

5

Question #1—What Are We Trying to Accomplish and Why?

*Management by Objectives works—if you know the Objectives.
Ninety percent of the time you don't.*

—Peter Drucker

Define and Align Objectives

| Objectives | Success Measures | Verification | Assumptions |
|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Goal | | | |
| Purpose | | | |
| Outcomes | | | |
| <i>Inputs</i> | | | |

FIGURE 5.1 The LogFrame Matrix Helps Organize Objectives in Relationship to Each Other

Shoot for the Moon

In 1962, President John F. Kennedy committed the United States to landing a man on the moon and returning him safely by the end of the decade. America's grandest achievement was realized in July 1969 when Apollo 11 completed man's first lunar landing. This was also a grand moment for me, the youngest accredited reporter at Cape Canaveral covering this historic event for a Seattle underground hippie newspaper, *The Helix*. Barely old enough to shave, I sat in the wooden press bleachers among a row of journalists from the world's leading publications, including *Time Magazine*, *Le Monde*, the *New York Times* . . . and *The Helix*!

The evening before launch, the press was escorted to just 50 yards from the majestic Saturn V launch vehicle. Being so near this 363-foot tall triumph of technology and imagination bathed in bright Xenon spotlights made me proud to live in a nation with such a daring vision and go-for-it spirit.

The countdown proceeded through the night and into the next morning until the final seconds . . . 3-2-1. *Ignition!* The massive engines erupted in a fiery plume and the rocket slowly ascended. Even from the press bleachers, two miles away from the launch pad, you could feel the air pulsating from the powerful Saturn first stage engines. I still get goose bumps recalling the thrill of take-off as the press cheered with excitement; and Dr. Wernher von Braun, watching his dream take flight shouted, "*Go baby go!*"

Kennedy's bold challenge came during the Cold War, the global psychological-political game that the United States seemed to be losing. In 1957, the Soviet Union surprised the world by orbiting Sputnik 1, a three-pound basketball-sized satellite that shocked America into action. Though Kennedy called landing on the moon his Goal, his true intention was a higher, unspoken Objective. Landing on the moon would demonstrate the superiority of the Western system and help the United States win the Cold War. Figure 5.2 shows this progression in an If-Then chart.

Why is this example significant? Because behind every project rests a higher level motivation of interest to senior leaders. This Objective often gets lost in the hand-off and may not be obvious to those doing the work. If you are a project manager, it's helpful

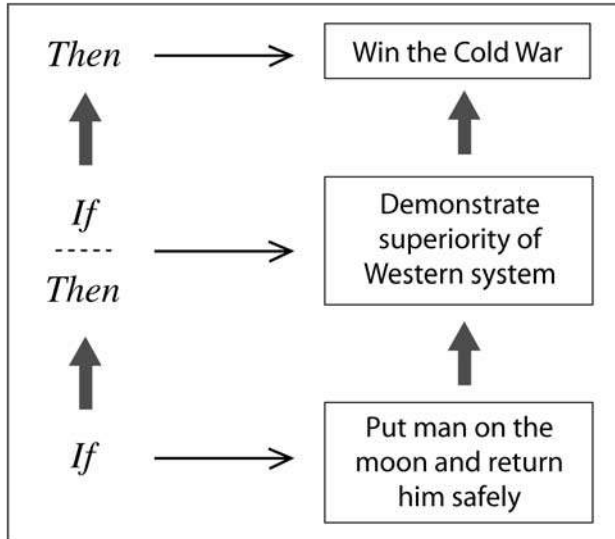


FIGURE 5.2 From Landing on the Moon to Winning the Cold War

to understand the Purpose and the Goal so that you can more intelligently deliver the Outcomes that will get you there. If you are a senior executive, make sure the Purpose is clear, so that project teams aim their efforts towards Purpose achievement—not just Outcome delivery. The LogFrame’s Objectives column helps line up project Objectives so they mesh with the broader corporate strategy.

Linking Objectives Into Logical Levels

Whether you aim for the moon or someplace closer to home, making the logical links explicit builds the business case. Making the linkages clear is especially valuable in emergent or initiated-from-the-middle projects when you have to sell your ideas to others or get funding.

