

Decision Jam

Facilitators guide

This is a short, structured process to help you collaborate effectively and make decisions fast; all while avoiding the terrors of unstructured meetings with no results. It's perfect for group problem-solving, fleshing out challenges and direction-setting.

The benefits are:

- It's fast
- It removes bias
- It creates focus
- It's collaborative
- It fosters inclusion
- It's easy

All the exercises are based on the principles of innovation practices like the Design Sprint, and blend the very best of Design Thinking and Agile (but you don't need to know any of that to make it work!).

Supplies

- Rectangular post-its (we like yellow)
- Square post-its (2 different colours, we like Pink and Blue)
- Voting dots – small circular stickers (2 different colours)
- Pens
- Timer that clearly shows the time remaining
- A nice playlist of instrumental music always helps

Time

60 - 120 mins. The times suggested in the exercise are more of a guideline and may only be relevant to the first time you run through it.

Participants

The ideal size is 4-6 people, so everyone can be heard. If you have any more than 8 people, you will need to work in groups (and may need some facilitator help to keep it all on track).

Step-by-step

1. Set the scene

Before you begin, recap what the situation is, and what you're trying to achieve today. Start with the context, and finish by explaining the Decision Jam. This is your group's opportunity to come up with a solution. *E.g. My charity needs to raise £2,000 to fund an important project by the end of the year. How do we reach our target?*

2. Start with the positives (4 mins)

Give everyone square post-its and a pen. Everyone then spends 4 minutes at a table by themselves, writing down all the positives they can think of related to the topic. Encourage them to write down as many as they can. With no discussion. *E.g. The project is going to provide a new community space for local people; Lots of local support etc.*

3. Present them (1-2 mins each)

Pick one person at a time to present and stick up their positives on the wall. Nobody else in the team is allowed to speak here, unless to clarify a post-it.

4. Capture all the problems (5 mins)

Everyone spends 5 minutes at a table by themselves, writing down all the problems they can think of on post-its. Anything related to the topic that is an issue is fine here. As before, no discussion at this stage. *E.g. We don't have much time to dedicate to fundraising; We only have three months etc.*

5. Stick them up on the wall (1 min each)

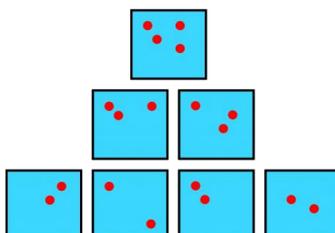
When the time is up, get everyone to stand up at the same time and put all the sticky notes on the wall.

6. Vote on them (3 mins)

Give each participant 3 voting dots. Everybody now votes on what they think is the most important to solve. No discussion allowed. You can vote on your own post-its here. You can also put all three dots on one if you feel strongly about it.

7. Order by number of votes (30 secs)

Next, rank the problems on the wall from top to bottom.



8. Reframe problems as standardised challenges (3 mins)

Now, only focusing on the top-voted problem/s - rewrite as a 'How Might We...?' (HMW) question. This allows us to make the problem solvable and standardise the way challenges are written. (Use rectangular post-its here).



9. Write down solutions, quantity > quality (6 mins)

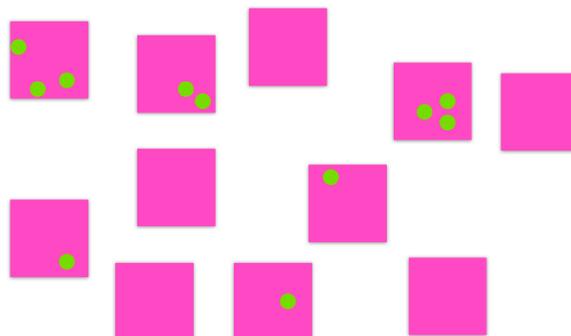
Now the top-voted problem will be used to produce solutions. If there are two top-voted problems, or three, just start with the one on the left. Don't discuss!

Give participants 5 mins to individually come up with as many possible ways to tackle the HMW question, without discussion.

They need to make sense to people reading them, as there will be no presenting of solutions here. Once the 5-mins is up, everyone sticks up the solutions as fast as possible. The quicker the better here. Ideally within one minute.

