

# Creative Problem Solving With Teams

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# Problem Solving

- A Function Of...
  - Creatively Solving Problems With Teams
  - Making Decisions (aka Leadership)

# Background of Presenters

- Randy Haykin – Outlook Ventures
  - \$140m Early-Stage Venture Firm
  - 8 Years As Venture GP – 30+ Companies
  - Former Exec at Yahoo, Apple, Paramount
- Don Massaro - CEO, Reconnex
  - Recently Funded Enterprise Security Firm
  - 35 Years in Management Roles
  - CEO of Shugart, Metaphor, Silicon Gaming, Array Networks, Reconnex
  - President, OPD Xerox Corporation

# Problem-Solving Examples In Growth Firms

- Company Strategy (Board, Mgmt Team)
  - Direction/Focus
  - Competitive Positioning
- Products (R&D, Product Marketing)
  - Matching Features to Customers
  - Development Processes
  - Functional Problems
- Marketing & Selling (Sales, Marketing)
  - Messages, Strategies, Tactics
  - Channel vs. Direct Sales – Customer road blocks

# Common Problem-Solving Issues

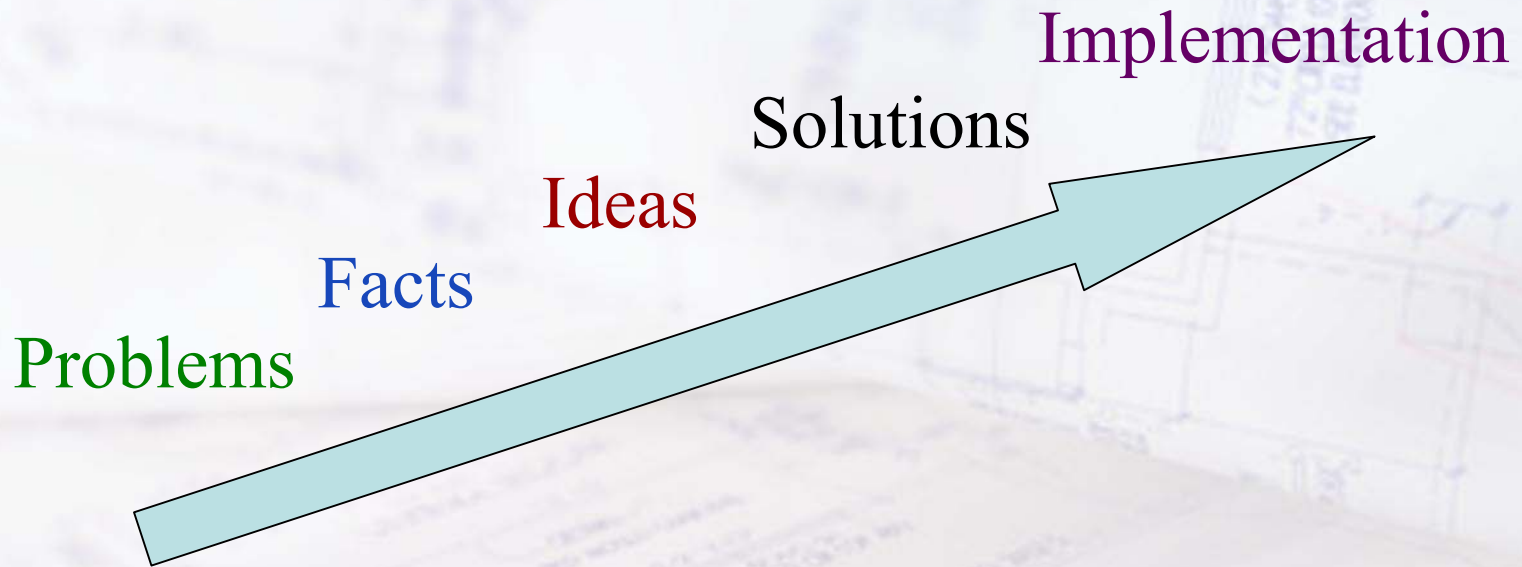
- Confusion Over Definition of Problem
- Group Off in Multiple Directions
- Lack of Process for Tying Together Ideas
- Leadership/Ownership Over Problem-Solving Process