The Logical Framework tool helps distinguish and link multiple project Objectives. The right column in Figure 5.3 elaborates on previous LogFrame definitions.

| Level of Objective | Definition | Elaboration |
|--|--|---|
| <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Goal</div> | The higher-level big picture strategic or program Objective to which the project contributes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is the 10,000-foot helicopter view. • Overarching umbrella for multiple projects. • Anchors project to strategic intent. |
| <div style="text-align: center;">↑</div> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Purpose</div> | The impact or behavior change we anticipate by doing the project; the expected result of producing the Outcomes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desired change expected after Outcomes produced. • “Linking pin” Objective that’s usually missing. |
| <div style="text-align: center;">↑</div> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Outcomes</div> | The specific results that the project team must deliver by managing Inputs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliverables, end products, and processes we can manage. • Team held responsible for delivering Outcomes. |
| <div style="text-align: center;">↑</div> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Inputs</div> | The activities and tasks we undertake and the resources necessary to produce Outcomes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation plan and schedule. • Project management software helpful here. |

FIGURE 5.3 Linking Multiple Objectives Into Logical Levels

Again, our strategic shorthand (reading the Objectives from bottom to top) is:

- *If Inputs, Then Outcomes*
- *If Outcomes, Then Purpose*
- *If Purpose, Then Goal.*

In any context, Objectives at an even higher level than the Goal may also exist. The standard LogFrame format includes just four levels, but you can add additional levels to tie the project into a high-level Objective or more clearly illuminate the If-Then logic. Call this higher Objective a super-Goal, vision, or whatever term you prefer. (I have field-tested terminology variations and concluded that substituting Outcomes over the original term Outputs enhances

understanding and makes it easier to dovetail LogFrames with systems thinking terminology.)

Feel free to tailor the LogFrame structure to fit your needs. What's important is to have clear meanings for all of your terms as well as to pressure-test the integrity of the If-Then logic.

Avoid the Muddle of Messy Meaning

A Human Resources (HR) department needed to align their goals with a headquarters-issued set of ten overarching Goals. Unfortunately, each of these ten Goals was accompanied by “Success Measures” and several “sub-Goals.” But there was no rhyme, reason, nor meaningful distinction among the three terms. It was a hodgepodge.

Sub-Goals (or anything lower in the casual chain) should be the *means* to Goals, (the “*If*” of the higher level “*Then*”), while Measures should describe conditions that will exist when those Goals are met. The muddled use of terms made aligning HR Goals with them impossible. Make sure that everyone speaks the same language by agreeing on what your key terms mean and using them in a consistent way.

Task Force Start-Up

A team of scientists from the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) and Sandia National Laboratories (SNL) faced the daunting task of organizing a task force of experts to solve a critical national security problem. This Offsite Recovery Project (OSRP) needed to find a permanent disposal site for some 20,000 “sealed-sources.” These small, neutron-emitting radioactive sources had been issued to universities and private companies for research, medical diagnostics, and geological exploration.

Many sealed-sources were no longer needed for their original mission, but there was no convenient process for their owners to safely dispose of them. Some had actually been found abandoned in sheds and landfills—posing a serious health, safety, and security hazard. The really scary part was that, in the wrong hands, they could be used to make dirty bombs.

Since these were considered to be civilian rather than military waste products, they could not be buried in existing disposal sites because of bureaucratic constraints. Thus, a new site would have to be found somewhere in a state willing to accept them—not an easy task. In addition, no disposal standards existed for this class of device, so new standards would have to be developed as part of the project and be approved by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The OSRP study team included multiple players from other national research laboratories and from the private sector. A robust planning approach was crucial, given the wide variety of perspectives among the strong-minded, opinionated players as well as the technical and political complexity of the problem itself.

Some serious institutional barriers and competitive issues needed to be overcome before productive work could begin.

The project director chose the Logical Framework tool to get a smooth start. This common language helped a diverse team work together to unravel a complex problem into solvable chunks; and it put a spotlight on some of the critical external factors shaping the success of this Assumptions-driven project. Their initial LogFrame plan served to shape a common vision and guide the process of defining the task details necessary to achieve the Goal. They added a fifth level to their LogFrame to show the cause-effect ripples of their strategy up to an important national Goal.

In the Objectives column of their initial LogFrame shown in Figure 5.4, note the verbs in bold.

Be assured that by the time you read this book, the most dangerous sealed-sources will be in safe hands. We'll return to this example in the next chapter to show how the team added Measures to their Objectives. (This project's complete LogFrame can be viewed at www.ManagementPro.com.)

The main value this process added to the OSRP team was the ability to keep sight of the higher level Objectives and avoid prematurely jumping to solution-finding before understanding the full dimensions of the problem.

