FACILITATION TECHNIQUE	Lightning Decision Jam (LDJ)
CORE PURPOSE / FOCUS	#decision making #problem solving #issue analysis #discuss challenges #group prioritization #intragroup openness
PHASE	#action #debrief
SKILL / CONTENT	#creativity #innovation #design #evaluation
TIME FRAME IN MINUTES	#<60 #60-120
GROUP SIZE IN PERSONS	#1-5 #6-15
FACILITATION LEVEL	Beginner
COMFORT ZONE	Stretch

Introduction

The problem with anything that requires creative thinking is that it's easy to get lost – lose focus and fall into the trap of having useless, open-ended, and unstructured discussions. Here is the most effective solution we think might help: Replace all open, unstructured discussion with a clear process.

What to use this tool/technique for: Anything which requires a group of people to make decisions, solve problems or discuss challenges. It is always good to frame an LDJ session with a broad topic, here are some examples:

- The conversion flow of our checkout
- Our internal design process
- How we organize events
- Keeping up with our competition
- Improving sales flow
- Problems in your team: basically this tool can be used in order to find solution to any kind of a problem

Necessary tools (what you need)

- Pick a suitable videoconferencing tool.

1. **Choose a moderator**

   You absolutely need to select someone on the team to take the role of the moderator. They can join in on the process but must focus on making sure no discussion breaks out and has to keep time.

2. **Start with Problems - 7 min**

   The first step is simple: Everybody in the team sits at a table and without discussion they spend 7 minutes writing all the challenges, annoyances, mistakes or concerns that happened during the week. These can really be anything from "I don't feel like we're making progress" to "I feel like project X is getting more attention than my project". Really anything that is bugging us. Once the 7 minutes are up, each person will have a pile of problem post-its in front of them.

3. **Present Problems – 4 min per person**

   The moderator now selects one person at a time to stand up at a wall/whiteboard to very quickly explain each problem as they stick them to the surface. Nobody else in the team is allowed to speak here. The moderator should give no more than 4 minutes per person. Once everyone has spoken and added their problems (we even include personal/health/mood) then everyone in the group has shared their challenges.

4. **Select Problems to Solve— 6 min**

   The moderator gives each member 2 voting dots—Everybody must now vote on the challenges they consider to be the most pertinent to solve, without discussion. Everybody can vote on his own post-its/problems here and put both votes on one challenge if he feels strong enough about it. Once the 6 minutes is up, the moderator quickly takes the voted problems and arranges them in order of priority. What about the rest of the problems that were not voted on? Do they get lost? More on that later.

5. **Reframe Problems as Standardized Challenges—6 min**

   Now, only focusing on the voted and prioritized problems—the moderator is going to rewrite each one as a standardized challenge, this will help us create an array of solutions and be a little bit more broad at the start.
   Let's look at an example: The top voted post-it here says "I have no idea what's happening on "project x". Because many people have voted on it, we can see it is clearly an issue many people are having. Rephrasing the post-it in a **"How Might We" (HMW)** format **allows us to make it solvable and standardize the way the challenges are written**. The moderator should quickly rewrite all the problems as quickly as possible, making sure they are still prioritized before moving on.

6. **Produce Solutions—7 min**

Now the top voted HMW problem will be used to produce solutions. If there are two top voted problems, or three **just start with the one on the left first**. Don't worry about it and do not discuss!

Now each team member is given in 7 minutes to write as many possible ways to tackle the How Might We challenge without any discussion. Removing discussion here also insures a variety of solutions. It is important for the moderator to tell the team members here that **we are aiming for Quantity over Quality – Later we can curate**.

Solutions don't have to be written in any particular way– but they must be understandable to people reading. There is no individual presenting of solutions as this creates a bias towards the best presenters.

Once the 7 minutes is up— now everybody sticks their ideas on the surface (wall, whiteboard, whatever) as fast as possible, no need to be neat— just stick them anywhere – this should only require one-minute.

7. **Vote on Solutions—10 min**
Remember this? It has been done before right? The moderator now gives each team member is stripped of six dots to vote on the solutions they think would best solve the HMW. Because the members will need to read each post-it, a little more time is given for this voting process:

8. **Prioritize Solutions – 30 Sec**
The team now has 30 seconds to make a prioritized list of solutions—Ignore anything with the less than two votes

9. **Decide what to execute on—10 min**
It is clear that some solutions are more popular than others to test out, but it's important to know how much effort is required to execute the solutions – so here we use a simple effort/impact (**E/I**) scale to determine which solutions to try ASAP – quick wins, and which should be added to a to-do list, or however you store your backlog.

The moderator needs to be very proactive at this step, as it is the only one that has a tendency to open up discussion. The Moderator will now take each solution one by one and add them to the effort/impact scale. Effort, in this case is how much effort we as a team think it will take to implement and impact is the degree to which we think it would solve our problem.

The moderator needs to: Take the top voted solution, hovers it over the center of the E/I scale and simply asks "higher or lower"—usually some small discussions break out here, so the moderator has to be diligent in finding a consensus and stopping any conversations extending past 20 seconds. Once the effort has been determined, the moderator uses the same drill for impact: "Higher or Lower."

Now we have a clear overview of what which **high-impact solutions** could be executed on and tested very **quickly** (In the **green** sweet-spot on the top left), and which **high-impact solutions** will take **more effort** (top right). The moderator should

now quickly mark all post-its in the sweet spot with a contrasting dot so we can identify them later.

10. **Turn Solutions into Actionable Tasks—5 min**
The moderator now takes the "Sweet Spot" solutions off the E/I scale and asks the person who wrote the solution to give actionable steps toward testing the solution. When we say actionable, we really mean something that could be executed on in the timeframe of 1–2 weeks. The rule of thumb might be a 1-week experiment, but of course this will depend on what the solution entails.

Once all these solutions are written up, your team now has actionable tasks that can be committed to (depending on how your team deals with task management).

The remaining solutions which require the high impact are to be added to our backlog 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 might become obsolete and you can later rip them apart!

11. **Structure and Discipline create the Freedom**
That's it! In a short amount of time, your team has been able to define important challenges, produce solutions and priorities what to execute on almost entirely without discussion! We use this principle of cutting out open discussion in almost everything we do, from designing new product features to planning events or improving our office space. As mentioned before: Creative problem solving is the core of design—so give it the respect it deserves and cut out the wasteful, demoralizing, fatigue-inducing discussion.

Tips & Tricks

- You can find a verbal explanation and illustration of this method in this YouTube video.
- Pick an online whiteboard tool that allows to use a large, zoomable canvas.
- Set up each topic at a different area of the board, spread them out just like you would do it on the walls of a room.
- Invite participants to zoom in and visit each section and add their ideas as sticky notes once you reach that section of the exercise.
- If you're not using an online whiteboard, we'd recommend using a collaboration tool such as Google Docs to collect the information for each step under a separate heading. Invite everyone into the document but be very clear in regards to editing rights.
- Use voting features such as Mural's voting session tool during the dot voting process. You can also add comments inside Google Docs or ask participants to add a thumbs up emoji to an idea in Slack to collect votes when using those tools.
- When facilitating group discussion, we'd recommend that participants use non-verbal means to indicate they'd like to speak. You can use tools like Zoom's nonverbal

feedback tools, a reaction emoji, or just have people put their hands up. The facilitator can then invite that person to talk.

Source

https://medium.muz.li/a-super-simple-exercise-for-solving-almost-any-product-design-challenge-f9e6c0019d7d