

The Means Diagram

The Means Diagram helps us plan the means by which a goal is to be achieved. It helps clarify what needs to be done and in what order. It is the bridge between a goal statement and an action plan.

Goals could relate to:

- Strategic goals incorporated into a manufacturer's strategic product plan.
- Improvement goals relating to the performance, value and cost of a particular product.
- Project goals relating to particular aspects of a new product development project.

It is important that goals are defined clearly and succinctly. A goal statement should include:

- a key focus
- an action word (verb)
- a measurable and desired performance outcome.

For example, take a typical strategic goal statement could be:

"We will increase resources allocated to new product development to yield a higher number of new products per year."

In this case the key focus is "resources allocated to new product development", the verb is "increase" and the desired performance outcome is "a higher number of new products per year".

Further examples of goal statements include:

- We will design our products to match competitive price points and maximise contribution from each product.
- We will reduce the cost of manufacture of product X in order to increase gross margin to 35%.

A storyboard is used as the raw material to develop the Means Diagram. The group focuses on the goal. The task of the team is to brainstorm the actions that could be taken to achieve the goal.

When all ideas have been generated, the storyboarding session moves into the scrubbing phase. Related cards are grouped together on the board, discussed and scrubbed. Further cards may be written and added to groupings if the team so wishes. A heading card is written for the group. This becomes the raw material for the Means Diagram.

The Means Diagram maps out the means by which the goal is to be achieved. The general form of a Means Diagram is shown below. The Goal is shown on the left side of the diagram. The Primary Means are the headings from the storyboard. They are arranged in a column as shown, in the sequence from top to bottom in which they

should happen. The second level means provide more detail on how the Primary Means will be achieved.

These are shown on the Means Diagram in a column to the right of the Primary Means, in the order from top to bottom in which they will happen. The storyboard will provide some ideas on how the Primary Means could be achieved, but may not necessarily cover all aspects. The Means Diagram aims to show exactly how the team intends to achieve the Primary Means, and the order in which actions need to be taken.

When the team is satisfied that the Means Diagram is complete, the actions at the right hand end of each branch of the Means Diagram can be delegated. For each task, the team should consider the most appropriate person to be made responsible. This need not be a team member. It should be the person in the best position to organise and carry out the task.

Obviously where the nominated people are not in the group, their support will need to be won. They will need to be briefed on what is required and why it is important. This is best done once the overall Action Plan is completed.

It is recommended that the team rough out the Means Diagram using cards and pin board. The completed Means Diagram should be redrawn using a word processor.

