



#11 Discernment Planning Tools

First of all how do you find out what God might want for your church and the community. What part has he got for you to play in the immediate future?

A Vision Day

One of the most important aspects of a vision day is to allow *everyone* to have their say. After all, God has used even a donkey to speak through so why can't he speak through any one of us? There are lots of tools you could use to explore this, but one of the best is Appreciative Inquiry (AI) – see for example <https://coachingleaders.co.uk/waht-is-appreciative-inquiry/>.

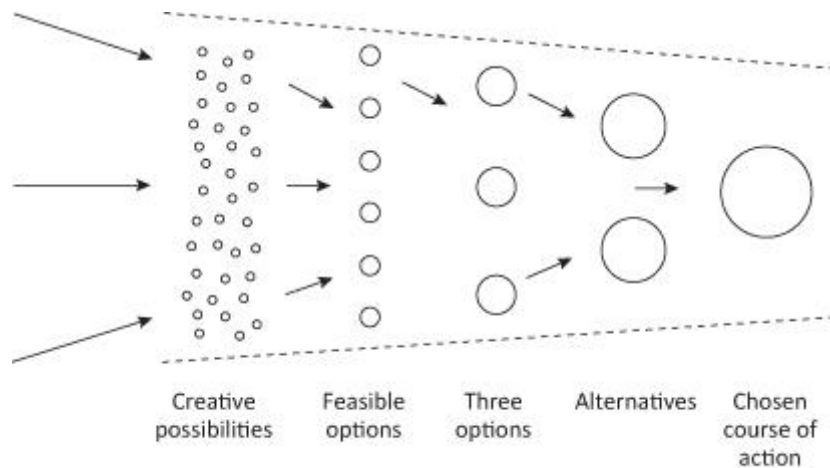
AI starts by **Defining** the issue that we need help with, in this case what is our part in his future? The next step is **Discovering**, looking at what is already happening that is good as a basis to build upon. Then there's **Dream**, daring to be open to all that God has for you and for you to do, and then **Design** looking at how you might make that happen. The final stage is **Delivery**, creating a plan of action to deliver on your plans – or in our case a **Mission Action Plan**.

If you want help to design a Vision day or if you need someone else to come and lead it, do get in touch and I will link you up with someone who can help.

Prioritising Objectives

1) Lobster Pot

John Adair suggested a picture of how we sift through the different objectives we might have, called the lobster pot. In order to trap lobsters, a fisherman creates a basket in which the entrance is wide but gets narrower and narrower the further you go in. Each section also prevents the lobster from going backwards.



The lobster pot model



**PARISH MISSION
ACTION PLANS**



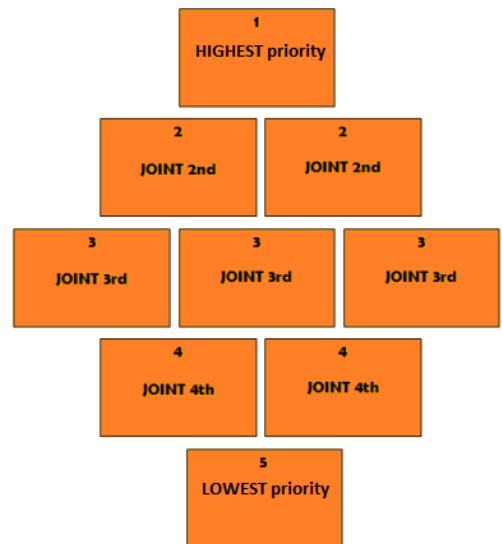
When planning we need to ruthlessly eliminate (or park for another time!) the objectives that we cannot look at now, leaving the few that we are going to focus on. If we don't do just that we will find quickly that our limited resources are simply spread too thinly to make an impact. This is true whatever size church community you are!

So once you created a list of all the possible objectives you could take on as a church for the next 3 to 5 years (including those you are carrying on from your previous pMAP) you could ask your planning group to choose their top 6. Map all the votes onto a flipchart sheet and see which top 9 objectives you have. Once you've done that you can use the following tool to take the next step.

Prioritising Objectives
2) Diamond Nine

Once we have the top 10 objectives, the next conundrum is how to decide which objectives are the most important. One of the best tools I have found is called Diamond Nine with thanks to Ed Dines for pointing me to it – see for example <http://www.classtools.net/> and search for Diamond 9.

One way for this to work is to choose the top nine objectives you have generated. Put the planning group into groups of 5 or 6. Put each of the objectives on a postit note and give a set to each group. Then ask them to rank them. I suggest you focus on the top 3 rows and get each groups to share what they chose for them, and then slim down your choices from there. It really does work!



Creating a Plan

The final step is to create a plan. We do this all the time instinctively, not really thinking about what we're doing. If the plan is to work for the PCC then you do need to decide who does what, by when, how and with what? Look at the example proforma of completed pMAP for more guidance.

If you get stuck at any point give me a call.

Phil Dykes