# The Typical Group Process

Solutions  
Facts  
Problems  
**Ideas**  
?? *Implementation*

*Lack of Organized Team Thinking & Solving Process*

# Staged Thinking



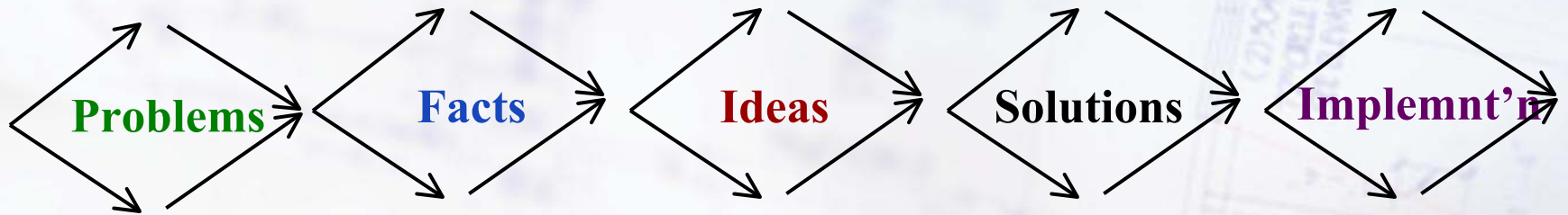
# The Stages

- **Problem Finding:**
  - Start With Range of Possible Issues
  - Choose Only One Problem at a Time to Work on
- **Fact Finding:**
  - Identify & List All Possible Facts We Have Already
  - Highlight the Facts Most Relevant to Situation
- **Idea Finding:**
  - Generate Ideas (Brainstorming)
  - Choose the Best Idea(s) Created
- **Solution Finding:**
  - List Possible Criteria for Ranking Solutions
  - Rank the Strengths & Weaknesses of Best Ideas
  - Choose One Solution Based on Ranking
- **Implementation (Acceptance Finding):**
  - List All Possible Actions to Be Taken
  - Choose Leader, Delegate and Narrow List of Actions

# Two Realms of Group Thinking

- **Divergent Thinking: “Spreading Out”**
  - Seek Wild Ideas – Creativity Encouraged
  - Combine/build on Ideas
  - Defer Judgment & Criticism
- **Convergent Thinking: “Tying Together”**
  - Improve Ideas
  - Prune Options and Select Best Option(s)

# Combine Process & Thinking Realms



# Example – Market Segmentation

- **Problem Finding:**
  - 15 Possible Market problems – list them all
  - Choose one problem to work on: “IWWMW capture 20% of the mid-tier (\$50-500M rev. in size) market?”
- **Fact Finding:**
  - Define customer base
  - What are our key facts about market & customers?
- **Idea Finding:**
  - Brainstorm ways of approaching – with team & experts
  - Choose top 5 ideas
- **Solution Finding:**
  - List of criteria for judging best market approach
  - Rank against criteria & choose top 2 choices
- **Implementation (Acceptance Finding):**
  - Brainstorm ways to get buy-in from Board
  - Assign leader – narrow tasks and delegate

# Decision Making

- Critical Part of Implementation Phase
- Suggestions *(Things That Work)*
- Pitfalls *(Things That Don't Work)*
- Conservation of Energy *(As Applied to Decision Making)*

# Suggestions *(Things That Work)*

- Learn to Like “*Making a Decision*”
- “Consultative Decision Making”
- Encourage Failure - Original Mistakes are OK!
- Speed More Important Than Accuracy
- Quality of Implementation > Quality of Decision
- Very Few Category 5 Decisions
- Conservation of Decision Energy

# Pitfalls *(Things That Don't Work)*

- Fear of Making a Decision
- “Consensus Decision Making”
- Pocket Veto
- Requiring Too Much Data
- Failure to Categorize Decision
- Not Understanding Conservation of Decision Energy
- Pocket Veto
- No Follow-Up

# Conservation of Decision Energy

**Energy** Making Decision + **Energy** Making The Decision Right = **Constant**

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