Appendix 1 ■ Skills and Tools for Facilitating a Constructive Debate

Building and Enforcing Norms

Norms or ground rules are agreements about how members of the group will behave toward one another and how they will treat the ideas that are discussed. To be useful, norms must be clear, observable, agreed to, and enforced. Otherwise, they quickly lose their meaning and efficacy. Norms can be enforced in a matter-of-fact way (as when reminding yourself or others that someone has overstepped) or with humor (one group I worked with threw a paper airplane at anyone who broke a norm). Any enforcement tools used should be used consistently; they become a part of the culture of an ongoing group or team and shape behavior in observable and implicit ways.

The first time a group meets, they can establish and agree on a set of norms that will support constructive debate. These norms can be revisited before each session; attention to the norms can be evaluated at the end of the session, and they should be modified as necessary. Groups that meet regularly can record the norms they agree on and revisit them at each meeting to make sure they remain relevant and explicit.

Examples:

- Agree to confidentiality: "what is said here stays here."
- Ask questions and express disagreement openly.
- Ask for and offer constructive feedback.
- Silence electronics.

- Honor time limits.
- Listen as an ally.

Once norms have been established, and provided that they are enforced, they will generally prove useful throughout the life of a group or team. Others may be added as the need arises. The facilitator or members of the group can refer to them at strategic moments to redirect the conversation down more-helpful paths or to remind the group what they agreed to. For example, a facilitator might say, “Remember, we agreed not to evaluate until we had all the ideas on the table.” From time to time, a facilitator or member might notice that an unhelpful, yet unspoken, norm exists (for example, “don’t confront the boss”). They can call that to the group’s attention and ask, “Do we want to keep that as a norm?”

Managing Discussions

In any organizational meetings, a great deal of learning takes place through dialogue and discussion. A good discussion isn’t just a matter of luck—it needs to be managed. Questions are among the most valuable tools in a facilitator’s kit for managing discussions. Statements can be another valuable tool but should be used sparingly so as to keep the discussion going. The ability to use both with clear intentions in mind has a powerful impact on both the quality and the amount of interaction in a meeting.

Questions or statements serve three main purposes in managing a discussion: They open the discussion, focus it, and close it. They guide the discussion to achieve specific objectives. When the objective has been achieved, it is time to move on.

Opening the Discussion

Purpose: To introduce the subject and engage the participants’ thoughts and feelings.

- *“What ideas do you have about . . . ?”*
- *“How might we approach the issue of . . . ?”*
- *“What other ideas might we consider?”*

Focusing the Discussion

Purpose: To focus the participants' thoughts and ideas on specific ideas or solutions being considered.

- *"Tell me how you think that would work."*
- *"What would be the advantages of . . . ?"*
- *"What would be the disadvantages of . . . ?"*
- *"What are other examples of . . . ?"*
- *"Tell us more about . . ."*

Closing the Discussion

Purpose: To close the discussion and summarize key points or agreements, or to make a transition to the next topic. Statements are useful to close the discussion. Questions tend to open it up again.

- *"You made several key points here: . . ."* (summarize)
- *"Let's spend another 2 minutes on this topic and then move on."*
- *"Are we ready to move on to the next item?"*
- *"Can someone summarize where we are on this?"* (Or summarize a possible agreement as a "trial close.")
- *"So, you're agreeing to . . ."*

Handling Questions

Below is the sequence of behavior and thought that can guide you to the most appropriate choice of response for the specific situation.

- Acknowledge the questioner.
- Restate the question, ask for clarification.
- Decide if you should answer the question. If not:
  - Boomerang the question to the appropriate person or other meeting participants.
  - Facilitate the questioner's thinking about the question.
  - Defer the question to a later time; put it on the "Parking Lot"—see below for a description of this tool.

Using Interventions

If you are planning or leading a meeting, you will find certain tools and processes invaluable for moving it along productively. These tools can be called "interventions." An intervention is an activity designed to break into the status quo and create a shift. Interventions can be used to involve or engage participants, to help them maintain their focus, or to facilitate decisions and actions.

Involving or Engaging Participants

- *Write, then Speak*: Give participants a few minutes to jot down ideas on a specific topic, then use a process for sharing ideas such as the Round Robin (below) or any brainstorming process. This is useful when some participants tend to dominate the meetings and you are not hearing from some of the more thoughtful members, who may prefer time to reflect rather than "thinking out loud."
- *Round Robin*: Ask each participant to give her or his idea briefly or to pass. Then, go around the group one or more times. This ensures that everyone who has a contribution to make has an opportunity to make it. This is a classic form of brainstorming that is especially effective in meetings where different personalities or levels may make it difficult for some people to get their ideas out on the table.
- *Grouping and Regrouping*: Ask the group to form pairs, trios, or quads and come up with ideas or recommendations on a particular topic. They then report it out to the larger group. This is particularly useful when there are members who have trouble being heard or speaking up in a larger group.

