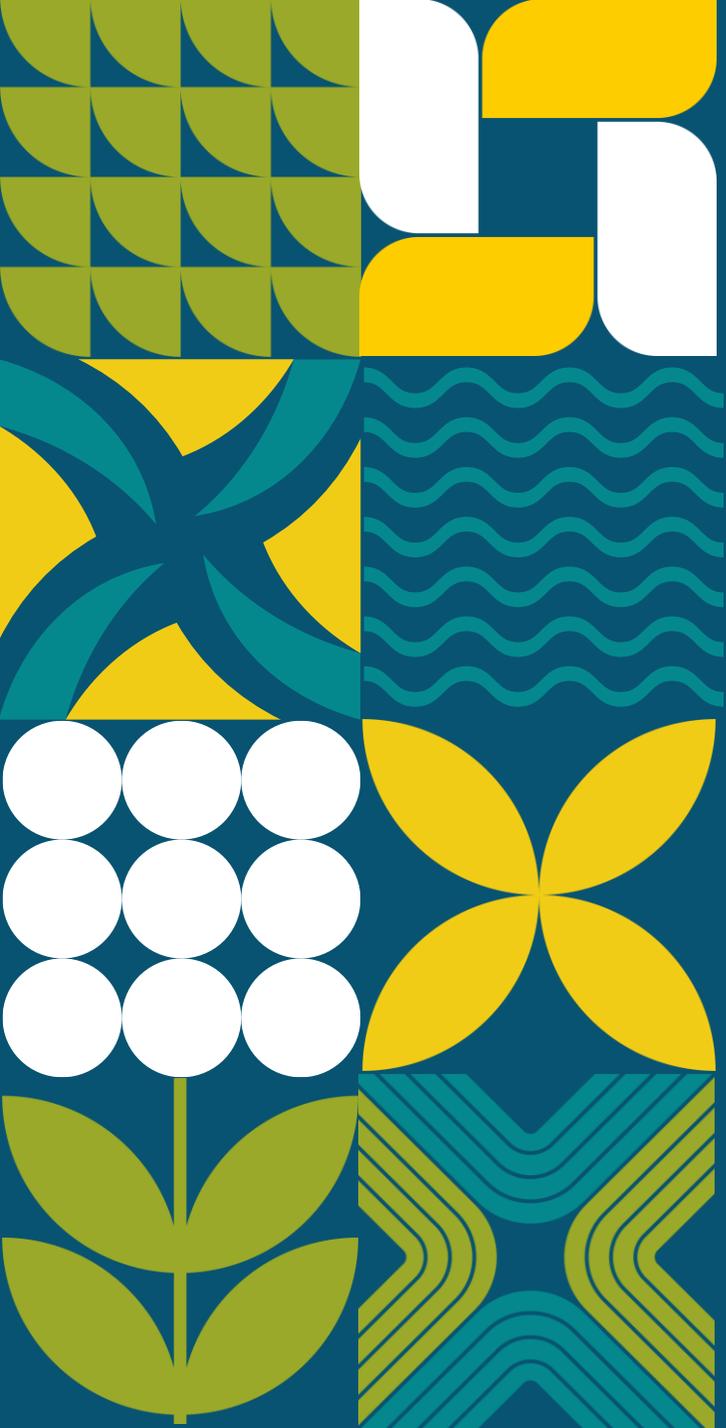


THE FACILITATOR'S PLAYBOOK

Top Tips, Tools, and Templates for Productive Meetings and
Discussions



SETTING THE STAGE

The role of the facilitator



Role of facilitator

Facilis (Latin) - easy to do; without difficulty

Formal Role: A facilitator helps plan and design a structured session where they guide a group to a desired result that is created, understood and accepted by participants. They use various facilitation techniques to guide participants through a process. Facilitation is not appropriate when: a decision has already been made and the participants do not have influence; the situation is too complex or confidential for the group; or time does not permit a facilitated approach.

Informal Role: A person recognizes a need to help move a group along and assumes the role of an informal facilitator. The impromptu facilitator uses facilitation techniques on the fly to help a group get “unstuck” and move towards a constructive result.

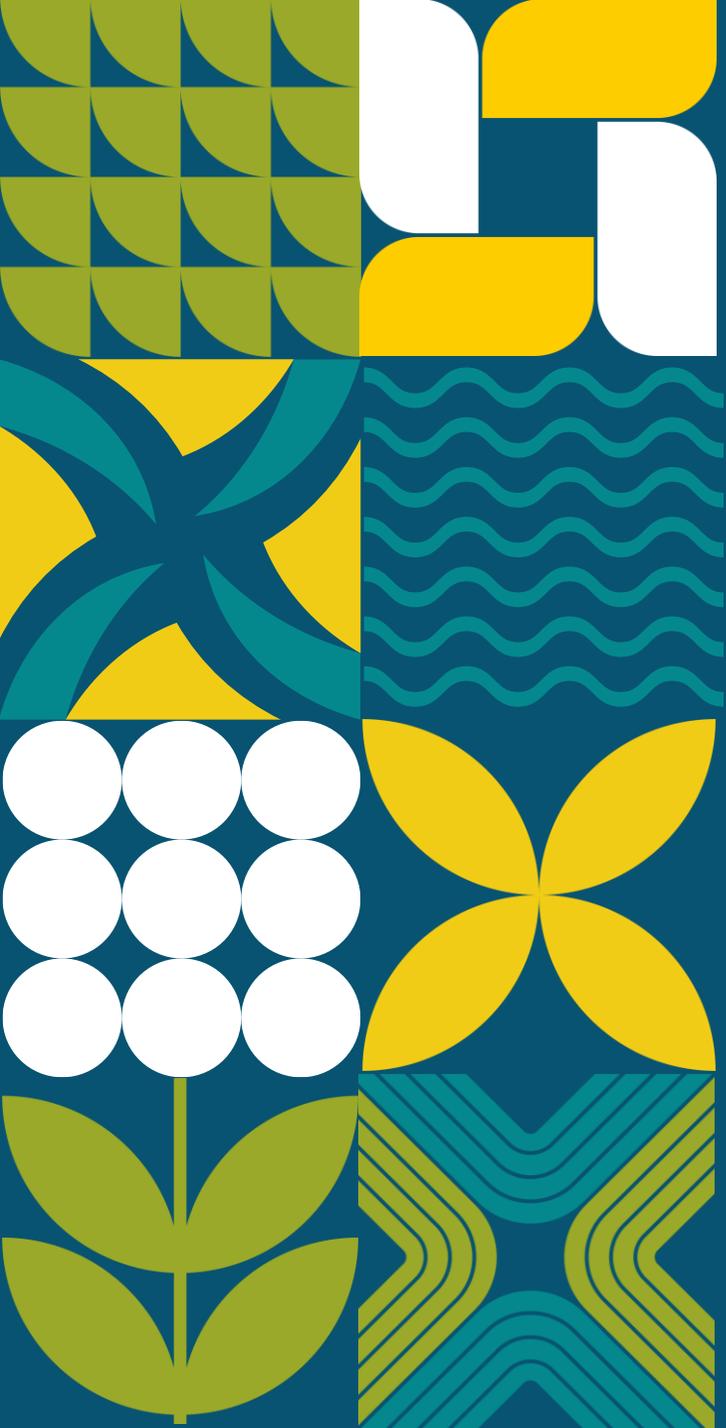


Role of facilitator

Below are some of the roles a facilitator might play:

- Leader of the group: encourage group cohesiveness and direction; ensure group members are treated as equals; establish and maintain group norms; encourage group discussion
- Manager of the agenda: start and end on time; make up time without sacrificing quality
- Role model for positive behaviors: maintain a positive and professional demeanor; seek positive solutions to constructive conflict; try to see other's point of view
- Content expert: ask and answer questions that take people deeper into the content; share relevant experience
- Consultant: help participants see the implications of new knowledge and skills

One of the hallmarks of true facilitation is that, as much as possible, the facilitator doesn't separate themselves from the participants - they are with the learners in the experience



COLLABORATION

Getting discussions started



“The mind thinks best in the presence of a question.”

