VIS-IT™ Technique for Prioritization
The Nominal Group Technique

In groups, it is often useful to gain a consensus about priorities for decisions and action. There are questions like the following, which need to be resolved:
- Given opportunities before us, in which order should we pursue them?
- Given the risks we've identified, how do they rank in danger?
- Given the decision factors we need to consider, which are the most important?

Let's assume that by using the Thinking with Hexagons technique, a group arrived at seven cluster labels for the ideas generated by this Focus Question: "What are the issues and opportunities we must address in order to meet next year's revenue growth goals?" Examples of idea cluster labels might include: Sales Training, New Products, Leadership, Delivery Times, Service Quality, Advertising, and Pricing. Now, let's assume the group wanted to reach a consensus on the rank of importance of these seven areas (factors).

The facilitation steps involved in using this prioritization technique are:

Step 1: Write each cluster label on a separate Big Idea Pad (BIP) sheet, and prefix each label with a capital letter, i.e., A, B, C, and so on. When there are seven clusters, then there would be seven BIP sheets with cluster names, prefixed by A, B, C, D, E, F, and G.

Step 2: Ask each participant to write the letters A through G in a column on a card or pad. Then, next to each letter, ask each individual to assign a numerical score to each letter, with a 7 going to the their highest rank, and a score of 1 to their lowest rank. Give the participants time to reflect and decide on their priorities.

Step 3: The facilitator, who may also be involved in the ranking, now creates a column of the letters on a flip chart or a white board.

Step 4: Beginning with the A factor, the facilitator asks each member of the group, in turn, for the score *given only that factor*, and records that score on the chart in a row alongside the associated letter. After all the scores for the first factor (A), then the facilitator will go on to the next factor (B), and so on until all scores for all factors have been offered.

Step 5: When all participants have given their scores for all factors, then the facilitator adds up the total score for each factor, and records the sum alongside

each letter. After all factors have been evaluated, the factors are ranked by their total scores, the top total score earning the top rank.

Step 6: The BIP sheets, on which the decision factors are written, are then positioned, by rank, with the highest rank on top. In this way, the group has reached a consensus about the priorities for their work. New idea processing activities will begin aimed at action planning.

Priority Ranking of Matrix Thinking Row Headings

The Nominal Group Technique can also be very useful when a group is involved with the Factor Analysis Matrix technique.

Decision Factors Below	City A	City B	City C
Workforce Quality			
Salary Rates			
Building Costs			
Air & Water Quality			
Culture			
Etc.			

When using the Factor Analysis Matrix Technique, it is often very useful to rank the decision factors before assessing the option choices. In the example below, involving the selection of a city for a new office facility, some decision factors may not be initially known, and some may be more important than others. In that case, additional factors should be surfaced and then all of them ranked with the highest priority at the top of the factor-heading list. This ranking can be performed as described above, with each decision factor being evaluated by using the Nominal Group Technique.

About Thinking Tools LLC (formerly Vision Works LLC)

The PURPOSE of Thinking Tools LLC is to develop and offer highly effective team-support tools and methods for innovative thinking, facilitation and training. Our VIS-IT tools focus thinking to generate greater insight, creativity and problem-solving capabilities! Our VIS-IT techniques make teams more productive! Together, our products and methods enable anyone to conduct Better meetings. On purpose. Please share your experiences and comments on this technique at www.facebook.com/thinkingtoolsnet.