Maintaining Focus

- *Parking Lot:* When an issue arises that is not relevant to the agenda item currently being discussed, write it on a flipchart page or whiteboard area labeled "Parking Lot." If the issue is relevant to a later item, raise it at the appropriate time in the meeting. If it is not relevant then, ask at the end of the meeting if, how, and when the group wants to handle the issue. By doing this, you keep the group on focus without appearing to ignore contributions and you make sure that issues with importance, but not immediacy, don't get lost.

- *Time Out:* When you think the group has strayed from its purpose, call a "Time Out" and ask whether the discussion is helping them get to where they want to go. (It may be helpful to remind them of the purpose and objectives of the meeting.) If they say a certain discussion is relevant, then step back and allow it to continue. If they say it is off purpose, then ask them what they would like to do instead.
- *Time Check*: When an issue is being discussed past the time allotted for it on the agenda, refer to the time already spent on the item, and ask whether the group wants to continue to discuss it, or set it aside for the time being (in which case you would put it on the Parking Lot for later action), or make a decision now, and so forth. If they want to continue discussing it, the group needs to agree on how they want to allot the remaining time for the meeting or whether they are willing to extend it.

Facilitating Decisions and Actions

Once the process of constructive debate has taken place, the group may continue by moving toward a decision. This may be because of time pressure (they have agreed to decide by the end of the meeting and that time is rapidly approaching), or because the issue has been thoroughly discussed and debated, or all participants have had an opportunity to state their views and are ready to move forward. The facilitator can ask the group what they are ready to do.

Methods of Decision-Making:

- *Delegation* to an individual or subgroup to decide, with or without a group recommendation

- *Voting*
    - Majority (51 percent)
    - Supermajority (75 percent or other)
    - Ranking (Each person ranks his or her top choices, points are awarded—3 for #1, 2 for #2, and so on—and then points are tallied and the decision goes to the option with the most points.)
- *Point distribution* (Each person has a number of points to distribute; he or she may give them all to one option or distribute them among preferred options.)
- *Consensus* (Each person has an opportunity to express an opinion about a proposed option. If all agree, the decision is made. If a member of the group does not agree, he or she is asked to state his or her concerns or upgrades. The group makes a good-faith effort to deal with the concerns or suggestions and to modify the proposal to make it acceptable if possible. All members agree that the proposal should be implemented and agree either to accept and participate or to "disagree and commit," where one or more members disagree, but are still willing to commit to implementation.)

Unless the group has a common practice for decision-making, they will need to agree on how to make decisions on the topics under discussion. In some cases, different issues may have different decision methods. For example, something that everyone in the group will have to carry out may require a consensus. Decisions that fewer people will carry out or that are less important to the vested interests of members may simply require a majority vote recommendation or delegation of the decision to the person or people most involved.

When time pressure forces a decision, you can:

- Do a time check and remind the group that they committed to make the decision by the end of the meeting.
- Ask what it would take for them to be ready to decide. When they respond, make it happen if you can. (For example, they may say, "We haven't heard from [mem-

ber's name] yet." You can then ask that person what they think.)
- Conduct the agreed-on decision process.

When the group is ready to make a decision, if you or a group member perceive that an issue has been thoroughly discussed and that all points of view have been expressed (this sometimes becomes obvious when the discussion has become repetitive), you can:

- Check to make sure that all points of view have been expressed (you may use a Round Robin format, asking participants to add anything left unsaid or pass).
- Ask if the group is ready to make the decision. If so,
- Conduct the decision process.

Principles of Effective Facilitation

The principles below are relevant for any successful facilitation, but they are especially important for facilitating a constructive debate, where enthusiasm, emotional intensity, and hearty disagreement are to be expected and even encouraged. Good facilitation practices, such as these, can guide this energy into productive channels:

- Know the purpose of the meeting or conversation you are facilitating.
- Make sure the agenda is explicit and aligned with the purpose.
- Learn which items are for information, which are for discussion, and which ones require a decision.
- Gain agreement about the role you will take, early in the meeting.
- Maintain a neutral role regarding the content; if you can't, ask someone else to facilitate.
- Establish or review norms at the beginning of the meeting or conversation; make sure they are enforced.
- Agree on the process or processes to be used for decision-making, information-sharing, and any other key components of the meeting.