- Nancy Klein, Time to Think



The Starting Question

The starting question is often the first tool a facilitator will use to open a discussion at the beginning of each agenda item. There are two types of questions. “Type A” starting questions directly ask what the facilitator wants to know. “Type B” starting questions will invoke an image in the participants’ minds and are designed to spark creativity. Type B questions are often more effective at getting people to actively participate.

Type A:

What are the inputs to the interview scheduling process?

Type B:

Imagine it’s February and you are about to plan the 2023 summer recruitment schedule for the New York office. What information do you want close by?

Think about... Envision... Consider...

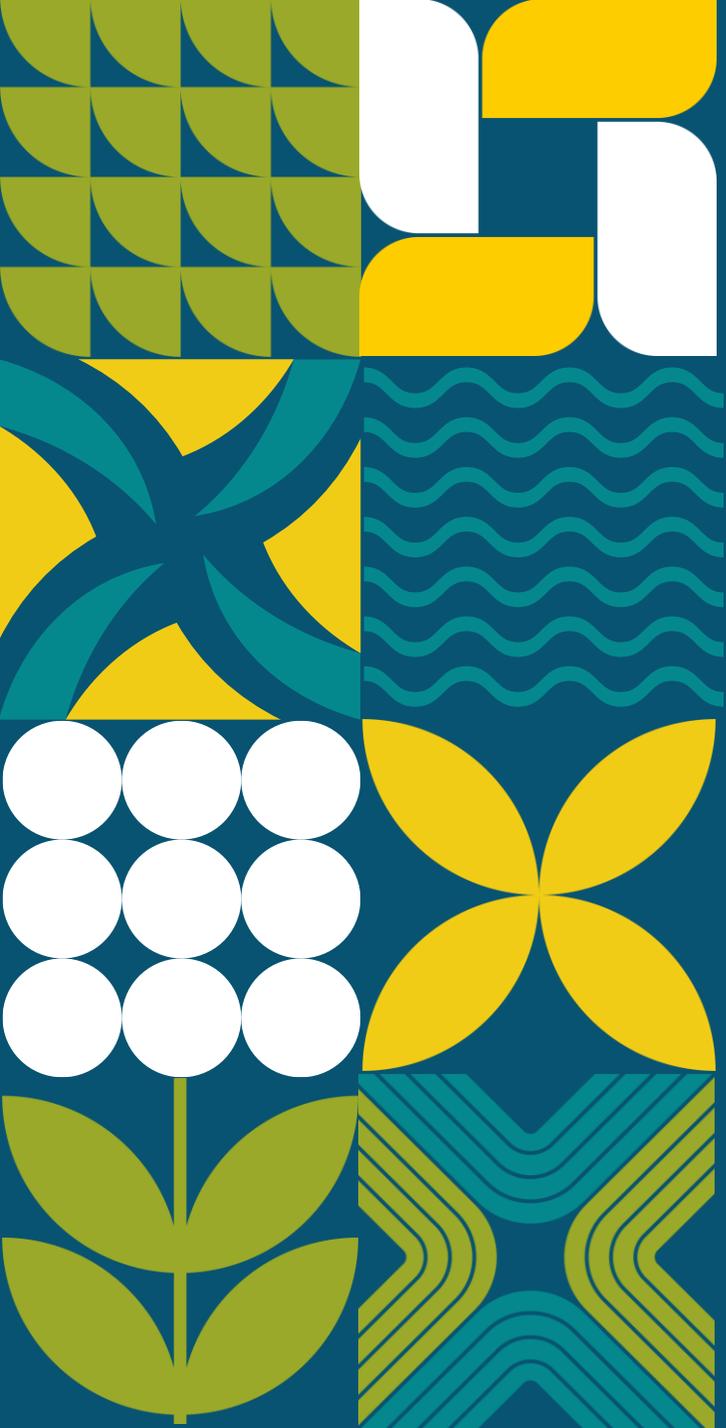


Frame: “How might we?”

The best ideas start with excellent questions. Questions allow us to open up our thinking, rather than jump to solutions. Below is a framing technique that is designed to help your group explore your topic more fully. Asking better questions will allow you to frame your challenge in ways that lead to more human-centric solutions.

- **How Might We?** - “How might we” is a design thinking question-starter that frames a challenge in a way that invites collaboration and possibility:
 - **How** indicates that there is an actionable solution to the question.
 - **Might** indicates that there are lots of possible ways to solve the problem.
 - **We** indicates that the process of generating the solution is collaborative.

Exploring a range of different questions can help ensure that you and your team aren’t jumping straight into solutions or limiting possibilities too early in the process. It’s also a great tool for reframing obstacles as opportunities.



COMMUNICATION

Active listening and reactive questions

Active listening: PROPOSAL

P - Probe for understanding

R - Reflect and rephrase

O - One thing at a time

P - Pause

O - Observe behavior

S - Summarize

A - Acknowledge the speaker and message

L - Let the speaker finish





Spectrum listening

This technique provides a way for participants to respond to the group's ideas and suggestions. Rather than viewing the ideas as good or bad, spectrum listening encourages participants to hear and evaluate each idea thoughtfully. Ask the group to listen for and make statements about three key areas:

- What I like about the idea
- What concerns I have about the idea
 - (Use the phrase "I wonder if..." when raising concerns)
- How my concerns can be turned into opportunities

Reactive Questions

Assessment

What do you think is best?
How does it look to you?
What resonates for you?

Elaboration

Can you tell me more?
What else?
What other ideas/thoughts/feelings do you have about it?

Example

What is an example?
For instance?
Like what?
Such as?
What would it look like?

History

What caused it?
What led up to it?
What have you tried so far?
What do you make of it all?

Integration

What was the lesson?
How can you make sure you remember what you have learned?
How would you pull all this together?

Clarification

What do you mean?
Can you say more?
What do you want?

Evaluation

What is the opportunity here?
What is the challenge?
What is your assessment?

Exploration

What part of the situation have you not yet explored?
What other angles can you think of?
What are your other options?

