

FACILITATION TECHNIQUE	Impact and Effort Matrix
CORE PURPOSE / FOCUS	#game storming #decision making #ideation #idea generation
PHASE	#action
SKILL / CONTENT	#evaluation
TIME FRAME IN MINUTES	#<30 #<60
GROUP SIZE IN PERSONS	#1-5 #6-15
FACILITATION LEVEL	Beginner
COMFORT ZONE	Safe

Introduction

The Effort Impact Matrix is one of the tools we use all the time. In this decision-making exercise, possible actions are mapped based on two factors: effort required to implement and potential impact. So, the main goal is to generate ideas and examine them by two factors: Impact and Effort. Categorizing ideas along these lines is a useful technique in decision making, as it obliges contributors to balance and evaluate suggested actions before committing to them. The impact effort matrix is also referred to as an action priority matrix.

It can be applied to anything, from simple tasks to complex projects, by anyone, from single individuals to large organizations.

The Effort Impact Matrix is a simple yet powerful tool for having a group conversation to make clear what all your priorities should be. It's an exercise you can do with your teams that'll help you all work out what you should be working on.

The reason for doing it? Just because you explained the priorities and it was really clear in your head, doesn't mean that it's really clear in everyone else's head. People always hear different stuff to what you think you've said. If you do the Effort Impact exercise with your group or team, you'll all get clearer, and it might shed light on what everyone is working on right now too.

The four sections of the matrix are:

- **QUICK WINS** (high impact, low effort): These are the most attractive ideas/projects, giving you a good return for relatively little effort.
- **MAJOR PROJECTS** (high impact, high effort): While these give good returns, they take a long time to complete and can be complex to execute.
- **WAIT** (low impact, low effort): Don't worry too much about doing these – if you've got spare time, do them.
- **DON'T DO** (low impact, high effort): Avoid these. Not only do they give low returns, they crowd out time which would be better used elsewhere.

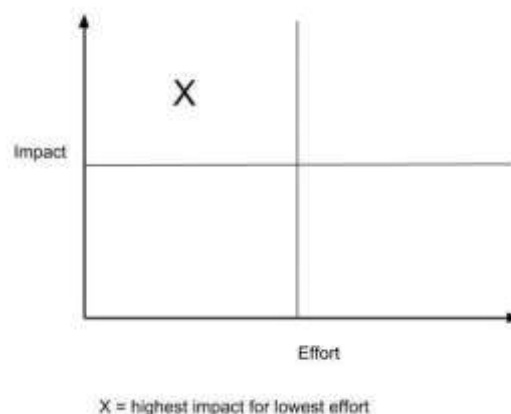


Necessary tools (what you need)

- Pick a proper videoconferencing tool: Use a video conferencing tool where you can assign the pair of participants into breakout rooms (e.g. Zoom)

Steps

1. Prepare Effort-Impact matrix – a grid with four quadrants based on the overlap between effort and impact. Impact runs along the side y axis. The higher up, the more impact. Effort runs along the bottom x axis. The further to the right along this axis, the harder the task or project (see the picture below).
 - Impact: The potential payoff of the action
 - Effort: The cost of taking the action



2. Explain the section of 2x2 matrix to all participants and then divide the group into subgroups of max 5 persons, or if the group is smaller the participants might work individually. Share the picture of 2x2 matrix with each group
3. To open the exercise, frame the goal in terms of a “What to do” or “What we need” question. This may sound as simple as “What do we need to reach our goal?” Given a goal, a subgroup may have a number of ideas for how to achieve it
4. Turn on breakout rooms in the chosen tool for the online cooperation (Zoom..) so each subgroup can work separately, ask them to generate ideas individually and write these in their 2x2 matrix.
5. Then ask each subgroup to present/write their ideas back to the group by placing/writing them within an empty 2x2 matrix which you have prepared for the whole group. In virtual environment, each subgroup should use the different colour while writing & presenting their inputs

6. As participants place their ideas into the matrix, the group may openly discuss the position of elements. It is not uncommon for an idea to be bolstered by the group and to move up in potential impact or down in effort. In this respect, the category of high impact, low effort will often hold the set of ideas that the group is most agreed upon and committed to.

Tips & Tricks

- When choosing order of play, have each person choose the next participant or have the facilitator select the next person. Ensure that nobody goes more than once.
- Pick an [online whiteboard tool](#) that allows you to use a large, zoomable canvas and add each line of the story as a post-it.
- When facilitating group discussion, we would recommend that participants use non-verbal means to indicate they would 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

<http://gamestorming.com>

