

ACTION PLANNING WORKBOOK

Company Name



Labor Relations Institute, Inc.

Call 800-888-9115

www.lrionline.com

How to Begin

The first step to an effective improvement program is to build your Steering Committee. Each department should have their own committee that includes individuals from all levels within the department. This is an important time to involve employees. Having employees involved throughout the entire process will not only show employees you are truly interested in their input, but will also show employees you want to be held responsible at all levels of the organization.

In order to use resources efficiently, top management should use the Net Promoter Vulnerability Analysis to rank each department. The departments that are considered to be the least vulnerable should be given the opportunity to go through the action planning process for their department without top management intervention. This will allow Corporate resources to be used for the most vulnerable departments. It is important to remember that improvements in every department are important. The least vulnerable departments should not be ignored in favor of the most vulnerable.

How to Involve Your Employees:

Involve your employees from the very beginning. Begin by asking a few employees to be on the Steering Committee. This will allow them to be a part of every step along the way. You will gain valuable insight into how your employees can be reached and they will feel as though you are making significant effort to keep them satisfied.

Identify your Objectives

The first step is to identify your objectives. Objectives can be defined as specific goals that you wish to accomplish. These objectives can be identified by using LRI's Employee Satisfaction Survey. The Final Report can be used to identify those areas that your employees are most and least satisfied with. These results can be identified in the 10 High and Low Statements; as well as, the open-ended statements in which the employees write their likes and dislikes about the organization.

Example of the 10 High/Low Table from the Employee Satisfaction Survey:

10 High/Low Rated Statements

Overall

Overall Score	Statement	Category
6.09	18. I have a clear understanding of my job responsibilities.	Communication
6.03	11. My work area is safe and accidents are infrequent.	Working Conditions
5.80	29. No one here is ever discriminated against.	Work Relations
5.79	41. Our safety training is satisfactory.	Working Conditions
5.76	32. I have no problem keeping up with my workload.	Job Satisfaction
5.70	57. My immediate supervisor is fair and consistent in the treatment of employees.	Supervision
5.68	22. I find my present job challenging and interesting.	Job Satisfaction
5.66	7. Generally speaking, my immediate supervisor is doing a good job.	Supervision
5.63	43. We have a lot of good people here working hard to make us successful.	Company Pride
5.58	37. My immediate supervisor regularly tells me how I am doing a good job.	Supervision

Overall Score	Statement	Category
4.73	24. The best way to get a raise here is to do a good job.	Pay & Benefits
4.72	64. Considering the type of work I do, I feel my pay is fair for this area.	Pay & Benefits
4.52	15. For a person with my abilities, there are many opportunities for advancement.	Advancement
4.50	69. Everyone here does their fair share of the work assigned to them.	Work Relations
4.45	58. I believe top management knows what employees think about most major issues.	Communication
4.38	25. Around here, "what" you know is more important than "who" you know.	Advancement
4.36	5. The most capable employees are always the ones selected for promotions.	Advancement
4.28	44. The way raises are determined here are fair.	Pay & Benefits
4.14	23. Morale here is high.	Company Pride
4.12	34. I believe that pay increases are based on performance.	Pay & Benefits

The 10 High/Low statements, along with the written statements will give you an objective measure of the best and worst aspects of your organization, according to your employees. Use these statements to start a discussion within your committee on what objectives should be identified. This discussion should focus on both the high and low rated statements. The low rated statements can be used to identify improvement objectives, while the high rated statements can be used to identify maintenance objectives.

The best way to begin reaching your objectives is to write them down. When you write down your goals, you are on your way to accomplishing them. This will also give you a list to come back to in the future to remind yourself of the goals you have set for the organization.

To begin this process, examine the 10 high rated statements and the “Like” written statements. Go through these statements within your committee and identify 5 to 15 objectives. These objectives can be the maintenance or improvement of current efforts. Write down these objectives using the format on the following page.

Begin by listing all your objectives. Beside each objective list:

1. Why do you want to accomplish this objective?
2. What will it mean to you personally if this objective is achieved?
3. What will be the consequences if the objective is not reached?

After listing your Positive objectives, go through the process again using the 10 low rated statements and the “Dislike” written statements.

When answering the above questions, keep in mind the reality of the issue and what it means to your organization. This information will allow you to understand the importance of each objective to both you and your organization.

Example:

In order to illustrate this process, the rest of the workbook will use the following example:

After examining the results of their Employee Satisfaction Survey, Org A identifies communication as a low rated issue. Specifically, employees don’t feel as though they have enough information on what is happening within the organization. Therefore, in order to address this issue, their objective is to “Increase the ways in which employees are informed about happenings within the organization”.

Identify your Objectives

Based on the results from the Employee Satisfaction Survey, identify the goals you wish to accomplish in order to improve your organization.

Objective	Reason for Objective	Meaning if Achieved	Consequences of Failure
Example: Increase the ways in which employees are informed about happenings within the organization.	Employees are dissatisfied with the amount of information they receive about the organization.	Employees will trust management and realize how much they are valued and respected.	Employees will continue to be dissatisfied. And they will view management as out of touch.

Based on the results from the Employee Satisfaction Survey, identify the goals you wish to accomplish in order

Prioritize your Objectives

Now that you have identified your objectives, it is time to prioritize them. The first step is to think about each objective and decide what it will take to accomplish each goal. Then, based on these factors, rate the items on (1) how much impact they will on the organization and (2) how difficult it will be to attain. The below format can be used to aid this process.

Objective: Increase the ways in which employees are informed about happenings within the organization.

Factors to Consider:

1. Time: Need time to gather and distribute information.
2. Management Support: Need approval for all projects.
3. Budget Approvals: No budget approvals needed.
4. Needed Information: Constant Organizational and Department updates.
5. Other: N/A

Please rate the following statements by circling the appropriate number.

