



*We Help You Focus Clearly,
Organize Effectively,
And Act With Courage*

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When should you consider a Future Search?

- When you have an important issue or opportunity.
- When the issue or opportunity requires the cooperation of multiple people with different points of view.
- When traditional planning methods do not seem to work or take too much time to “trickle down.”
- When you want to get a lot of people on the same page at the same time.
- When you want to improve communication, cooperation, and appreciation of different points of view.
- When you are willing to work as a peer and discover the future together with others.

When should you pass?

- When you do not want to put in the full 16 hours (spaced over three days) required for a successful conference.
- When you do not have the time or inclination to plan it well. (At least two months lead time and minimum one day with a steering committee.)
- When you are not committed to inviting people whose views you may dislike.
- When you are already committed to a solution or believe you have the right answers.
- When you are not committed to supporting whatever results or vision might emerge from the dialog. □

Future Search

A new way of planning together

Have you ever wondered how to get the many people involved in an issue into the same room and avoid endless speeches and arguments? There are some new large-group methods that deliver promising results. One is Future Search.

A Future Search is a 16-hour workshop in which people with diverse interests work together on a common issue. Future Search uses special methods to help people understand their past, acknowledge their present, develop a common vision, and create action plans for the future.

What makes Future Search powerful is that *everyone who has a stake in the issue is represented*. An average meeting size is 64 to 80 people, and can go larger.

A Future Search conference works on five key principles:

1. Picking a business opportunity where people are passionate or concerned.
2. Ensuring a diversity of viewpoints.
3. Focusing on the future and common ground.
4. Thinking globally, and acting locally.
5. Working as peers, by self-managing discussions and action plans.

The results of Future Search conferences are amazing. In meetings like these, people acknowledge and understand their differences, and then seek to discover common ground that all can support. The result is that tremendous power and energy are unleashed that had once been tied up fighting each other.

Here are some examples:

- Following three years of fruitless debate on how to help manufacturers in Massachusetts become more competitive, a statewide Future Search conference was held in December 1993. It yielded a consensus that resulted in legislative support and funding just two months later. One manufacturer said, “What, in the Berkshire Plastics Network, took us seven years was accomplished here in just 16 hours! I would never have believed it.”
- Kansas City citizens had agreed on a goal of becoming “The Child Opportunity Capital” but did not know how to start. They undertook a Future Search in November 1993, to achieve consensus on how to proceed. Ten action teams were formed to cover funding, youth empowerment, services integration, regional collaboration, and volunteer youth programs. Within weeks, major actions were reported and commitments undertaken.

Future Search methodology helps people and organizations create new beginnings together, based on a common vision that is powerfully shared. But it is not for everyone or every situation. Check out the sidebar to see if this might work for you, and give us a call if you are interested in exploring this further. □ *CMP*