



# Creative Approaches to Problem Solving

Methods toolkit

Get started



# Introduction

In today's organisations we're faced with a complex context in which to try to create change. By definition it requires working collaboratively with others, and finding new ways of looking at, and responding to, problems we sometimes feel are familiar and well-trodden. Through developing Q, and Q labs, we have tried and tested a number of methods for creative collaboration and problem-solving.

This document collates a number of activities we have found useful, and brings them together with some tips and ideas for Q members interested in applying these, or similar, methods in their own organisation.

We encourage Q members to post about their experiences of using creative methods on the [Q website](#).

## We have grouped the methods according to different objectives:



**Gaining insight and input** to help inform decision-making, or understand more about the problem



**Seeking new perspectives** to spark new thinking and bring in new considerations



**Reframing a problem** to open up new ways of look at or addressing it



**Harnessing new ideas** to brainstorm different solutions, and get the most out of everyone's inner creative



**Prioritising solutions** to make decisions about how to move forward

Most of these activities can be deployed over short time frames (such as a workshop), however they also work in the context of longer projects.

This is not by any means an exhaustive list or a prescriptive guide. These tools can be adapted and modified to suit the context and challenge, and can even be knitted together to form longer strings of tools in response to particular needs. There are many more that we haven't included for reasons of space but there are links at the end to help you dig deeper into methods.

# Getting started

It is always important to give some consideration to the social and organisational cultural context in which you are introducing these methods:

- Lots of these activities may be different to normal ways of working, and possibly challenging to some people's conceptions of the right way to approach a problem. You may want to hold back on bringing out the sticky notes and craft materials until people are in the swing of things.
- While many of the methods are designed to engender collaboration, think about the level of trust within the group – will people be comfortable sharing? How can you make it a safe environment? How can you build trust within the group?
- Think about setting some ground rules at the start. See our list on the right for a suggestion.
- Many of these methods can quite easily favour the extroverts or 'loudest voices' – so try and balance out talking, sharing, and on-the-spot group creative activities, with reflective, quiet, and individual writing or drawing activities.
- Keep it simple. Don't try to pack too many activities into one session, or you risk exhausting your collaborators. Although...
- ...there's nothing like a tight timeframe to drive creativity!

## Co-creation etiquette:

- **Everyone's ideas are worth something, no matter how rough...**
- **Be critical but constructive...**
- **Everyone here is an expert in something, so listen carefully...**
- **Two heads (or ten) are better than one...**
- **Focus on possibilities, not limitations...**
- **Document everything - don't keep it in your head...**
- **Make and draw, express yourself in something other than words...**
- **Opt out of anything you're not comfortable with...**
- **Keep focused - our time is precious so let's use it well...**
- **Have fun!**

# Methods

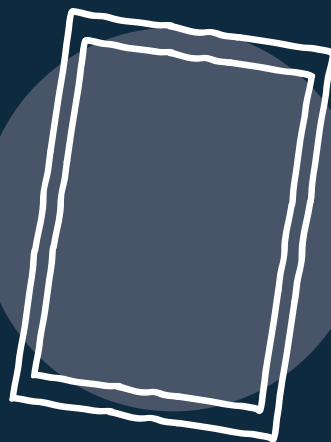
I want to:



Gain insight  
and input



Seek new  
perspectives



Reframe the  
problem



Harness  
new ideas



Prioritise  
solutions

View all the  
methods on  
the Method  
Matrix

The methods included over the following pages have been grouped into categories to make it easier for you to select which method to use and when. Some of the methods can be used for various reasons and so appear in more than one category.

Click on a category to jump to that section or on the 'Method Matrix' to see an A-Z list of all the methods.

# Method matrix

Click on a method to read more detail.