1. If accomplished, how much impact will this objective have on the organization?

Low Impact

Neutral Impact

High Impact

1

2

3

4

5

2. How easy will this objective be to accomplish?

Difficult to Attain

Neither Difficult nor Easy

Easy to Attain

1

2

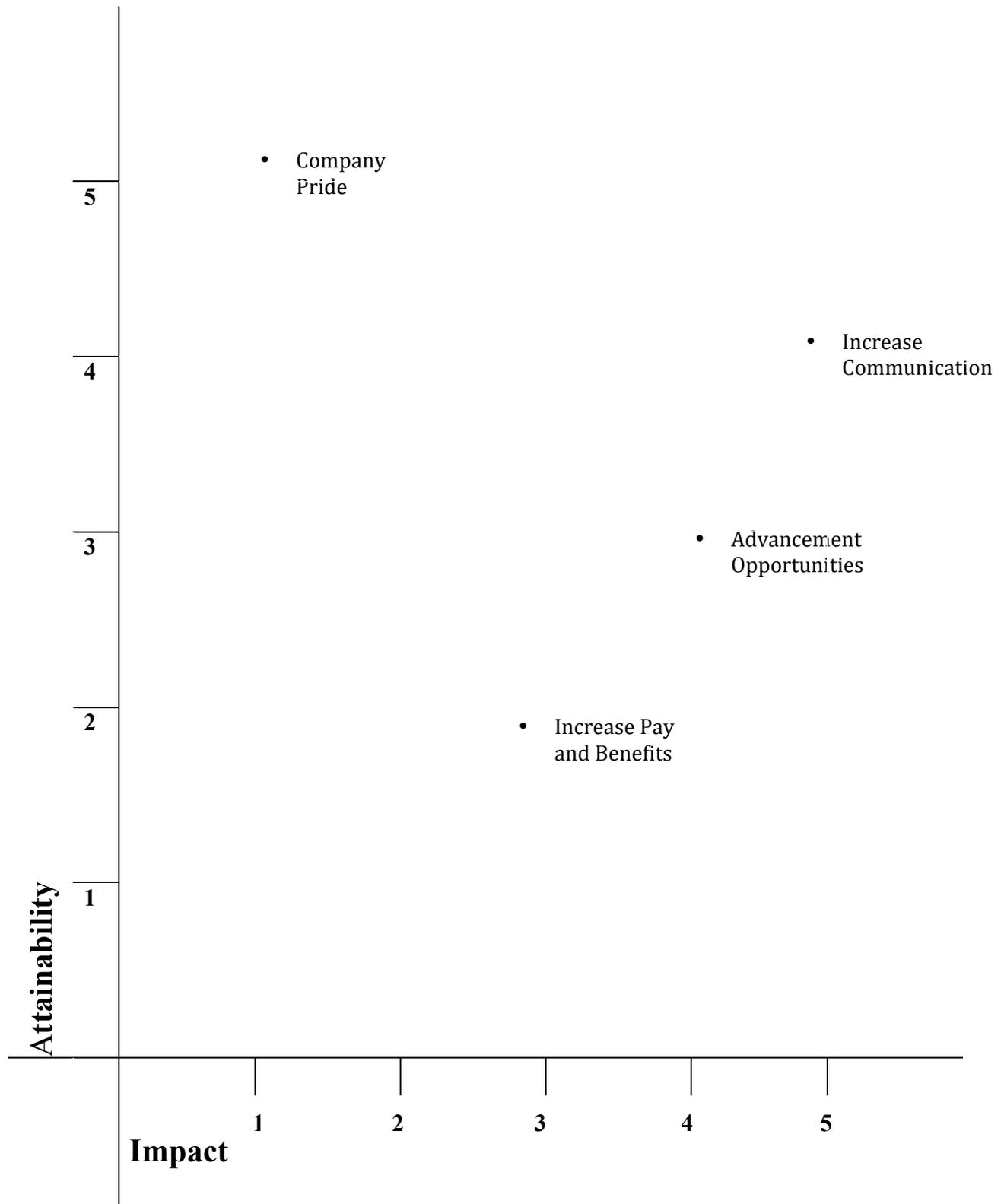
3

4

5

After you have rated each objective, plot each objective according to the format on the following page. Based on the ratings you gave to each objective, plot their position on the grid. Categorize the goals based on (1) how easy/difficult the goal is to attain and (2) how much impact the attainment of that goal would make on your organization.

- The **LEAST DIFFICULT** goals to attain are those that can be achieved in the least amount of time and with the least amount of resources
- The **MOST DIFFICULT** goals to attain are those that require a large amount of time to implement, as well as, the use of multiple resources.
- The goals that have **LOW IMPACT** on your organization are those that will have the least impact on employees' opinion or satisfaction with the organization.
- The goals that have **HIGH IMPACT** on your organization are those that will have the biggest impact on employees' opinion or satisfaction with the organization.



Theory of Constraint

The Theory of Constraint (TOC) was developed by Eliyahu M. Goldratt. According to TOC, like a chain, an organization can only be as effective as its weakest link. No matter how weak the other links in the chain, it will always break at the weakest link. In an organization, effectiveness is hindered by how weak the weakest link is. Therefore, in order to improve the organization, one must begin with the weakest link.

We use the TOC as a way to identify which objectives should be focused on first. In order to make the biggest initial impact, you should focus on the objectives that having a high impact on the organization and will be the easiest to attain. Begin by identifying ONE POSITIVE OBJECTIVE and ONE NEGATIVE OBJECTIVE to start with.

Remember, although all goals are important, you should begin to focus on those goals that are the least difficult to attain and will have a high impact on the organization. As these goals are met, you can move on to the most difficult/high impact goals, followed by the least difficult/low impact goals. If you are lucky enough to get through these goals, then turn your attention to the most difficult/low impact goals. As you improve each weak link, the chain will once again become strong.

Action Planning

Once you have chosen one positive and one negative objective to focus on, the next step is to dissect each one to fully understand what it will take to accomplish that objective. Under each objective, list specific outcomes that must be accomplished in order to successfully meet your objective. Once again, for each specific objective identify (1) Why you want to achieve this outcome, (2) What does the outcome personally mean to you, and (3) what are the consequences for failure to achieve that outcome. This can be formatted using the chart on page 4 of this workbook.

Once that has been outlined, under each outcome list milestone achievements that will help you monitor your progress for each outcome. Think of each milestone as a step in accomplishing that outcome. Do not list every minor step that much be accomplished, but rather the major steps that will be evidence of true progress in achieving your goal.

The next step is to assign a completion date to each milestone, as well as a team member that will be in charge of accomplishing each milestone.

The following page is a worksheet that can be used to identify and map out the specific outcomes and milestone achievements for each objective. The example used previously is used again on the following page to illustrate how to fill out the worksheet.