Turning a Problem Into a Set of Objectives

A problem is simply a project in disguise. Projects masquerading as problems must first be converted into Objectives before advancing to solutions. Spend some time carefully diagnosing the problem because

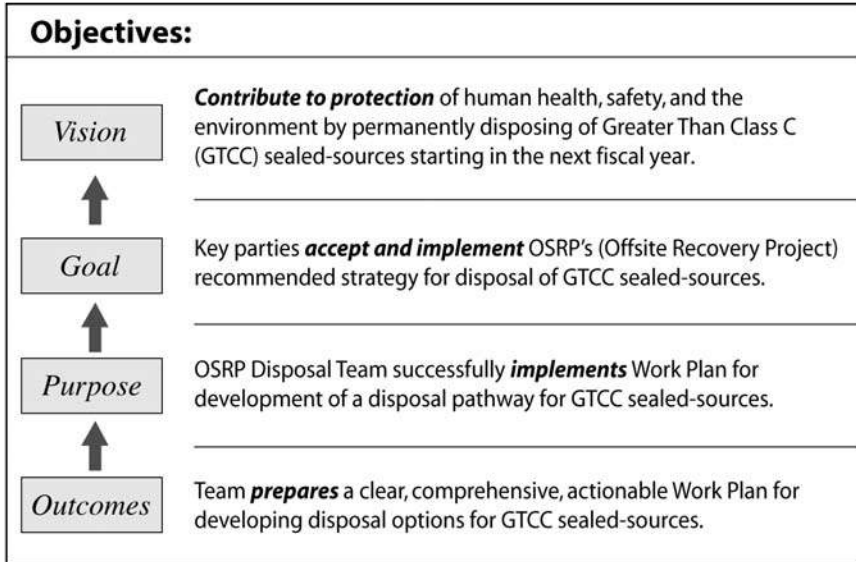


FIGURE 5.4 The OSRP's Hierarchy of Objectives

the way you define it shapes the range of solution options. Don't get sucked in by an over-simplified definition, catch phrase, or symptom. Get at the root causes. Find the right problem to solve.

A classic story, first told by systems thinker Russell Ackoff, proves the point that unless you zoom in on the right problem, you risk solving the wrong problem. Tenants in an aging 20-story Chicago office building complained about the long wait for elevators in the lobby. Karen, the owner of the building, was worried that her small business tenants would move to a newer space. Consequently, she hired a consulting engineer to solve the slow elevator problem. The elevator was too old for upgrading, so the consultant recommended a new elevator system. The owner gulped at the \$300,000 price tag—fearing that she could not increase rents to cover the cost without losing tenants.

Fortunately, Karen got a second opinion from a different consultant. Rather than automatically accepting the problem as “The elevators are too slow,” this creative consultant suggested that the real problem was that “Tenants get bored while waiting.” His recommended solution: Entertain and distract tenants so they wouldn't mind the long wait. Following his advice, the owner renovated the

| Solution #1 Objectives | Solution #2 Objectives |
|---|---|
| <i>Goal:</i> Keep tenants happy | <i>Goal:</i> Keep tenants happy |
| <i>Purpose:</i> Reduce wait time | <i>Purpose:</i> Keep tenants from boredom while waiting |
| <i>Outcomes:</i> New elevator installed | <i>Outcomes:</i> Lobby renovated |
| <i>Inputs:</i> Install elevator @ \$300,000 | <i>Inputs:</i> Install monitor and mirrors @ \$30,000 |

FIGURE 5.5 Two Alternate Solutions to Reach Goal

lobby, installed television monitors tuned to CNN, and mounted mirrors by each elevator so people could preen themselves. Problem solved at a fraction of the cost. Total cost: \$30,000. The tenants enjoyed the upgrade at a cost the landlord could afford and everyone was happy.

This story illustrates two very different strategies to reach the same Goal, as illustrated in LogFrame language in Figure 5.5. Problems usually look different through the eyes of different stakeholders. To zoom in on the right problem to solve, get alternate points of view. State the problem in different ways, and examine its various facets. Try inverting each problem statement into an Objective.

Stakeholder collaboration during problem analysis builds shared understanding, generates better solution approaches, and greases the skids for smoother execution.

Ask Your Stakeholders

- What do you see as the problem?
- Why is this a problem and for whom?
- What causes the problem?
- What are the consequences if we ignore the problem?
- How will you know when the problem is gone?
- What benefits will a solution bring?
- What might an ideal solution look like?

Many proven problem analysis methodologies are available, such as the well-known Fishbone Analysis, the Five Why Questions, basic TQM tools, LEAN Value Stream Mapping, and Six Sigma processes. No matter which methodology you use, it pays to involve your stakeholders early and often in problem identification and analysis.

Terry's Tips for Clear Objectives

Apply these proven tips to make your Objectives stand up straight and salute.

Tip #1. Select Just the Right Words

Precise language leads to clear Objectives. While your project Objectives may already be described in a work scope or corporate memo, their clarity and quality of the logic behind them can vary tremendously. Some are coherent, while others seem to have been written while under the influence.