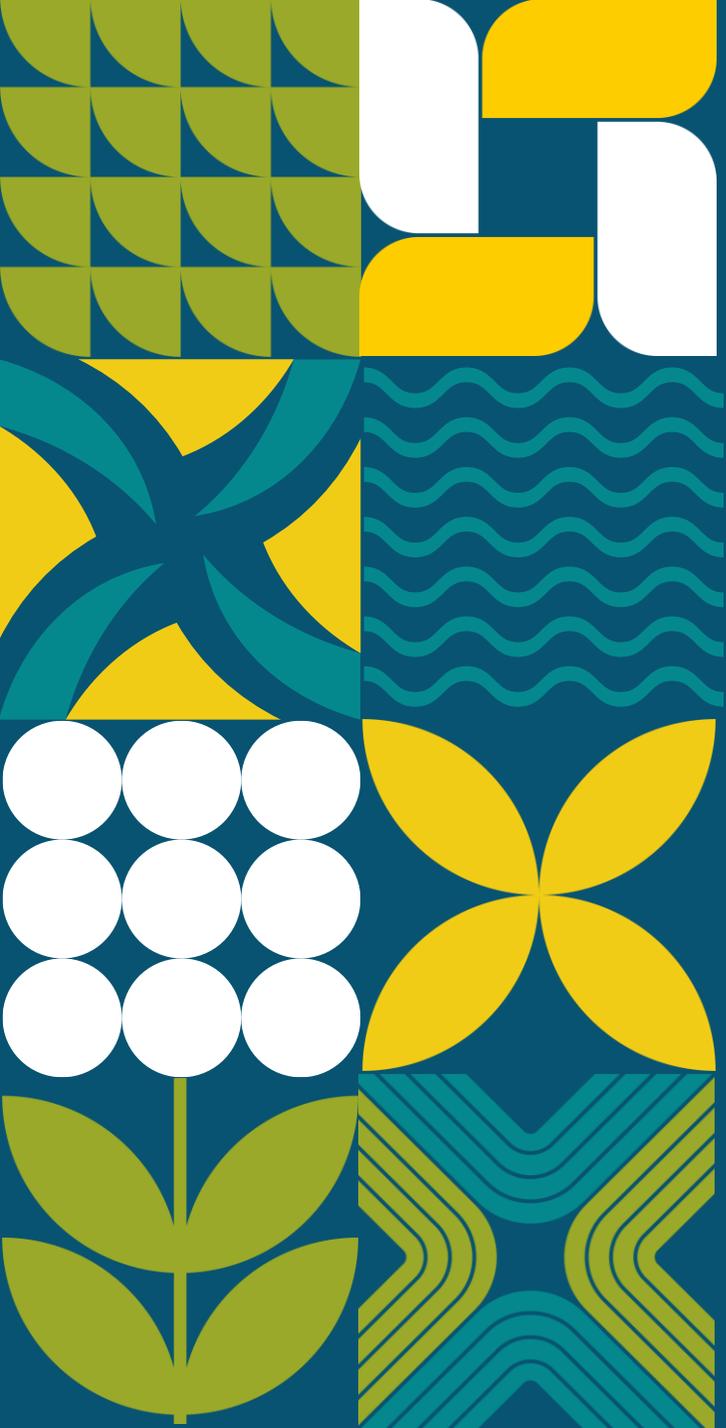
Implementation

What is the action plan?
What will you have to do to get the job done?
What support do you need to accomplish it?
What will you do?
When will you do it?

Options

What are the possibilities?
If you had your choice, what would you do?
What are possible solutions?
What will happen if you do, and what will happen if you don't?
What options can you create?





CLARITY

Agendas, checklists, keeping the group on track



How to write a meeting agenda

- Identify the goal
- Ask for input
- List the questions you want to address
- Identify the purpose of each agenda item/task you want to complete during the meeting
- Identify leads for each agenda item/task
- Estimate the amount of time for each topic
- End meeting with a review

(See template on next slide)

Agenda template

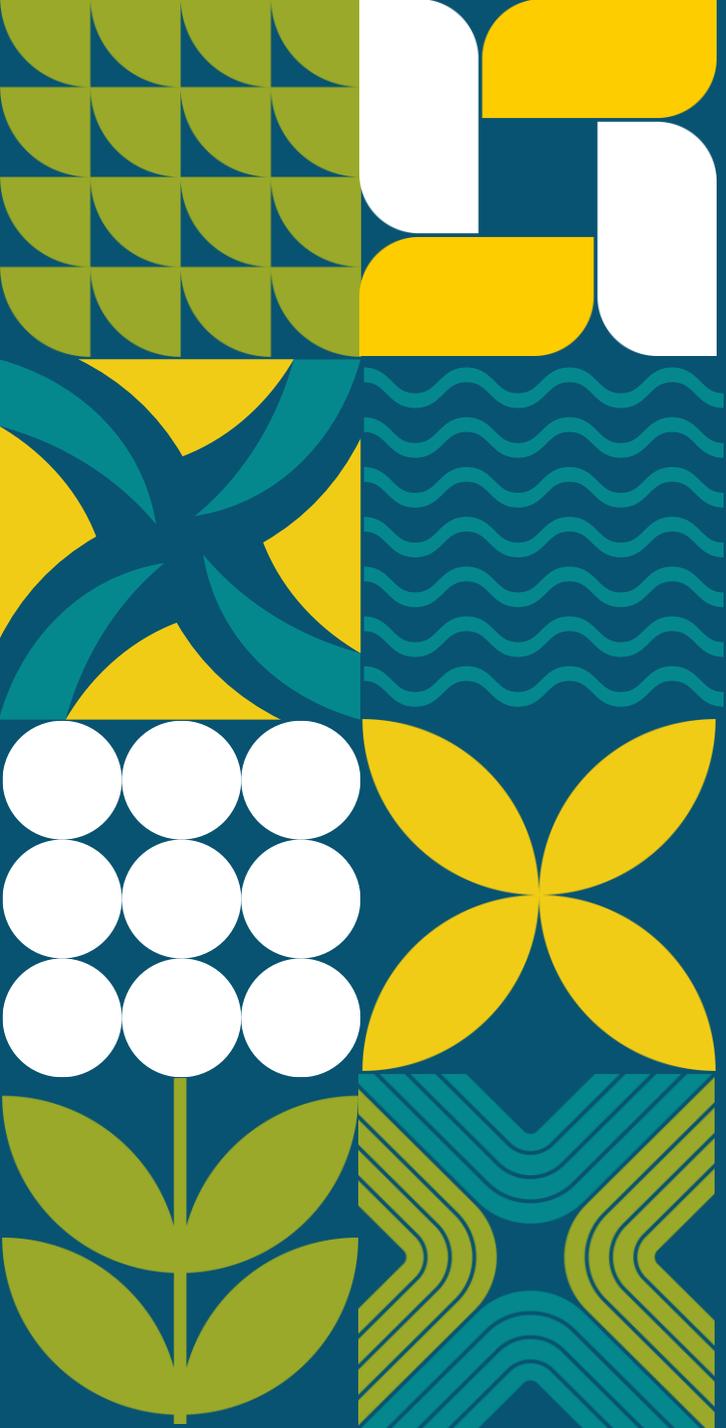
Date:	Time needed to complete all agenda items:	Questions to be addressed:	Purpose and goals:	Task Leads:
--------------	--	-----------------------------------	---------------------------	--------------------

Start and End time	Minutes needed	Description	Facilitator/presenter
00:00-00:05	5 min	Opening and overview of agenda, goals and objectives	Lead facilitator
		Agenda item/task one description	Name
		Agenda item/task two description	Name
		Agenda item/task three description	Name
		Agenda item/task four description	Name
		Agenda item/task five description	Name
00:00-00:10	10 min	Next steps for all involved	Thinking Round (all participants)
00:00-00:05	5 min	Summary/review	Lead facilitator



Checkpoints: Keeping the group focused

- Checkpoints are a great tool for helping groups understand where they are in the overall process or conversation
- Use checkpoints:
 - At the beginning of each new agenda item to mark progress and explain the importance of what comes next
 - In discussions, use checkpoints to let others know what's been covered already and give a preview to explain what's coming up
 - When discussions move off the main point or agenda item, use checkpoints to redirect the conversation or gain consensus that the group would like to veer off course. (*"That's a great point! It's not what we agreed to discuss, but is important. Would you like to take the time now [in group setting get the group to weigh in], or should we parking board this for a later discussion/meeting?"*)



TYPES OF MEETINGS

Worksheets and templates for generating ideas, goal setting, prioritization, decision making, and planning



Generating ideas



Time to Think: A thinking “Round”

- The best way to get the best thinking from everyone is to invite participants to engage in uninterrupted Rounds. Rounds increase the generative nature of the group’s thinking.
- Rounds also usually produce superior ideas in less time.
- A Round is a simple enough concept, but it requires these four actions from the facilitator.
 1. Decide first what the question is that people will be addressing in the Round
 2. Determine the direction of the Round (clockwise, anti-clockwise)
 3. Ask for a volunteer to begin the Round
 4. Remind people that no one speaks again until the Round is completed

www.timetothink.com



Crawford Slip

The Crawford Slip is a brainstorming exercise you can use to solicit ideas from a group of people quickly, while ensuring input from everybody. With small slips of paper, ask participants to identify three items in less than 20 seconds, then pass the slip to the next person. Brainstorm for 3-5 minutes. The rapid pace encourages creativity, and the nature of the exercise appeals to quieter participants.

