

## **FIP: FIRST IMPORTANT PRIORITIES**

This attention-directing tool is pronounced 'fipp'.

Many of the attention-directing tools are designed to broaden perception (CAF, C&S, OPV, PMI, APC). This is part of 'parallel' thinking: what else? We try to add to the list just as we try to think of more factors in CAF. With FIP as with AGO we try to narrow things down.

FIP is concerned directly with priorities. Forget about 'first important' as this is only put there to make 'FIP' pronounceable. With FIP we direct attention to priorities.

What are the priorities here?

Not everything is of equal importance. Some things are much more important than others. Some values are much more important than others.

... 'There are a lot of things that are important but which are the most important - we must do a FIP.'

... 'Before you can make a decision you need to know your priorities. Do a FIP.'

... 'I suspect my priorities are different from yours. Let us both do a FIP and then compare the outcome.'

The FIP tool is related to the AGO tool and also to focus and purpose, because just as we need to know our objective at the beginning so we also need to know our priorities.

The objective is what we are trying to reach. The priorities are the guidelines which tell us how we get there. Priorities are things that have to be taken into account. These are usually priority values and priority factors.

## **INCLUDE AND AVOID**

Some priorities have to be included. Safety is a priority that has to be included in any thinking on aeroplanes and air traffic. Human rights and justice are priorities that have to be included in law and police matters. Ease of manufacture is usually a priority that has to be included by designers. Cost is a factor that has usually to be included in setting up any business - so are profits.

Some priorities have to be avoided. We should try to avoid pollution. We should try to avoid sharp edges and detachable pieces in toys for young children. We should try to avoid fear in medical care. We should make it difficult to cheat systems (fraud). We try to reduce risk.

Through language we can sometimes convert one type of priority into another: we should seek hygiene in food retailing; we should avoid food contamination. We should seek efficiency in energy use; we should avoid energy waste.

## **HOW MANY PRIORITIES?**

When you look at a list of factors (for example in choosing a holiday) you might find that all of the factors seem to be priorities. Usually a case can be made for the importance and value of most things - if we try hard enough. But the point of FIP is to force us to make choices: what are the really important things (not what would we like to have).

So it is useful when doing a FIP exercise to set an artificial limit on the priorities. This limit could be three, four or five. You cannot go beyond these. You may be able to condense several factors or values into one priority.

In serious matters you need not stick to this artificial limit, but such a limit provides good thinking discipline.

## EXERCISES ON FIP

1. If you were selecting people to be good police officers, what would your top three priorities be? Do a FIP.
2. If parents were able to select the characteristics of their children, what do you think the four top priorities of most parents would be? Do a FIP.
3. When a child has done something wrong, what would the three priorities of the parents be? Do a FIP.
4. In choosing a career, what would your four top priorities be? Do a FIP.
5. If you were going to elect someone to be leader of your group, what would you look for? Do a FIP on this (four priorities).
6. A businessman is choosing a salesman to go out and sell a new line of children's toys. He does a FIP and decides that the priorities he needs are:
  7. energy and stamina
  8. honesty
  9. understanding of the toy market
  10. clean appearance
7. Has anything been left out? If you were to do a FIP (only four priorities allowed) what would your FIP be?
7. There is an argument between parents and their children over what time the youngsters should be back home in the evening (choose ages of the youngsters as you wish). Do a FIP (three priorities) for the parents. Do a FIP (three priorities) for the children.
10. Do a FIP on choosing a friend.
11. Do a FIP on buying music tapes (or CDs).