Methods (A-Z)	Gain insight and input	Seek new perspectives	Reframe a problem	Harness new ideas	Prioritise solutions
A Day in the Life					
Actions for Retrospectives					
Brand Thinking					
Business Model Canvas					
Circles and Soup					
Circles of Influence					
Goal Roadmapping					
Hopes and Fears					
Lateral Thinking about Users					
Lateral Thinking Prompts					
Min Specs					
MoSCoW Method					
Open Space Technology					
Persona Empathy Mapping					
Public Participation Spectrum					
Segmentation					
Six Thinking Hats					
Skill Swap					
Speed Consulting					
Stakeholder Mapping					
TRIZ					
Two Brains					
User Journey Mapping					
User Personas					
Voting, Scoring, Rating					



**I want to:**  
**Gain insight  
and input**

**Open Space  
Technology**

**Public  
Participation  
Spectrum**

**Skill Swap**

**Speed  
Consulting**

**Stakeholder  
Mapping**

**Methods  
Matrix**





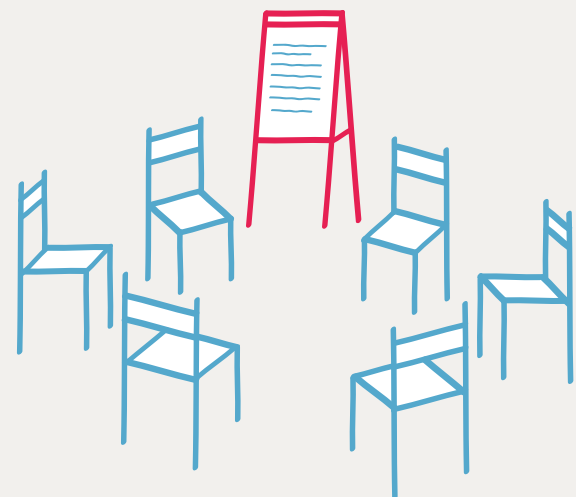
# Open Space Technology

In this type of dynamic meeting, people have time and space to self-organise around a theme, fully engage with issues and achieve shared goals.

**People:** 10+

**Time:** 90+ mins

**Materials:** a community of interest or practice, venue, materials to capture and document the conversation.



## How it works

1. Before the session, place a circle of chairs in the middle of the room. Stick letters or numbers around the walls as meeting locations. Allocate wall space for the agenda, news posts and discussion summaries.
2. Open Space Technology meetings are based on central broad themes – e.g. ‘How do we create synergy between departments?’ The method is most effective for complex themes, or where there are time constraints or possible conflict.
3. Participation needs to be voluntary to foster honest and open discussion. Bigger groups are more diverse and potentially have more impact.
4. Greet the group and explain how the meeting will run. **(5 mins)**
5. Participants with issues to discuss write these down and stick them to the wall, then choose a time and place to meet. **(5+ mins)**
6. The rest of the group read about and choose sessions to take part in. **(10+ mins)**
7. Participants record important points from sessions and post these on the wall. **(45+ mins each)**
8. Groups create action plans as required. **(15+ mins each)**
9. The wider group reconvenes and shares any final comments or insights. **(10+ mins)**
10. A report of the meeting is compiled and shared.

For further information visit the [Open Space: website](#).

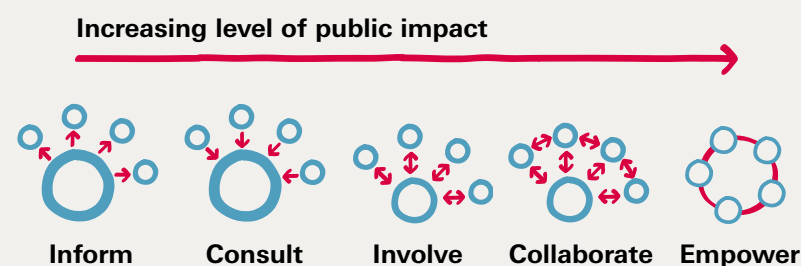
# Public Participation Spectrum

Thinking through different ways to support public participation in the delivery of a product/service, and committing to these, can increase the likelihood of wider impact.