- Be aware of the difference between the content of the meeting and the process; as facilitator, your focus is the process.
- Be willing to call for a process check when you sense that the group has bogged down.
- Observe behavior and note patterns of participation, agreement or disagreement, and leadership.
- Provide feedback and suggest activities to the group, based on your observations, that will move the members toward the outcomes they hope to achieve.
- Make sure that everyone in the group has an opportunity to express ideas and opinions.
- Encourage the group to take action rather than avoid dealing with problems, issues, and decisions.
- If you sense that the group is avoiding dealing with an important issue or decision, remind the group of its purpose and ask if the current activity is helping them to achieve it.
- At the end of the meeting, summarize decisions and action items. Make sure they are recorded (graphically) and saved in a form that can be shared. Taking a photo of the flipchart or whiteboard and sending it around to meeting participants, or copying and sending the virtual whiteboard list of action steps, ensures that agreements and decisions are not lost or misremembered.

Appendix 2 ■ Constructive Debate Planning

Many of the forms shown throughout this section can be downloaded from https://www.barnesconti.com/CD/.

1. Frame the problem or issue in a way that is objective and neutral as to cause or solution.
   - Framed Issue:

   - Desired Outcome:

2. Identify key participants and note any possible vested interests in the outcome. Include yourself.

Participant	Opinion/Vested Interests

Place an asterisk (*) next to the name of anyone who could take a facilitator role or consider the use of a neutral facilitator under Step 4.

3. Review conditions for a constructive debate.
    - To what degree does each condition already exist? Mark that place on the scale and, below each, note 2 to 3 actions you could take to improve or reinforce those conditions.

Ability to communicate

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very little					To a great degree	

Open-mindedness

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very little					To a great degree	

Minimum of conflicting vested interests

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very little					To a great degree	

Shared values

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very little					To a great degree	

Compelling issues

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very little					To a great degree	

Clear and effective process

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very little					To a great degree	

4. Select and review 3 to 4 tools, approaches, or activities that may be useful during the discussion debate.
5. Develop a tentative agenda that includes the use of process tools as appropriate.

Activity	Process	Person	Time

6. Use the Observer Guide during or after the meeting to help the team members continue to develop and improve their skills.

Observer Guide

	Skills	Name	Name	Name
EXPRESS IDEAS	Make suggestions			
	Offer reasons			
	Provide examples			
ENGAGE OTHERS	Ask for ideas			
	Ask for feedback			
	Listen actively			
EXPLORE VIEWS	Draw out			
	Build on ideas			
	Anticipate consequences			
CHALLENGE POSITIONS	Identify assumptions			
	Clarify rationales			
	Argue a point			

Appendix 3 ■ Tools and Templates

Many of the forms shown throughout this section can be downloaded from https://www.barnesconti.com/CD/.

Affinity Diagram

An affinity diagram helps you to categorize or identify relationships among ideas, issues, or elements of a system.

Applications:

- When you need to break a complex issue into broad categories
- When you need to organize ideas, solutions, or recommendations
- As a follow-up to a brainstorming process using postable notes

Materials/Equipment:

- Postable notes

Process:

1. Conduct a "silent brainstorming" session, preferably using postable notes.
2. Ask the group to rearrange the notes, posted on a wall or table, into categories of similar ideas.
3. Ask the group to create titles that label the sets of ideas. Use brief titles or headings that describe the theme of each category.

Brainstorming or "Note-Storming"

Applications:
- When you want to generate a large number of ideas
- When you want to stimulate new ideas
- When you want to minimize "private ownership" of ideas and maximize cross-fertilization

1. After formulating a problem statement or question, remind the group of the rules for brainstorming. They are:
   - Allow enough time for the activity to get beyond the tried and true ideas.
   - Emphasize quantity, not the quality of ideas.
   - Do not criticize, evaluate, or judge ideas, either for yourself or others.
   - Post ideas where all can see them.
   - Do not interrupt the process.
   - Encourage humor, "wild" or unique ideas, and a playful attitude.
   - Suspend hierarchical power.
   - Don't quit too soon.

2. Use either a Round Robin format (where each person contributes in turn) or a "Popcorn" style (where members contribute ideas as they occur).
   - Record all ideas on flipcharts or whiteboard.
   - Allow at least two 2-minute silences before stopping.
   - Alternative: have the group write their ideas on postable notes and place them on large sheets of paper or a board, reading other people's ideas as they do.

Consensus-Building

A consensus process results in a decision that will be implemented and supported by all members of the team even if they do not fully agree with it.

It is most useful when there is a history of discussion or previous understandings about the issue and where there is now a need for agreement or alignment.

Applications:

- When you want to develop a new agreement
- When you need to work through mild to moderate disagreement about a decision
- When you need to make decisions about purpose, vision, values, policies, or practices that need the support of the entire team

Note: Use this tool after a discussion in which the issues are aired.