Objective Plan

Objective: Increase the ways in which employees are informed about happenings within the organization.

- 1) **Specific Outcome:** Regularly communicate updates about what is going on in the business through a Company Facebook page.
 - a) **Milestone Achievement:** Survey employees to determine if stated outcome will be effective.
 - i) **Date of Completion:** August 15, 2010
 - ii) **Assigned Team Member:** John Baker
 - b) **Milestone Achievement:** Delegate responsibilities regarding who will keep up with the Facebook page.
 - i) **Date of Completion:** August 25, 2010
 - ii) **Assigned Team Member:** Judy Little
 - c) **Milestone Achievement:** Collect information about what should go on the Facebook page through researching the appropriate sources.
 - i) **Date of Completion:** September 15, 2010
 - ii) **Assigned Team Member:** Rob Aster
 - d) **Milestone Achievement:** Build the Facebook page.
 - i) **Date of Completion:** October 1, 2010
 - ii) **Assigned Team Member:** Sean Timmet
 - e) **Milestone Achievement:** Promote the Facebook page; Encourage employees to join the page.
 - i) **Date of Completion:** October 15, 2010
 - ii) **Assigned Team Member:** Rick Lifton

- f) **Milestone Achievement:** Monitor the frequency of updates on the Facebook page for the first month of operation.
- i) **Date of Completion:** November 15, 2010
- ii) **Assigned Team Member:** Sarah Wester
- g) **Milestone Achievement:** Determine how to measure the effectiveness of the outcome.
- i) **Date of Completion:** November 30, 2010
- ii) **Assigned Team Member:** Pam Mistin
- h) **Milestone Achievement:** Resurvey employees to determine if the outcome was successful.
- i) **Date of Completion:** January 1, 2010
- ii) **Assigned Team Member:** Josh Street

Measuring your Outcome

An important aspect to the Action Planning process is measuring the effectiveness of your plan. After you have implemented a change, it is important to know if it was successful in accomplishing the overall outcome. Below is a list of some suggestions for evaluating your outcome:

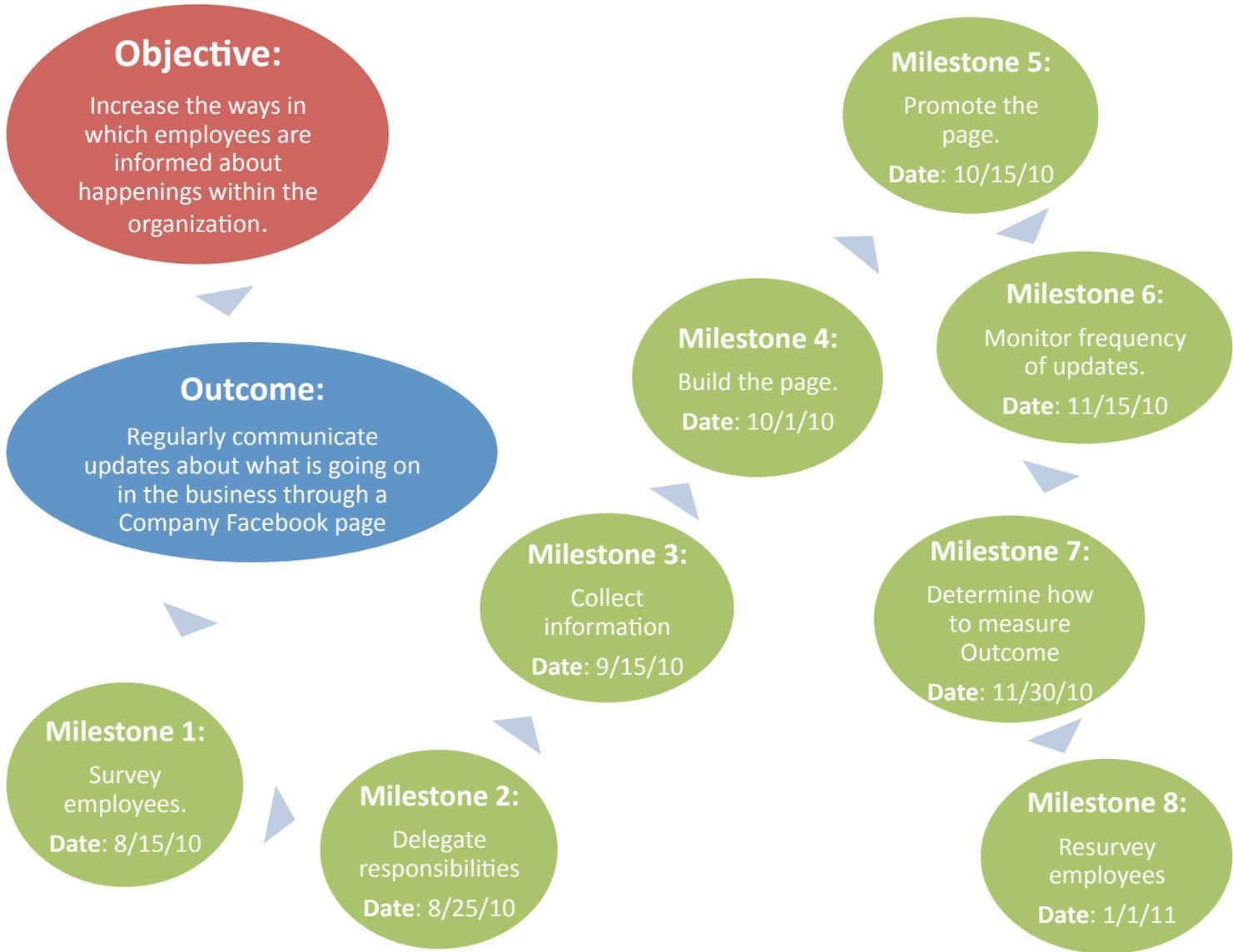
- If the outcome is based on the Employee Satisfaction Survey, re-survey your employees to see if there was an increase in the scores on that item or category.
 - Advantage: Direct, objective feedback on what you have worked on.
 - Disadvantage: Data could be skewed if that item (or set of items) is given independently of the rest of the survey.
- Conduct spot interviews of focus groups to have a conversation with your employees.
 - Advantage: You hear directly from your employees how they feel about the program.
 - Disadvantage: Employees may not feel comfortable telling you directly they do not like the program
- Use objective measures, such as absenteeism, turnover, complaints, etc.
 - Advantage: Objective measure
 - Disadvantage: May not be directly related to specific outcome.

