Designing Options

Objectives:	To identify and understand the steps involved in designing options.
	To learn how "developing options" is separate from "selecting options".
Session Times:	1 ½ hours: Sections A–E
	¾ hours: Sections B–E
Essential Background:	The Win/Win Approach

Designing Options

New Choices for Better Solutions

A. Stimulus Activity

(40 minutes)

Unleashing Creativity: *participants are led through a visualisation process to encourage creative thinking for generating solutions. (See Designing Options Activities, pA.9.1.) If time is limited, move directly to Section B.*

B. Creating Options

(15 minutes)

Question: **How do we create options?**

Discussion: *Draw out participants' responses. In addition, you might explore:*

- brainstorm

- divide the problem into smaller pieces

- identify the outcomes we want

- use a trial and error approach

- maintain current arrangements and generate greater commitment

- go with the obvious solution.

Question: **Are these different methods appropriate for different circumstances? Such as?**

Discussion: *Draw out participants' responses. In addition, you might consider:*

- going with the obvious solution, or trial and error approach, may be most appropriate for a less complex issue, or one involving few people, or limited resources risks or consequences

- dividing up the problem (chunking), brainstorming, or identifying the outcome may be better suited to a more complex issue, or one involving many people, resources, risks and consequences.

Obviously these two areas overlap. A key to how successful the option will be, in the long run, is how committed people feel to it. This, in turn, pivots on how well it meets their needs, and how much they have been included in designing that option.

*Give out the **handout: "Designing Options"** and explain the variety of tools that can be used to design options. Highlight that designing options:*

- is not a linear process (e.g. we may try a variety of tools, in any order)

- is not necessarily complex (e.g. sometimes people easily agree to an obvious solution)

- is a process for which different tools are appropriate at different times (e.g. perhaps halfway through brainstorming it becomes evident that the problem needs further dividing into pieces).

## C. A Practice Session on Designing Options

(25 minutes)

Using our previous example/s (generated in the mapping exercise), we're going to practise one process for designing options.

The first step is to identify the issue, or the part of it for which we're going to design options.

Draw a circle on a large piece of paper, in which to place the issue.

Sometimes, as a result of the mapping exercise the issue may have become clearer and may be identified differently. In the example we used during mapping, the issue was "Office workload division". During the mapping process, numbers of participants stated a need for the workload to be divided fairly. This need for fairness could now be incorporated into the way the issue is identified in the designing options phase. It could become "A fair division of office work".

Draw on the board:

A fair division of office work
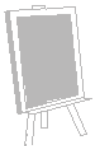
A very valuable tool when dealing with a complex issue, and when numbers of people are involved is **brainstorming.**
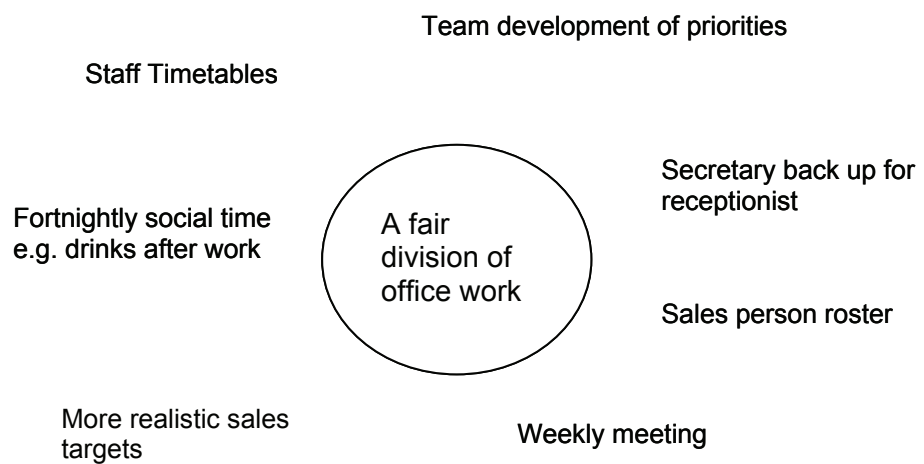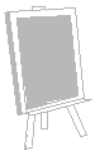
Question: How do we go about brainstorming?

Discussion: Draw out participants' responses. In addition, you might explore:

- no censoring

- no justifying

- no debating

- all ideas, once written up, become shared property

- people can begin to hear other ideas once theirs have been acknowledged.

Ideas generated while brainstorming can be written around the circled issue.

Demonstrate on the board:

Team development of priorities

Staff Timetables

Secretary back up for receptionist

Fortnightly social time e.g. drinks after work

A fair division of office work

Sales person roster

More realistic sales targets

Weekly meeting

We'll work again in the same small groups that we had during the mapping exercise to identify an issue about which each group can generate options.