Materials/Equipment:

- Note paper
- Flipcharts or whiteboard
- Markers

Version One

1. Clearly identify and state the issue under discussion; for example, "How would you describe the purpose of this team?"
2. Each person on the team writes down her or his response.
3. The facilitator asks for each person's response and writes it on a flipchart or whiteboard.
4. If there seems to be significant agreement, team members can try writing a statement that summarizes what each has said. If there are differences, go to the next step.
5. The facilitator asks the group to identify and highlight words or phrases they like in each statement, even if they do not agree with the whole statement.
6. Team members individually write a new statement, using as many as possible of the highlighted words or phrases. These are posted over the other ones and discussed. The group combines, modifies, and chooses a final statement with which they can all substantially agree. It may be necessary to repeat steps 5 and 6 another time to come closer to agreement.

7. If consensus is not entirely achieved, members who disagree are asked for the minimum change it would take to shape the statement to something they could support even if they don't fully agree. If the rest of the team agrees, these changes are made. If not, another tool for resolving conflict or building agreement should be used.

Version Two

This version of consensus-building is useful when you are developing new agreements that you want the entire team committed to implement or align with. Use an actual or virtual whiteboard or large paper roll (36 in. or 48 in.) and white movable tape (both can be purchased at art supply stores).

1. Clearly identify and state the issue under discussion; for example, *"What is the purpose of this team?"* The facilitator begins by asking, *"What word or phrase would you use to describe the purpose of this team?"*
2. Team members record the words or phrases on 8½ × 11 in. paper, writing with markers in large block letters so they can be read easily. They can record more than one word or phrase.

   If you are using a whiteboard or large sheet of white paper as a background, use colored paper for the words and phrases.
3. Individuals, in turn, write on or tape their responses to the whiteboard or paper, reading them aloud as they do so. Others may ask questions for clarification.
4. The facilitator, with direction from the team, moves similar words and phrases into groupings on the board or paper.
5. The team reviews groupings and identifies themes. They may want to move phrases or words around.
6. The facilitator asks the team to identify the words or phrases that best represent the purpose (or other issue under discussion).

7. The group combines, modifies, and chooses a final statement using the words and phrases the group has selected. They may do this in open discussion or (especially if there are many introverts in the group) by writing their own versions, then posting them and having the group choose or modify the one that best states what people are agreeing to.
8. If consensus is not entirely achieved, members who disagree are asked for the minimum change it would take to shape the statement to something they could support even if they don't fully agree. If the rest of the team agrees, these changes are made. If not, another tool for resolving conflict or building agreement should be used.

Cost/Benefit Analysis

Applications:

- When you are choosing among alternative solutions
- When action steps are likely to involve risk

Determining whether a solution is cost-effective is an important part of decision-making. Particularly when considerable resource increases are proposed, you will need to be able to show return on investment. This tool is also helpful in making decisions about whether to explore high-risk/high-reward options.

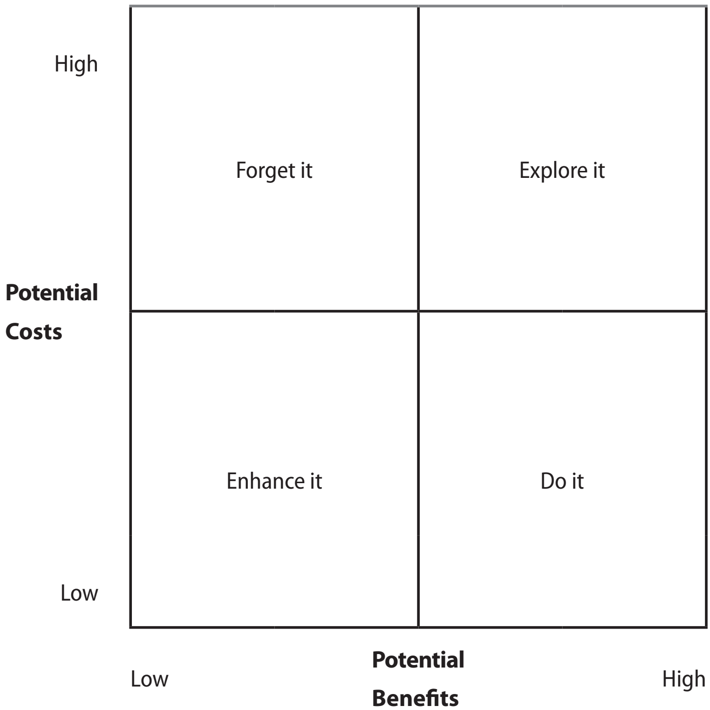
Materials/Equipment:

- Prioritized action ideas
- Cost/benefit forms

Process:

1. Identify the costs or risks involved in the solution you have selected. Are there any hidden costs?
2. Identify or calculate potential benefits.
3. Compare potential costs and benefits. Is it worth the effort to achieve this?
4. Consider which risks could be adjusted to decrease the probability or consequences of failure.
5. Identify other ways to improve the cost/benefit ratio and recalculate.
6. Discuss, then check “Go,” “Caution,” or “No Go” as appropriate for each action idea.

