

Introduction to
ONION
Workbook



Deepen your clarity at work



Introduction to ONION

What is ONION?

ONION is a framework developed to help individuals, teams and organisations achieve improved **clarity** at work as part of [my Business Coaching practice](#). It's been successfully used by a range of my clients to move from professional and organisational stuckness to **Big Picture and Next Step clarity and action**.

Who can use ONION?

ONION was designed to help my clients dealing with complex work and business situations to develop clarity on two levels – **clarity on the Big Picture and clarity on the Next Step** - so that they could make more effective decisions and achieve better outcomes at work. ONION is for you if **want to move forward and make significant progress at work**.

How do you use this ONION workbook?

You can use the framework to get clarity on your issue or challenge, starting with Outcomes and working through to Next Steps. Each layer of ONION relates to the others, so note down your insights and outputs from each layer and use those insights as you progress.



People: You will get added value from involving others in the three layers where you see this symbol - the second layer (**Now**), the third layer (**Ideas**) and the fifth layer (**Next Steps**).



Pen and Paper: The workbook has spaces for you to write down your insight and outputs. You may want to use your own notebook or additional pieces of paper.

Can we use ONION as a team?

Absolutely! Teams can use ONION very effectively to gain shared clarity, commitment and progress on key challenges. It's a good idea to assign someone to lead/ facilitate.

How long does ONION take?

I've seen participants get great value from a 20 minute demo. In my coaching practice, a typical coaching session tends to be 90 minutes. It's worth spending the most time in the first two layers, **Outcome** and **Now**.

This is just an introduction to ONION, there's more, including further tools in [my newsletter](#). If you'd like to go deeper or find out more about how working with me can help you or your organisation grow your clarity and results, go to the [website](#) or [get in touch](#).

Good luck on your journey to greater clarity and more effective action at work!


R. A. Williams

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Clarity at work

 **O**utcome – where do you *want to be*?

 **N**ow – where are you *now*?

 **I**deas – what *could* you do?

 **O**ptions – what *should* you do?

 **N**ext Steps – what *will* you do?

Outcome

Where do you want to be?

Define a clear vision of where you'd like to be

*Destination defines direction, so start with the end in mind. What do you want? Get clear on a desired Outcome - a situation which you can work towards in a number of different ways. The key is **clarity and specificity**.*



Some questions:

- Where do I want to be in this area?
- What do I *really* want?
- What does it look like? (be specific)
- What's my timeframe?



Tips:

- Take your time here; defining your Outcome clearly is **essential**
- An Outcome (unlike a goal) takes into account your wider context, it is a desired situation rather than a discrete item to be ticked off a list
- An Outcome (unlike a vision) is specific enough that you should be able to describe it and measure your progress towards it
- Don't get hung up on fixed solutions; an Outcome should be flexible enough that it can be achieved in a number of ways



My desired Outcome is:

Now

Where are you now?

Get a clear picture of where you are currently

Now you know where you're going, use that clarity to understand better where you are currently in relation to where you'd like to be. The key is to be **objective** and **resourceful**.




Some questions:

- What have I already done or got towards my Outcome?
- What resources/ support to do I have to hand?
- What resources/ support could I access?
- What's getting in the way?
- What resources/ support do I need?
- What still needs doing?



Tips:

- Use your Outcome to help you focus on what's **relevant** in your current situation
- Begin with what you have and what you've already done *and then* thinking about what you need and what you're lacking
- It's a good idea to involve other people in this layer as they can help you to gain objectivity on your current situation. *People who already understand your professional situation well will generally be most helpful here.* 



Given where I want to get to, this is my situation Now:

Ideas

What could you do?

Take time to surface what's possible

Clearly defining your **Outcome** and your **Now** enables you to more fully explore ways of achieving your Outcome. Get all of your Ideas on the table, get other perspectives. The key is **openness** and **exploration**, avoid analysis at this stage – you need to **access** your Ideas **before you assess** them.



Some questions:


- What would I do if money / time/ resources were no object?
- What would I do if I had half the time/ money/ resources available?
- What's the most obvious/ least obvious thing I could do?
- What would I do if I had two weeks/ 3 months/ a year to do this?
- What would I do if I were my mother?/ my closest friend?/ eight years old? [substitute people who are different from you]
- What's a creative way of doing this?/ What if I did it this way?
- What have I seen in other contexts that might work here?

