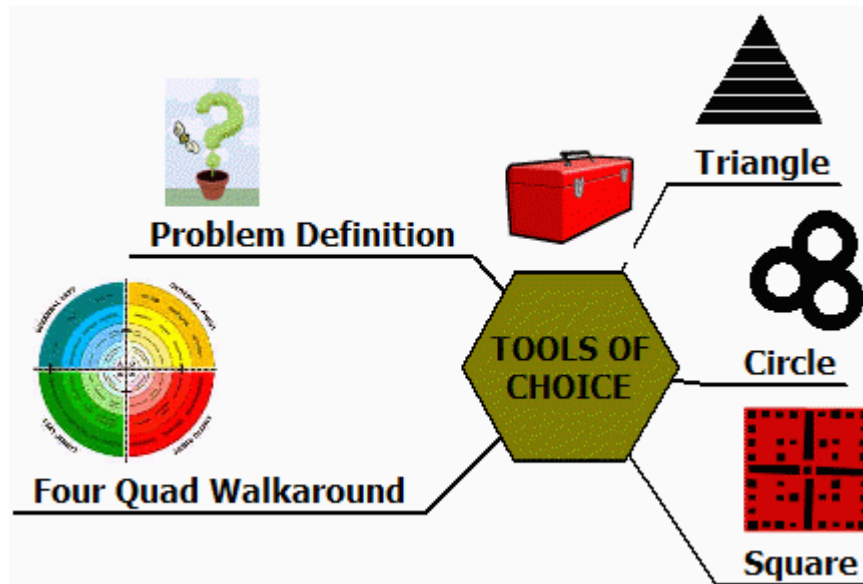


## Tools of Choice



### How visual tools can show the options

*People only see what they are prepared to see* - Ralph Waldo Emerson

Visual maps are wonderful for expressing and charting your ideas. There are additional thinking tools which you may also find useful. Some involve the use of very simple shapes to clarify and sort out aspects of your ideas. These are especially helpful when you are working in small groups. If you have to evaluate several options, there are also ways to weigh them that will help you see what you want to do.

### The Shape of Things to Come

In *The Marketer's Visual Tool Kit* Terry Richey gives a wealth of ideas for the use of visual tools which can be applied to many decision-making tasks. After you have generated a number of ideas with VisiMap, you may need to simplify the resulting ideas even more. Richey reminds us that basic shapes can be used effectively in this way. Anyone can draw a triangle, circle and square and these simple shapes can really help you see what you think.

### The Triangle

Suppose you have a major decision and you need to break it into smaller chunks. Richey suggests that you try to see five aspects of the decision or problem. For example, suppose that sales on one of your best selling items are down. The problems that might be churning around in your mind cover a whole range of topics:

- Are my prices too high?

- Do I need a bigger logo on my store's plastic bags?
- Should I spend more on advertising even though my revenue is really low?
- Should I start advertising on the Internet?
- Are more stores in the neighborhood selling the same product?

Putting these questions inside a triangle in descending order of importance will help put the questions in perspective.

If you have 500 unused plastic bags, the logo question can go to the bottom of the triangle for now. Price goes to the top, because it is the most important element from the customer's point of view. You need to know what the other stores are doing; this step may require some immediate investigation so it goes close to the top. Your advertising decisions will relate to what you learn about the competition. Whether to go the Internet route has to fit into the framework of the advertising budget as a whole. The resulting triangle would probably look something like this:

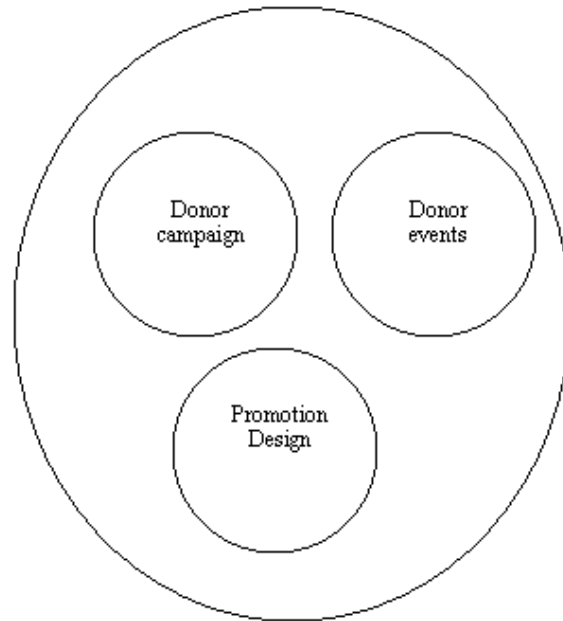


If you see the priorities differently, you can realign them in your own way. The point is that you are creating a framework to deal with the problem, not dashing off to order the Internet account as a quick fix. A triangle is a simple understandable shape to deal with priorities.