Take any given set of Objectives as a starting point only. As you wrap your mind around the situation, you may find that a subtle restatement captures the underlying intent much better. Brainstorm multiple possibilities. Since brainstorming is an imperfect process, your possibility list needs to be reviewed and reworked. Before solidifying which words best describe your Objectives, generate a dozen different answers to Question #1: *What are we trying to accomplish and why?* Experiment by choosing different words and sense their nuances. Savor various wordings, rolling phrases around in your mind—sensing any sour, bitter, or bland constructs with an aim to crystallize and sweeten them for the benefit of all.

Here's the key to well-formed Objectives: State each Objective in a sentence or phrase using chosen verbs and descriptive phrases. Selecting just the right words is as important as selecting just the right person for a job. So, choose well!

Figure 5.6 offers a master menu of Strategic Management verbs so you can pick those just-right, on-the-mark words that best express your true intentions.

During the early stages of project initiation, Objectives may be ragged, suggesting a general intent or direction but without real

Master Menu of Strategic Management Verbs

- | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| • Accelerate | • Direct | • Invent | • Resolve |
| • Accomplish | • Discover | • Investigate | • Respond |
| • Achieve | • Dispose | • Lead | • Reverse |
| • Activate | • Dissolve | • Launch | • Review |
| • Administer | • Document | • Link | • Revise |
| • Amplify | • Educate | • Maintain | • Revitalize |
| • Analyze | • Elevate | • Manage | • Revolutionize |
| • Apply | • Eliminate | • Market | • Roll out |
| • Assemble | • Encourage | • Maximize | • Satisfy |
| • Assess | • Enhance | • Merge | • Save |
| • Assist | • Enjoy | • Minimize | • Schedule |
| • Attain | • Enlarge | • Modify | • Search |
| • Begin | • Enlighten | • Obliterate | • Select |
| • Build | • Enlist | • Obtain | • Sell |
| • Certify | • Ensure | • Operate | • Simplify |
| • Change | • Envision | • Optimize | • Slow |
| • Commercialize | • Erase | • Organize | • Solve |
| • Compare | • Establish | • Outline | • Speed up |
| • Complete | • Evaluate | • Persuade | • Spin off |
| • Compute | • Examine | • Plan | • Stabilize |
| • Conduct | • Execute | • Predict | • Stop |
| • Consolidate | • Expand | • Prepare | • Store |
| • Construct | • Explain | • Prevent | • Streamline |
| • Convert | • Explore | • Produce | • Strengthen |
| • Convince | • Fabricate | • Program | • Structure |
| • Coordinate | • Facilitate | • Project | • Submit |
| • Create | • Finalize | • Promote | • Support |
| • Decide | • Identify | • Prove | • Survey |
| • Decrease | • Implement | • Provide | • Synthesize |
| • Deduce | • Improve | • Publicize | • Systematize |
| • Define | • Improve | • Qualify | • Teach |
| • Deliver | • Incorporate | • Quantify | • Test |
| • Demonstrate | • Increase | • Recommend | • Train |
| • Design | • Initiate | • Reduce | • Transform |
| • Destroy | • Install | • Reengineer | • Understand |
| • Detect | • Institute | • Remediate | • Update |
| • Determine | • Institutionalize | • Report | • Upgrade |
| • Develop | • Integrate | • Reorganize | • Utilize |
| • Diagnose | • Introduce | • Research | • Validate |
| | | | • Verify |

FIGURE 5.6 Master Menu of Strategic Management Verbs

clarity. That's okay. By applying your answers to the four strategic questions, they will become well-formed. After reworking your Objectives, validate your interpretation with stakeholders and invite suggestions as you test iterate until consensus.

Tip #2. Unravel Narrative Gobbledygook

Early in my career, when I was a program analyst for the U.S. Department of Transportation in Washington D.C., draft Requests for Proposals (RFPs) would sometimes cross my desk. These contained work statements for research studies that would be contracted out to industry and academia. While most made sense, some were convoluted and confusing—loaded with bloated bureaucratic paragraphs that left me scratching my head and worrying about how our tax dollars were being spent.

One day, over lunch with the author of an especially suspect RFP, I asked what the real intent was. He confessed that this study would break new ground. The government was not sure what they wanted, but didn't want to come out and admit it. He hoped that by putting enough good-sounding gobbledygook in the RFP, some smart consultant would figure out what was needed!

Later, as a management consultant responding to RFPs, I learned a great technique for uncovering the strategic logic buried in convoluted narrative language. Try out the method described below if you want to separate the extraneous words from the strategic essence in written descriptions.

Certain linking words suggest that an If-Then relationship exists:

- To
- In order to
- So that
- Through
- By
- Thus
- That will
- That

For example, “Develop a new customer order system that reduces errors in order to enhance customer satisfaction,” includes three linked Objectives. Can you recognize and express them as If-Then statements? (See answer at the end of this chapter.)