And **most** importantly :

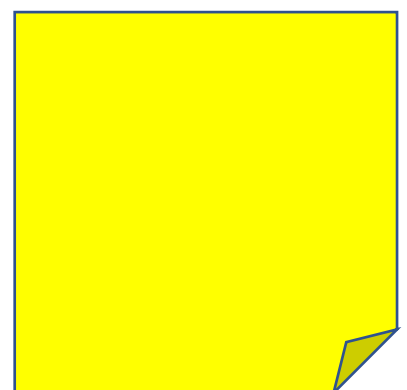
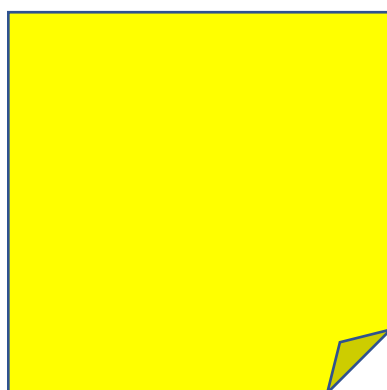
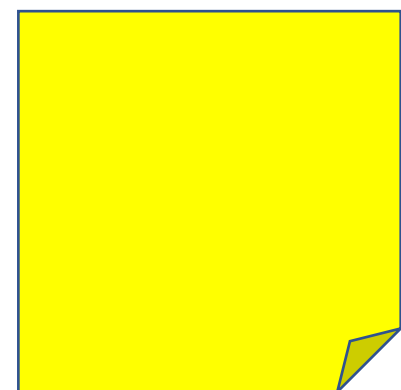
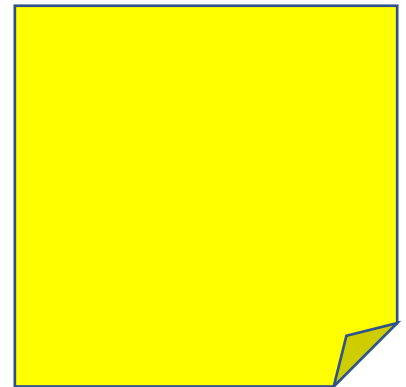
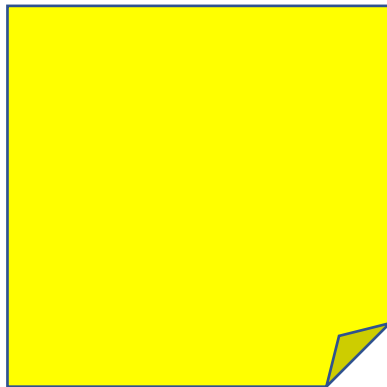
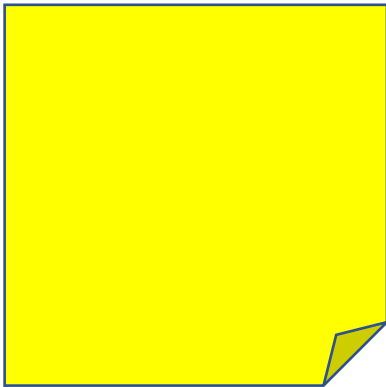
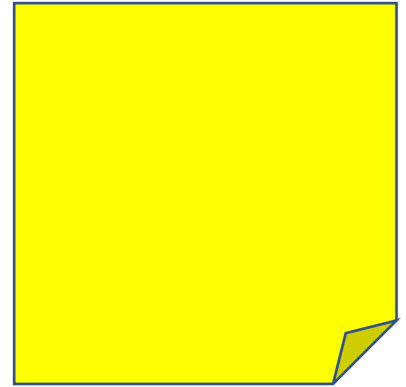
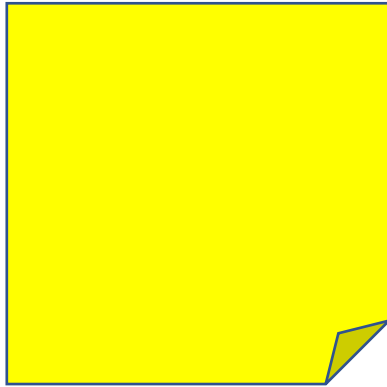
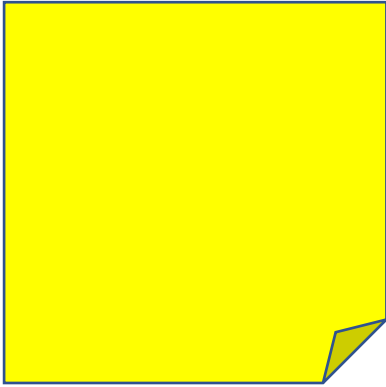
- **What else** could I do?