In summary, the results of a good cost/benefit analysis can be represented as follows:


High
Forget it
Explore it
Potential Costs
Enhance it
Do it
Low
Low
Potential Benefits
High

Application: Cost / Benefit Analysis

Idea	Potential Costs	Potential Benefits	How to Reduce Risk and Improve Cost/Benefit Ratio

1.

Go	Caution	No Go

2.

Go	Caution	No Go

3.

Go	Caution	No Go

Creative Controversy

One technique that can be used to derive both individual and organizational benefit from the conflict of ideas is called creative controversy.

Conflict, handled in this way, can become a stimulus for deeper and broader thinking on issues, using the content from entrenched positions either as the basis for a new synthesis or to generate innovative ideas. Instead of avoiding conflict, the parties embrace it through a series of structured activities. This may be done within the context of a team meeting or with the help of a facilitator.

Applications:

- When members have developed fixed positions and no movement is occurring
- When you want to explore a controversial issue
- When it is especially important for members to understand one another's opinions or ideas

The creative controversy process is basically as follows:

1. Clarify the issue with an agreed-on problem statement, and then develop clear position statements.
2. Each party to the conflict develops and presents the most compelling arguments in support of that position.
3. Each party listens to and clarifies the other's position until they believe that they understand it fully.
4. The parties then switch sides and argue as forcefully as possible for the other position.
5. The parties work to agree on a new, synthesized position or develop a new alternative that they can both support.

This process is an efficient way first to capture the energy tied up in strongly held positions and then to use it for resolution and innovation. New ideas frequently emerge from controversy.

Select a partner to work with on the exercise, then select one of the following controversial issues (or create your own). Choose the side that is closest to your own opinions or that you can agree to argue in favor of. Find another team that holds or will take the opposite position to yours on the issue.

You will have 10 minutes to select your strongest arguments, write them down, and put together a case for your position. Choose which team will present their arguments first. Each team will then be given 5 minutes to present their arguments. It will be helpful to take notes of the opposition's case. Ask questions to learn as much as possible about the other's point of view.

After each side has presented their arguments, switch sides and argue as forcefully as possible for the opposite point of view. Each team will be given 5 additional minutes to argue the opposite position. Both teams will then attempt to agree on a broader, more-informed position that synthesizes the arguments from both positions.

Medical Research

A. Decisions concerning medical research should be made primarily based on the potential social and economic benefits to the larger society.
B. Decisions concerning medical research should be made primarily based on the basis of commonly held values, morals, and beliefs of the members of a society.

Stimulating the Economy

A. The best way to stimulate an economy that is in recession is by providing corporations with incentives to spend money.
B. The best way to stimulate an economy that is in recession is by providing individuals with incentives to spend money.

Organizational Focus

A. This organization would be more successful if it focused more on what it does best and quit dabbling in what it doesn't know.
B. This organization would be more successful if it were to diversify more, so it could insulate itself from potential problems in one market sector.

Questions

- What, if any, change took place in your own opinion or position during the exercise?
- What helped move you to modify your position?
- How can you apply this experience to real controversies at work?

Diffusion/Integration Rule

This ground rule helps you keep the right balance between idea generation and decision-making. It should be discussed and agreed to early in a meeting or institutionalized as a team "norm" so it can be invoked at the appropriate time.

Applications:

- When there is a tendency to judge ideas too quickly
- When time pressure threatens to discourage creativity
- When your team is having trouble coming to closure and moving ahead with decisions
- When you need to balance efficiency and creativity

Process:

1. Divide the meeting or the topic into diffusion and integration periods.
2. During the diffusion period, generate as many different ideas as possible. No evaluation of these ideas is allowed. Members are encouraged to build on one another's ideas. The rules of brainstorming apply.
3. During the integration period, develop criteria for selection. Then test the ideas against the criteria, evaluate, prioritize, or choose. New ideas are not encouraged during this period, though it is important to leave a flipchart sheet up where people can write new ideas for the next diffusion session. Alternate as needed, while moving ahead toward a decision. For example, the first diffusion session may generate ideas for areas to focus on, then the integration session results in selecting one. The next diffusion period may generate specific project ideas within the area, so during the integration period the team selects three projects. The third diffusion period generates sources for funding, and so forth.

This can be done very effectively via electronic media over a period of time, posting ideas where they can be read by all.* Strict time limits will have to be enforced, however, in order to keep the

* This can be in the form of an interactive "blog" or a discussion forum.

process moving. (For example, all members receive the message "Post all of your ideas about possible quick-start applications by Friday.") It may be most effective to conduct the diffusion portion asynchronously to allow plenty of time for members to consider many possibilities and conduct the integration meetings synchronously.