Example: Brainstorming project stakeholders

Give each participant an index card or sticky note and ask them to identify 3 people or organizations that might be impacted by the project. Every 15 seconds, pass your index card to the person on your right. When you receive the next card, you must identify 3 stakeholders who aren't already listed. You can repeat stakeholders you wrote on an earlier card, but not repeat anything written on the card in front of you. Continue this exercise 'round robin' for a few minutes until you reach a comprehensive list of potential stakeholders. Then discuss and organize the stakeholders into categories such as "Needs Awareness", "Needs Buy-In", and "Has Ownership".



Visualization and visual prompts

Visualization is about thinking of challenges visually to better understand the issue. It is a process of cultivation and enlightenment where thinkubator members take a break from the problem at hand and concentrate on something that is unrelated. It is during this process that the subconscious mind continues to work on the idea and can create enlightenment, where the group members suddenly have a burst of divergent thinking that can create new lines of thought for the entire group.

Pictures can elicit emotions and serve as a catalyst for our brains to create connections that often can result in creative solutions. In the addendum, we have provided (royalty free) images that can be sent to group members before a meeting. To use this tool, the facilitator should ask the participants to open each image separately, so that the group can all be viewing the same image at the same time. During the meeting, the facilitator asks members to open up the image and write down anything that comes to mind when looking at the image. After each image, participants discuss the ideas they have come up with and brainstorm more solutions to the existing problem/challenge. (see addendum for visual prompt pictures)

Project canvas: Explore ideas

Description of the idea

Why do we need this?

Describe the challenge and list the current issues and symptoms

How will this work?

What will it look like if we solve the challenge?

What do we need to do?

What activities need to be done?

Who needs to be involved and in what capacity

How will we work together?



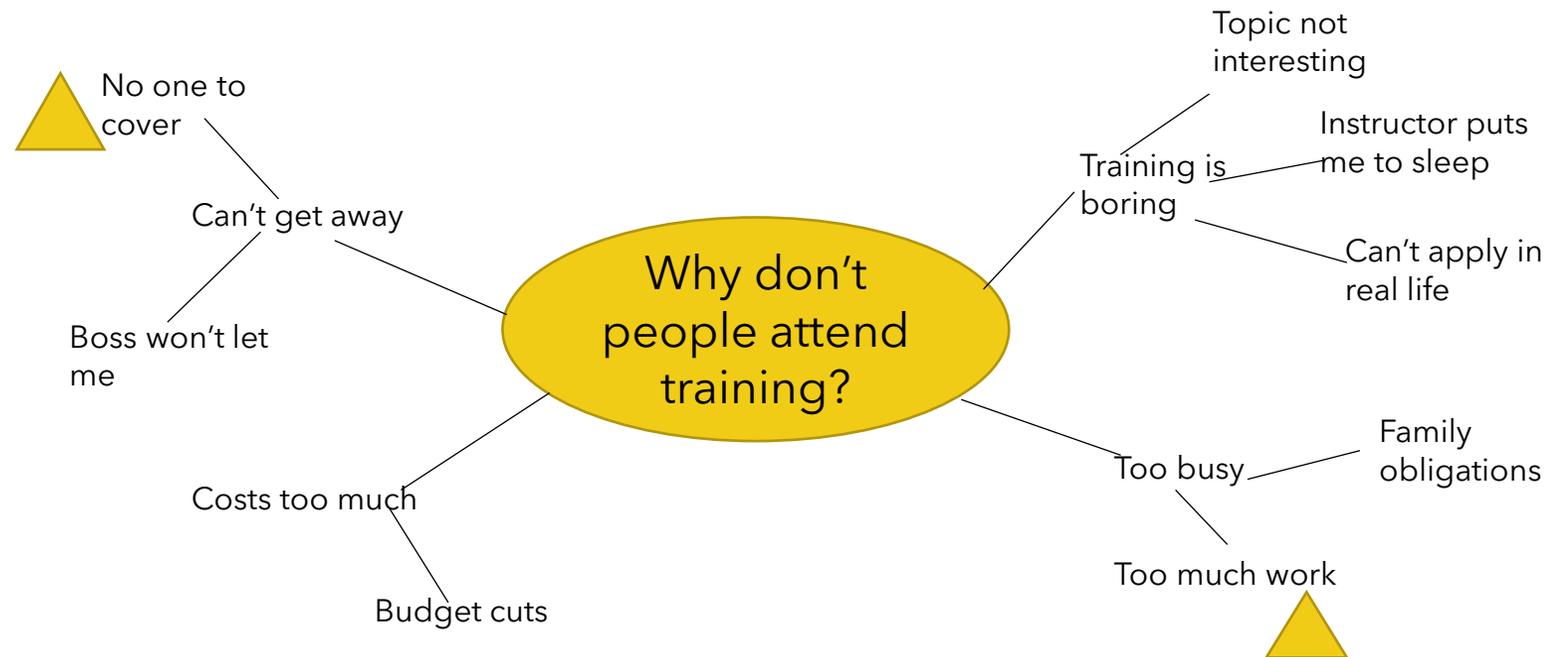
Idea consolidation: Seven questions

Once a collection of ideas has been generated, the next step is to make the group's top ideas specific in order to assess them. Asking these seven questions can help crystalize:

1. What is the idea?
2. Who needs your idea/audience?
3. Where is the idea going to happen?
4. How much will it cost?
5. How does it work/process?
6. Why is it important?
7. When will it be ready?

Mind mapping

Mind mapping (also called clustering or webbing) is a fast and easy method for producing ideas. Write a problem statement and draw a circle around it. For two minutes, write down all aspects of the problem. Connect the related words with arrows or lines. Look for three or four main themes or categories and assign a geometric shape (square, circle, diamond, triangle) to each category. Discuss the findings.





Goal setting



SMART Goals

S

Specific

Define your goal in detail
Answer the who, what, where and when of the goal.

M

Measurable

How will you measure success and track progress?
Create milestones within your SMART goal to track progress.

A

Attainable

Is it achievable?
Determine if the goal is realistic.

R

Relevant

Is it worth the effort?
Decide if your goal makes sense and benefits you.

T

Timebound

What is the deadline
Have a timeframe for completing your goal with benchmarks.



SMART Goals Worksheet

Goal: _____

Define your goal in detail

S

Specific

How will you measure success and track progress?

M

Measurable

How will you achieve this?

A

Attainable

How will this benefit you?