Another issue to discuss is when to re-evaluate employee satisfaction. There is no specific rule of thumb for this issue. Evaluation procedures should be based on the nature of the outcome.

Objective Outline

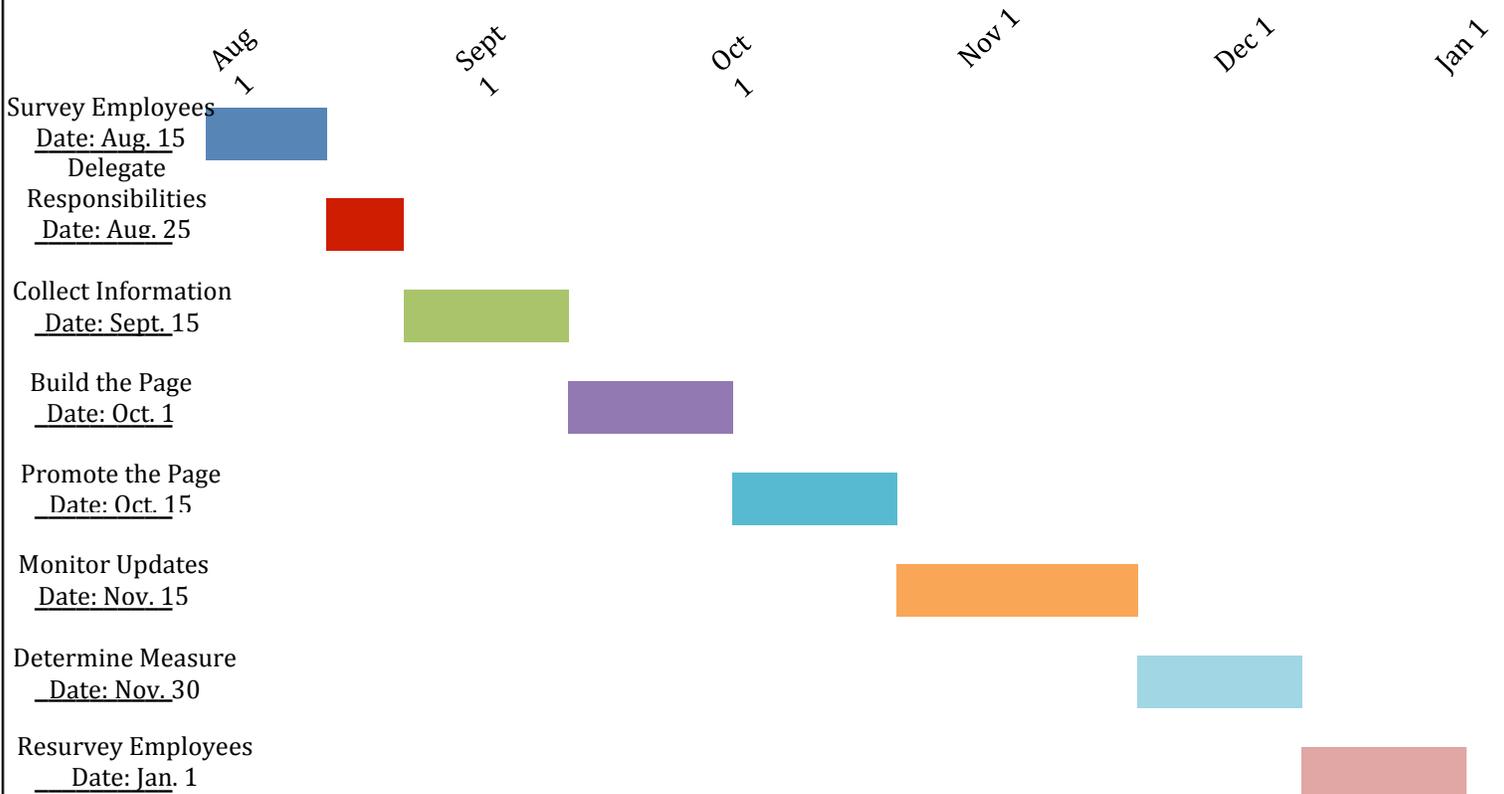
Now that you have dissected each objective into manageable steps, the next step is to make a timeline with all the completion dates. The timeline can be formatted as an actual timeline that can be seen by all members of management or through the use of a company calendar. As long as all members of management have access to the timeline and can view the upcoming completion dates, whatever format works best for you and your organization will work.

The following pages are two examples of formats that can be used to outline all your objectives, outcomes, and milestones. For each objective, fill out the chart accordingly.



Schedule of Milestones

Outcome: Regularly communicate updates about what is going on in the business through a Company Facebook page.



Communicate with Employees

Throughout the process of Action Planning, employee opinions and ideas should be taken into consideration. If you have started with the Employee Satisfaction Survey, then you are aware of the issues employee's are most satisfied and dissatisfied with. These meetings should discuss the objectives you have identified, the outcomes, and the milestones you have already outlined. Allow the employees to voice their opinion on the effectiveness and perceived value of each objective. By allowing employee input, you are showing them you care about their opinions and are working to make the organization a better place.

During the Communication Meetings, you should focus on four areas:

- What the surveys told you.
- What you are going to do about the results.
- What you have done so far.



What you told us...

- A survey was conducted: June 5, 2010 – June 25, 2010
- Lowest rated area:
 - **Communication: mean = 4.01**
 - Sample Item: “I believe top management knows what employees think about most major issues.”
 - Sample Comment: “Shift managers do not inform the next manager about problems.”
 - **We want to improve the lines of communication so that our employees feel comfortable with the information they receive.**

The first slide should include information about the results of the survey including:

- When the survey was conducted
- The lowest rated areas
- Examples of the areas using sample items and comments
- Importance of the issue



What we are going to do...