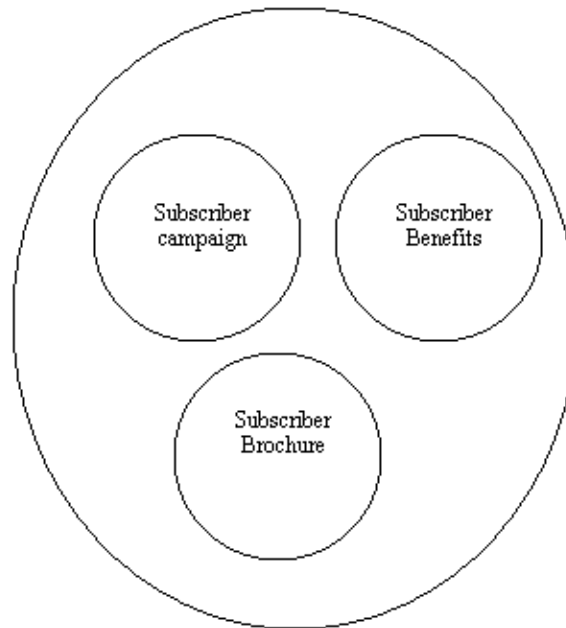
## The Circle

Circles help to remind us that there are many elements in any problem and they have to be identified and given boundaries. Imagine a small volunteer office where the staff lurches from crisis to crisis because no one has a clear understanding of who does what. Mary and Susan both see marketing as their prime responsibility and they are falling all over one another in this area while other tasks are avoided. Eventually their new manager asks them to draw circles containing their areas of responsibility.

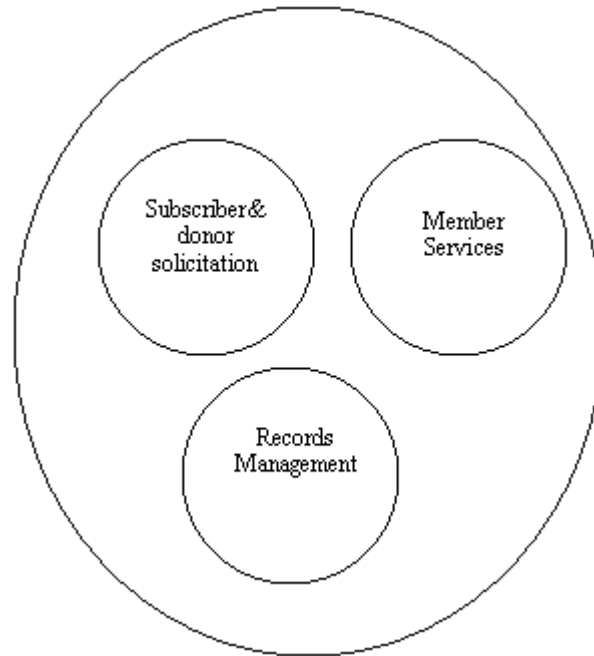
Here's how Mary's picture looks:



And here is Susan's:



The manager has drawn her own map, which shows a slightly different perspective:



When the three of them sat down to talk they discovered some interesting things. Mary and Susan noticed that they were dealing with the same people, but they were keeping separate records in individual data bases. Both of them were heavily involved in trying to get new subscribers, but neither was serving the current ones, who became impatient with the current level of service and left. They had entered a no-win situation in which they had to keep looking for a constant stream of new subscribers and donors. They suddenly realized the importance of integrated records and serving their existing clientele. In the end, Mary undertook the recruitment programs and Susan maintained the records and kept in touch with existing members and donors on a regular basis. They farmed out promotional design, an area where costs later dropped significantly because they didn't need to advertise as widely as before.

Putting tasks in circles is an excellent way to see what is included and what is left out. When people feel their work is overlapping, they can show this dramatically by drawing overlapping circles with their names and their tasks. Separating the tasks and redrawing the circles can re-establish the boundaries and give each person a better sense of autonomy.