R

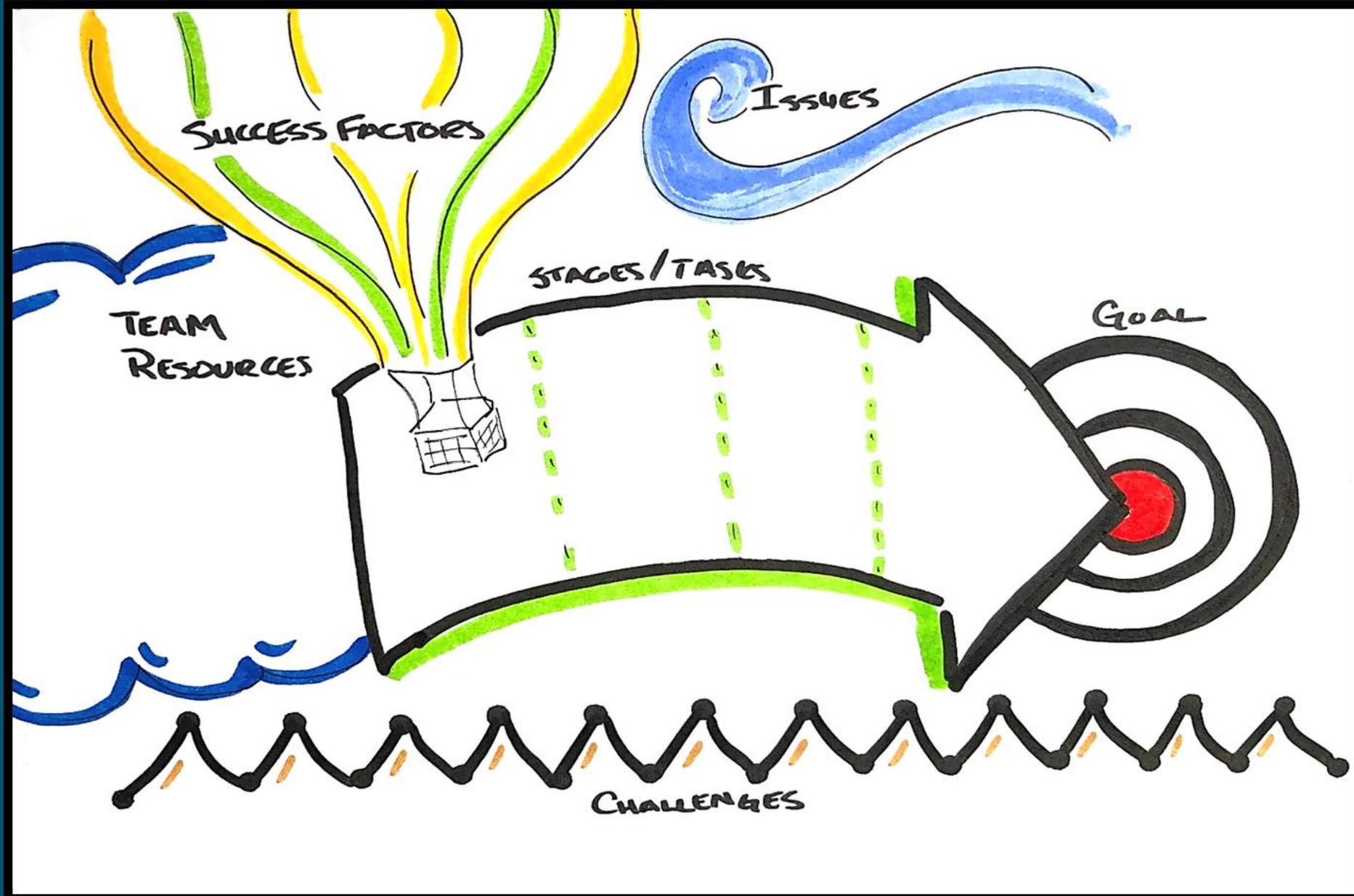
Relevant

What is the deadline?

T

Timebound

Goal setting





OPERA tool: Goals

Outcome desired:

Pus for and against:

Evaluate each force:

Reduce or reinforce:

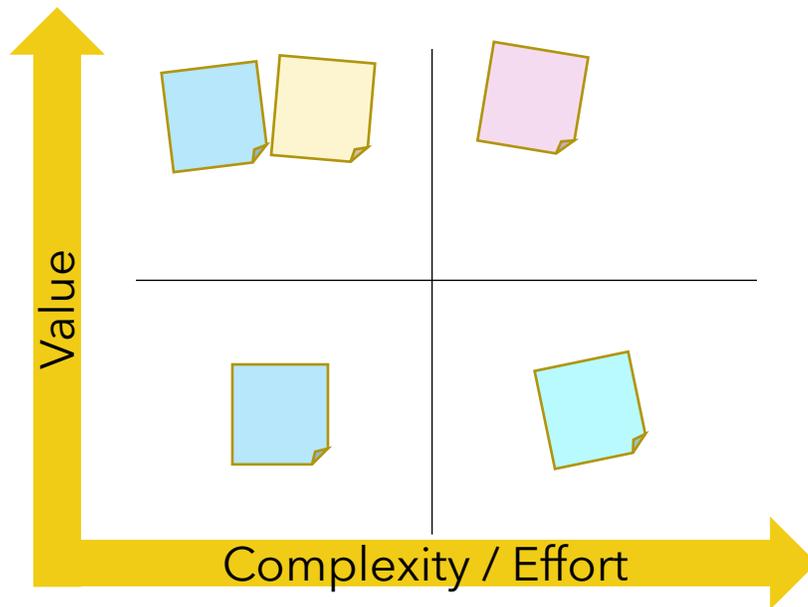
Action plan:



Prioritization

Value vs. Complexity quadrant

A Value vs. Complexity Quadrant helps a team evaluate ideas according to how much value they bring and how difficult they are to implement

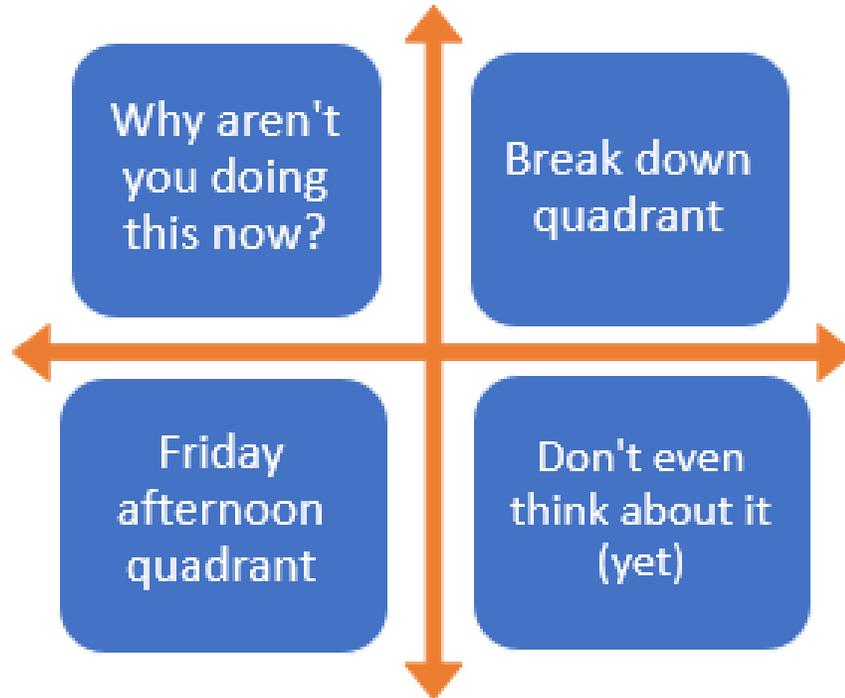


Step 1: Plot Ideas

- Draw a 2x2 matrix with Value along the vertical axis, and Complexity or Effort along the horizontal
- Write ideas onto sticky notes; one idea per note
- As a team, evaluate each idea according to the value it would bring (ex. Impact, benefits to more people, cost, efficiency, buzz/excitement, other...)
- As a team, evaluate how much effort it would take to implement
- Plot ideas on your matrix and prioritize

(See Step 2 on the next slide)