As you come up with options, write them around the issue, as demonstrated on the board.

Allow about 10 minutes.

*Then refer them to the **handout: "Designing Options"** and highlight points in the wheel under the first heading: **Development**. In particular focus on the clarifying and negotiating tools to help in the brainstorming process.*

Allow a further 5 minutes for small groups to develop options. If you did the Stimulus Activity in Section A, refer back to it now for discussion and to debrief the process of encouraging creative thinking.

D. Steps in Selecting Options

(10 minutes)

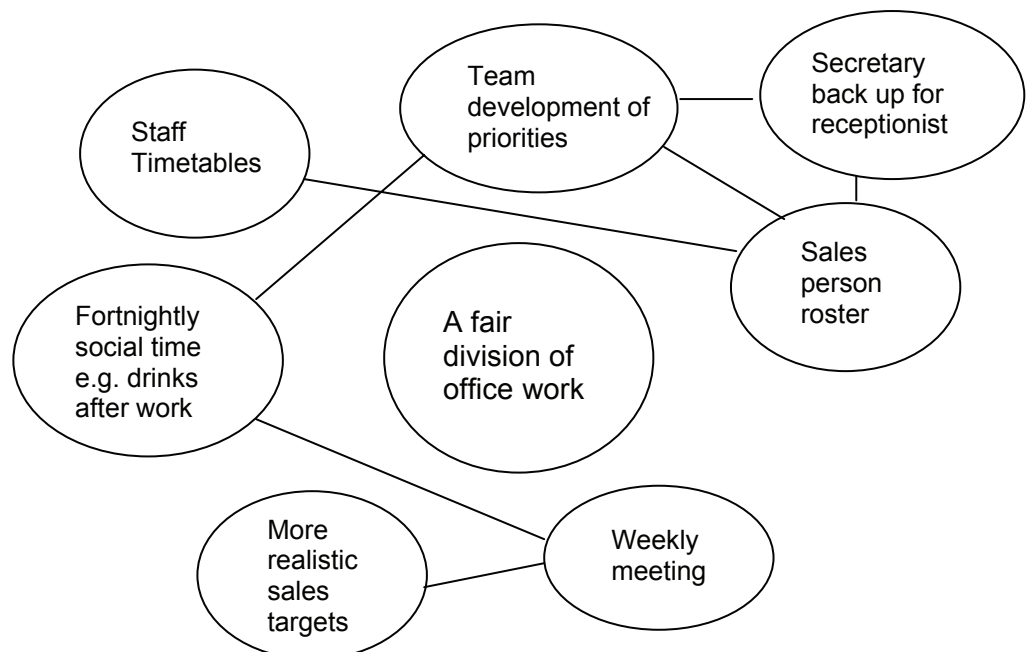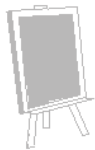Now we need to select options. This is a different process to developing options.

Question: How is "selecting" different to "developing"?

Discussion: Draw out participants' responses. In addition, you might consider:

- developing involves thinking as creatively and laterally as possible and often seems random and disordered.

- selecting involves bringing order to the range of options generated, making links between similar or complementary options.

- selecting also has an evaluative component. It's about assessing the appropriateness and the feasibility of particular options.

- as well, selecting is about matching options to needs and concerns that were identified during the mapping process. What options meet most or many of the needs of the parties and takes account of many or most of their concerns?

The first step then is to link options that go together in some way.

Demonstrate on the board:

Staff Timetables

Team development of priorities

Secretary back up for receptionist

Sales person roster

Fortnightly social time e.g. drinks after work

A fair division of office work

More realistic sales targets

Weekly meeting

*Then refer them to the **handout: "Designing Options"** and highlight points under the heading:* **Selection**.

We'll continue to work in our small groups. Evaluate the options you've already generated. Eliminate the inappropriate ones, and put the rest into the order in which they need to be implemented. Remember, try to choose options which meet more needs than any other.

E. Acting on the Chosen Option

(15 minutes)

Question: **Who has ever had the experience of analysing a problem and generating a solution which then seems to disappear down a black hole? The problem is still there, two weeks, a month later? What happened, or failed to happen?**

Discussion: *Draw out participants' responses. In addition, you might explore:*

- no action plan

- tasks not assigned to particular people

- no time frame for implementation

- resources not allocated

- no review or monitoring mechanism.

If there is no follow-through on the process of designing options, people can feel disheartened, sometimes betrayed and certainly become unwilling to participate in future problem-solving sessions. So developing an action plan and a review mechanism is vital.

