

5. Think in Options, Not Just Answers

This **Think in Options** approach is about empowering decision-makers by giving them thoughtful choices, each with its unique strengths, weaknesses, and potential impact.

By offering several paths to success, you're showing that you've considered the organization's resources, priorities, and constraints, making it easier for leadership to select the best fit.

This guide will help you brainstorm, analyze, and present multiple options clearly and effectively.

The steps guide you to think creatively, evaluate critically, and present recommendations in a way that feels flexible yet grounded in solid reasoning.

Step-by-Step Guide

Step 1: Brainstorm 3 Potential Solutions

Offering multiple options ensures decision-makers aren't boxed into one solution, allowing them to select a path that best aligns with their current needs, resources, and timelines.

Brainstorm three distinct ways to reach the project's goal. Think beyond the obvious choice. Consider varied approaches that might involve different scales, resource requirements, or timelines.

Guiding Question: *What three different ways could we achieve this goal, each with its own unique approach?*

Tips for Finding Solutions:

- **Consider Scale:** Think of one option as a small, incremental change and another as a larger-scale, transformative approach. This gives flexibility based on resources.

- **Use What’s Worked Elsewhere:** Look at case studies, industry reports, or competitor practices to find approaches that have proven successful in similar situations.
- **Think Short-Term vs. Long-Term:** One solution might be designed for quick wins, while another focuses on sustainable, long-term results.
- **Engage a New Perspective:** Talk to team members, consult experts, or gather feedback from potential users to inspire fresh ideas.

Step 2: List Pros and Cons for Each Option

Understanding each option’s pros and cons helps decision-makers weigh benefits against potential drawbacks, leading to more informed choices.

For each solution, list specific advantages and disadvantages. This will help identify risks, resource needs, and potential challenges.

Guiding Question: What are the strengths and weaknesses of each option?

Tips for Listing Pros and Cons:

- **Be Realistic:** Don’t oversell the pros or downplay the cons. Clear, honest assessments build trust and credibility.
- **Look at Resources Required:** Consider budget, personnel, and time—any constraints that might limit or support each option.
- **Think About Impact on Culture and Morale:** Some options may have a strong positive effect on morale, while others might be more demanding or disruptive.
- **Balance Short-Term Gain vs. Long-Term Sustainability:** Options with quick results may have long-term costs and vice versa.

Step 3: Analyze the Short-Term vs. Long-Term Impact

Evaluating both short- and long-term impacts adds depth to each option, showing decision-makers the immediate vs. lasting effects.

Describe the short-term benefits and costs, as well as long-term effects for each solution. This adds dimension to each choice, clarifying both immediate and enduring impacts.

Guiding Question: *What are the immediate and lasting effects of each option?*

Tips for Analyzing Impact:

- **Consider Quick Wins vs. Long-Term Wins:** Some options might solve immediate issues but need reinvestment for long-term impact.
- **Look at the Impact on Team Dynamics:** If an option involves new processes, roles, or changes, consider how it affects relationships and teamwork.
- **Assess How Each Option Supports the End Game:** Will the impact of each option align with the ultimate goal? Think about lasting value.
- **Identify Potential Future Adjustments:** Some options might require revisiting or adapting over time to stay relevant or effective.

Step 4: Recommend the Best Option (and Why)

Offering a recommended option helps decision-makers see your perspective on the optimal path forward. The recommendation should be clear and well-supported by your analysis.

After reviewing pros, cons, and impacts, choose the option you believe will most likely succeed. Explain why this option stands out, referencing specific benefits.

Guiding Question: *Which option stands out as the most effective solution, and why?*

Tips for Making Recommendations:

- **Emphasize Alignment with End Game:** Your recommendation should clearly tie back to the end game.
- **Explain the Rationale:** Reference specific pros, cons, or impacts that make this option the best fit.
- **Show Flexibility:** If necessary, acknowledge the strengths of other options and suggest how they could be adapted or combined with the recommended approach.

- **Tool: You may use Problem-Solution Fit Canvas**