## What it is

A simple yet powerful tool for focusing actions on creating results[1]

## What it can do

This tool can assist you to:

o Help others and yourself get clear on the purpose and outcomes of any intended action

o Help instill in individuals, teams and organizations an ongoing discipline of focusing on results rather than activity

o Create more real results with less effort

## When to use it

o When initiating any purposeful activity – small or large: a telephone call, an entire meeting or a single agenda item, a campaign tactic or the whole campaign, a training or a training module, a program or organizational initiative, etc.

o When coaching or training individuals or groups to be more effective

## How it works

This tool is available online at: atctools.org/resources/tools-for-transformation

**P**urpose

**O**utcomes

**P**rocess

Before initiating an activity, address three questions:

**P**urpose: Why? Why are we undertaking this? What is the purpose?

**O**utcomes: What are the specific outcomes we want to accomplish as a result of this action?

**P**rocess: What steps will we take to achieve these outcomes and fulfill the purpose?

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[1] The POP Model was created by Leslie Sholl Jaffe & Randy Alford.

## Additional considerations

The model is simple and easy to teach.

While it can be used in a specific situation to help focus planning, its greater value is when it becomes a regular habit that helps improve performance for individuals and groups.

Our energy and our time are precious.
We would all like to learn to create more real results… with less effort…
(and less unintended side effects).

The POP model[2] is called "fabulous" because it is a very simple tool that helps us to do exactly this.

Many of us work very hard. Our busy lives can feel like the White Rabbit in Alice in Wonderland:
> *"I'm late. I'm late. For a very important date.*
> *No time to say 'Hello.' 'Goodbye.' I'm late, I'm late, I'm late."*

But we all too often confuse working hard with getting results.

The POP model disciplines us to have more action with less motion..
Less activity. But more results.

Here is the model:

**P**urpose

**O**utcomes

**P**rocess

Before undertaking any activity, one clarifies:

What is the **Purpose** of this activity? **(P)**

What are the specific **Outcomes** we hope to achieve? **(O)**

And only then, what **Process** will we use to achieve these outcomes? **(P)**

Let's look more closely at each step in the model:

## PURPOSE

Our work should always begin with purpose.
Purpose answers the question: "Why?"
> *Why am I/we doing this?*

Purpose is important at the meta level:
> *Why do I/we do this work?*

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[2] The POP Model was created by Leslie Sholl Jaffe & Randy Alford.

But it's equally important to consider in all our daily acts of leadership:
*Why this meeting? Why this phone call?*

As leaders, there's always more to do than can be done.
Before embarking on any significant expenditure of time & energy, we want to ask:
*Why? For what reason?*
If you don't have a good answer to this question – consider not proceeding.

You may have heard the well-known axiom: *"Slow down to speed up."*
The failure to invest the time up-front to focus our energy is one of the greatest sources of wasted time.

Purpose – the first step in the POP model – helps ensure that our energy is spent on things that matter.

## OUTCOMES

*"It is more important to know where you are going than to get there quickly. Do not mistake activity for achievement."*

– Mabel Newcomber, American educator

Once our purpose is clear, we next want to define the specific outcomes we seek to accomplish. The more clearly we can define our desired outcomes, the more clearly we can design the most effective process to achieve them.

*What are the specific results we want to achieve that will help us fulfill the purpose?*
*What will be different in the world?*
*What would make it worth the expenditure of energy?*

Results can include things that are visible, concrete, and easy to measure.
Or they can be relatively less tangible outcomes like increased commitment, greater understanding, better partnership, etc.

Do not proceed to planning until you are clear on exactly the outcomes you want to create.

## PROCESS

Only now, after being clear on our purpose – why?
and the specific outcomes we wish to accomplish – what?
are we ready to begin planning the process to use – how?

*"Failing to plan is planning to fail."*

– Effie Jones, educator

Sounds rather obvious, right?
But, way too often, instead of planning, it's: *"Fire! Ready! Aim!"*

Or . . . we remember to plan for the "big" events – the campaign, the big meeting . . .
But fail to apply the same rigor to the thousands of "small" actions that actually make up the great majority of our days and life.

You all know how to plan. But the simple, revolutionary point of the Fabulous POP model is to ensure that our plans – the processes we create – are actually designed to serve the purpose and accomplish the outcomes we intend.

This may seem so elementary that it hardly seems worth mentioning.
Except . . .

Have you ever rushed from a meeting into an important phone call without having carefully though the purpose and outcomes of the call, or how best to structure the telephone meeting?

How many times do we get enamored of a particular process that may or may not be precisely targeted to the results we need?

How many times do we do things the way we've always done them . . . because it's the way we've always done them?
How many times do we launch into activities with any planning?