*Refer to the **handout: "Designing Options"** and highlight points under the headings:* **Implementation** *and* **Agreements***.*

In your small groups, set an implementation plan. In real life, you would then need to check that everyone is in agreement with the chosen options and the implementation plan.

Allow small groups a further 5 minutes to complete this process, and for the person on whose problem the group has been working, to decide upon at least one option he/she might pursue after this session.

F. Concluding Comments

Designing options is an essential part of solving problems and conflicts that people are experiencing. People can become disillusioned with well-meant consultation and even preparedness to listen from others if, at the end, they are still left with a problem.

So a rigorous approach to identifying the scope of the issue, and all the needs and concerns of parties to the conflict, is a first step. Follow this with a serious effort to deal with the problem, to bring about appropriate changes, and people will gain confidence in the effectiveness of the win/win approach.

Designing Options Activities

Unleashing Creativity

Trainers' Information Only

Context: In trying to generate solutions, our thinking is often restricted and mechanical. It can be valuable, therefore, to stimulate us to think more creatively. *(See Chapter 9: Designing Options: Section A.)*

Time: 40 minutes

Aim: To give people experience and tools in releasing their creativity.

Requirements: Instrumental music suitable as background for reflection

Butcher's paper and pens

Instructions: Often our thinking is very restricted and mechanical. This can hamper our attempts to generate a range of options to solve difficult situations.

We're going to do an exercise now to release our creativity.

What stimulates your creativity?

Encourage discussion by participants. In addition, you might suggest:

- relaxation

- walking on the beach

- gardening

- music

- doodling

- exercising

- conversation

- showering

- not censoring.

We are now going to work on thinking creatively about an issue.

If this exercise follows Mapping, continue with the issue/s used in the mapping process.

If Mapping has not been covered, ask individuals each to think of an unsolved problem; or if participants are a work team, ask them to identify an issue to work on together.

The right side of the brain is generally better at creativity and leaps in consciousness because it works in images, wholes and simultaneous connections. Music has the capacity to stimulate the right side of the brain. Pictures stimulate the right side of the brain. We'll do an exercise using both. I will put some music on and lead you into a visualisation. The purpose of the visualisation is to picture a successful outcome to the problem that we've just identified.

Play very quietly some gentle or reflective music.

Lead them into a guided reflection that lasts about 5 minutes. It's not necessary to use this script exactly.

Start the music and suggest participants close their eyes. Wait about 20 seconds before continuing.

Consciously begin to relax your body. Now, tense as many muscles as you can. Particularly concentrate on face, neck, buttocks and feet. Tense them as much as you can... hold it.... hold it (10 seconds)... and relax. Do that once more. Tense as many muscles as you can in your body...hold it... hold it... and relax.

Concentrate now on your face. Make sure it is relaxed. Soften your eyes behind your eyelids. Imagine your cheekbones widening and spreading away from your nose. Release any tension in your jaw. Swallow and then relax your throat. Lower your shoulders. Where are they still tense? Relax in those spots. Take a deep breath and sigh it out. Relax your diaphragm and stomach... relax your back and buttocks. Check your thighs... relax them, your calves... relax them, and your feet...

Now develop for yourself a special place where you can go to be creative. It might be a beach, a mountain top, a tree you played in as a child, a field, or the countryside. What are you doing – strolling along, sitting down? What do you see? What can you hear? Is it silent? Are there noises of birds or water? What can you smell? How do you feel?

Now bring to mind your problem, and begin to imagine that a very successful outcome to it has occurred. Build this successful outcome into a very clear picture. You don't have to know how the success occurred, just that it has occurred. What is showing you it was successful? What are the people doing? What do you see? What are they saying to each other? ... to other people? ... to you?

Now, gradually bring yourself back into your body, sitting in this room. Have a bit of a stretch, perhaps rub your face... and open your eyes.

Give participants a moment or two to become ready to focus on the next part of the exercise.

What we were doing was seeing the gap between the problem as it appears now and an envisaged successful outcome.

What we don't know yet is how to move across this gap from the problem to the outcome.

Let's start by generating options.

Refer back to Section B of Chapter 9. Designing Options for details on how to create options, in particular noting the brainstorming technique.

After completing Section B encourage discussion on the process of stimulating creative thinking.

Discussion: Ask participants about their response to the music and to the visualisation. What worked? What didn't?

What normally inhibits our creative thinking?

Are there activities/techniques we could incorporate into our life on a regular basis to stimulate our creativity?

Important Points to Cover:

Creativity flourishes when option development is separated from option selection.