A great way to connect the dots among Objectives contained in a work scope or strategic plan is to go through the document and highlight all of the Objectives you can find (clue: look for verbs). If it's a lengthy document, don't be surprised to discover redundancy, with the same ideas repeated using slightly different words. Look for key verbs and phrases, and then search for the connecting words that indicate If-Then links. With that done, you can recognize the cause-effect relationships and identify the underlying strategic hypotheses using Objectives Trees and LogFrames.

It's likely that your project background documents may use terminology different from those in LogFrames, or may use similar terms without clear definitions of their meanings.

Their meanings may be quite different. Don't be misled by sloppy use of terminology—just because something is labeled *Goal*, *Objective*, *Purpose*, or *Outcome* does not make it so.

For example, “The project Goal is to develop a safety training program” is not strictly correct. In our logic, the Goal of such a program would be “Fewer accidents” or “Increased safety.” Developing a safety training program is an Outcome by definition because it is something you can make happen. Purpose, in this case, might be “People practice safe behaviors.”

You are free to use any terms and meanings you like. Whatever terms you choose to use, consider creating a reference document so that everyone uses the terminology consistently. (The Appendix to this book includes a Glossary of Terms and Usage, which you are free to adapt as your standard terms).

Tip #3. Tweak and Fine-Tune

Corporate objectives and mandates that slide down a chain of command or arrive in a memo are too often treated like commandments carved on stone tablets. But they are seldom fully thought out in the first place and should not be taken as gospel.

If there is a project charter or a scope of work, use it as a starting point. Recognize that, like the first bid in an auction, its real value is to get you into the game. Most of them smell of “preliminary draft” and could usually benefit from going through several iterations to get them squeaky clean. Treat the original problem statement and/or scope of work as molded in soft and malleable clay rather than as cast in concrete.

A LogFrame at this early stage will give you ideas on how to proceed. Do not hesitate to go back up the chain of command regarding that preliminary plan with a suggestion for doing something a little differently than what was asked for. Those who originated the requirement may not have thought through their needs, or the requirement may have become garbled as it was passed along. By investing some quality thinking time, you may have a better understanding of what's required or what's possible than the person who made the request. So, speak up!

Tip #4. Avoid the “Joe’s Correct” Syndrome

Keep an open mind about how to best state your Objectives, especially for complex projects. Avoid “premature cognitive commitment,” which is what psychologists call the all-too-human tendency to lock onto statements that sound good and stop making refinements. I call this the “Joe’s correct” syndrome.

“Joe’s correct” syndrome is a common occurrence when groups brainstorm about project Objectives. Joe is usually a senior manager or respected informal leader who suggests something to which everyone shouts, “Yes! Joe nailed it. That’s right!” Joe’s words then become written in stone, even though better language might have emerged with more patience. No one suggests any tweaking because of “group think” dynamics. Joe himself may later realize that his first stab was a little off-course, but he hesitates to suggest a change because everyone seems sold on his idea. After receiving all of that praise and hook-line-and-sinker commitment, he doesn’t want to admit that his idea needs improvement.

Exploring Distinctions Among LogFrame Levels

To fully appreciate the Logical Framework’s power, let’s explore each level separately and examine the distinctions among the Objectives, and offer some secondary questions that may capture the right nuance.

Goal: The Big Picture Impact

The Goal is the big picture context—the overarching corporate or strategic Objective to which your project, and usually other projects, contribute.

Some typical Goal examples:

- Delight our customers
- Become the top provider in the market
- Increase corporate profits
- Ensure reliability of the nuclear stockpile
- Foster a climate of innovation
- Be the global leader in safety education

These secondary trigger questions can help you get to the primary Goal of a project:

- What is the higher corporate or strategic Objective to which this project contributes?
- Why is the project's impact important?
- What should happen after we achieve the Purpose?
- What is the big picture reason for doing this project?

The project Goal is often a given, but worthy projects also begin bottom-up as a hunch, gut feeling, or gleam in the eye of a visionary. In these cases, you begin without clear connecting logic and it may take some time to develop, coax out, or infer the most appropriate Goal. In corporate situations, it can be smart to plug in a hot button Goal statement for your emerging strategy.

The LogFrame matrix usually shows four levels, but as the OSRP project demonstrated, Objectives above the Goal can be included to illustrate a higher level of impact. The higher up the hierarchy we climb, the more long-term, general, and “vision-sounding” these Objectives become. Alternately, to maintain conceptual parallelism or to dovetail with the levels in your corporate strategic plans, you can insert a level between Purpose and Goal and call it a sub-Goal. You can chop your strategic salami in thinner slices, as long as the structural foundation of If-Then logic hangs together.