- To improve communication:
 - We will create a Departmental page on Facebook so that all important information and updates can be viewed on a regular basis.
 - Milestones
 - Survey employees to determine if stated outcome will be effective: Completed by August 15, 2010.
 - Delegate the responsibilities: Completed by August 25, 2010.
 - Collect information: Completed by September 15, 2010.
 - Build the page: Completed by October 1, 2010.
 - Promote the page: Completed by October 15, 2010.
 - Monitor the updates: Completed by November 15, 2010.
 - Determine how to reevaluate: Completed by November 30, 2010.
 - Resurvey employees: Completed by January 1, 2010.

The second slide should include the steps you plan to take to improve the problem area. The information on the slide should include:

- The specific outcome you wish to accomplish
- The milestones you have set and their completion dates



What we have done so far...

- The committee has been selected including:
 - Jeremy Bates (Dept. Manager)
 - Sarah King (Assistant Manager)
 - Leslie Plots (Floor Associate)
 - Alex Drist (Floor Associate)
- The first meeting was held on: July 10, 2010
- Next meeting will be held on: July 25, 2010
- We will report our progress via a Department-wide meeting on: September 30, 2010

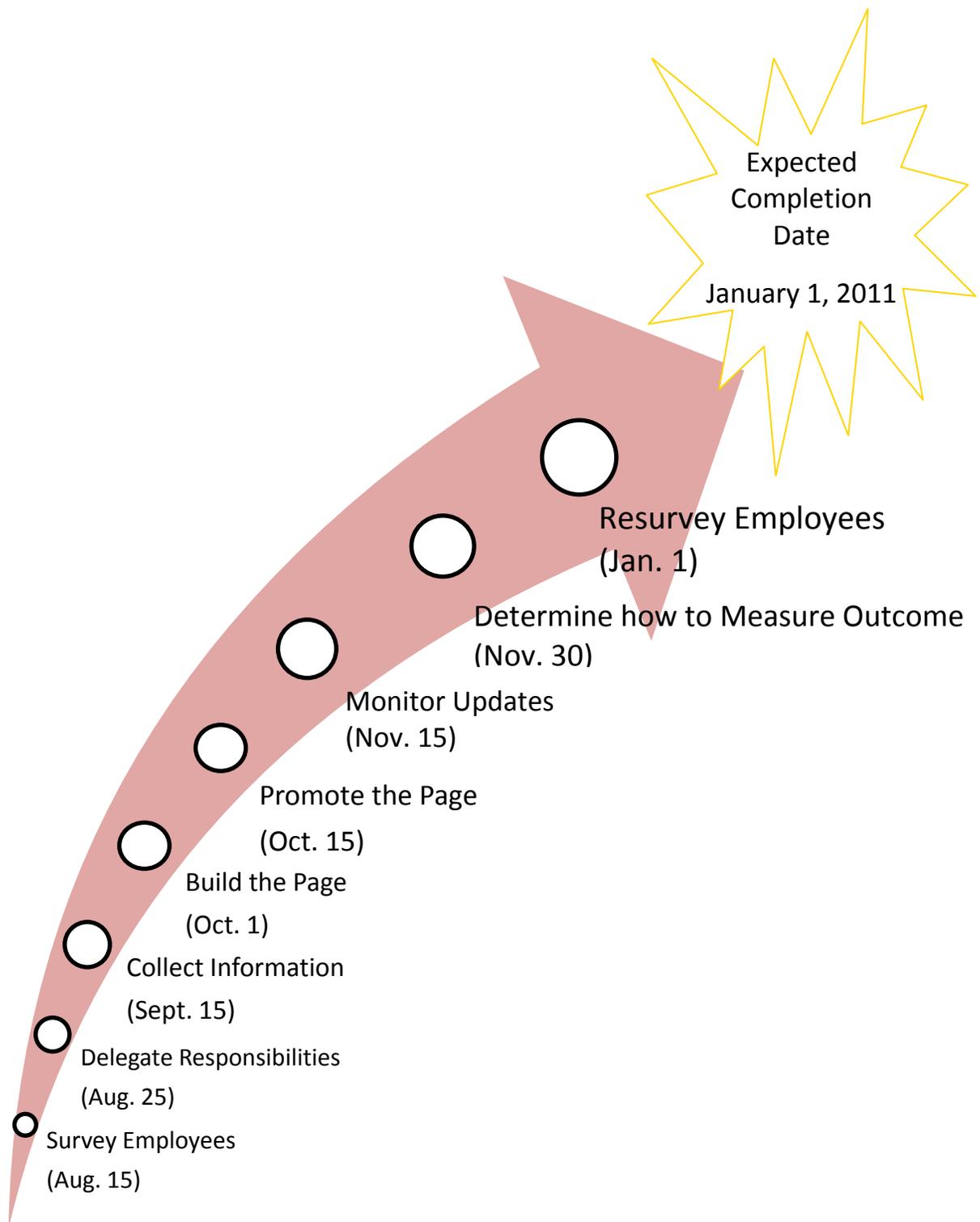
The final slide should outline the steps you have already taken in accomplishing this goal, include:

- The committee members that have been chosen
- When the next progress meeting will be held

Another way to allow employees to keep track of the progress for each objective, is by posting the objectives and completion dates for everyone to see. This will let employees know what has been accomplished; as well as, when they could expect objectives to be accomplished.

The following page shows an example of a format that can be used to show employees the progress that has been made on each outcome. As each milestone has been achieved, the bubble can be filled. Once the outcome has been accomplished, the star burst at the top can be filled in to show it has been completed.

Goal: Regularly communicate updates about what is going on in the business through a Company Facebook



What is Next?

Remember that the examples given previously only cover one negative objective you identified. You are also simultaneously working on accomplishing a positive objective.

An important issue is when to begin a new objective. It is not always necessary to wait until you are completely finished with one outcome to begin another. It may be most efficient to conduct more than one objective at once. Once you have an outcome that is at a maintenance stage, it is ok to begin a new outcome procedure.

Workbook Formats

The following pages include enough blank workbook pages to begin the Action Plan process for one positive and one negative objective.

- A. Identify your Objectives
- B. Objective Evaluation
- C. Plot of Objectives
- D. Objective Plan
- E. Objective Outline
- F. Schedule of Milestones
- G. Communication Slides
- H. Objectives Poster

Identify your Positive Objectives

Objective	Reason for Objective	Meaning if Achieved	Consequences of Failure

Identify your Negative Objectives

Objective	Reason for Objective	Meaning if Achieved	Consequences of Failure

Objective Evaluation

Objective: _____

Factors to Consider:

1. Time:
2. Management Support:
3. Budget Approvals:
4. Needed Information:
5. Other:

Please rate the following statements by circling the appropriate number.

