Five on Friday: Issue Trees

Clarity College

Five on Friday: Issue Trees

Hello again,

Issue trees are a valuable tool to use when you need to prepare for a piece of work. They help you confirm you are solving the right problem, get organised, ensure you have thought about the task completely and brief your team.
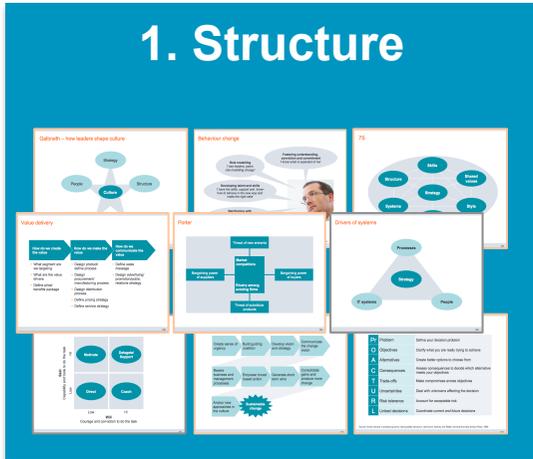
This short pack provides a bit more meat to the solutions from this week's Friday Five challenge.

Feel free to email us at hello@claritycollege.co if you have further questions.

Regards,

Davina and Gerard

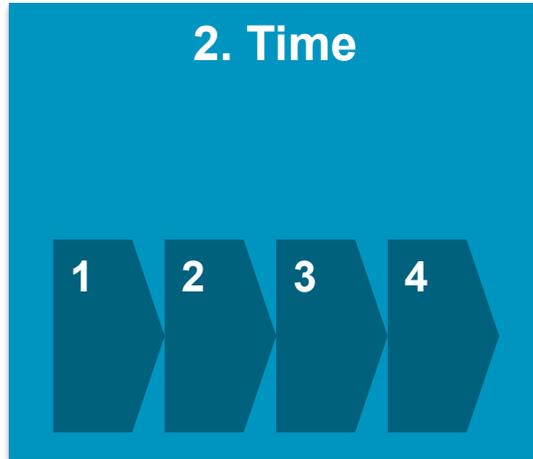# There are three ways to order your ideas within your tree
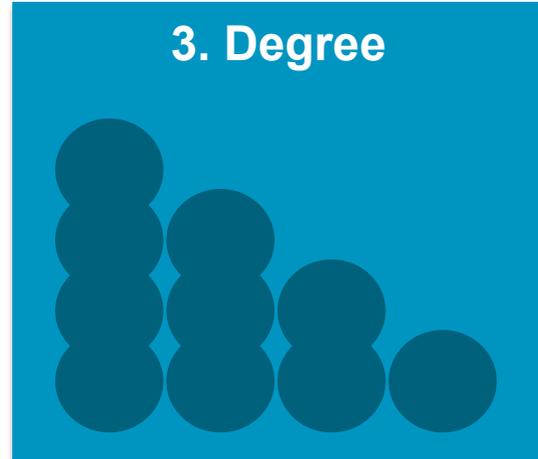

1. Structure
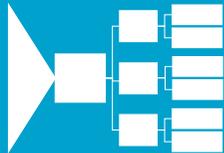
- Parts of a whole
- Components

2. Time

- First to last
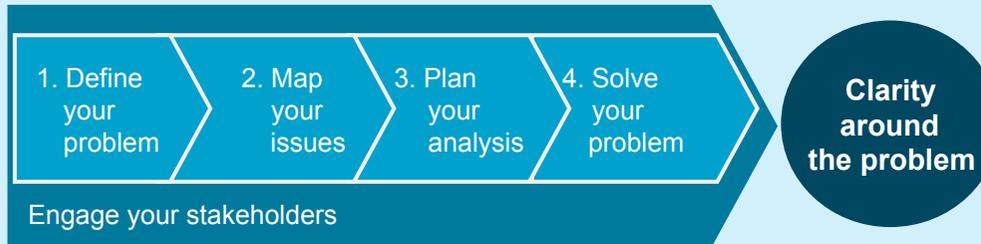- Last to first

3. Degree

- Biggest to smallest
- Least significant to most significant

Clarity Roadmap: What are you trying to do?

Are you trying to crunch a problem?

- Do you need more data to solve your problem?
- Do you need to do more analysis to solve your problem?

