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1. WHAT IS A LINEAR COURSE?

A linear course is one which is fully assessed at the end of study. In the case of A Level Business, most candidates will take all their assessments at the end of two years of study.

This means three examinations during the May/June examination session. All of the examinations must be taken within the same examination session. For example:

A candidate who starts a two year A Level Business course in September of 2015 would take all three examinations in May/June 2017.

If the candidate wanted to re-sit any examination in 2018 it will require all three examinations again. No marks will carry over to a new examination session.

This is in direct contrast to previous 'modular' courses, where candidates could re-sit individual components and take examinations in different sessions.

2. WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF A LINEAR COURSE?

2.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS

Every examination may cover every element of the specification. Teachers must therefore have covered everything in the specification to A Level standard before candidates sit the examination.

If more than one teacher is delivering the course there must be collaboration to make sure that candidates can use content from any area of the A Level Business specification in combination with any other area of the specification for every paper.

The most important implication for teachers, therefore, is that there must be a combined approach to the course, which builds in some time for candidates to look at businesses as a whole, not just in terms of individual functions.

As you can see from the tables below, the variation between papers is no longer about the content of the specification, but about the context of the business.

There is also parity of marks between the three papers and a standard two hour examination time to prepare for.

H430 – 'Old' Business Studies A Level

Examination	Details	Specification content	Type of business
F291 – An Introduction to Business	60 Marks 1 hour paper 20% of total A Level	The nature of business Classification of business Objectives Other influences	Any
F292 – Business Functions	90 Marks 2 hour paper 30% of total A Level	Marketing Operations Management People in Organisations Accounting and Finance	Any
F293-F296 – Option papers	60 Marks 2 hour paper 20% of total A Level	Further Marketing Further Business Production Further People in Organisations Further Accounting and Finance	Any
F297 – Strategic Management	90 Marks 2 hour paper 30% of total A Level	Business objectives and strategy Business analysis External influences Change	Any

With effect from Sept 2015 the above structure is now replaced by:

H431 - 'New' Business A Level

Examination	Details	Specification content	Type of business
Component 01* Operating in a local business environment	80 Marks 2 hour paper 33.33% of total A Level	Any	A small/local business
Component 02* The UK business environment	80 Marks 2 hour paper 33.33% of total A Level	Any	A national business
Component 03* The global business environment	80 Marks 2 hour paper 33.33% of total A Level	Any	A global business

2.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR CANDIDATES

Candidates must approach all three A Level components with a complete and comprehensive knowledge of the specification. They will be assessed at full A Level standard in every examination.

This is a different system to many of the GCSEs and other qualifications which candidates may have done before A Level study. For example the current GCSE Business Studies does have a linear format in terms of the examinations being taken at the end of the qualification, but the content from each examination is only on a specific part of the specification.

Therefore candidates must find new ways to learn, retain and revise content for A Level Business that are more suitable to the new linear courses.

2.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR CENTRES

OCR will provide more detail on specific rules and regulations surrounding centre administration, but there are certain non-specific implications which may affect centres.

- The AS qualification is a stand-alone qualification which does not count towards A Level certification.
- No examinations in the first year of study (often Year 12) unless centres choose to take the stand-alone AS qualification. This can lead to a greatly increased time for teaching in the first year.
- 'One chance' for candidates in every examination and a full year before a second attempt at the whole qualification. This may lead to a greater emphasis on getting it right first time and potentially to more year 14 students.

- An increased importance for good centre based assessment to provide predictions and forecast outcomes. In the past many centres used AS modules to provide realistic predictions.

3. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A LINEAR COURSE?

A linear course has many benefits which can be exploited in A Level Business:

- The higher level skills of analysis and evaluation can be developed further through two years of study. With the 'old' A Level, this development was assessed by an increasing emphasis on the skills in the levels of response between the AS modules and the A2 modules. This meant that candidates were required to develop at the rate set by the specification.
- With the 'new' A Level, candidates can develop at their own pace over two years and teachers can choose when to introduce the skills as appropriate.
- Content can be taught in a more 'logical' pattern. One of the frustrations of a modular course can be the need to stop teaching a topic because the module has an 'un-natural' break in it. A good example of this, from the 'old' A Level is in Marketing where market research was taught in F291 and the market segmentation was in F292 and consumer buyer behaviour was in F293. With a linear approach there can be a logical progression from one to another building on candidate's knowledge and understanding.