**People:** 4+

**Time:** 85+ mins

**Materials:** Whiteboard/  
Markers/Flipcharts



## How it works

1. Before the session, draw a table on the whiteboard with five headings: 'Inform', 'Consult', 'Involve', 'Collaborate' and 'Empower'. Above these, add a horizontal arrow pointing right, labelled 'Increasing impact'. Write three headings down the left: 'Public participation goal', 'Promise to the public' and 'How can this be done?'. Also prepare this table on enough flipchart sheets for small group working. You may want to replace the word 'public' with a more appropriate descriptor of the wide group you are targeting – eg 'patients', 'community', 'hospital staff'.
2. Introduce the group to the IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum: a tool to help work out the level of public participation in any community engagement programme – ie define the public's role in it. **(15 mins)**
3. Divide the group into smaller groups. Ask each group to work through their tables and fill in the 'goal', 'promise' and 'how' sections. There may be more scope for wider public engagement in some projects than others – for example, in social prescribing and self-care projects versus a programme targeting children with cow's milk allergy. **(35 mins)**

Regroup as a whole and review the various ideas generated. Finalise the main whiteboard table. Use it as one element of your project planning. **(35 mins)**

For further information visit the [International Association for Public Participation website](#).



# Skill Swap

A skill swap can help to surface any skills, materials or resources that people either need or can offer, and enable fruitful conversations and exchanges to take place.

**People:** 20+

**Time:** 60+ mins

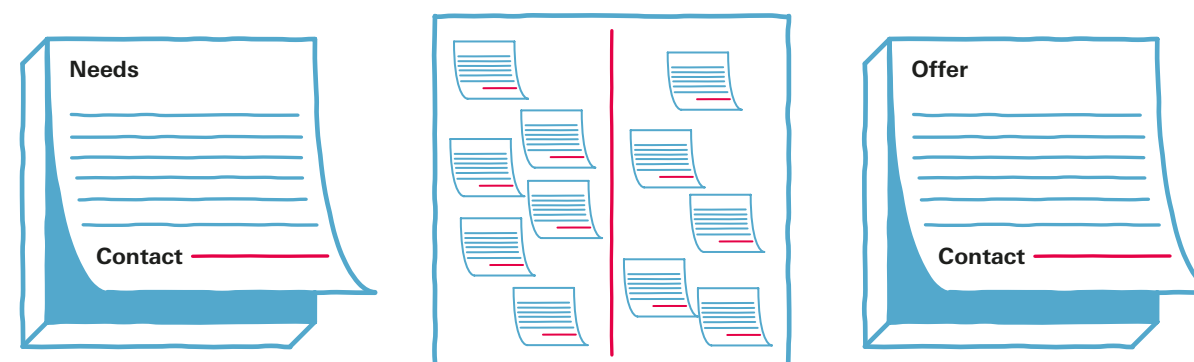
## Materials:

These are all optional and should be tailored depending on the most suitable platform for your organisation:

- 'Offer' and 'needs' postcards/ sticky notes in two different colours, with space to fill out description and contact details
- Whiteboard to draw on or large pinboard
- Online platform (eg Twitter, LinkedIn, your organisation's website).

## How it works

1. To start the skill swap make a board for highlighting the various exchanges. This can be done both virtually (eg an intranet or using social media) or physically (eg creating a bulletin with 'needs' and 'offers'). You can also arrange these into different categories or types of skills to further refine them.
2. This exercise will help highlight any gaps that may need to be addressed at a higher level, as well as any skills that others were not aware of and are being underutilised.
3. When running a skill swap physically, get participants to write their needs and offers on different coloured paper or sticky notes, and stick these onto a board with different categories. People can start useful conversations either in a structured or unstructured format. You can also use Twitter and other social media platforms to promote and connect people.





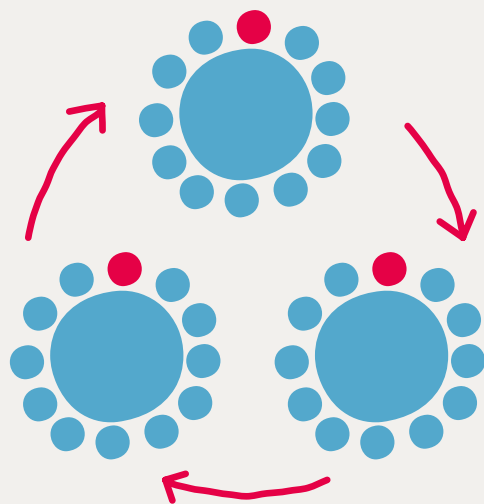
# Speed Consulting

This exercise enables groups to quickly give (and receive) input on a number of issues through quick group consultancy.