As shown in the model below, each layer of the POP model is subordinate to the one above it. If at any point there is confusion or uncertainty, work your way back up the model and re-check for clarity and the linkages and alignment involved.
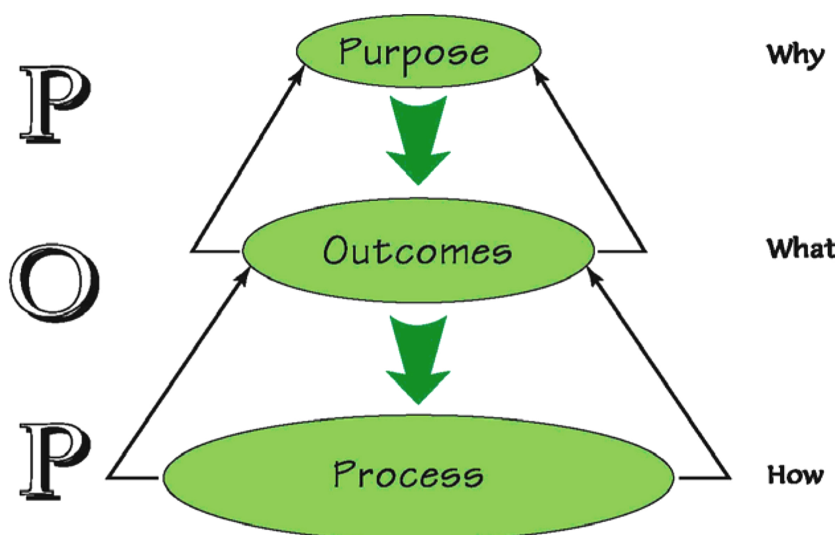


Graphic courtesy of Leslie Jaffe and Randall Alford

## THE POP MODEL AND MEETING PLANNING

We want our meetings to be a productive use of our time and energy.
On average, people at work spend 37% of their time in meetings. But according to research, up to 50% of that time is wasted. Think how many times you have been in meetings with people giving reports of no real interest except to the people talking.

The POP model is perfect for ensuring highly productive meetings.
The purpose and outcomes for the overall meeting should be clarified.
Then – here's the breakthrough notion:

No item should go on the agenda without:

1) a clear purpose and specific outcomes that are worth the time and attention

2) a process that will likely achieve the purpose and outcomes in the allotted time

Critical questions regarding **Purpose** in planning a meeting agenda:

1) Is the Purpose clear?

2) Is the Purpose relevant and of interest to most of the people attending?

3) Is the Purpose sufficient to warrant the investment of time?
   (Multiply the number of people attending x the amount of time allotted
   to calculate total organizational energy.)

Critical questions regarding **Outcomes** in planning a meeting agenda:

1) Are the Outcomes clear and specific? A useful guide to action?

2) Do the Outcomes advance the Purpose?

3) What would success look like? How will you know if you have accomplished your Outcome?

4) Are the Outcomes of sufficient importance to warrant the investment of time?

5) Are the Outcomes realistic given the amount of available time and the information/expertise present in the room?

Critical questions regarding **Process** in planning a meeting agenda:

1) How exactly will the Process deliver the outcomes?

2) What kind of facilitation will be needed to ensure success?

3) Where might there likely be breakdowns in the Process?

4) How will you handle breakdowns if they arise?

Walk through the Process you plan to use in the room, and see if you think it likely to deliver the outcomes you want. If not . . . Find another process. Or don't waste the group's time.

**REMEMBER**: Create the POP for the meeting in its entirety. Then create a POP for every single agenda item.

## THE POP MODEL AND COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

Another important application of POP is to support having successful courageous conversations. (See our tool *The Courageous Conversations Toolkit* available at: atctools.org/resources/tools-for-transformation)

Far too often, we launch into critical conversations without clear intent, much less a clear plan to accomplish what we desire. Perhaps we have some vague thought of "wanting to get something off our chest" or to "clear the air."

Without clear intent, our attempts to clean up interpersonal messes may go badly, once again demonstrating to ourselves that we should avoid difficult situations.

> *"Our plans miscarry because they have no aim. When one does not*
> *know to which port one is sailing, no wind is favorable."*
> – Seneca, Roman philosopher

The odds of having successful courageous conversations improve greatly if we begin by establishing a POP:

**What is the purpose of this conversation?**
Examples:

- To build trust.

- To gain alignment around the proposal.

- To seek an improvement in John's performance.

**What outcome(s) am I seeking?**
For example:

If the Purpose is to build trust, the Outcome might be:

We each understand each other's needs and perspectives on _____.

Or, if the Purpose is to gain alignment around a proposal, the Outcomes might be:

- Everyone understands the proposal.

- Everyone is on board to move forward.

- Each team member understands what they personally will do going forward.

**Once the Purpose and Outcomes have been established, you can begin to consider what Process to use for the conversation.**
For example:
**Purpose**:  to build trust
**Outcome**:  We each understand each others needs and perspectives on ____.
**Process**:

- We will begin by my interviewing him about his needs and concerns.
- Once he feels complete, I will share mine.
- We will then look for areas of overlap and possible ways to move forward.

Bring care and greater success to your meetings, your courageous conversations, and all your acts of leadership, by disciplined use of the fabulous POP model.

*"If you don't know where you are going,*
*you will probably end up somewhere else."*
– Yogi Berra

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