- There can be more time for the 'fun' aspects of Business as a subject. These might include year long activities such as running Young Enterprise in conjunction with Business in Year 12 through to business visits and speakers which may have taken a backseat with the continuous pressure of modular examinations.
- There may be time saved which was previously used for preparation and sitting of modular examinations.
- The structure is better suited to the integrated and holistic approach which is an essential feature of business behaviour and interaction.

4. WHAT ARE THE DRAWBACKS OF A LINEAR COURSE?

A linear course may also have some drawbacks:

- Candidates only have one opportunity to sit each examination, so mistakes are very costly. This requires a significant change to the culture of most schools and colleges where the ability to re-sit has been utilised to great effect. Many candidates expect the opportunity to 'have another go' and teachers will have to change this culture over time.
- Teachers will have to spend a significant amount of time preparing summative assessment exercises, especially at the beginning of the specification, because there will be a limited amount of specimen and past papers to use. Many centres do 'mock' examinations before each modular examination. This can mean more than four practices during two years. For the first sitting of the examinations one or perhaps two specimen papers may be available which is unlikely to be enough for most teachers.
- Candidate's retention of knowledge will have a far bigger impact on the overall grade than it has in the past. In the 'old' A Level each module built on the one before. So to take F291 required only knowledge of that module. However each 'new' component will require the knowledge of the whole syllabus. This is going to mean that teachers will have to teach strategies to retain and revise knowledge to a far higher level than previously required.
- Many teachers who started teaching in the past two decades are unlikely to have encountered linear courses. This will require INSET and training to cope with the requirements.

- What has been learnt and understood, last week, last term and even last year must be continuously used in an integrated way throughout the course and for this integrating themes and approaches will be an increasingly essential part of the teaching and learning framework.

5. USING SCHEME OF WORK MODELS TO ASSIST TEACHING AND LEARNING

How the scheme of work for a course is structured must reflect the needs of each individual centre and set of candidates. None of the following provide a detailed scheme of work but are suggestions upon which a centre might choose to base their scheme of work. Each has advantages and disadvantages and a teacher may find a much better solution than any given here. However these may provide a starting point for centres to discuss how a linear course must be thought of in a different way to a modular course.

5.1 WHY USE THEM?

Businesses have one over-riding objective, to use resources, skills and information to add value by producing products or services which can be sold at a profit. To do this successfully a business must be structured and organised efficiently, collecting within itself a sufficient and efficient combination of stakeholders and responding successfully to the social, technological, economic and legal environment in which it operates.

In the past, each modular examination (apart from a final synoptic one) would only be able to assess a part of the whole subject. As such schemes of work tended to be focussed on individual modules.

Now the specification sets out to ensure that business building processes and the functions that must be integrated together are all understood. Gradually, as this understanding of these building blocks is developed business must be seen as integrated and holistic. The assessment of the subject (the examinations) relies on every student having a holistic approach. Therefore it may be wise to discuss how different models may assist in developing a holistic approach to business from the very beginning of the course.

There are many models which help us to do this. These can be used as appropriate depending upon the scheme of work developed.





1. THE TRADITIONAL APPROACH

The traditional approach is to teach the course in a very similar way to the 'old' A Level. This would cause minimal disruption to current schemes of work. The course starts with how to describe a business, and its objectives, moves through the business functions and finishes with strategy, the external environment and change.

An Introduction to Business

- Enterprise
- Business sectors
- Types of business
- Franchises and franchisees
- Business functions
- Business size and growth
- External growth

Business Objectives

- Different stakeholder and business objectives
- Stakeholders
- Mission statement
- Corporate social responsibility (CSR)
- Business plan
- Risk and uncertainty
- Opportunity cost
- Models of strategic choice
- Measures of Performance: financial and non- financial

Human Resource Management	Operations Management	Marketing	Accounting and Finance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Human resource management objectives -Organisation -Communication -Workforce planning -Recruitment -Selection -Training -Appraisal and workforce performance -Redundancy and dismissal -Functions of management -Leadership -Motivation -Employer/ employee relations -External influences on Human resource management -The HR strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Operations management objectives -Added value -Innovation, research and development -Methods of production -Services -Project management -Productivity -Economies and diseconomies of scale -Capacity utilisation and management -Stock control -Lean production -Technology -Internal quality standards -External quality standards -Services -Location and logistics -External influences on operations management -The operations strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Marketing objectives -Marketing resources -Identifying customer needs -Anticipating consumer needs -Customers and consumers -The product life cycle -The marketing mix -Product -Price -Place -Promotion -Service marketing -External influences on marketing -The marketing strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Accounting and finance objectives -Sources of finance -Accounting concepts -Costs, revenue and profit -Break-even analysis -Investment appraisal -Budgets and variances -Cash-flow -Working capital -Income statements -Statement of financial position -Ratio analysis -External influences on accounting and finance -The finance strategy