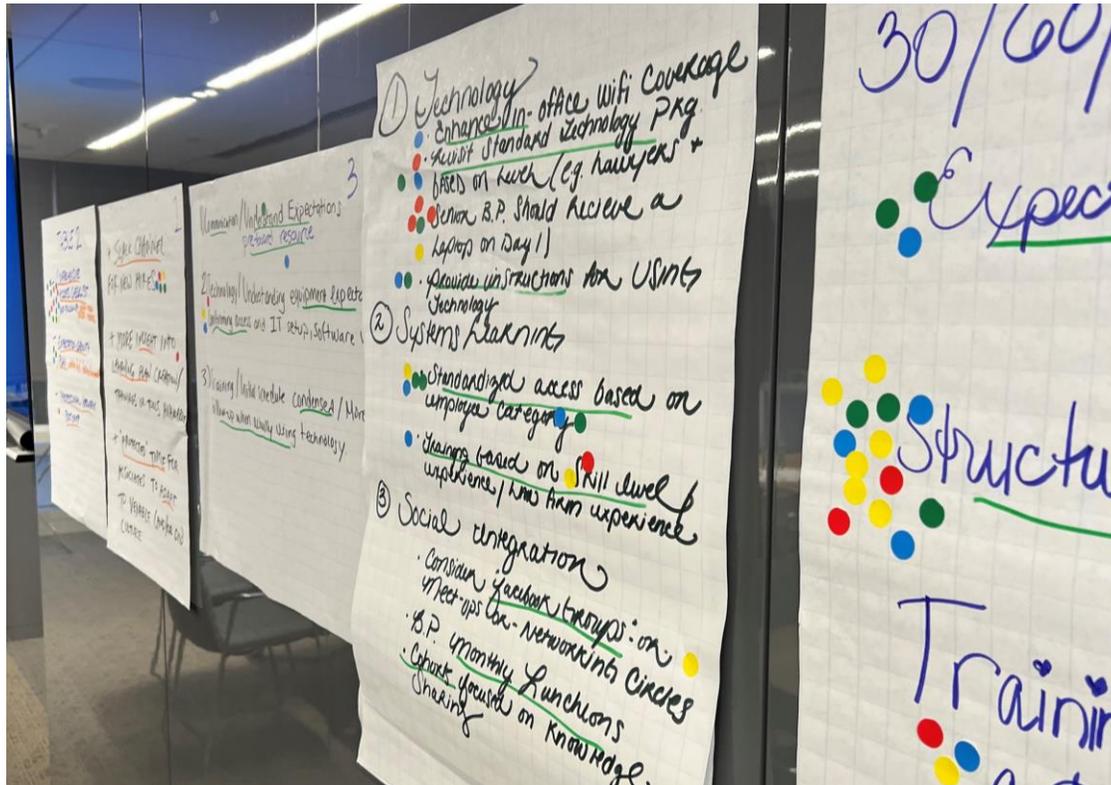
Value vs. Complexity quadrant



Step 2: Interpret your results

- Top Left: These ideas offer the best value with minimal effort; these will be your top priorities
- Top Right: These ideas are worth prioritizing, but they risk being shelved because of the effort required to implement; try to break these items into smaller items and re-map them
- Bottom Left: These may represent small wins that can be slotted when there is downtime or between larger projects
- Bottom Right: Not a priority

Voting



After you generate ideas or options, prioritize them by asking participants to vote with stickers, sticky notes, online polling, ballot, or another mechanism.

In the photo, table groups generated ideas for improvements to onboarding. Each table group pitched their best 3 ideas. Each participant was given four dots to vote. As the class took a break, participants used their dot stickers to cast votes for their top priorities.

Eisenhower matrix

Important	1	2
Not Important	3	4
	Urgent	Not Urgent

"The most urgent decisions are rarely the most important ones."

Draw a 2x2 matrix with and plot items according to how important the team feels they are, and how urgent they are.

This tool is especially valuable for looking at how we manage time. We naturally need to spend time and energy on Quadrant 1 items. We sometimes neglect or procrastinate on Quadrant 2 but shouldn't.

Weighted matrix

Example: *Where should we hold the Associates Retreat?*

Decision Criteria	Weight	Ritz-Carlton Miami	DC Convention Center	Tidewater Inn
Cost (1 \$\$\$\$ to 5 low)	9	Score 1 (high cost) x Weight 9 = 9	3 x 9 = 27	5 x 9 = 45
Distance (1 far to 5 near)	5	1 x 5 = 5	5 x 5 = 25	1 x 5 = 5
Activities (1 few to 5 many)	6	5 x 6 = 30	1 x 6 = 6	5 x 6 = 30
Reputable Brand (1 low to 5 high)	4	5 x 4 = 20	2 x 4 = 8	1 x 4 = 4
....				
Total Score		64	66	84

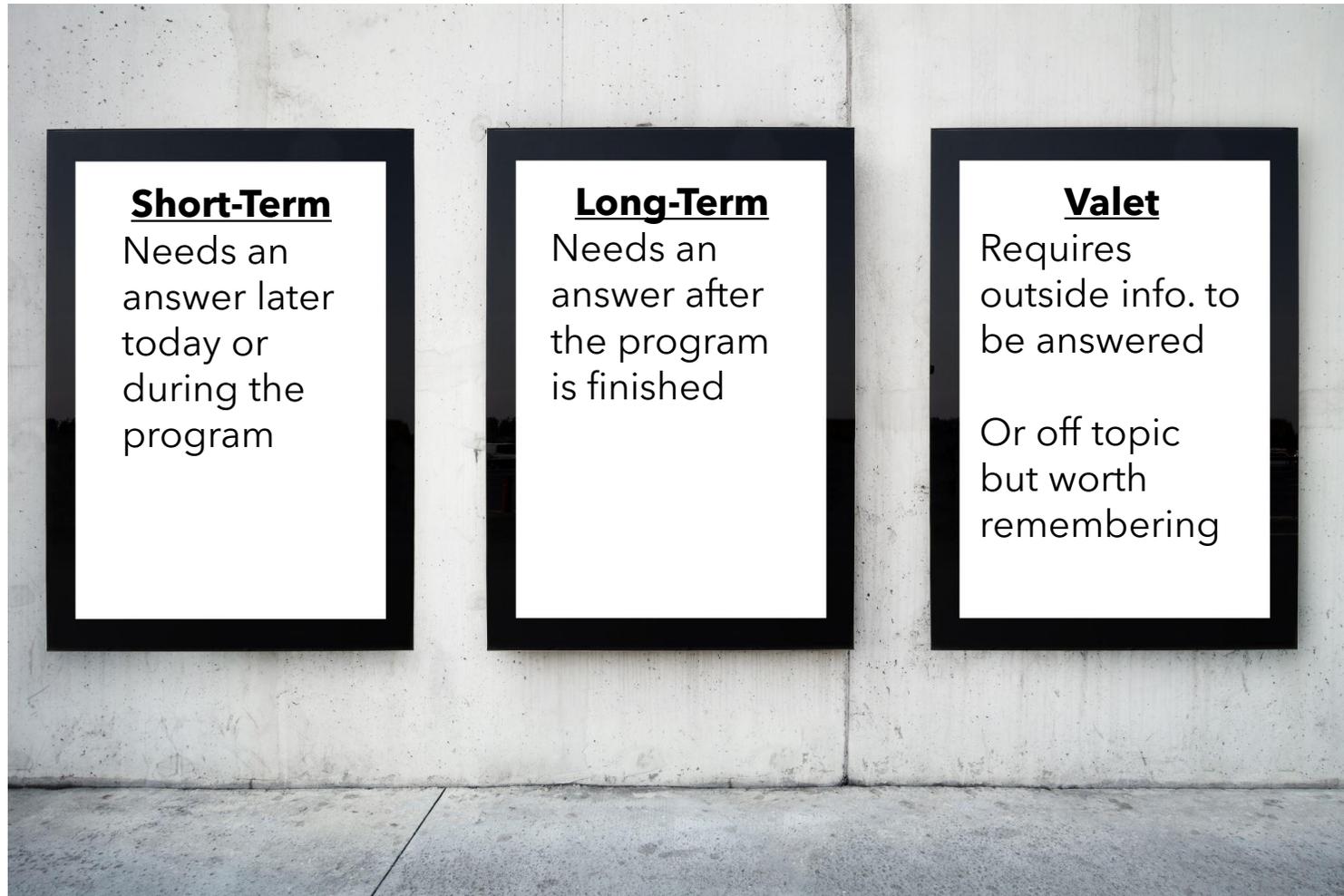
A Weighted Matrix allows you to evaluate options based on a list of weighted factors.