### **Lines and Squares**

One of the most common drawing tools is the matrix which allows one to place elements in four squares. It simplifies looking at complex issues by placing the elements in various positions on the grid in the same way as the triangle and it is particularly useful for comparing one's own organization to others. Price, quality, innovation and priority are good candidate for comparisons on a grid:



Putting your organization in the right spot in the matrix and placing your competitors in the appropriate positions can be a useful way of seeing how crowded your market really is. Older organizations fail to watch the growth of the new kid on the block and suddenly find that others are now successfully invading their turf. When this happens, it is time to take a look at the opportunities on the matrix. There may be a position that no one is filling and you can rejuvenate yourself and experience a new birth.

Triangles, circles, lines and squares are excellent tools for small groups who want to simplify issues for group discussion. In other situations though, you may be facing a number of personal choices that all seem worthwhile and you need to clear a path through an enormous jungle of exciting possibilities. There is no shortage of good ideas. You have several and you want a way to evaluate them and let the cream of the creative ideas to rise to the top.

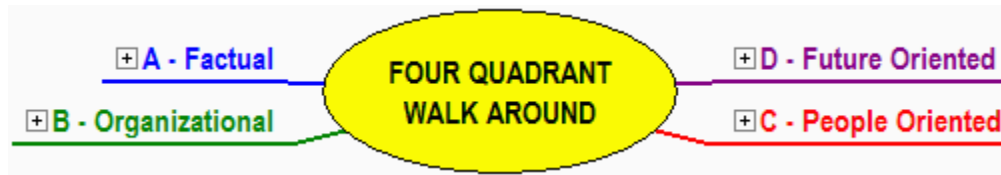
### **Decisions, Decisions . . .**

Chief among our gains must be reckoned this possibility of choice, the recognition of many possible ways of life, where other civilizations have recognized only one. -Margaret Mead

Here is an innovative way to use the strengths of VisiMap and the Herrmann Model to full advantage. Ned Herrmann suggested that one of the best ways to reach a sound decision is to walk it around the quadrants. In other words, it is wise to look at an issue before any final decision is made from an analytic, a procedural, a humanistic and a visionary perspective.

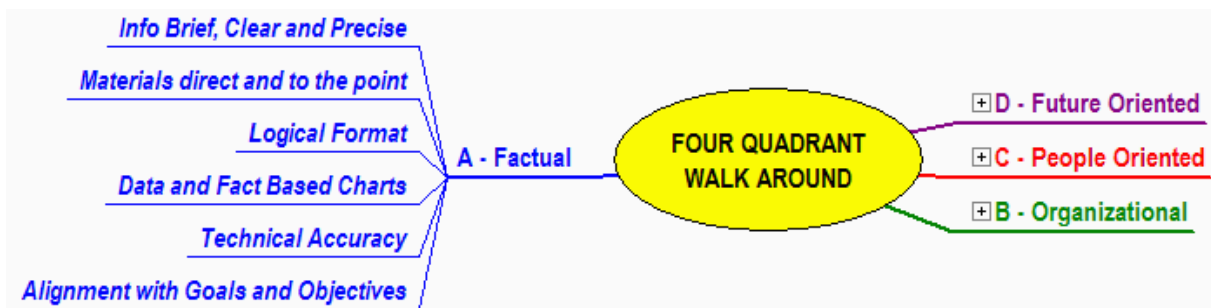


These are the four perspectives. You can use these titles as a first level branch for your map:

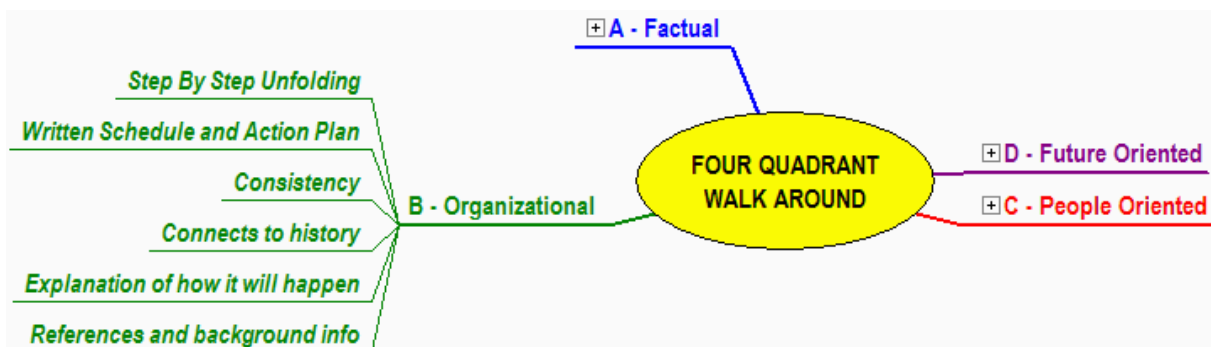


Now let's open each branch in turn and see how the issue looks when viewed from that perspective. Not every question will be relevant to every issue but some elements on each branch will apply.

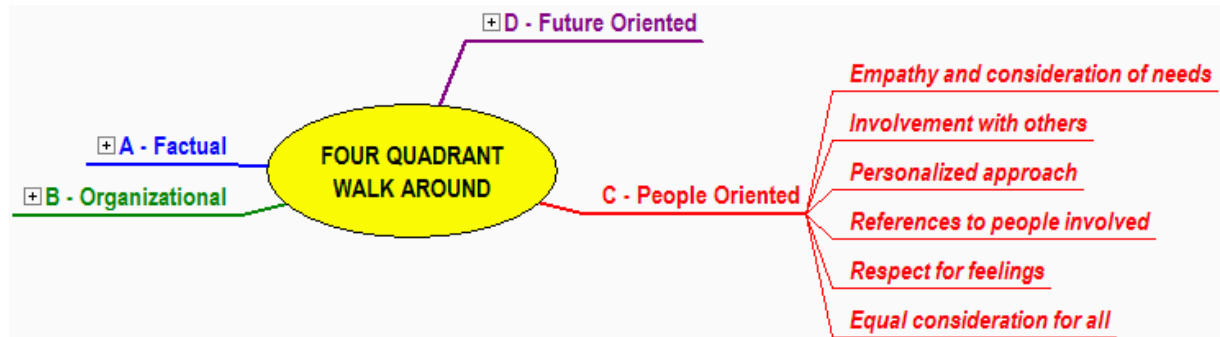
Here are the A Quadrant elements to examine:



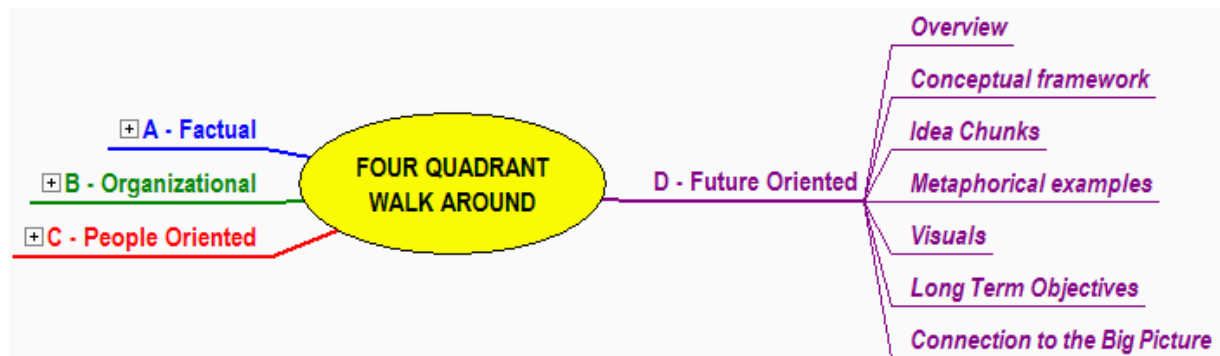
Now let's look at the issue from the B Quadrant perspective



Here are the issues from the C Quadrant Perspective



And last but not least, here are the D Quadrant Perspectives:



