



Concepts, Tools, and Disciplines

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Work is one of the primary ways we add value to others' lives and bring purpose to our own. When we think about how to build [high-trust relationships](#) in our work to create a desired reality, we rely on concepts, tools, and disciplines (CTDs). Time-tested CTDs enhance our ability to more efficiently and effectively get smart stuff done (GSSD).

Concepts are time-tested insights that make it easier to turn our [Vision](#) into reality. Leaders must cultivate a shared understanding of their concepts and develop ways to cascade their meaning and purpose all the way down and across their organization.

Tools are the programs, documents, frameworks, and devices that help us meet the requirements associated with our roles, accountabilities, and responsibilities (RARs). For example, tools simplify completing tasks by breaking down a problem into smaller steps to take or questions to answer.

Disciplines are the applied best practices, like meetings, that help teams align and stay on track toward their goals. We adopt these means to implement, reconsider, and revise what we learned or gained from our tools.



CONCEPTS



TOOLS



DISCIPLINES

Context

We use every one of the concepts, tools, and disciplines we write about. Your organization's CTDs and how you use them make up your business operating system (BOS). At Ninety, several of our leaders are also [BOS Coaches](#). They each provide their clients with a specific set of time-tested CTDs.

Your decision to upgrade your BOS by introducing and applying new CTDs is driven by one or more top-level goals. For example, your goal may be to grow your business 15% per year, improve your organization's culture, or reduce the difficulty of navigating the [Stages of Development](#) associated with building a great company. Any improvement to how your organization operates almost always requires adding or replacing specific CTDs within your existing BOS. For example:

- Clarify everyone's RARs with a detailed [Org Chart](#).
- Document the critical aspects of your organization's [Vision](#) (Core Values, go-to-market strategy, and so on).
- Improve how, why, and when your teams hold [meetings](#).
- Establish and practice how you resolve [Issues](#).
- Introduce To-Dos as a way to form short-term [agreements](#) about the work we need to get done.
- Incorporate creating, accounting for, and completing [Rocks](#) as 90-day goals.
- Harness data to help inform how you work with [Scorecards](#).

Whether you have engaged a [BOS Coach](#) or are upgrading your BOS yourself, understanding what, how, and when new CTDs can help you will be crucial to the process. This is the driving force behind our 90u library.

Filtering through Too Many Ideas

It's easy to become overwhelmed by the relentless flow of suggestions our industries, business publications, and social media environments throw at us. An idea only becomes valuable when you gain crystal clarity about what it is (**concept**), have a way of implementing it (**tool**), adopt a method for acting it out, and ingrain it (**discipline**). The reward comes when you leverage that concept, tool, and/or discipline as a force multiplier to do more with less.

Here are two examples that illustrate the power of CTDs.

EXAMPLE 1: FOCUS USING ROCKS

Concept: To achieve your [Compelling and Audacious Goals](#) (CAGs), you need to establish a well-designed set of goals that helps you see a path from here to there. Your 3-Year, 1-Year, and 90-Day Goals (Rocks) help us proceed down that path, beginning with our Rocks, so we are focused on the highest priorities associated with getting from here to there. Planning those Rocks by setting up 3–5 specific Milestones helps to structure and organize your efforts and exponentially increases the likelihood of completing the Rock on time.

FURTHER READING

Our [90u Library](#) contains short informational briefs, guides, workbooks, and assessments, each focusing on a specific concept, tool, or discipline. Here are a few examples of what you can find:

- [Trust Concept Brief](#) — Understand the relationship between trust and achieving your goals.
- [To-Dos Tool Brief](#) — Learn how to use Ninety's To-Dos tool.
- [LAC Discipline Brief](#) — Learn the practices of becoming a world-class leader and coach.





Tool: While creating an action plan is one way to achieve team goals for the quarter, a digital tool like the [Rocks tool](#) in the Ninety platform immensely helps break down those Rocks into specific steps (the Milestones) that are easily tracked and automatically turned into To-Dos that show up during your Weekly Team Meeting. This ensures everyone stays on the same page and accountability is created around them.

Discipline: [Making your team's Rocks SMART](#) (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) is an important way to boost transparency, preserve accountability, and define what success looks like for everyone. This best practice helps to build a strong high-trust, [agreements-based culture](#) as members learn to stay focused and aligned while they work toward a common goal.

EXAMPLE 2: FEEDFORWARD

Concept: Providing meaningful feedforward to team members is an approach that looks forward to solutions instead of looking back through criticism. Feedforward keeps team members engaged, aligned, and connected. We employ the simple idea of keeping our [1-on-1 discussions](#) truthful, specific, and positive (what we call TSP).

Tool: While words in and of themselves are tools, Ninety's [1-on-1 tool](#) also reinforces effective and well-memorialized feedforward. When you're in a Quarterly Discussion, review your team members' past performance according to their Seat, Core Values fit, and your commitments as a leader and a coach through feedforward statements.

Discipline: Supporting team members with truthful, specific, and positive feedforward helps you preserve a healthy culture. Once you've said something harmful, you can't take it back. Having the discipline to keep yourself from saying something regretful in a moment of frustration is crucial for mastering what we refer to as [Lead, Agree, Coach](#), especially during [hard conversations](#).

Applying CTDs

1. **Identify how you currently operate your business.** You're using the concepts, tools, and disciplines of your [BOS](#) to grow and strengthen your business. Leverage this [assessment](#) to help you measure the strength of your Nine Core Competencies so you and your colleagues are crystal clear on your biggest opportunities for improvement. Taking the time to work on your business, not just in it, is essential for continuing on your path through the Stages of Development.
2. **Consider whether your CTDs are multiplying your team's efforts.** Adopting new concepts, tools, or disciplines can be a source of stress for your people. If you and your team determine your current CTDs aren't simplifying, amplifying, or clarifying work, we encourage you to discuss alternatives with your team and BOS Coach. Ensure your team members understand the why behind the change.
3. **Embrace the continuous process of improvement.** Most of us at Ninety had a similar moment during our onboarding experiences: We saw immediate value in upgrading to a Designed BOS and wished our previous employers had implemented similar CTDs (such as effective [meetings](#) and

transparent [goals](#)). We're always adapting and upgrading our CTDs to serve our Ideal Stakeholders while continually researching better ones.

Hopefully Helpful Hints

Not every idea is worth implementing. Generating new ideas is great, but some novel concepts may not help your organization. Create and use [Focus Filters](#) to ensure your plans and practices align well with your [long-term Vision](#).

Share what works. If your team is benefitting from any CTDs, share them with other team leaders to see if they may also benefit. Some of our best processes were developed by a specific group but also proved helpful for others to implement.

Minor improvements can lead to significant outcomes. We've experienced it over and over again: Even small improvements of the concepts, tools, and disciplines we use in our organization can have an exponential impact. These benefits include greater productivity, efficiency, profitability, and other key performance indicators.

Takeaway

Concepts, tools, and disciplines (CTDs) are the means we use to get to an end – completing daily responsibilities, prioritizing our Rocks, executing processes, achieving multi-year goals, and so on.

Finding the right CTDs for your work is one of the surest ways to help your organization focus, align, and thrive. We use CTDs as a strategic framework for organizing our work.

Once you've determined an outcome or a goal, identify the CTDs you'll need to achieve success. These are the concepts that help leaders turn their Vision into reality, the tools they use to align work with the organization's Vision, and the disciplines that help keep teams on track toward their goals.

To discover more impactful resources to grow your organization, visit the [90u Library](#). We're here to help!

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