- Step 1: As a group, determine the criteria that factors into your decision.
- Step 2: Discuss how important each criteria is and assign it a "weight".
- Step 3: Score each alternative on the criteria, multiply by the weight, and total weighted scores.
- Step 4: Discuss the final scores and prioritize.



Decision making

Parking boards



Parking boards or parking 'lots' are a way to capture important information that should be discussed later. It's a technique used to manage time and address conversations that may be taking too long, need more information/input, or are off topic. In this example (left), the facilitator is using more than one type of parking lot.



DROPS tool: Decision making

Description of the problem:	
Reasons behind it:	
Options to solve it:	
Pros & Cons of each:	
Select the best option:	

Forced Pair Matrix

The Forced Pair Matrix is a simple decision framework where each decision is paired with every other decision. It helps participants sort out their true preferences between options.

Example: Which vehicle best suits my needs? Winner: 4-Runner

	Acura MDX	4-Runner	Jeep	Honda Pilot
Acura MDX		Acura or 4-Runner? 4-Runner	Acura or Jeep? Acura	Acura or Pilot? Acura
4-Runner			4-Runner	4-Runner
Jeep				Jeep
Honda Pilot				

Paradox of Choice

The average supermarket has dozens of options for toothpaste. The local Costco has four. Why is that?

Choice is usually a good thing. But too much choice can leave us overwhelmed and frustrated. Sometimes reducing choice can lead to improved outcomes. The less choice you have, the more likely you are to be happy with your decision. This is known as the paradox of choice, or the 'Costco effect'.

Try to eliminate some of your options before applying other decision-making tools. You may find the task easier and the outcome more satisfying.



Source: The Unstuck Box,
www.unstuckbox.com



Planning

SWOT tool





STORM tool: Mapping resources

Specific results:

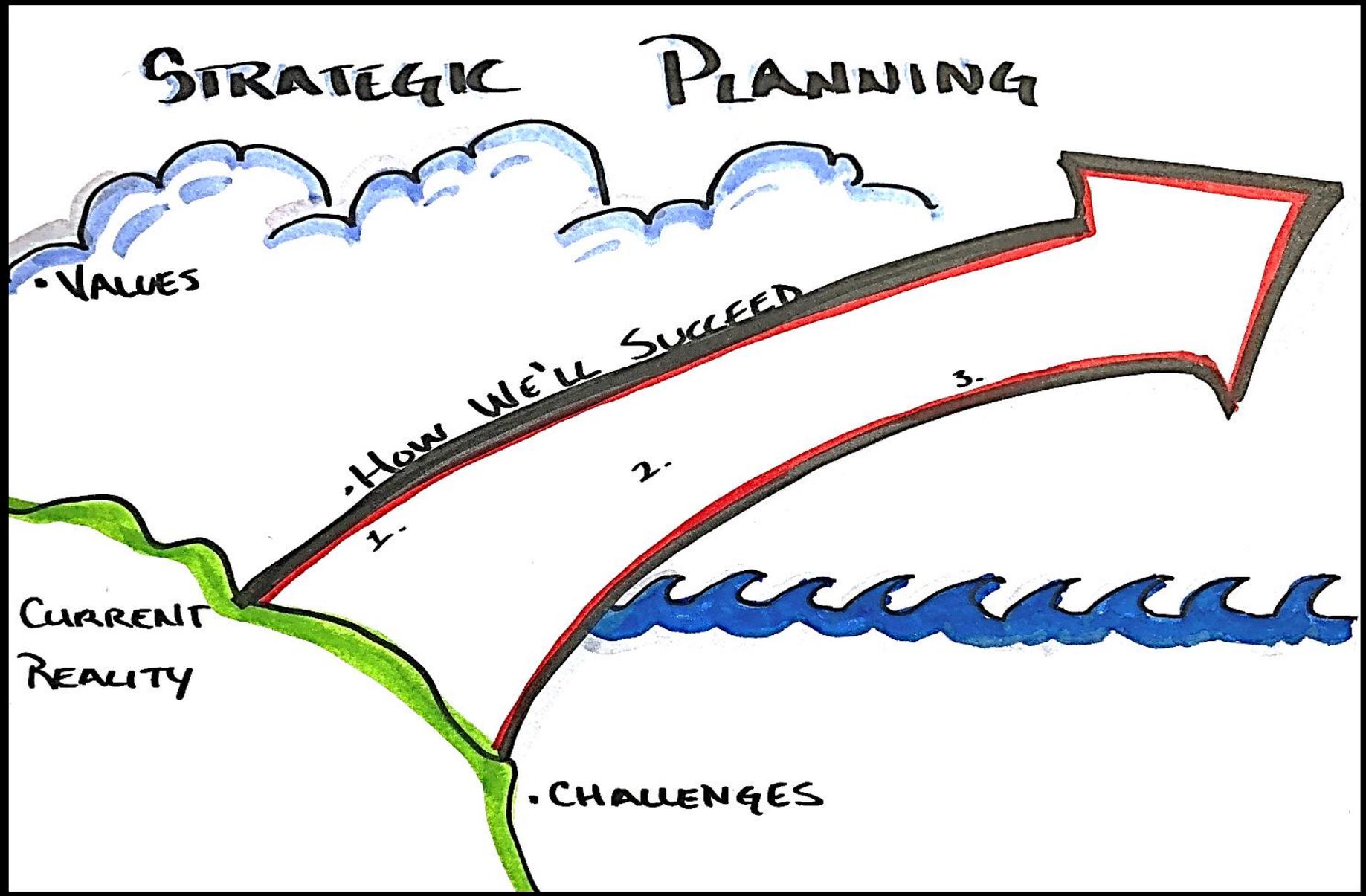
Time to complete:

Others who can help:

Resources needed:

Measure of progress

Strategic planning

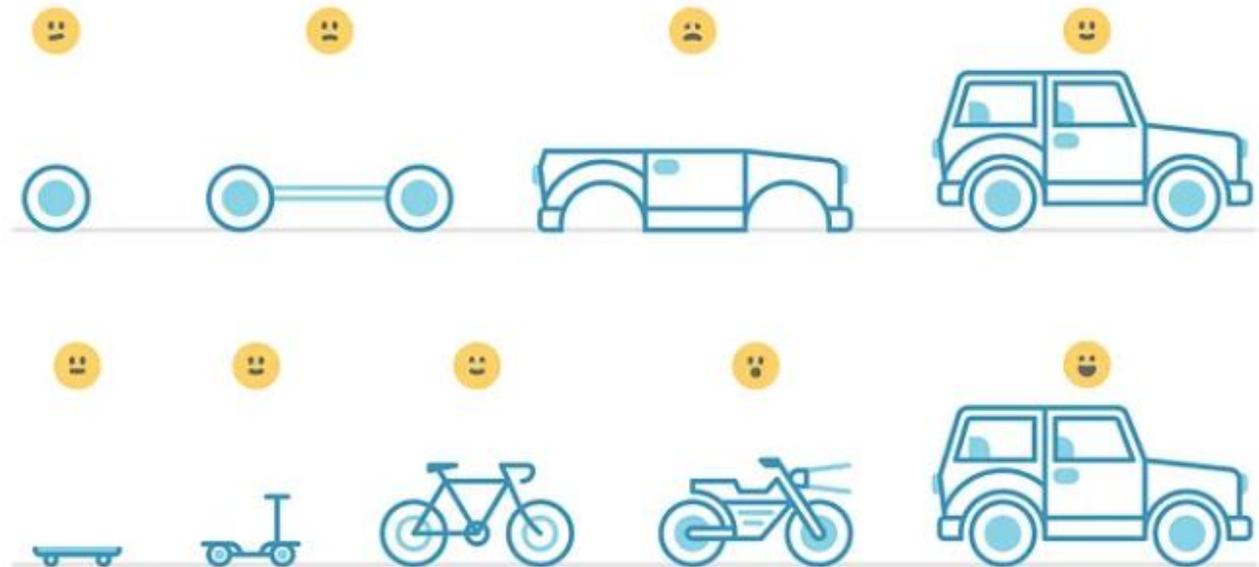


Skateboard - Bicycle - Car

Sometimes we are tempted to jump straight to the optimal solution, but doing so could be so costly or so time-consuming that it never gets accomplished.