Purpose: The Project Sweet Spot

Purpose is the vital, often missing focus that expresses the desired result or the impact we expect the project deliverables to produce. It

describes *expected change* in system behavior, whether the system of interest is a core process, a new organization unit, or target customers. Purpose floats a level above that which we can directly control—the Outcomes. It's a subtle concept, often hard to grasp because we are so conditioned to thinking of activities and Outcomes.

Consider these examples:

| Outcomes Statement | Corresponding Purposes |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| System built or delivered. | Customers <i>use</i> our system. |
| Process improved. | Improved process <i>used</i> . |
| System developed. | System successfully <i>implemented</i> . |
| Staff trained in safe procedures. | Staff <i>operates</i> machinery safely. |

Choosing a Purpose statement is the most critical part of project design. Here are some trigger questions you can ask to articulate the Purpose:

- Why are we really doing this project?
- What would the clients or users like to see happen because of this project?
- If this project were a success, how would we know?
- What impact are we trying to achieve?

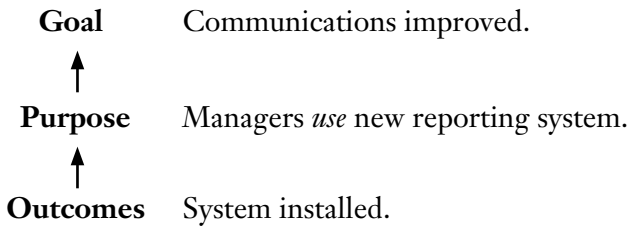
Aim for project Purpose—the project's sweet spot and motivation. Designing projects from the Purpose perspective helps you determine what set of Outcomes you need to reach that Purpose. When you identify a project Purpose and then define the Outcomes needed to achieve it, you are hypothesizing: "*If* we can produce these Outcomes, *then* we should achieve this Purpose." In other words, select the set of Outcomes you believe will cause the Purpose to happen. Structure your project design around the essential hypothesis of—*if* Outcomes, *then* Purpose.

Don't get tangled up in the terms and stumble over whether a project Objective should be called a Goal or a Purpose or a duck-billed platypus. Just keep the if-Then linkages in logical alignment. Confusion often crops up between Goal and Purpose relationships. To determine which is which, test which direction the If-Then relationship between them makes the most sense.

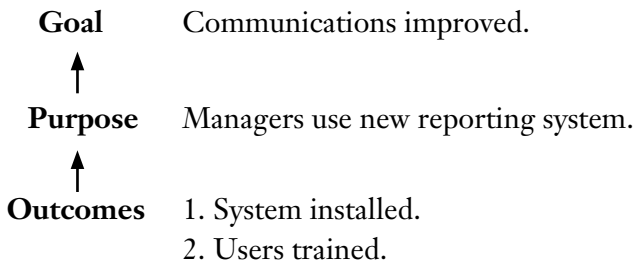
Purpose Drives Outcomes

Purpose describes the change in behavior of the project users or in the system of interest. Remember, Purpose hovers over a level above our direct ability to deliver or control.

Purpose is the glue connecting Outcomes to strategic Goal. When executive sponsors and project teams take the time to jointly define this relationship in words and Measures, the odds of success sky rocket. For example, if you are responsible for putting in place a new reporting system, the following might be your first-cut hypothesis:



How confident are you that this single Outcome is enough to achieve this Purpose? Hmm . . . haven't we all seen systems that are built but never used? It seems that an additional Outcome is necessary. Adding this second Outcome adds confidence in reaching the Purpose and strengthens the strategic hypothesis.



Iteratively testing and refining the Outcome-to-Purpose link to determine whether or not you have the right set of Outcomes to achieve the Purpose calls for systems thinking and mental flexibility. Examine the Outcome-to-Purpose link and evaluate whether or not you have the necessary and sufficient set of Outcomes to achieve the Purpose. Are other Outcomes needed? Are they collectively sufficient? Are they all necessary? Are some nice to have but not must-have? Are these Outcomes the best choices? What other sets of Outcomes might

be better? Continue this dynamic mental modeling process until you come up with what feels like the appropriate Outcome chunks.

In many cases, multiple project thrusts (each with their own Purpose) are needed to reach the Goal. If so, develop a separate LogFrame for each. For example, reaching the single Goal of increased profit margins may require twin Projects (and Purposes) to reduce costs and increase sales. When each LogFrame expresses only one Purpose, it's easier to align project Outcomes. Multiple Purposes dilute the project focus and muddle the design.

If you seem to have more than one valid project Purpose, first check to see whether or not there is a causal relationship between your candidate Purpose statements. Perhaps you can summarize the multiple Purposes in a single, more global statement.