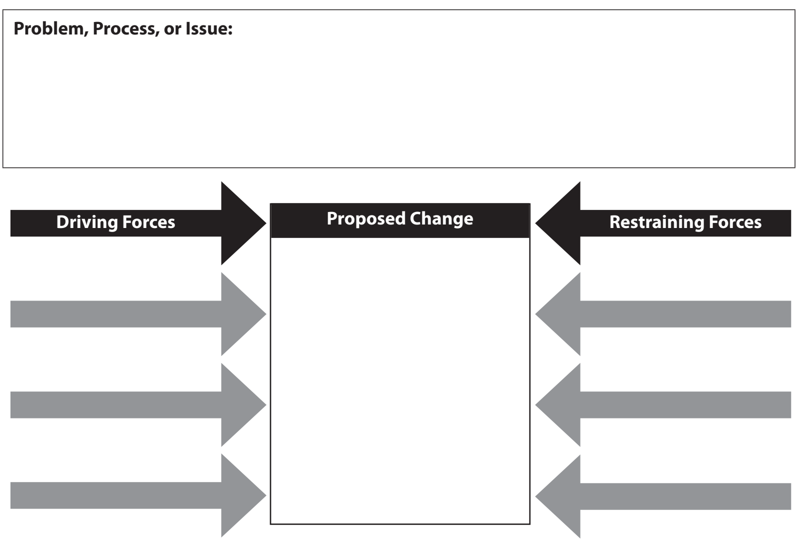
Force Field Analysis

This tool helps you to identify the dynamics in a complex system that must be considered in resolving a problem or initiating a change.

Applications:
- When you are confronted with a persistent problem
- When you want to analyze the dynamics affecting a problem or issue

Materials/Equipment:
- Flipchart or whiteboard
- Postable notes (optional)
- Markers

Process:
1. Identify the process, situation, or issue to be analyzed.
2. List forces that are moving the issue toward improvement or resolution as well as the forces keeping the issue in place or moving against resolution. Use a form similar to the one illustrated below. Participants can use postable notes that are then transferred to the form; otherwise, a facilitator can conduct an open session.



3. When ideas have been collected, identify positive forces that can be enhanced and negative forces that can be reduced or eliminated.

Framing and Reframing

> **Applications:**
> - When the group seems "stuck" in discussing a problem or issue
> - When creative thinking is required
> - When you want the group to consider alternative points of view, approaches, or solutions

A frame of reference is the general background or context within which we consider an idea. The frame we use often determines how we feel and react. The way we frame a *problem* generally predicts the set of solutions we will consider. The way we frame a *debate* suggests the positions that participants will take. Reframing is a technique for interpreting the available data surrounding a situation, result, or solution in an alternative way. To be effective, a reframe must:

- Take all relevant facts into account to provide a rational explanation or interpretation of those facts
- Align with the target person's values, goals, and even model of the world
- Be acceptable to you as an alternative way of viewing the idea or situation. When reframing:
    - Identify key goals, values, or elements of the target person's worldview
    - Identify relevant facts concerning the situation or idea
    - Think of an alternate way to interpret those facts that fits the criteria above

Example:

- Your frame around the situation:
  —*"We should not use the vendor we have used before; they are not capable of the level of quality we require."*

Your Reframe:

—*"Choosing this new vendor provides us with an opportunity to save some money and experiment with a new approach."*

From/To Analysis

This tool helps you to clarify goals as you begin to plan a strategy.

> **Applications:**
> - When you are leading a change process
> - As a follow-up to a visioning session
> - When you are preparing to design a strategic solution to a difficult problem
> - When you need concrete and specific change goals
> - When you are designing metrics to measure change

Materials/Equipment:

- Flipchart or whiteboard
- Markers
- Postable notes

Process:

1. On a flipchart, a long sheet of paper, or a whiteboard, draw a vertical bisecting line. Label the left side "From" and the right side "To."
2. Ask the group to review their vision statement and then identify specifically where they are now and where they will need to be in order to achieve the vision. You may want to define specific areas, such as "Financial," "Capabilities," and the like. The group can use postable notes, or a leader can facilitate and record. As an alternative, use graphic symbols rather than words to promote a deeper discussion.
3. As an alternative, ask the question more generally, and use an affinity diagram process to cluster the suggestions into categories.

Is/Is Not Matrix

The Is/Is Not Matrix is a tool for organizing data in ways that expose underlying patterns. Discovering such patterns helps localize a problem, making it easier to identify the cause of the problem. This analysis both precedes data collection (so the team or person will know what kind of differences to look for) and follows it (so the team can discover which factors actually affected the results).