1. If accomplished, how much impact will this objective have on the organization?

Low Impact

Neutral Impact

High Impact

1

2

3

4

5

2. How easy will this objective be to accomplish?

Difficult to Attain

Neither Difficult nor Easy

Easy to Attain

1

2

3

4

5

Objective Evaluation

Objective: _____

Factors to Consider:

1. Time:
2. Management Support:
3. Budget Approvals:
4. Needed Information:
5. Other:

Please rate the following statements by circling the appropriate number.

1. If accomplished, how much impact will this objective have on the organization?

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2. How easy will this objective be to accomplish?

Difficult to Attain

Neither Difficult nor Easy

Easy to Attain

1

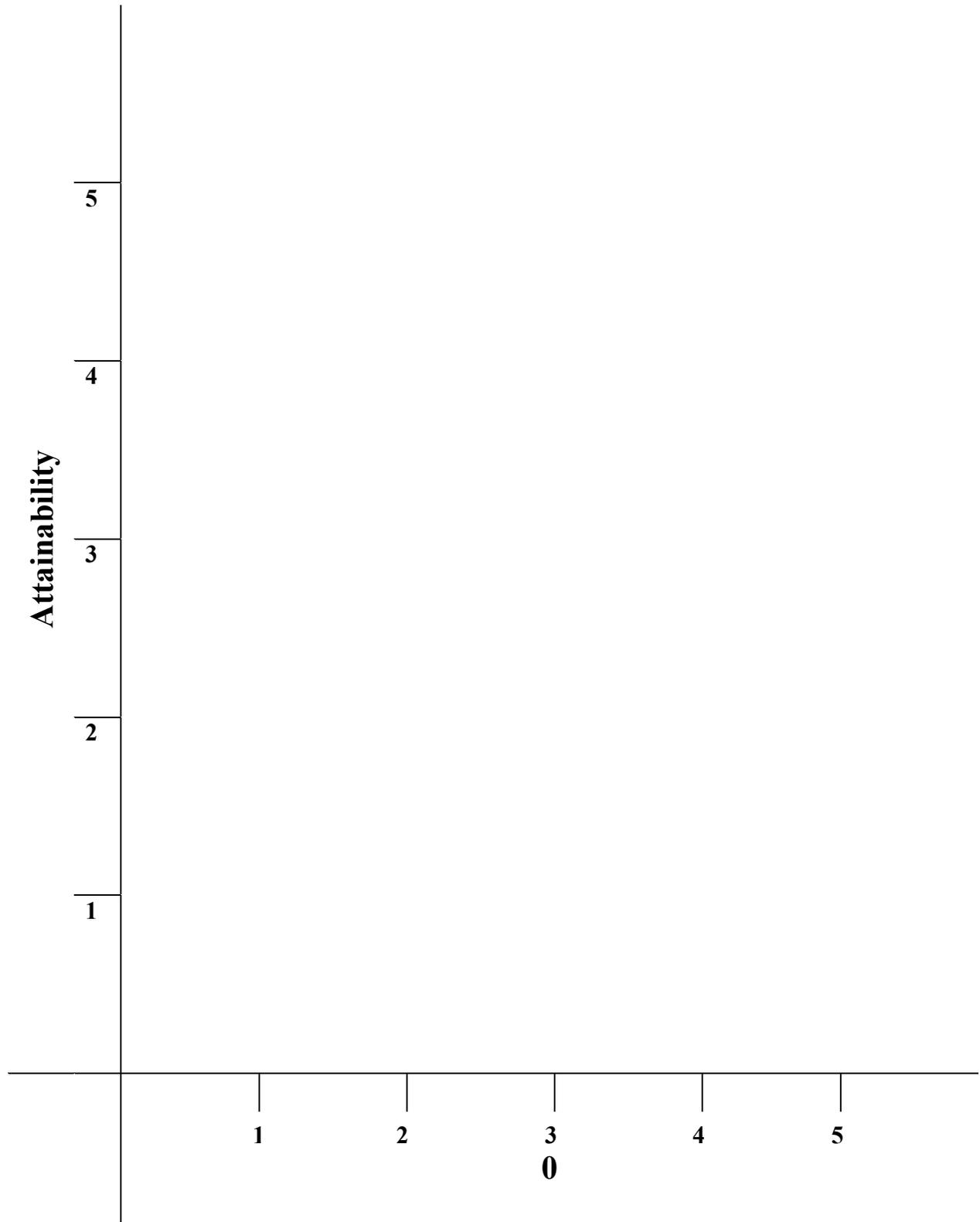
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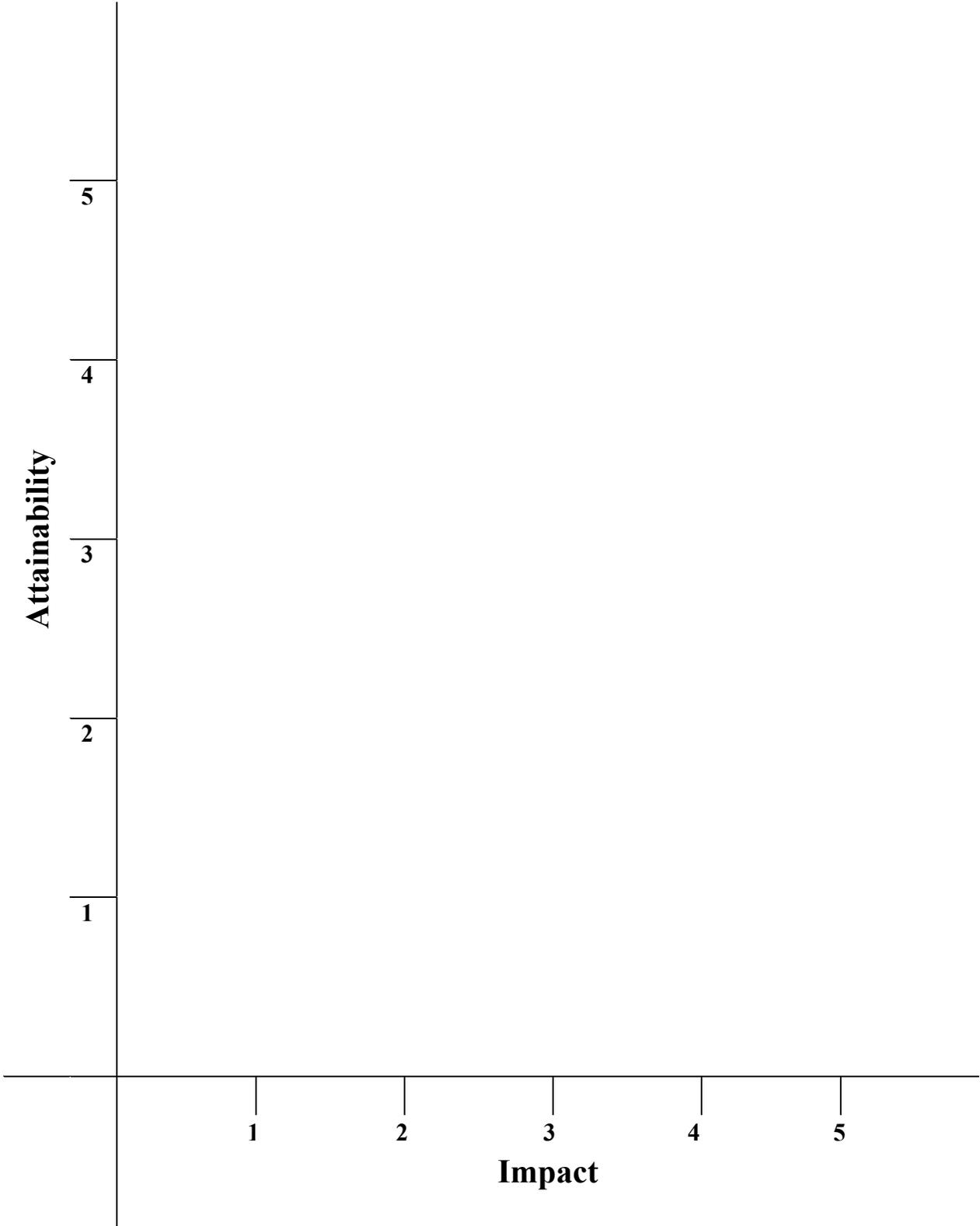
4