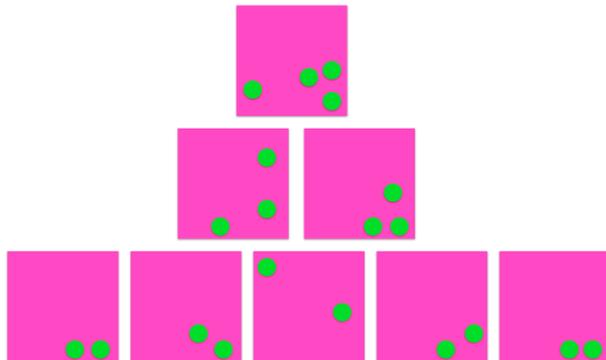
10. Vote (5 mins, 6 dots)

Give each participant 6 dots to vote on the solutions they think best answers the problem. There is more time here to give everyone a chance to read through all the solutions.



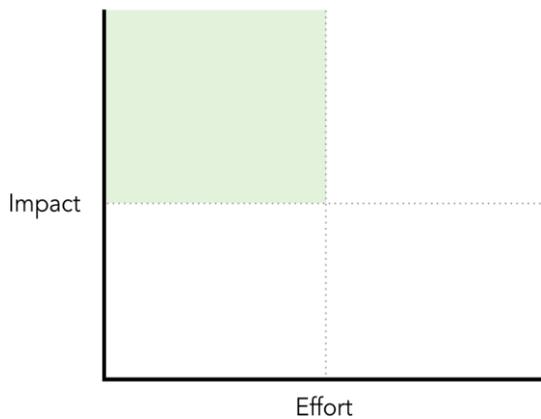
11. Prioritise solutions (30 seconds)

Like before, quickly prioritise the most-voted solutions on top. Ignore anything with less than two votes.

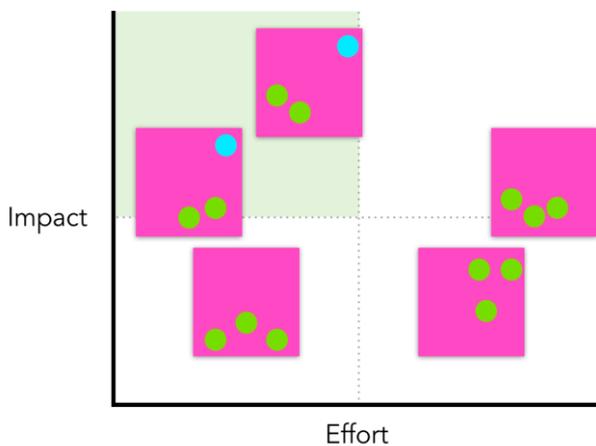


12. Decide what to act on (10 mins)

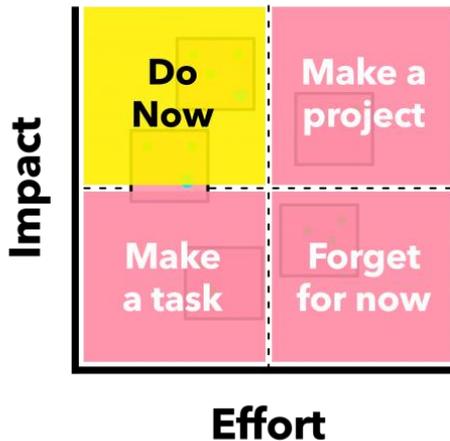
Plot the solutions on an effort/impact matrix to figure out which ones to tackle first.



You need to be diligent to keep this on track. It needs to happen without too much discussion! You're essentially looking for the ones in the 'sweet spot' of high impact and low effort.



This is one good way to categorise:



13. Action items (5 mins)

You now take the “Sweet Spot” solutions and ask the person who wrote the solution to give actionable steps toward testing the solution. By actionable, we mean something that could be executed on in the timeframe of 1–2 weeks.

Let’s look at one example:

 <p>Dedicate 30 minutes every day to fundraising</p>	<p>30 min p/day fundraising time – starting on Monday</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Block time out in everyone’s calendar- No emails or phone calls during 30 mins- Team catch-up at the end of the week to share progress.
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Once all these solutions are written up, your team now has tasks that can be committed to. As for the solutions that didn’t make it into the “Sweet Spot”? We actually turn all the high impact solutions into actionable post-its so they don’t get forgotten. What you might see happening is that the sweet spot actions actually end up solving problems in a way that the higher effort solutions become obsolete and you can later rip them apart!

THE END! Well done you :)

Hopefully you’ve learned that structure and discipline create a fair bit of creative freedom.

In a short amount of time, your team has been able to define important challenges, produce solutions and prioritise what to execute through effective collaboration!