Applications:

- When you have a specific problem to solve
- When a group can provide a "bigger picture" of where and how a problem occurs
- When you have specific bits of data on a problem and need to identify patterns

You can use an Is/Is Not Matrix to help pinpoint a problem by exposing where it does and does not occur. Such analysis lets teams avoid wasteful effort, directing their energies to the most potentially fruitful areas.

Materials/Equipment:

- "Is/Is Not Matrix—Example" or a simplified version on a flipchart or whiteboard.

Process:

1. Identify the problem or situation you want to analyze. Your process map may have identified a problem to analyze.
2. Use the Is/Is Not Matrix to organize your knowledge and information. This matrix can be re-created and used in virtually any setting. An individual may complete the matrix, or it can be used in a team.
3. Complete as many of the matrix cells as possible. The matrix cells can be filled in any order or sequence.
4. Look for relationships in the data presented. Some relationships or potential causes may be apparent once all information is entered into the cells. In certain instances, other problem-solving techniques or activities will need to be undertaken to further isolate causes and effects.

Is/Is Not Matrix—Example

Problem	**Is** Where, when, to what extent, or regarding whom does this situation occur?	**Is Not** Where, etc., does this situation NOT occur, though it reasonably might have occurred?	**Therefore** What might explain the pattern of occurrence and non-occurrence?
Where The physical or geographical location of the event or situation. Where it occurs or where it is noticed.			
When The hour, time of day, day of week, month, or time of year of the event or situation. Its relationship (before, during, after) to other events.			
What Kind or How Much The type or category of event or situation. The extent, degree, dimensions, or duration of the occurrence.			
Who (Do *not* use these questions to blame.) What relationship do various individuals or groups have to the situation or event? To whom, by whom, near whom, etc., does this occur?			

Norm-Setting

> **Applications:**
> - When you want to establish a productive climate for discussion and debate
> - When discussion and debate become unproductive and you want to make some agreements that will improve quality and productivity

Version One

For new teams or mixed groups:

1. Ask the group what ground rules they would like to have that will help them to achieve the results they hope for.
2. Brainstorm a list of possible ground rules or norms.
3. Ask for clarification so you can make the behaviors observable.
4. Ask for agreement. If someone does not agree, ask what it would take for him or her to "sign up," then modify if possible and ask for agreement.
5. Ask how the group wishes to enforce the norms.
6. Rewrite and post the norms in a visible place.

Version Two

For existing teams:

1. Ask the group to list current norms for team meetings.
2. Identify which are explicitly stated and which are implicit but real.
3. Ask if, and how, they would need to be modified to enable the group to meet expectations and avoid negative outcomes.
4. Ask how the group will enforce them.

On the Worksheet for Team or Meeting Norms, several areas are named in which groups or teams may want to suggest norms for meetings that will promote constructive debates.

Worksheet for Team or Meeting Norms

Category	
Communication	
Information-sharing	
Agenda and times	
Decision-making	
Problem-solving/Conflict management	
Focus vs. distractions	
Action planning	
Other	

Parking Lot

1. Place a flipchart page labeled "Parking Lot" where it can be seen by all team members (in person or by video conference).
2. When issues arise that are peripheral to the main topics of discussion, put them on the Parking Lot page.
3. At the end of the meeting, refer to the page and identify action steps for each item. *Caution:* If you don't follow up with this step, this tool will be seen as an "idea-killer" tool.

Applications:

- When you want to make sure the group remains focused on the issue at hand
- When you don't want to lose track of an important idea or issue that is not relevant to the current discussion
- When you want to demonstrate respect for a person who makes an off-topic but important comment

Plus/Delta Review

At the end of the meeting, take a few minutes to evaluate the session. Ask the group to think about what worked especially well (Plus) and what they would like to change for the next time (Delta). List all comments and make a point of reminding the group of what they want to keep or change at the beginning of the next meeting.

Applications:

- To call the group's attention to process
- To learn what worked well and what needs to be changed about a meeting process
- To check in with the group as to how it is progressing

+	Δ

Prioritizing

This is a method for getting a quick sense of a group's opinions or preferences.

Applications:

- When several issues or solutions are under consideration
- As an early step in the decision-making process
- To narrow the field of choices

Materials/Equipment:

- Flipchart or whiteboard and markers
- Colored "dots"

Process:

1. Clearly identify and state the issue under discussion; for example, *"What are the two most important goals for the team this year?"*
2. The team brainstorms a list from which to choose. The facilitator or recorder posts the list where all can see it.
3. Give each team member six (or another appropriate number*) colored "dots" that can be applied to the flipchart paper (these are available at stationery stores). Giving each person a number of check marks that he or she can use is also effective and does not require any additional supplies.
4. Team members then apply as many dots (or check marks) as they like to the items. They can apply all six dots to one item or can distribute them among several items.
5. The facilitator identifies the items receiving the most dots. The target number of items is considered selected. If a tie results, members can move their dots from nonselected items to the items still in competition.