External Influences

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The market, market size and growth -Demand and supply -Market forces -Physical and non-physical markets -Competition -Market dominance -Global context -International trade and free trade -The European Union 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Emerging markets and the global environment -Political factors -Economics factors -Social factors -Technological factors -The digital revolution -Ethical factors -Legal factors -Environmental factors -External factors and influences
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- External influences on human resource management
- External influences on operations management
- External influences on marketing
- External influences on accounting and finance

Business Strategy

- Strategy and Implementation
- Contingency planning and crisis management
- Forecasting
- Decision Making
- Decision trees
- Ansoff's matrix
- Conflicts in business decision making

- The HR strategy
- The operations strategy
- The marketing strategy
- The finance strategy

Change

- Causes and effect of change
- Managing change



2. A STAKEHOLDER APPROACH

The business will be most likely to be successful when it acts in the best interests of all of its stakeholders. The specification requires candidates to be able to analyse and evaluate any business decision or outcome in the light of the perceptions and expectations which each group of stakeholders may have.

The stakeholder approach requires splitting the specification into areas which reflect the interests of both internal and external stakeholders of the firm. This approach requires much more reorganisation of the content, but an idea can be gained by the matrix model below. This model is a suggestion of how content could be taught by stakeholder group, but there are many other ways of organising the content.

	Internal stakeholders				External stakeholders		
	Owners	Employees	Suppliers	Competitors	Community	State	Environment
Introduction to business							
Business objectives and strategy							
External influences							
Change							
Human resource management							
Operations management							
Marketing							
Accounting and finance							



3 .THE LIFECYCLE OF A BUSINESS

Many schemes of work will start at this point which is, in itself a planned and integrated set of decisions. The prospective business owner must start with the resources and skills which are possessed or can be acquired and consider what can be produced and effectively marketed. These decisions are made within a given market domain, the competition that is there and the economic conditions which prevail.

New businesses have to fight for survival in a situation where competitors will fight and credit will be hard to find until a reputation is established. This makes sufficient finance and good initial research important criteria for success. The decisions then move on to an established business and analysis can be made of the similarities and differences between the two.

	A new business	An established business
Introduction to business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Enterprise -Business sectors -Types of business -Franchises and franchisees -Business functions -Business size and growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Enterprise -Business sectors -Types of business -Franchises and franchisees -Business functions -Business size and growth -External growth
Business objectives and strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Different stakeholder and business objectives -Stakeholders -Mission statement -Business plan -Risk and uncertainty -Opportunity cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Corporate social responsibility (CSR) -Models of strategic choice -Contingency planning and crisis management -Measures of Performance: financial and non-financial -Forecasting -Decision Making -Decision trees -Ansoff's matrix -Conflicts in business decision making
External influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The market, market size and growth -Demand and supply -Market forces -Physical and non-physical markets -Competition -Political factors -Economics factors -Social factors -Technological factors -The digital revolution -Ethical factors -Legal factors -Environmental factors -External factors and influences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Market dominance -Global context -International trade and free trade -The European Union -Emerging markets and the global environment -Political factors -Economics factors -Social factors -Technological factors -The digital revolution -Ethical factors -Legal factors -Environmental factors -External factors and influences
Change		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Causes and effect of change -Managing change



