

How does Innovative Decisions, Inc., help you “innovate?” As illustrated in the IDI logo of “The Party Problem,” all groups with choices to make must somehow address the four elements of a decision: objectives, alternatives, information, and uncertainty. By using IDI’s powerful **Decision Conference** approach to decision making and problem solving, a group is able to discover new, value-added answers hidden within their own situation.

Objectives

Many organizations fail to define what they really want to happen—what outcome they really prefer. For example, a customer call center looking to reduce costs tried to reduce the average length of a call in order to improve customer satisfaction. But when calls took longer than the objective time, the customer reps simply hung up on the customers. Customers called back and began all over again with a new rep, and overall costs actually increased! This is known as “Solving the Wrong Problem Perfectly.” IDI Decision Conferences use systems thinking models to help groups identify their **means objectives** and explore how achieving them impacts their **fundamental objectives**. Many groups discover better objectives through this process, which gives them a clearer goal and actually make choices easier.

Alternatives

Many organizations avoid decision-making until change is thrust upon them by forces outside their control. For example, the cost of some supplies goes up and must be passed along to customers; many aging workers retire at the same time and must be replaced by inexperienced new hires; a high number of accidents occur and the schedule must be slowed to review safety procedures. Groups may limit the option set in these situations to just a few alternatives because they are focused on restoring the status quo. IDI Decision Conferences use **Value-Focused Thinking** models to help a group reverse its alternative-focused thinking and expand the option set to take advantage of new opportunities. By first identifying the objectives that are really important to them, the group can discover new alternatives that maximize value—even achieving more value than the status quo.

Information

Many organizations continuously gather data on their operations without regard to the costs involved and how the data will be used. This leads quickly to information overload. Even with the use of data mining tools, some information will be very useful while other information just won’t be used. IDI Decision Conferences use **value of information** models to understand how information will be used to make decisions and the value of an additional piece of information. Groups often discover they can reduce the amount of data they collect and free up resources that can be put to better use elsewhere.

Uncertainty

Many organizations make choices based on a single set of assumptions, data averages, and point estimates. This can lead to fragile decisions that may not hold up when implemented. IDI Decision Conferences use decision trees, fault trees and risk analysis models to help groups better understand the expected range of outcomes resulting from each option. Many groups discover new **hedging and shaping strategies** through this process that can reduce uncertainty around the desired outcomes and mitigate the impact of an undesirable outcome.