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* In general, the number of dots should be two or three times the number of items in the final outcome; that is, if the goal is to identify the two most important items, four or six dots would be appropriate. This method balances the amount of support for each item with the level of interest and commitment by individual team members. If only considering the level of support, give each member fewer dots; the rule is that each dot must be applied to a different item.

6. In virtual, synchronous meetings (such as video or computer conferences), ask members where they wish to place their “dots”—the facilitator then places them accordingly.

Reflection Break

> **Applications:**
> - When you want the group to reflect on and upgrade the process they are using to achieve a particular result
> - When the group process breaks down
> - When something important occurs and you want the group to learn from the experience
> - At the end of a session as a way of capturing and summarizing what has been learned and how to apply it

Version One

For planned reflection breaks, questions can be prepared and written on flipcharts or the whiteboard. A good format for developing questions is:

- *"What?" "So what?" "Now what?"*
- *"What happened?" "What did you notice?"*
- *"So, what does it mean?" "What have we learned?"*
- *"Now, what shall we do about it?" "How can we apply what we learned?"*

Typical questions might include:

- *"What did we learn from that experience/discussion?"*
- *"What worked well in the meeting today?"*
- *"What could we do differently the next time?"*
- *"How can we improve . . . ?"*
- *"How were we able to accomplish . . . ?"*

1. Any of these or other questions can be asked as needed in the group—the member who is facilitating or another member can call for a reflection break. The purpose may be to "capture" learnings that might otherwise be forgotten or overlooked, to explore what has been going on in order to improve the process, or other purposes.
2. A time limit of 5 or 10 minutes is usually appropriate and should be stated up front.
3. The facilitator should make sure that everyone who has something to say is heard. If the team has one or two more extroverted members who tend to use more "air time," have people take 2 minutes first to think and jot down their reflections. Then get people's comments one at a time while

you record them on flipchart paper. This slows the process down enough to allow most people to participate fully.

4. At the end of the time allotted, the facilitator can summarize or ask for a summary, then ask the team what they want to do with the information (get it copied and pass it around, give it to a person or subgroup to follow up on, or other).

Version Two

1. For a quick "learning intervention," the facilitator can ask the team to step back from the task for 5 minutes and rate the process by holding up the appropriate number of fingers (1 = low, 5 = high). Use the following questions or others as appropriate.

   "To what extent are you satisfied with the way the team is working?"

   "To what extent are you satisfied with your own level of participation?"

2. Allow the team a few minutes to clarify responses and adjust the process, then return to the task.

Round Robin

1. Present the question or issue to be discussed in the meeting.
2. Call for a Round Robin. That means that each person gives her or his idea or opinion in turn before any of the ideas are discussed.
3. Give the group a few minutes to think about or jot down ideas. Ask someone to start by giving one idea or offering a suggestion or opinion. The person to her or his left is next; move clockwise around the group. It is acceptable to pass.
4. The facilitator may record the ideas and may (or may not) participate in turn. (This format allows the facilitator to participate in idea-sharing; it is better *not* to participate if the task is to give opinions or make judgments.)
5. The activity may continue for several rounds until everyone passes or for a specific number of times.
6. No comments on ideas or opinions are permitted until the Round Robin is over. Then clarifications and a general discussion can follow.

Applications:

- When you want to poll the group by providing everyone in the group with an opportunity to contribute
- When some members are dominating the discussion and others are not participating at all

Summarizing

The leader or facilitator invokes a "rule of summarizing." This means that new information cannot be added until the previous information has been reviewed and summed up to the satisfaction of the group or the other person. To be acceptable, a summary should be:

Applications:

- When members are not listening to one another and debates are becoming unproductive
- When members are wandering off topic

- Stated neutrally (*"Your point of view is . . ."* versus *"You stubbornly maintain that . . ."*); for example, shows neither agreement nor disagreement; does not judge
- Stated briefly
- Stated in one's own words rather than "parroted," thus showing an intellectual understanding of what the other has said
- Checked out with the originator of the statement; for example, *"You think we should go ahead with the project over Engineering's objections. Is that right, Susan?"*
- Before proceeding with their statement, the next speaker summarizes *either* what the relevant points of the discussion were (if the tool is being used to move toward a decision) *or* the previous speaker's statement (if the tool is being used to move toward resolution of a conflict).
- The leader or facilitator ensures that the summary has been accepted by the previous speaker(s) as substantially correct; that is, it shows understanding (not agreement) before the speaker continues.