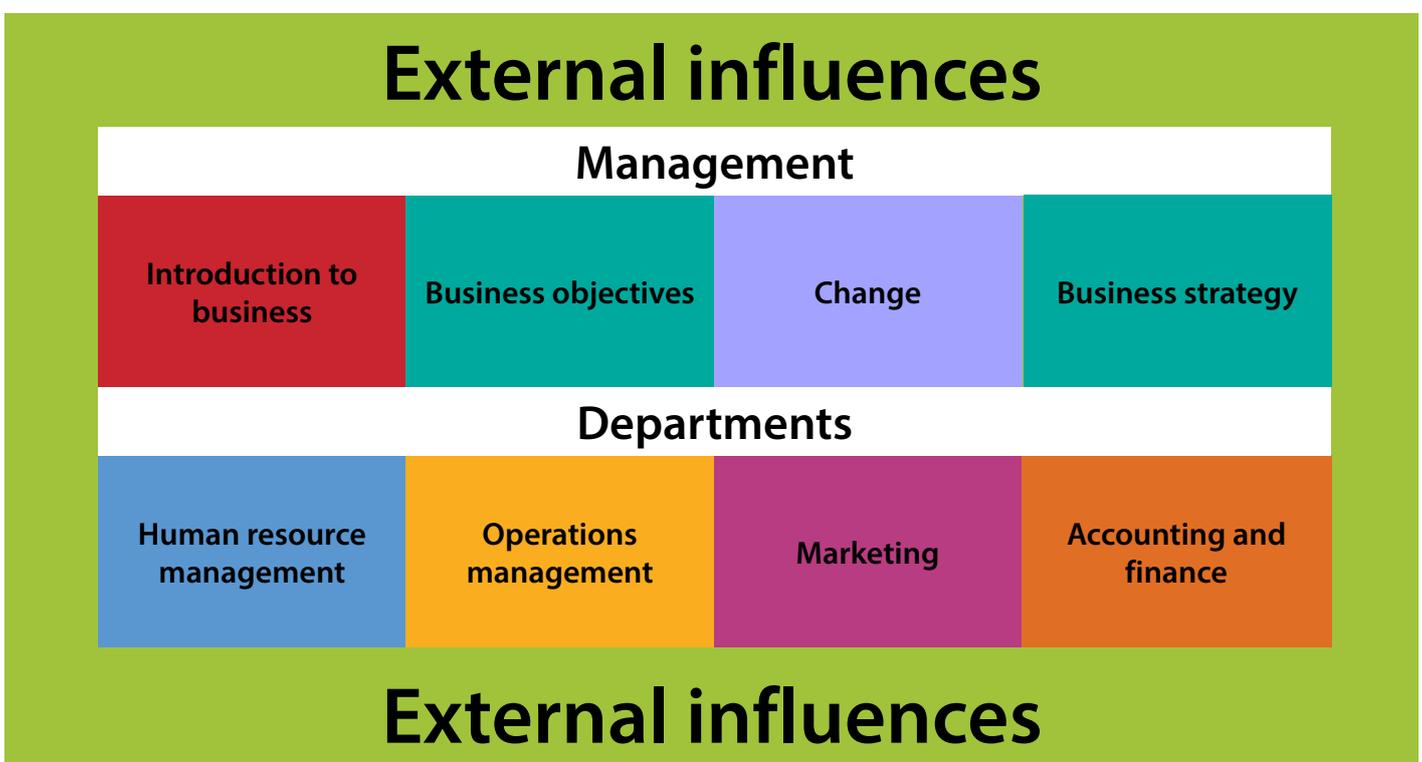
	A new business	An established business
Human resource management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Human resource management objectives -Organisation -Communication -Workforce planning -Recruitment -Selection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Human resource management objectives -Organisation -Communication -Training -Appraisal and workforce performance -Redundancy and dismissal -Functions of management -Leadership -Motivation -Employer/ employee relations -External influences on operations management -The operations strategy
Operations management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Operations management objectives -Added value -Technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Innovation, research and development -Methods of production -Project management -Productivity -Economies and diseconomies of scale -Capacity utilisation and management -Stock control -Lean production -Internal quality standards -External quality standards -Services -Location and logistics -External influences on operations management -The operations management strategy
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Marketing objectives -Marketing resources -Identifying customer needs -Anticipating consumer needs -Customers and consumers -The product life cycle -The marketing mix -Product -Price -Place -Promotion -Service marketing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The product life cycle -The marketing mix -Product -Price -Place -Promotion -Service marketing -External influences on marketing -The marketing strategy
Accounting and finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Accounting and finance objectives -Sources of finance -Costs, revenue and profit -Break-even analysis -Cash-flow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Accounting and finance objectives -Sources of finance -Accounting concepts -Investment appraisal -Budgets and variances -Cash-flow -Income statements -Statement of financial position -Ratio analysis -External influences on accounting and finance -The finance strategy

4. THE CULTURE AND ORGANISATION OF A BUSINESS

Most businesses start small and continued success usually depends upon growth. Organisation is essential even where one person does everything but as growth takes place it requires the employment of others, delegation and control; in terms of what they do, the attitude as to how they should be led and motivated and a structure within which they will work with others.

There are three model groups which assist teaching and learning of this element.

a. The functional organisation chart which sets out the relationships between all the management and employees of a business in terms of the lines and levels in which they work. There are a number of different variants of this model, the standard departmental one, one which shows relationships in terms of product teams and one which shows organisations in which the same employee may work in different roles in the business. A school/college is a good example e.g. the same employee may be in one role within a department, in another in relationship outside activities and yet another.



b. A Venn diagram which emphasises the extent to which all but the very minor decisions impinge upon the work of all or most of the others.

e.g. if a production department decides to increase output this may require new investment and payment of staff (finance); new employees or further training (human resources) and the search for and supply of new markets (marketing).