Tips:

- Just get the Ideas out, without judgement.
- Aim for at least 5-7 Ideas. You may be tempted to settle for the first couple of ideas but push through and try to enjoy the process of exploration
- This is a great layer to get the perspectives *others who are unfamiliar with your issue or work* as they'll bring fresh perspectives to your thinking. If you do this, just write down their ideas or questions, don't judge/ analyse 
- If possible, take a break, do something else and come back to it
- Pin your list of ideas up where you can see and add to them

What Could You Do? - Ideas



ptions

What *should* you do?

Filter for what looks most effective and feasible to pursue

Now you've got a range of *Ideas* on the table, you can assess them using your **Outcome Layer** and your **Now Layer** to determine what matters most (your priorities) and determine which **Options** on which to focus. The key is **priority** and **strategy**.



Some questions (work through these in order):

- What are my key priorities when it comes to my **Outcome** (e.g. speed/ cost/ quality/ sustainability/ client engagement)?
- Which are the three most relevant/ important (**Outcome**)?
- Of these three, which one matters most? (be ruthless)
- And then which one?
- Given the resources I have and can access (outputs from **Now** layer), what looks most feasible?



Tips:

- Aim for 1-3 Options. If you have more, filter further
- Use your outputs from your **Outcome Layer** and **Now Layer** to help establish your priorities
- Be disciplined and ruthless in ranking your priorities - remember that not everything can be equally important
- Use your priorities to establish your **Options**
- You might find that you can tweak or even combine **Ideas** as you filter them



What Should You Do? - Working Out Your Options

My priorities* are...

My top three priorities (from most to least important) are...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Applying these priorities to my Ideas, my best Options are...

** - Use the outputs from your Outcome and Now Layers will help here.*

Next Steps

What *will* you do?


Determine, design and pursue concrete actions

Now you've worked out your most promising Options, you can design some clear Next Steps to pursue. The key is **realistic, concrete, time-framed** actions to which you feel committed

Some questions:

- What will I do in the next week/month?
- How will this get me closer to my desired Outcome?
- By when?
- What will success look like?/ How will I measure success?
- Who else is involved in making this happen?
- How committed do I feel to this plan?
- What might get in the way?

Tips:

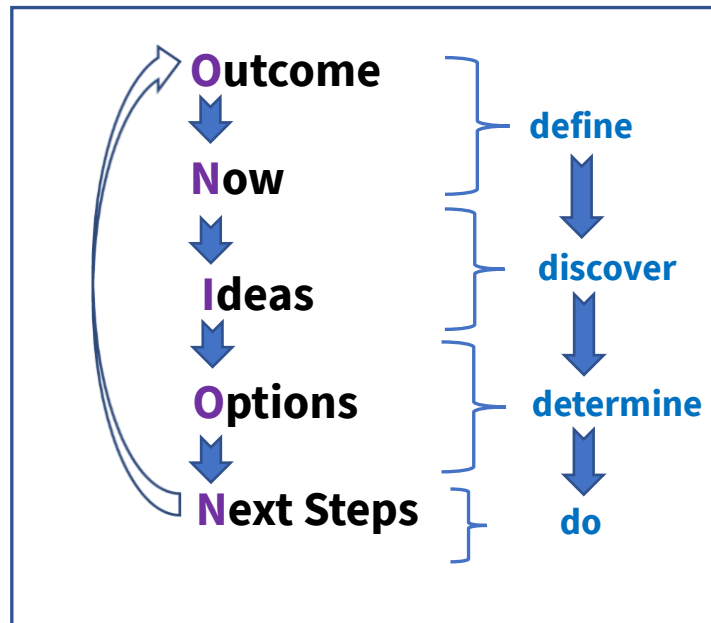
- Good Next Steps start as soon as possible
- Put a timeframe around your Next Steps (e.g. "I'll do X by Y")
- If you can, ask someone to provide positive accountability by checking in on your progress on Next Steps (and don't bite their head off when they do!) 
- Ensure that Next Steps are manageable - if a Next Step looks like it will take more than a couple of weeks, consider breaking it down further
- Don't map out more than a couple of steps ahead; once you've done those, you can plan and move on to further steps
- It helps to *write down and pin up* your Next Steps somewhere you can see them



My Next Steps are....

Action	By when?	Notes	Done?





“Start by doing what is necessary, then what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”

Francis of Assisi



About the author: R.A. Williams is a Business & Strategy Coach who specialises in working with high performing and entrepreneurially-minded individuals, teams and organisations to get the clarity they need to achieve sustainable success in their work or business. Find out more at www.rwilliamscoaching.co.uk.

