

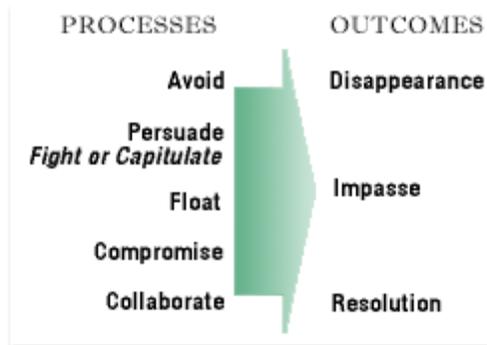
# The 8-Step Solution: An Effective Tool for Problem Solving and Decision Making

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## Understanding: Process Yields Outcome

Once an issue arises within a group, it moves by process - how members talk and listen together - toward an outcome. Any process can produce any outcome. However, certain processes tend to yield better outcomes more frequently. The combinations of process and outcome often become a pattern for a group. Various process/outcome patterns result in differing levels of productivity and satisfaction for the group.

Every group has its own ways of solving problems and making decisions. The diagram below shows the optional processes and outcomes for dealing with issues.



To improve your group's problem solving and decision making effectiveness, think about the patterns (of process and outcome) that are typical for your group, from your experience. Then consider your own level of satisfaction with these usual patterns. Identify the process/outcome options of the most frequent ways your group deals with issues. Rate your satisfaction level with each pattern (low-medium-high).

The 8-Step Mapping Process When your group has an important problem to solve or decision to make, you can resolve it through mapping the issue. This collaborative process helps you reach the most productive and satisfying outcomes.

<b>STEP 1 IDENTIFY THE ISSUE</b>	Identify and define the issue; determine what the decision to make is, and who is involved in the process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the issue?</li> <li>Who is involved?</li> </ul>

<p><b>STEP 2 CONTRACT TO WORK THROUGH THE ISSUE</b></p>	<p>Contracting Involves:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Checking everyone's willingness and readiness to work through a particular issue before launching into the issue.</li> <li>2. Setting procedures for conducting your meeting before starting the discussion.</li> </ol> <p><b>Note:</b> Without a good contract - commitment to work through an issue - any discussion may be hurried, superficial, flat or guarded, if it occurs at all.</p>
<p><b>STEP 3 COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND THE ISSUE</b></p>	<p>Develop complete understanding of the issue before taking action. This prevents jumping quickly to solutions that do not fit.</p> <p><b>How to understand the issue:</b> Each person answers four questions from his or her own perspective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sensory Data</b> - What have I seen and heard?</li> <li>• <b>Thoughts</b> - What do I think is going on?</li> <li>• <b>Feelings</b> - How am I feeling?</li> <li>• <b>Actions Past, Current</b> - What have I done, or what am I doing, that is working or not working?</li> </ul> <p><b>Understanding as the Solution:</b> Occasionally you will discover that it is not necessary to go beyond Step 3, because the very process of understanding the issue in itself has become the solution.</p>
<p><b>STEP 4 IDENTIFY WANTS</b></p>	<p>This step focuses on each member's "wants for" the team and organization in relation to the issue. Each asks themselves and shares:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do I want for the Organization?</li> <li>• What do I want for Other(s)?</li> <li>• What do I want for Self?</li> </ul> <p>Be careful not to confuse what you "<i>want for</i>" others, with what you "<i>want from</i>" others. Include "don't wants" as well as wants.</p>
<p><b>STEP 5 GENERATE AND CONSIDER OPTIONS</b></p>	<p>At this point members brainstorm what they could actually do to resolve the issue. <b>To generate options:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brainstorm a diverse list of small positive actions you can actually take as next steps rather than trying to come up with one big solution.</li> <li>• Think small, openly and positively.</li> <li>• Be sure to include both new possibilities that have not been tried and past actions that have been helpful. Do not repeat what is not working.</li> <li>• Generate possibilities without pausing to critique or judge the options.</li> </ul>

<p><b>STEP 6 CHOOSE ACTIONS</b></p>	<p>Choose options and action plans that are the most workable and beneficial for the team and organization. Allow complete and equal input. Assemble a plan including all input.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Who will do what?</b></li> <li>• <b>By when?</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>STEP 7 TEST THE ACTION PLAN</b></p>	<p>Test your plan by pausing for a moment and imagining yourselves actually carrying out the actions you have chosen to take.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If each of you sees, hears and experiences yourself and others following through with each action effectively - great! Your plans fit.</li> <li>• However, what if someone cannot see himself or herself or others carrying out the action plan? Does a thought, feeling, want or action exist that does not fit congruently and that dampens the plan? If so, talk about it. Revise the plan.</li> <li>• Perhaps the incongruency signals a new issue. It may be signaling a deeper issue that is really blocking resolution of the original issue.</li> </ul> <p><b>You may need to go through previous steps on deeper issues.</b></p>
<p><b>STEP 8 EVALUATE THE OUTCOME</b></p>	<p>After you have had a chance to take action, evaluate your plan and determine how well it worked. If your action has been effective, you will feel positive - celebrate! If your action has not been effective, you may experience a range of negative feelings - disappointment, frustration, even embarrassment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review what you have learned from the experience and generate a new action plan.</li> <li>• Do not keep repeating actions that do not work.</li> </ul> <p><b>Considerations</b> If the planned action was never taken, consider whether this is part of a float pattern?</p>
<p><b>IMPORTANT NOTE:</b> These 8 steps are intended as a continuous loop. It is not a one-time method, but a continuous action. When warning signals, problems or other issues emerge, you start the process over, going back to the initial steps. All the steps are important. Don't try to leap over them! <a href="http://www.interlinktc.com/public_html/eightsteps.html">http://www.interlinktc.com/public_html/eightsteps.html</a></p>	