Many times, what sounds like different Purposes is actually the same thing but using different words. To discover if this is the case, ask how you would measure each one. If the Measures are the same, so are the Objectives. Many times statements that initially sound like different Objectives actually say the same thing. Or one may be a valid Measure of the other.

For example, consider these two possible Objectives of a safety program “Improve employee safety” and “Reduce accidents.” Which is better? In fact, accident reduction is a perfect Measure of employee safety.

The most frequent mistake LogFrame beginners make is to choose a Purpose statement that merely restates or summarizes one or more Outcomes. Purpose is the synergistic *result* of Outcomes, not a re-description or summary of them.

Outcomes: What the Project Will Deliver

Project Outcomes describe what the team can, must, and commits to make happen to achieve Purpose. They can be functioning systems or processes (i.e., recruiting process operating) as well as completed end products (i.e., prototype built) and delivered services (i.e., people trained). They describe the specific end-results (or deliverables) expected from implementing a series of activities or tasks.

Use these questions to help solidify required Outcomes:

- What are our main project deliverables?
- What do we need to make happen in order to achieve the project Purpose?

- What are the end results for which the project team can be held accountable?
- What processes do we need to put in place to achieve Purpose?

Be careful not to lock into a rigid set of Outcomes too early. Instead, allow the mix of Outcomes to intelligently evolve. That's not being a flip-flopper—that's being smart! As a loose rule of thumb, try to structure your projects to include three to seven Outcomes.

Here's a tip to formulate Outcomes: Describe them as they will exist on the day they are completed, using the *past tense* form of the verb. For example, use "System developed," not "Develop system"; or "Users trained," not "Train users." While your fifth grade English teacher might frown, this makes Outcomes easier to visualize in your mind and distinguishes them from activities.

Remember, Input activities are the action steps to produce Outcomes; and Outcomes describe what you have after the activities are completed.

The set of Outcomes constitutes "a management contract," an agreement and commitment between the project team and the customer or sponsor to deliver these Outcomes, given appropriate resources. This establishes accountability and defines the project manager's primary job—to produce Outcomes aimed at achieving Purpose.

Figure 5.7 shows some more examples of Inputs and Outcomes.

Test for Necessity and Sufficiency

Outcome-to-Purpose logic is the heart of your project and constitutes your best-guess hypotheses, given present knowledge and an integrated strategy for reaching Purpose. Each Outcome is a necessary ingredient in the recipe for a successful Purpose. But they are usually not sufficient. The other factors—which are also necessary but outside your control—will be expressed as Assumptions.

Sometimes it's not immediately apparent just what Outcomes are needed to reach Purpose. So start with the ones you are sure about. As your thinking progresses, some additional Outcomes required should coalesce in your mind. To optimize your ability to zoom in on the right Outcomes, let's first study how an artist uses successive approximations and iterations to create a masterpiece.

| Inputs (Activities) | Outcomes |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Train users | • Users trained |
| • Improve skills | • Skills improved |
| • Determine best methods | • Best methods determined |
| • Build new office | • New office built |

FIGURE 5.7 Distinguishing Inputs and Outcomes

Sculpting Your Project Masterpiece

Initial project planning at the fuzzy front end brings to mind the image of a sculptor pondering a large slab of unformed clay or block of granite. The artist begins with a general strategy based on the shape of the artist’s inner vision and works to release the masterpiece from the granite block for all to appreciate. A project planner is much like the artist with a vision, but the planner’s intent is to lead a team in drawing out ideas and creating a plan that all can use.

The artist’s tools are his or her hands, mallet and chisel, and a variety of shaping implements that turn the vision into reality. The project planner’s tools are his or her ideas, human resources, and physical assets. His or her initial project statement jottings sketch out the Goal, the Purpose, and Outcomes, as well as some initial Input tasks. These are in draft form because still more granite needs to be chiseled away. At this point it still smells of a hunch. The purification of validation will come later.

Now look again at the basic LogFrame grid. Mathematicians talk about “elegant proofs”—concise, logical descriptions of precise numeric relationships that leave no room for ambiguity. That is what the LogFrame provides—an elegant, concise framework with which one can build the simplest to the most complex projects from start to finish, providing a path through the jungle of complications and changing conditions. This rigor should not be confused with rigidity—locking in a project design too early or printing the blueprint too soon is dangerous.

It's worth repeating the importance of keeping some flexibility to avoid prematurely committing to a solution before several alternatives are considered. Even well-meaning early solutions can fall far short because they become focused on limited solutions.

With that, we can more easily see the tremendous value and exciting potential of using the LogFrame constructs. It's preprogrammed to provide you with the most essential tool thinking templates in the box. More than a tool, in a figurative sense, it is a discovery map with the ability to unearth clues to the location of buried treasure.