5

Plot your Positive Objectives



Plot your Negative Objectives



Objective Plan

Objective: _____

1. **Specific Outcome:**

a. **Milestone Achievement:**

i. **Date of Completion:** _____

ii. **Assigned Team Member:** _____

b. **Milestone Achievement:**

i. **Date of Completion:** _____

ii. **Assigned Team Member:** _____

c. **Milestone Achievement:**

i. **Date of Completion:** _____

ii. **Assigned Team Member:** _____

d. Milestone Achievement:

i. **Date of Completion:** _____

ii. **Assigned Team Member:** _____

e. Milestone Achievement:

i. **Date of Completion:** _____

ii. **Assigned Team Member:** _____

f. Milestone Achievement:

i. **Date of Completion:** _____

ii. **Assigned Team Member:** _____

g. Milestone Achievement:

i. **Date of Completion:** _____

ii. **Assigned Team Member:** _____

Objective Plan

Objective: _____

1. **Specific Outcome:**

a. **Milestone Achievement:**

i. **Date of Completion:** _____

ii. **Assigned Team Member:** _____

b. **Milestone Achievement:**

i. **Date of Completion:** _____

ii. **Assigned Team Member:** _____

c. **Milestone Achievement:**

i. **Date of Completion:** _____

ii. **Assigned Team Member:** _____

d. Milestone Achievement:

i. **Date of Completion:** _____

ii. **Assigned Team Member:** _____

e. Milestone Achievement:

i. **Date of Completion:** _____

ii. **Assigned Team Member:** _____

f. Milestone Achievement:

