

Tree Diagram



What is a Tree Diagram?

Tree Diagrams help link a task's overall goals and sub-goals, and helps make complex tasks more visually manageable. These diagrams encourage team members to expand their thinking when crafting solutions, and allow participants to verify decision-making and assess for completeness at every level of the process. You can use a tree diagram to break down a process into manageable parts, or discover the detailed components of any complex process.

How to Draft a Tree Diagram

1. Draft a Goal Statement

Work to create a clear, action-oriented statement through consensus.

2. Assemble the Right Team

The team should consist of action planners with detailed knowledge of the goal topic. Only take the tree to the level of knowledge the team has, and then prepare to hand the tree off for further detail. 4-6 people are the ideal group size for the Tree Diagram.

3. Generate Tree Headings (Sub-Goals)

- a. Brainstorm major task areas to create the first level of detail. These are the major "means" by which the goal statement will be achieved.
- b. Brainstorm action statements, and sort into groupings.
- c. Choose the header for the grouping; use these header cards as the tree's first-level sub goals.

4. Sketch More Detail

- a. Working from your goal statement and first-level detail, placed to the right, left or top of the work surface, ask of each first-level item: What needs to be achieved to meet the goal statement? Keep repeating this question for each successive level of detail.
- b. Stop the breakdown when the detail has reached an assignable task or the team reaches the limit of their expertise. Most trees are broken out at the third level of detail. However, some sub goals are easier to detect and don't require as much breakdown.

5. Review

- a. At each level of detail, look for anything you may have forgotten.
- b. As the tree breaks down into greater detail, ask: If I want to accomplish these results, do I really need to do these tasks?
- c. As the tree builds to broader goals, ask: Will these actions actually lead to these results?
- d. Finally, draw the lines connecting the tasks.

Remember:

- Try to look at your organization from an external perspective, even when assessing internal factors: What would others say about your organization?
- Try to verify/quantify statements when possible, rather than making general statements about your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
- You may end up with what seems like too many factors to consider, at which point it might be helpful to start prioritizing them
- Consider: How can you convert weaknesses into strengths? Use strengths to overcome threats? Use strengths to maximize opportunities? Use strengths to compensate for or minimize weaknesses?
- SWOT analyses can be performed on multiple levels of an organization: Might it be more helpful to perform one just on your program? Division? A specific process?