

# Value Wave | White Paper

## Targeted-Innovation Process

The Value Wave Targeted-Innovation process is an attempt to reconcile creativity with specific, controlled results. Traditionally, managers have not had to concern themselves with employee creativity and innovation. Today, however, change is so rapid and competition so fierce that organizations must adapt and innovate in order to survive. The reason why I developed The Value Wave Targeted Innovation Process was to assist us as we face the need to be innovative. Targeted innovation does not allow creativity to diverge indefinitely, but guidelines are set for the innovators to converge on the solutions that will specifically satisfy their needs. The process consists of four stages, which are depicted in the figure below.

- Problem Exploration
- Sharing of Problem Statement
- Sharing of Brief Background of Problem
- Purging of Initial Ideas
- Initial Statement of Problem
- Problem Restatement
- Idea Generation
- Converging and Evaluation
- Implementation Planning

### Problem Exploration

During the initial planning meeting, the team will clarify the problem and prepare for the problem-statement meeting, which will include the resource-group participants.

In the problem-statement meeting, the facilitator announces the initial problem statement that was formulated with the help of the manager. The manager then briefly explains just enough of the background of the problem—such as essential information or any previously attempted solutions—to stimulate ideas. The team member then answers any questions from the participants.

During the “purge” session, participants are encouraged to generate the most immediate, spontaneous, and obvious solutions to the problem. In theory, as the participants state the more obvious ideas, room is created for more creative thinking later on. The team member often can tell from the purge session whether the participants are channeling their thinking in a feasible direction.

# Value Wave | White Paper

## Problem Restatement

Next, the team member and the participants restate the problem from all possible perspectives in order to eliminate the chances that the final solution will be biased or inaccurate. Restating the problem also helps to eliminate the possibility that the group will be attempting to solve the wrong problem. By being phrased differently, the problem often can be made clearer and focused. The facilitator must emphasize that this phase simply concerns itself with problem restatement, not with solution generation. The following techniques can help the group to generate a variety of restatements.

- Restate the problem in a less-specific manner. For example, the initial problem—"How to improve our soap"—could be restated as "How to produce an optimal cleansing product."
- Challenge old paradigms. During problem solving, it is easy to take traditional ways of thinking and doing for granted and not to consider changing them. The components of the process or product and assumptions about goals often go unchallenged.
- Break problems into their individual components. Many factors—people, resources, timing, motivation, norms, distribution, and so on—contribute to the existence of a problem. By breaking problems into individual factors, one can address the factors separately, and the true cause of the problems may surface. For example, difficulty in meeting deadlines may have many contributing factors: scheduling, lack of uninterrupted work time, unmotivated employees, insufficient supplies, and so on.
- Look for the underlying cause of the problem. Using the above example, difficulty in meeting deadlines may be caused not by staff, scheduling, or supplier problems but by the fact that the organization has expanded too rapidly and needs to scale down its product lines.
- Dream. Allowing a problem-solving committee or task force to fantasize about ideal situations with no limits can trigger both insights into the problem and creative ideas for later solutions. There may be a way to make at least part of a dream come true.

When the group has generated at least a dozen restatements of the problem, the team member selects or combines one or more to create an appropriate restatement of the problem—one in which the group is interested and that is workable—on which the group can focus and begin to generate solutions.

# Value Wave | White Paper

## Idea Generation

During this stage, the group works to generate a number of ideas about the problem statement. This period of creativity is known as brainstorming, which is an idea-generation process with specific rules: quantity is more important than quality; criticism is not allowed; analysis or judgment of others' ideas is forbidden; and free association and "piggybacking" on others' ideas are encouraged. The facilitator encourages the group to take risks, to suggest seemingly wild or outrageous ideas, and to build on ideas without restriction. Brainstorming is an integral element of the targeted-innovation process.

## Converging and Evaluation

When a sufficient number of ideas have been generated, it is time to evaluate the various options. This usually is done by the team member with the facilitator's help. If there are ideas or concerns about which the team member seeks clarification, the resource group can be asked to consider them as new problems. During this stage, the team member attempts to choose solutions after all options have been explored and analyzed.

## Implementation Planning

Once a solution has been selected, it must be implemented. The resource-group participants supply the team member with all problem restatements and ideas for solutions. Often, the team member will confer with the participants in order to obtain any unrevealed or late-surfacing ideas.

- Problem-Exploration Meeting
- Client-Facilitator Planning
- Determine Initial Problem Statement
- Idea-Generation Meeting
- Problem Statement Shared with Resource Group
- Brief Background Shared
- Purge of Initial Ideas
- Problem Restatements
- Idea-Generation Technique Used
- Converging and Evaluation
- Implementation

# Value Wave | White Paper

## Idea Generation

During this stage, the group works to generate a number of ideas about the problem statement. This period of creativity is known as brainstorming, which is an idea-generation process with specific rules: quantity is more important than quality; criticism is not allowed; analysis or judgment of others' ideas is forbidden; and free association and "piggybacking" on others' ideas are encouraged. The facilitator encourages the group to take risks, to suggest seemingly wild or outrageous ideas, and to build on ideas without restriction. Brainstorming is an integral element of the targeted-innovation process.

## Converging and Evaluation

When a sufficient number of ideas have been generated, it is time to evaluate the various options. This usually is done by the team member with the facilitator's help. If there are ideas or concerns about which the team member seeks clarification, the resource group can be asked to consider them as new problems. During this stage, the team member attempts to choose solutions after all options have been explored and analyzed.

## Implementation Planning

Once a solution has been selected, it must be implemented. The resource-group participants supply the team member with all problem restatements and ideas for solutions. Often, the team member will confer with the participants in order to obtain any unrevealed or late-surfacing ideas.