ToP Design Pattern	**Brainstorming Specific Actions**	May 2009

The Big Picture

The Action Planning Workshop					
Introduction Whole Group	**Developing Specific Action Plans** Teams Use the Action Planning Workbook			**Consensus Plenary** Whole Group	
Preparing for Action Planning	**Determining the Measurable Accomplishment**	**Deciding on the Specific Actions**	**Creating the Action Timeline**	**Coordinating the Groups Plans**	**Launching the Action Phase**

Name	Brainstorming Specific Actions
Overview	This Design Pattern will result in a list of actions that can be taken to achieve the measurable accomplishment(s). It involves: ▪ Brainstorming specific actions ▪ Clustering similar actions ▪ Selecting key actions ▪ Sequencing the actions *Groups working on a single strategy* will work as a whole group. *Groups working on multiple strategies* will work in teams and use the Action Planning Workbook.
Metaphor	Plotting the course to get as far as possible in the next week.
Graphic	Project Purpose → Strategic Environment → Measurable Accomplishments → Key Actions → Action Timeline → Coordinated Plans
Level of thinking	This Design Pattern employs the full range of thinking levels. The key focus is interpretive, selecting an integrated set of actions. This is tactical thinking at it's best.
Pattern of Collaboration	The key collaborative patterns in play in this Design Pattern are generation, reduction and organizing. The key pattern is reduction. The brainstorm is quite straight forward. The organization of the ideas into a sequence is quick and intuitive. It is the selection of key actions that is important. The group needs an integrated set of actions that will lead to real success.
Role	This step is where the "rubber hits the road." The actions brainstorm and selection grounds the plan in reality. The group has to balance achievement with the realities of time and available people power.
Best uses	This Design Pattern is best used to guide a group in bringing practical focus to the tactical steps necessary to bring success to an initiative.
Do not use	Avoid using this kind of pattern when doing visionary thinking.
Group size	6 – 10

Space needs .	Groups working on multiple strategies will need working space so their voices do not interrupt the work of other groups.
Timeframe	20 minutes

Objectives

Rational Aim	Brainstorm and sequence a set of actions that will achieve each measurable accomplishment within the time frame.
Experiential Aim	The group will have victory clearly in sight and will see the practical ways of getting there
Product	A brainstorm of actions focused on achieving the measurable accomplishment numbered in initial sequence of implementation.

Script

Context

We are looking for a list of specific actions that will achieve this measurable accomplishment.

Brainstorm Specific Actions

- Brainstorm a list of actions needed to implement this initiative and achieve the measurable accomplishment.

The actions need to be very specific and concrete. They are "tactical" steps; things that can be done in a few days or less. They need to be more imaginative than administrative. A conference call with three key people may be more productive than a series of individual calls because of the synergy.

For example, "Phone Fred" may be a tactical step if Fred is a key contact who can assist the plan in a major way. If Fred is one name on a list of people to call for contributions, the specific actions is something like, "phone the list of potential donors."

Cluster Similar Actions

- Cluster actions to reflect momentum toward a particular accomplishment.

There are 2 main reasons to cluster actions.

First is if they are clearly overlapping or repeated ideas. You are trying to develop a list of distinct actions that will enable achievement of the Measurable Accomplishment.

Second is if more than one very distinct actions are quite apparently a single tactical step that can be accomplished in a few days.

Select Key Actions

- Select the actions you intend to implement from the brainstormed list.

You are looking for a set of actions that will be extremely effective in reaching success. A group may or may not do all of the actions on the brainstorm. Select those that clearly fit together to complete the measurable accomplishment. Ask the group to identify the actions that will be most effective in achieving success. Keep in mind the number of people available for this work and the amount of time the group has to do its work.

Sequence the Actions

	▪ Number them in the sequence of implementation.

Do this intuitively and not belabour it, the group will actually schedule them on the action timeline in the next step. You are looking for a clear set of tactical steps which, done in the appropriate sequence, will be successful.

Groundrules	Everyone contributes to the list. The group makes the final selection of actions to implement

Using this design pattern in a face to face environment

Materials	▪ An Action Planning Workbook for each person. ▪ A flip chart and markers are very helpful if the group is larger that 5 – 6 people. ▪ A small group can work directly with the Action Planning Workbook.
Preparation	
Challenges	The key challenge in this Design Pattern is tactical thinking. It is easy for groups to be logical and administrative at this point. The unimaginative groups will set out a course that plods to the end of the timeline. Imaginative groups will look for the greatest bang. They will build on advantages. They will engage additional people. They will find a sequence of actions that is integrated and will achieve a breakthrough.
Tips	If there are more that one measurable accomplishment, do each brainstorm separately, but keep the others in mind. Each one needs to be distinct, but they are likely related; so there needs to be alignment among them.
Modifications	If time becomes very tight, delay the sequencing step until the actual creation of the action timeline.

Using this design pattern in a virtual environment

Virtual Tools	
Modifications	.
Preparation	
Challenges	
Tips	
Example	