Focus on Objectives

Criteria, Objectives, and Attributes are terms that are often used interchangeably when making decisions.

Traditionally, people speak of criteria.

We recommend focusing on "objectives" instead of criteria. This helps clarify what should and should not be in the hierarchy -- which we refer to as an "objectives" hierarchy.

A criterion (singular) or criteria (plural) are often thought of in "ordinal" terms, i.e., meeting a criterion.

Consider thinking of criteria as measures for the achievement objectives.

Avoid using attributes in the hierarchy itself. Attributes, such as the size of a car, are useful in helping to identify objectives, but are not in and of themselves objectives. The size of a car is, for example, an attribute. But size is in and of itself not an objective. What objectives related to size might be included in the hierarchy? A large car can carry more people, so capacity of people is an objective. A large car is generally safer, so safety is an objective. A large car is usually less fuel efficient, so fuel efficiency is an objective. A large car is more difficult to park, so ease of parking might be an objective. Focusing on objectives rather than attributes will help in identifying all relevant "wants" and also avoid double counting a "want" that might be related to more than one attribute.