1. Define your problem → 2. Map your issues → 3. Plan your analysis → 4. Solve your problem → **Clarity around the problem**
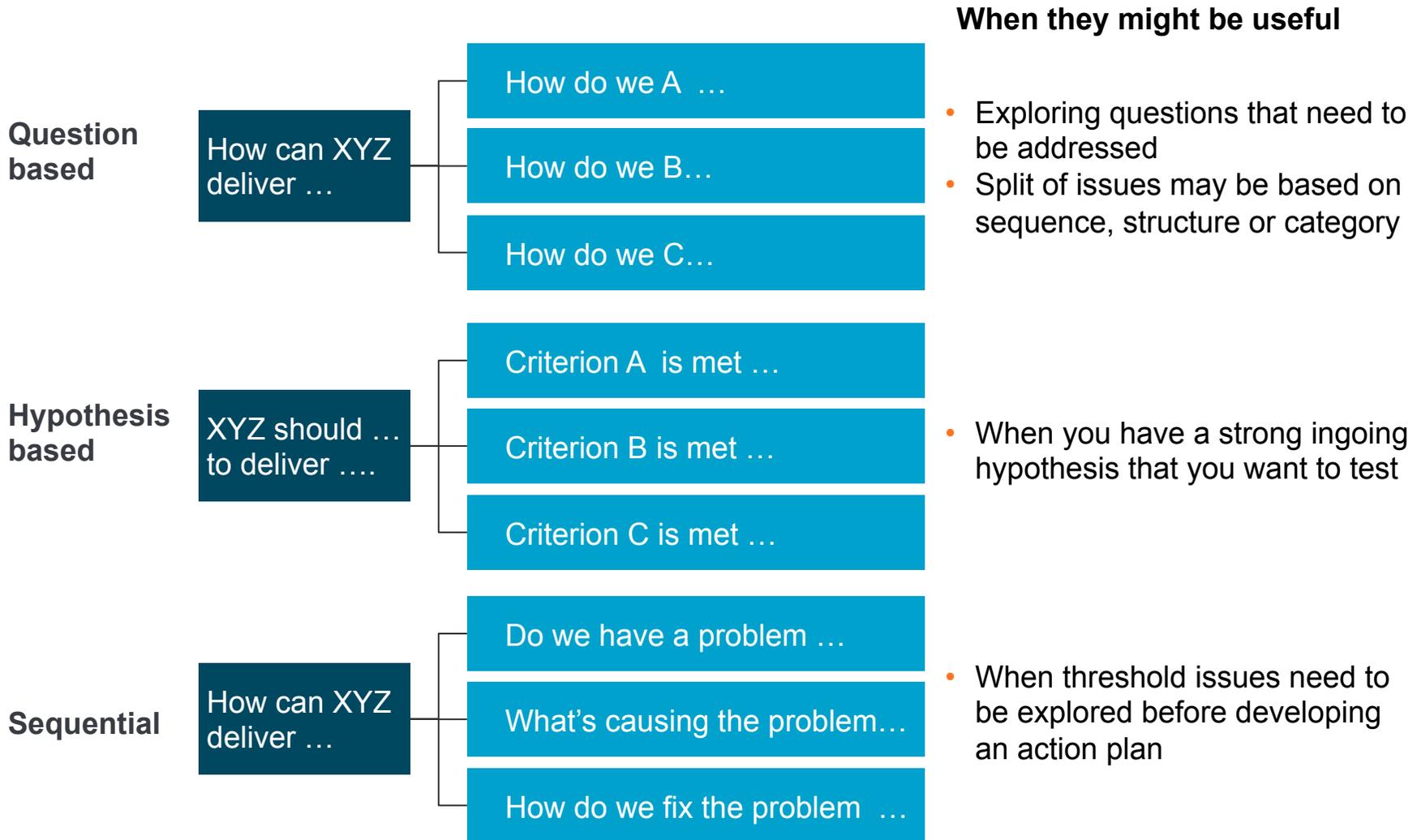
Engage your stakeholders

Are you trying to clarify your thinking?

- Do you need to communicate to a particular audience?
- Do you have enough information to tell your story?

1. Understand what's needed → 2. Build a great storyline → 3. Test your storyline → **Clarity around the story**

Classic issue tree patterns (1/2)

When they might be useful

Question based

How can XYZ deliver …

- How do we A …
- How do we B…
- How do we C…

- Exploring questions that need to be addressed
- Split of issues may be based on sequence, structure or category

Hypothesis based

XYZ should … to deliver ….

- Criterion A is met …
- Criterion B is met …
- Criterion C is met …

- When you have a strong ingoing hypothesis that you want to test

Sequential

How can XYZ deliver …

- Do we have a problem …
- What's causing the problem…
- How do we fix the problem …

- When threshold issues need to be explored before developing an action plan

Classic issue tree patterns (2/2)

When they might be useful

Gap analysis

| How can XYZ deliver … |

- What is current state …
- What is desired future state …
- How do we make the transition …

- When looking at a 'gap' problem

Diagnostic

| Why are we having a problem with X |

- Is A causing the problem …
- Is B causing the problem…
- Is C causing the problem …
- Is D causing the problem …

- When you have a clear framework that underpins analysis – may be for part of tree

Five tips for building an effective issue tree

1	Pose the central question from the client's perspective
2	Articulate one idea as a full sentence in each box
3	Present the ideas in logical order within each branch or sub-branch (framework?)
4	Apply the MECE test
5	Keep it to one page: max 4 levels across and 2-5 boxes within each branch or sub-branch

Learn some more…

- ✓ Aristotle's *Poetics*

- ✓ Ken Watanabe's *Problem Solving 101*

- ✓ www.neosi.co (to learn more and trial the storyliner)

- ✓ Barbara Minto's *The Pyramid Principle*

- ✓ Linda Long's *The Power of Logic in Problem Solving and Communication*