Creative option development, the encouragement of dramatic shifts in thinking, are a key for using a win/win process to achieve a win/win outcome.
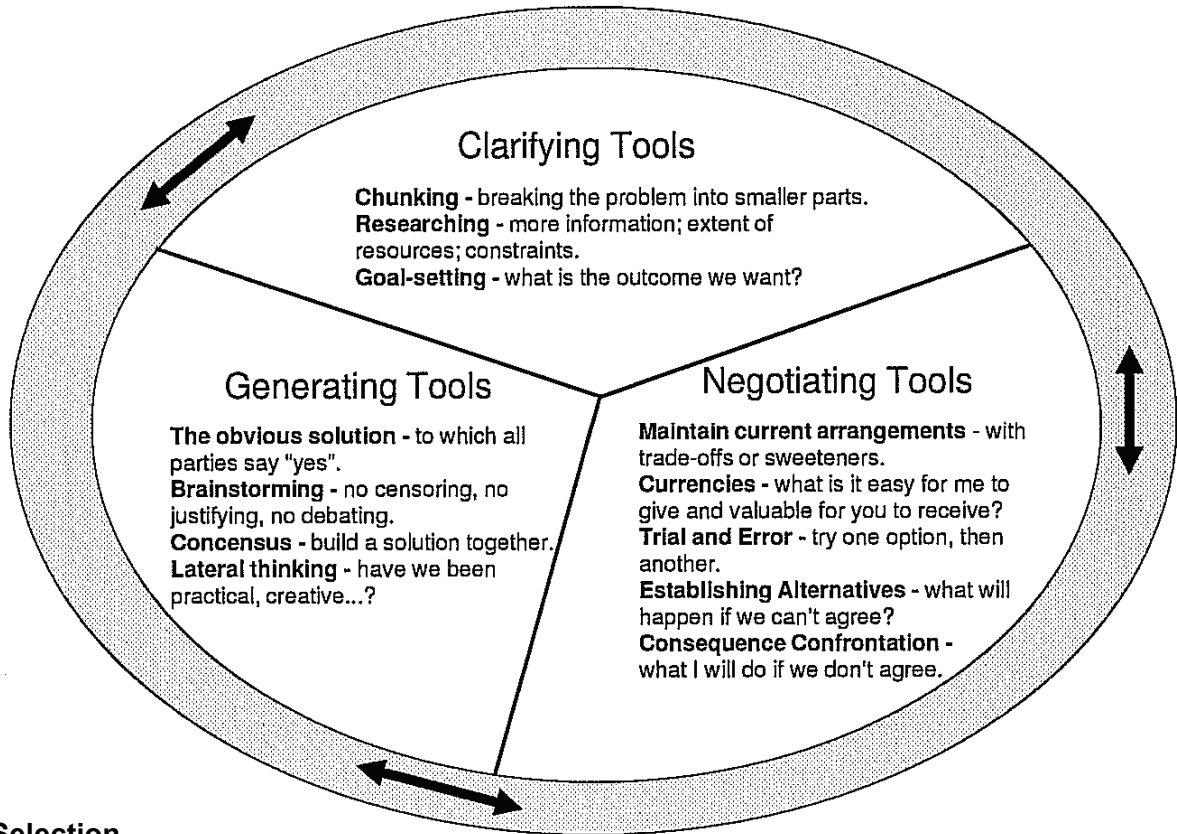
It's important to recognise when our thinking is constrained, and to seek ways of stimulating our creativity.

Designing Options

Development

What is the range of options? Use the tools below.

Clarifying Tools

Chunking - breaking the problem into smaller parts.
Researching - more information; extent of resources; constraints.
Goal-setting - what is the outcome we want?

Generating Tools

The obvious solution - to which all parties say "yes".
Brainstorming - no censoring, no justifying, no debating.
Concensus - build a solution together.
Lateral thinking - have we been practical, creative...?

Negotiating Tools

Maintain current arrangements - with trade-offs or sweeteners.
Currencies - what is it easy for me to give and valuable for you to receive?
Trial and Error - try one option, then another.
Establishing Alternatives - what will happen if we can't agree?
Consequence Confrontation - what I will do if we don't agree.

Selection

Is it built on a win/win approach?

Does it meet many needs of all parties?

Is it feasible?

Is it fair?

Does it solve the problem?

Can we settle on one option or do we need to trial several?

Implementation

Are there a number of steps involved?

What are they?

Who is responsible for each step?

Is the responsibility shared fairly?

What is the time frame?

What is the review and evaluation process?

Agreements

Are there any other relevant issues that need to be addressed? Do we need agreement displayed e.g. by handshake, show of hands or in writing?