Drill Down

Breaking Problems Down Into Manageable Parts

Drill Down is a simple technique for breaking complex problems down into progressively smaller parts.

To use the technique, start by writing the problem down on the left-hand side of a large sheet of paper. Next, write down the points that make up the next level of detail on the problem a little to the right of this. These may be factors contributing to the problem, information relating to it, or questions raised by it. This process of breaking the problem down into its component part is called 'drilling down'.

For each of these points, repeat the process. Keep on drilling down into points until you fully understand the factors contributing to the problem. If you cannot break them down using the knowledge you have, then carry out whatever research is necessary to understand the point.

Drilling into a question helps you to get a much deeper understanding of it. The process helps you to recognise and understand the factors that contribute to it. Drill Down prompts you to link in information that you had not initially associated with a problem. It also shows exactly where you need further information.

Example

The owner of a windsurfing club is having complaints from its members about the unpleasant quality of the water close to the clubhouse. This seems like a huge problem. She carries out the analysis in Figure 1:
This gives her a starting point in which to begin thinking about the problem. It highlights where she does not fully understand the problem, and shows where she needs to carry out further research.

**Key Points**

'Drill Down' helps you to break a large and complex problem down into its component parts, so that you can develop plans to deal with these parts. It also shows you which points you need to research in more detail.

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