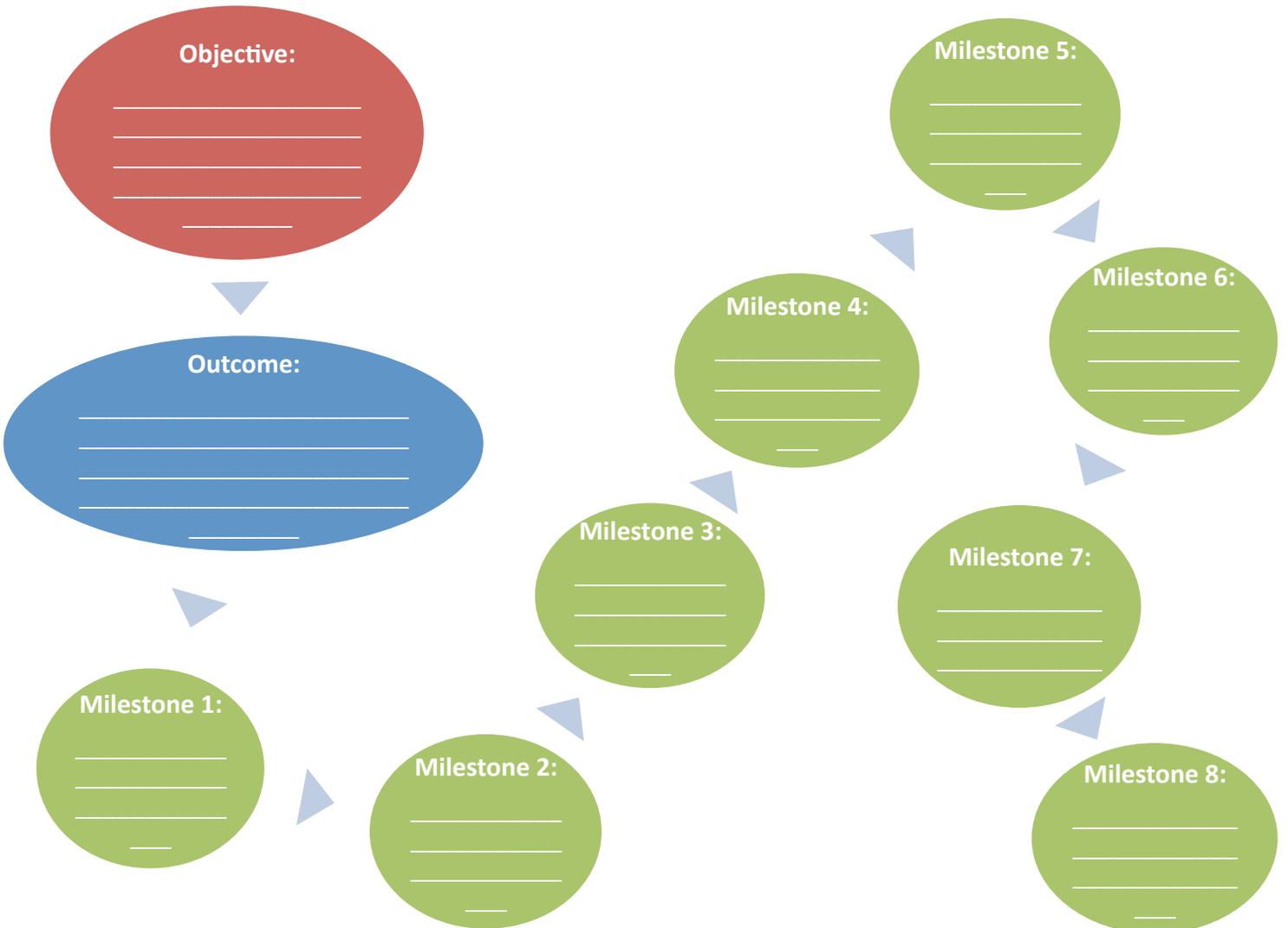
i. **Date of Completion:** _____

ii. **Assigned Team Member:** _____

g. Milestone Achievement:

i. **Date of Completion:** _____

ii. **Assigned Team Member:** _____



Schedule of Milestones

Outcome:

	/	/	/	/	/	/

Schedule of Milestones

Outcome:

	/	/	/	/	/	/



What you told us...

- A survey was conducted: _____
- Lowest rated area:
 - _____: mean = _____
 - Sample Item:

 - Sample Comment:

 - _____



What we are going to do...

- To improve communication:

- _____

- Milestones

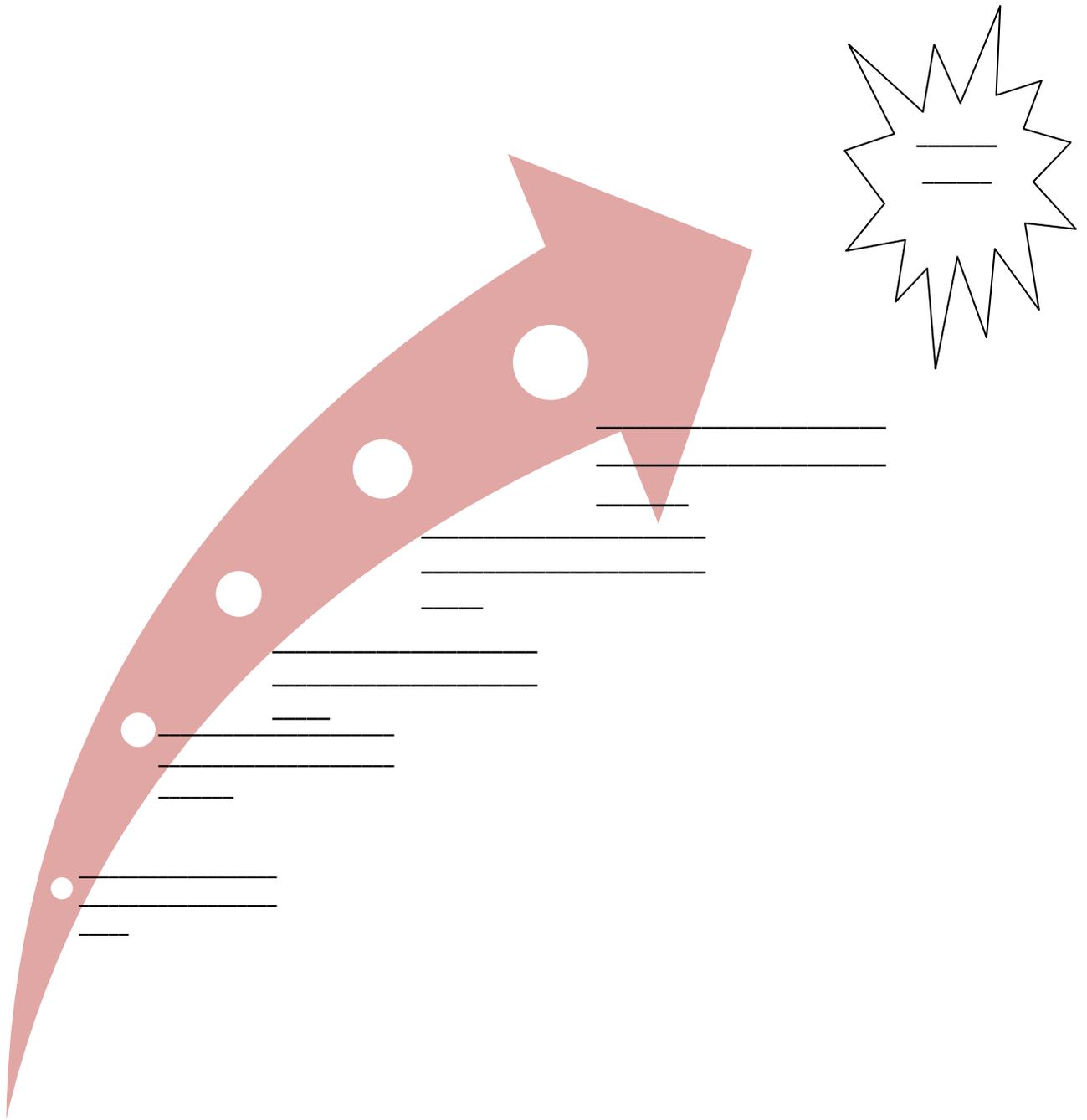
- _____ : Completed by _____
 - _____ : Completed by _____



What we have done so far...

- The committee has been selected including:
 - _____ (_____)
 - _____ (_____)
 - _____ (_____)
 - _____ (_____)
- The first meeting was held on: _____
- Next meeting will be held on: _____
- We will report our progress via a Department-wide meeting on: _____

Goal: _____



Goal: _____

