

The Z-Model for Problem Solving

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A common approach to problem solving can enhance a group's ability to make decisions together. The Z-Model is such an approach. When used in conjunction with a consensus process, such as Proposal-Based Decision Making (PBDM)¹, group decision making is more effective.

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1. What is the Z-Model?

The Z-Model provides a sequence for reaching decisions using Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI®) preferences. The sequence is as follows:

1. Use **S**ensing to gather the facts of the situation.
2. Use **i**ntuition to create different options that might address the situation.
3. Use **T**hinking to agree on criteria to select the options that will work best.
4. Use **F**eeling to assess the impact on people of implementing the selected option.

SENSING

What do the **Facts** tell us?

THINKING

What are the **Criteria** for our decision?

INTUITION

What **Options** do the facts suggest?

FEELING

What **Impact** will it have on those involved?



Revisit and refine your option(s) to address any issues raised during the assessing of impact.

The above four-step sequence was discovered when researchers examined the problem solving approaches of groups that reached effective decisions. The sequence of Sensing, iNtuition, Thinking and then Feeling is not represented of any one of the 16 MBTI types and requires everyone to stretch out of preference.

2. The Z-Model and PBDM.

In the Proposal Based Decision Making process group members make proposals, build on each others' proposals and then work towards building a proposal everyone can support. The Z-Model supports PBDM by using the strengths of all preferences in the decision making. For example:

- When generating proposals, the Z-Model helps people identify the relevant data (S) and then create multiple proposals to address what the facts of the situation mean (N).
- When deciding among multiple options, the Z-model helps people to first apply criteria (T) and then to explore the impact on people (F).

3. Using Effective Questions to Implement the Z-Model.

The following Effective Questions (EQs) can be used to implement each step of Z model.²

¹ Pillsbury, *Results Based Facilitation: Book Two – Advanced Skills*, Ingram Press, 2013.

² www.myevt.com/teamdev/4-mbti-function-pairs informed the effective questions used in the steps of the Z model.

EQ's for the Z-Model

1. The Facts (Sensing)

- ② What are the relevant facts?
- ② What specific data is available about the situation?
- ② What does experience tell us?
- ② What are the realistic constraints?
- ② What incremental steps have already been taken?
- ② What facts describe where we are?
- ② What should we keep that works?

2. The Options (iNtuition)

- ② What are all the possibilities?
- ② What is the big picture view of where we want to be?
- ② What are the alternatives?
- ② What might address many factors at once?
- ② What might happen in the future?
- ② What trends or patterns can inform different approaches to the problem?
- ② What could we do?

3. The Criteria (Thinking)

- ② What needs to be considered in assessing the options?
- ② What are the criteria that will determine the best decisions?
- ② What are the best options, with their pros and cons?
- ② Is there a model that we can apply to better understand the options?
- ② What are the fundamental assumptions underlying the options?
- ② What are the logical consequences of implementing each option?
- ② How does each option contribute to the desired result?
- ② How will we objectively assess progress and success?

4. The Effect on People (Feeling)

- ② With whom do we need to collaborate and in what ways?
- ② How will people feel about the implementation of the selected option?
- ② How will our stakeholders react?
- ② Which solutions will promote maximum acceptance and ownership?
- ② Is the option consistent with our values?
- ② Who will be affected by the implementation of the option(s)?
- ② How will we communicate with others about the selected option?
- ② Are there other parties to the solution who should be included?