The metaphor of a hidden treasure rings true with the sculptor's vision, such as Rodin's, which enlightens us to the hidden beauty that was once unseen. At the outset, the sculptor sees what does not yet exist, and gradually determines what needs to be removed at the first and subsequent whacks. *The Thinker*, as an example, was once hidden inside the slab of granite, but it took a real-world visionary with artistic know-how to see it initially and courageously chisel away again and again so that all could see it eventually and be inspired.

How well do you sculpt ideas? Whether or not you have natural talent, the four question concepts in the book can serve as a step-by-step manual to walk you through the process—almost as simple as a Color by Numbers painting (but with rigorous thinking required).

Example: First Cut Chunking of IT Project Objectives

The best way to get started is to establish an imperfect, first-cut answer to Question #1. Here's an example for an IT project that led to a very spirited discussion of just what the Goal and Purpose mean.

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Goal | New processes and systems enable staff to achieve strategic Goals. |
| ↑ | |
| Purpose | Staff adopts use of newly established processes and systems. |
| ↑ | |
| Outcomes | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Project structure established and followed. 2. Business processes redesigned. 3. Software solutions identified and developed. 4. Processes redesigned in context of software environment. 5. Roll-out plan in place. 6. Training and communication plan in place. 7. Solutions implemented. |

Note that the Outcomes are more or less chunked by phase and appear in logical sequence. The Measures discussion, which comes into play with Question #2, fleshes those out and transforms the project from a theoretical one into a real one where the end results are real-world changes.

Also notice the past tense form for the Outcomes. Instead of “redesign business processes,” it should be stated as “business process redesigned.” Past tense Outcome language is important for two reasons. First, the present-tense form is an activity and, as such, is a summary of many tasks leading to the Outcome. Second, we can more easily describe what “business process redesigned” means by answering which processes and defining the meaning of “redesigned.”

Only by being clear and descriptive about Objectives and logical hierarchies can the true elegance of the project design emerge.

Smart and deliberate initial Objectives setting lays the groundwork essential to strategic success.

Knowing what you want to accomplish and why sets the stage for planning the remainder of your project masterpiece.

Key Points Review

1. Projects masquerading as problems must first be converted into Objectives before you can proceed to project solutions. Carefully diagnose the problem. Don't be deceived by an oversimplified definition, catch phrase, or symptom. Get at root causes, and find the right problem to solve.
2. While vague, fuzzy Objectives can provide cover—they do not provide focus. Establish clear Objectives with a careful use of language. State your Objectives in concise language, using well-chosen verbs and descriptive phrases. Remember: separate Objectives for Goal, Purpose, and Outcome levels.
3. Keep in mind the important distinction between Outcomes and Purpose. Outcomes are what the project team can deliver or make happen. Purpose is the synergistic impact expected from the set of Outcome deliverables.
4. Purpose is the vital, often missing focus. It's the glue of a project and should be the primary aiming point. Purpose expresses the important result or impact we expect the project to produce.

Purpose floats a level above that which we can directly control—the Outcomes.

5. The set of Outcomes constitutes a management contract—an agreement and best-effort commitment to deliver the Outcomes with appropriate resources. This establishes accountability and defines the project manager’s job—to produce Outcomes aimed at achieving Purpose.
6. Time spent examining and challenging presumed If-Then linkages is well-invested to avoid wishful thinking, ideology, ignorance, or baloney masquerading as logic.

The four chapters of Part Two include Application Steps at the end of each chapter to activate each critical question. Use these to jumpstart your efforts. By following Step #1, you will have created a strong but flexible backbone for your project.

Application Step #1

Question 1—What Are We Trying to Accomplish and Why?

For the best results with this and other steps, invite a few core team members to gather around a whiteboard. You can also do this on your own. To define and align Objectives, follow these steps:

1. Create a draft list of Objectives. Take from a work scope, if one exists; otherwise brainstorm.
2. Group your Objectives into those you can make happen and those you cannot. The former will become Inputs and Outcomes, while the latter will be Purpose and Goal level Objectives. But they are all still in the draft.
3. Review for logical If-Then relations among them. Discard redundant statements and incomplete thoughts.
4. Tentatively select the highest Objective and make it the Goal. Identify one or two Outcomes that you know will be necessary. Then fill in a connecting Purpose statement. When adding Measures (our next step), you will discover insights to refine all the Objectives until they feel right.

5. Test the logic of your strategic hypothesis (Outcome to Purpose to Goal Linkages). Make sure this project backbone is solid. Be willing to tinker with it. If time allows, set it aside for a few days and review it with a fresh eye to improve the wording.

Answer to Example Question on page 97

Enhance Customer Satisfaction



Reduce errors



Develop a new order system