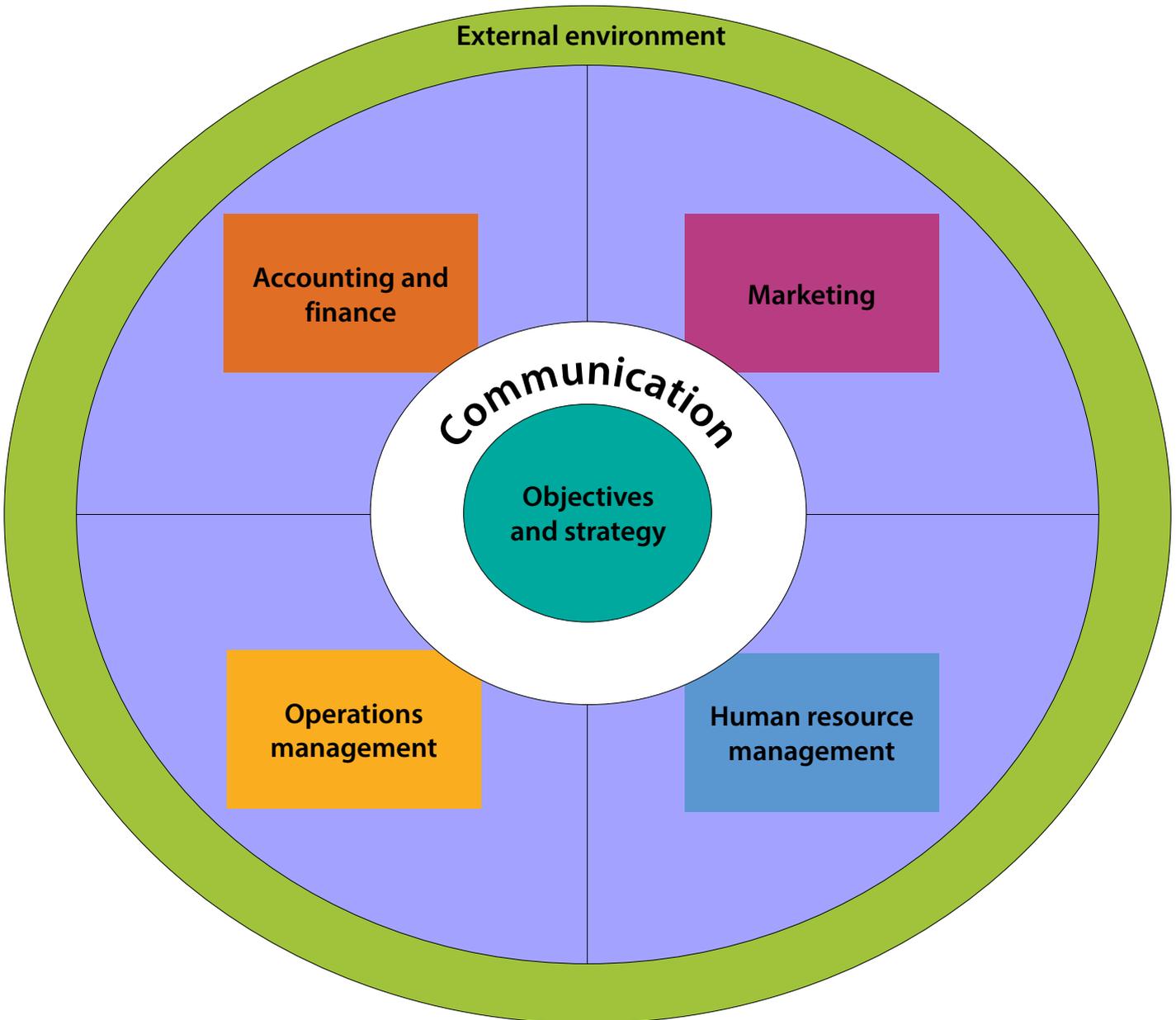
c. Decision models.

Simple or habitual decisions often take very little time or thought but others need to be planned to ensure they are within the resources and objectives of the business and that the risks involved have been considered.

At its centre are the influences of the business objectives and strategy and the way these are communicated.

Around its circumference are the external factors which

will impinge on the decisions that can be made, the way they should be thought through and their likely outcomes. In each of its segments are the stages of the process from original idea to the outcome and its effects. The whole model is circular to make the point that all decisions arise from former ones and lead to subsequent ones.



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