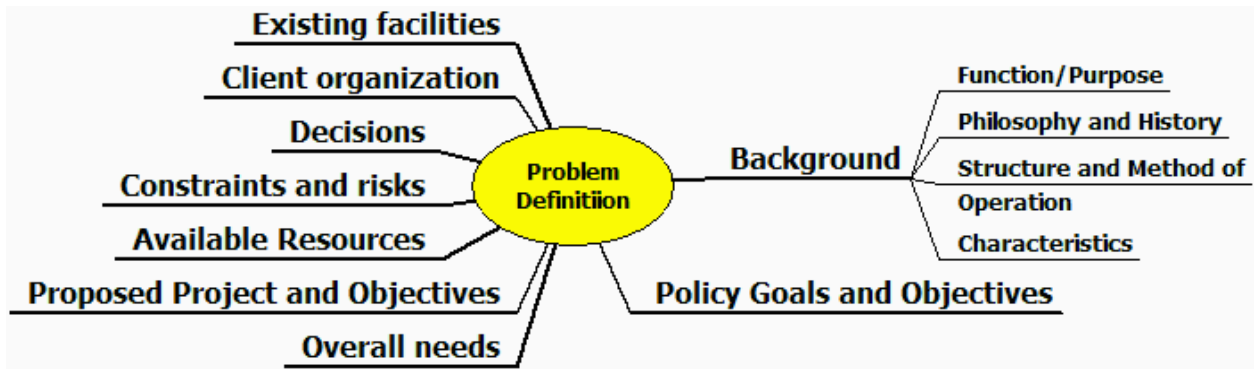
All the quadrants need to be examined in making the decision. If you find yourself skipping over one that you deem to be less important, it may indicate an avoidance in dealing with that particular kind of thinking. Again, that is why it is valuable to have a variety of thinking preferences in any decision making group.

## Problem Identification

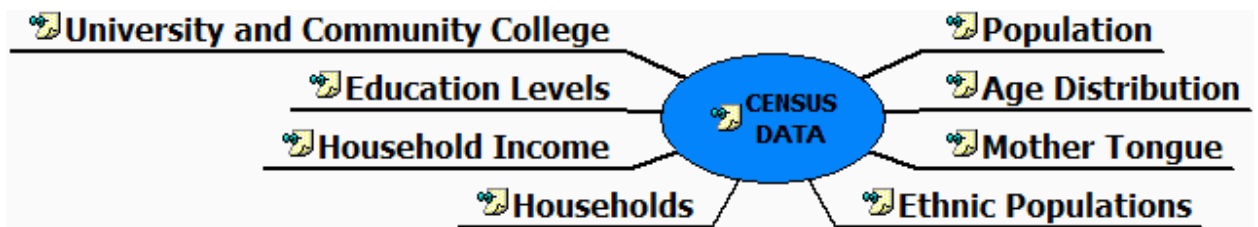
*I must keep on trying, just to keep the experiment going until I get tired of it all. Even if the last result is not necessarily the best, I stop when my interest in the problem wanes.*

-Pablo Picasso

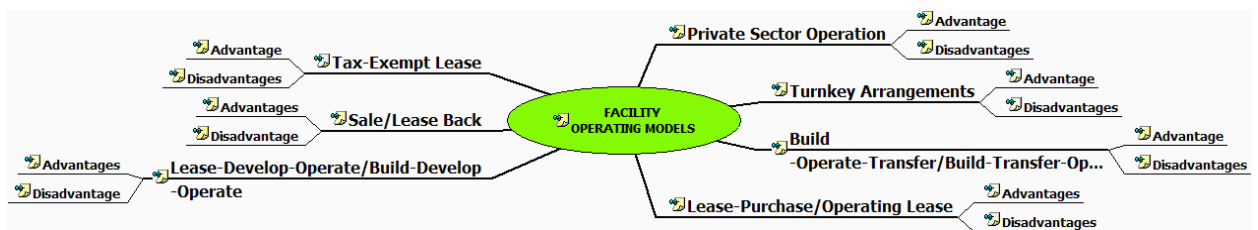
Sometimes before you can reach a decision you have to define a problem more precisely. You can develop a template suitable to your needs on a model something like this one and use it consistently, putting the responses right on the map and using it to clarify what the problem really is.



Templates are useful for ongoing research. In moving into a new geographical area, or embarking on a new facility, census data has special relevance. A model like the following one can be used to record the related data in note format.



When there are a number of options in a decision it can be useful to put advantages and disadvantages of each option right on the map. This will narrow the choices and provide a sounder basis for a final decision.



Visuals and map templates are really valuable when they become working tools in regular use. The visuals and templates that you put to work are limited only by your imagination.

### Brain Wave

- Try each of the models over a period of a few weeks in a relevant situation