One alternative is to look for incremental improvement opportunities. What improvements or advancements would we be satisfied with, in the short-term, while working towards the long-term solution? This approach is also referred to as Minimum Viable Product or Satisficing.

Instead of building a car and only a car, let's build on what we have while we work on building the car.



Source: <https://awilkinson.medium.com/skateboard-bike-car-6bec841ed96e>

NALP 2023 Annual Education Conference

Risk Analysis

Probability	High			
	Medium			
	Low			
		Low	Medium	High
				Impact

When planning a project, it's a good idea to discuss events that could throw the project off track. This could be related to people on the project, additional stakeholders, new information, changes in scope, time or resources, or other factors. The team should focus attention on the risks that are most likely to happen and those that would have the greatest impact.

This risk analysis framework can be a useful tool during a planning session.

- Step 1: Brainstorm potential risks.
- Step 2: Plot each risk on a matrix according to how likely it is to happen and the impact it would have.
- Step 3: Discuss what to do about the risks (if anything), focusing on those in the green shaded area.



Other Planning Tools

Premortem

Premortems ask us to flip our vision of outcomes. If we spend time early-on envisioning potential failures, we can find the pitfalls earlier. A premortem also helps us be more resilient in the face of a challenge. After all, we saw it coming!

Source: The Unstuck Box,
www.unstuckbox.com

Maslow's Hammer

Over-reliance on a single tool can lead to its overuse. It often leads us to fall back to tried and tested methods at the expense of exploring more efficient solutions. When you're trying to get something done, try to find new tools, tactics or strategies instead of relying on what you know.

Tripwires

In almost every aspect of our lives, our brains try to operate on autopilot. We make quick decisions automatically with as little cognitive burden as possible. Sometimes that means we're not paying attention. Tripwires are a way to "jolt" us from passivity. They can help us avoid sleepwalking into poor decisions. Try to incorporate your own tripwires in your plan to startle yourself, force a decision or change perspective.



Wrap up



Next Steps

This exercise holds the participants accountable for the action(s) that they will take prior to the next meeting. It can be something as simple as “Call Sue by next Tuesday to discuss how her organization approaches succession planning.”

Each participant writes down one action that they will take before the next meeting. The participants should challenge each other to ensure that the actions are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound. The facilitator sets up a round and each member commits to taking their action.

Next steps





GOLD tool: Review and learning

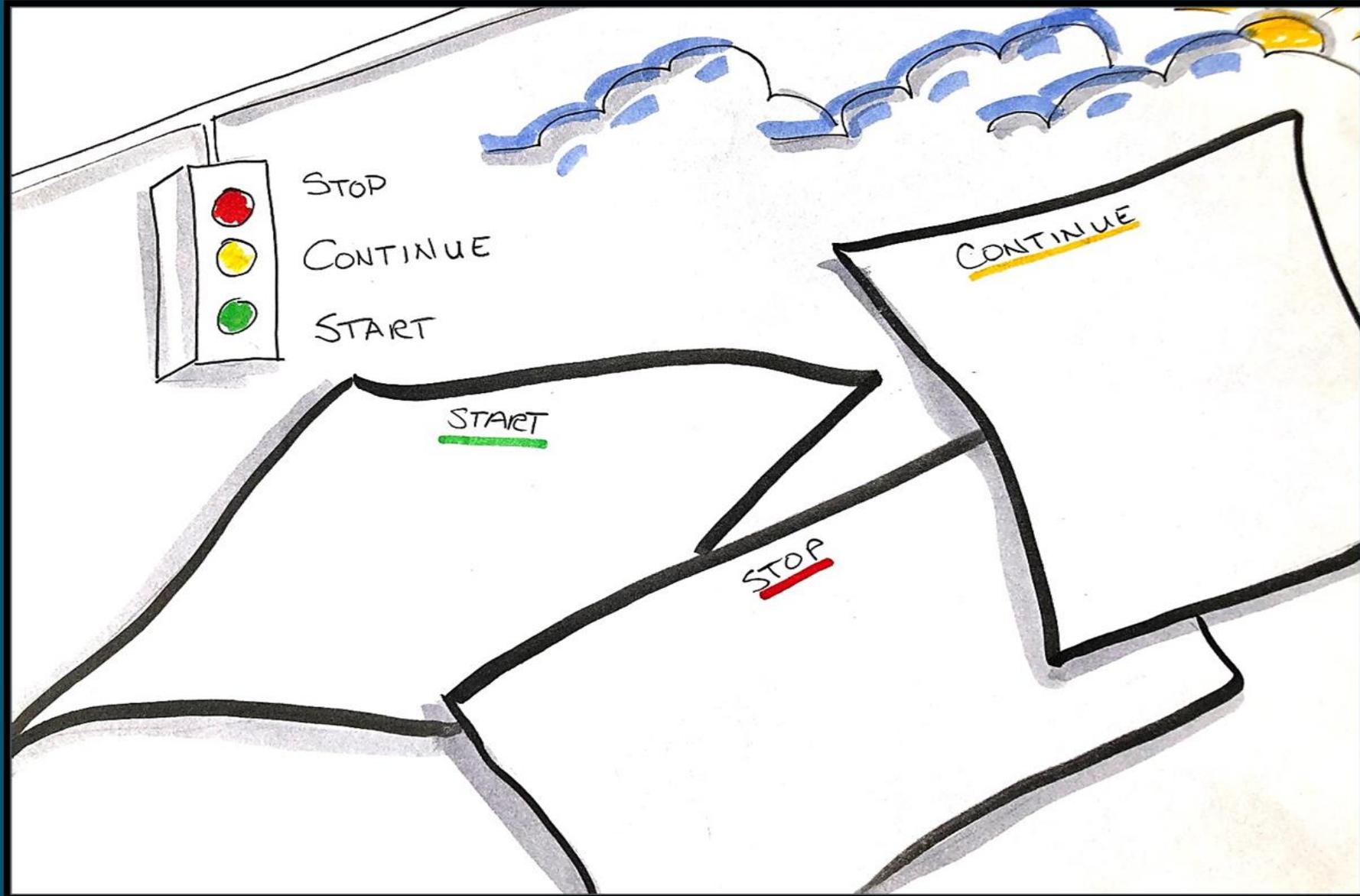
What was the Goal?

What was the Outcome?

What did we Learn?

What will we do differently next time?

Start, stop, continue



Rose - Bud - Thorn

One way to frame a debrief discussion is by using the Rose-Bud-Thorn metaphor.

- **Rose: Something that is working well**

How have we been successful? What did you like? What positive feedback did we receive? Where are our strengths?

- **Bud: An opportunity area or idea to explore**

What are wish list items? What's possible?

- **Thorn: Something that isn't working well**

What can we improve? What was difficult? Where are our pain points? What are our sources of stress? What negative feedback did we receive?



Active note taking - placemat



New information



Insights



Need to follow up



Actions I'll take

Evaluation - placemat

A+B=C



YES!



What did I learn?

What will I do differently?

What worked well?

What could have made it even better?



Additional considerations for activities



Participant styles

When choosing facilitation activities, pick tools and activities that are appropriate to the audience.

- Achievers are results-oriented and focus on doing; they are good at finding practical uses for ideas and theories
- Evaluators like to analyze a situation and use a logical process to resolve issues
- Networkers like to develop close relationships with others
- Socializers like to talk and share
- Observers are best viewing concrete situations from many points and prefer to watch and conceptualize rather than act



Addendum - visual prompts