**People:** 10+

**Time:** 30+ mins

**Materials:** Flipchart/Markers



## How it works

1. Arrange the room into a number of discrete working areas or tables within one room.
2. Before the session begins, ask the group for issues or challenges which some of them are facing. You need one issue for each table.
3. Group the remainder of the participants into mixed teams, and ask them to join an issue owner at their table. **(3 mins)**
4. Explain to the groups that their role is to act as a team of consultants to the issue owners. They will hear the issue explained, and they will then have just 10 minutes to suggest as many practical ideas, solutions and connections as possible. Emphasise that there is no time to waste! **(2 mins)**
5. The issue owner starts by sharing their issue, clearly and simply. The consultants can ask questions for clarity. Once the consultants begin to offer their suggestions, the issue owner should simply accept them, noting everything down. Remind the groups that after 10 minutes you will ask them to visit the next issue owner. **(10 mins)**
6. When the time is up, ask the groups to rotate and repeat 2-3 times. **(30 mins)**
7. Finish the session by asking the issue owners for feedback on the process. Ask the 'consulting team' to do the same. **(5 mins)**

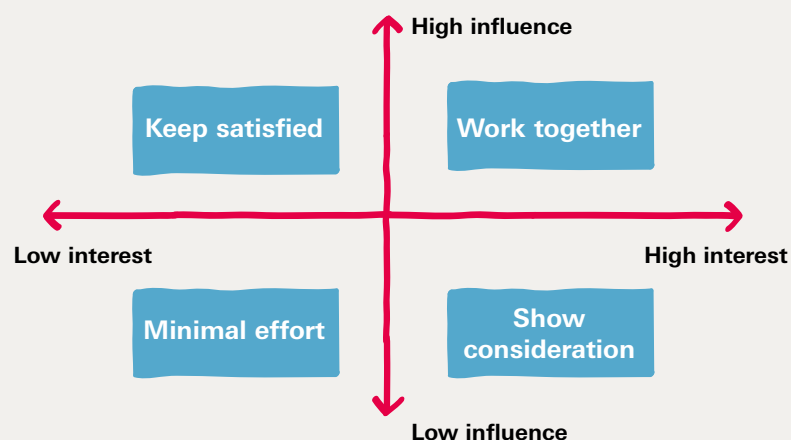
# Stakeholder Mapping

Stakeholder mapping broadly identifies your stakeholders and the varying degrees of their impact on or interest in your product/service.

**People:** 1+

**Time:** 15+ mins

**Materials:** Flipchart/Markers



## How it works

1. On the flipchart, write down all the types of people (eg clinical managers, community health workers, administrative staff, patients, carers), organisations (eg hospitals, care homes, local council), and bodies (e.g. Clinical Commissioning Groups) that interact with and/or have an effect on your product or service. These are your stakeholders. Consider who is involved in each stage, across the ecosystem of your product/service. **(5+ mins)**
2. On a fresh page, draw a graph, labelling the x-axis 'Influence' and the y-axis 'Interest'. Divide the graph space into four boxes to create a matrix, and label the boxes from top left reading across: 'Keep satisfied', 'Work together' [or 'Actively engage'], 'Minimal effort' [or 'Monitor'], 'Keep informed' [or 'Show consideration']. **(2 mins)**
3. Think about where to place each stakeholder in the matrix, in terms of how much influence they have and how engaged they are. Then work through the list and plot them on the graph. This will build a picture of the community around your product/service and identify which stakeholders require more time and energy spent on them as part of the process of achieving your goals. **(10+ mins)**
4. Information about what and who influences your most influential stakeholders is also useful to add if available (see the Circles of Influence activity).



I want to:  
**Seek new  
perspectives**

**A Day in  
the Life**

**Circles of  
Influence**

**Hopes  
and Fears**

**Persona  
Empathy  
Mapping**

**Six Thinking  
Hats**

**Speed  
Consulting**

**User Personas**

**Methods  
Matrix**

# A Day in the Life

An effective way to gather insights about people in situ, to help design or redesign solutions that can improve their experience, or validate existing solutions.

**People:** 2+

**Time:** 1+ day

**Materials:** Blank hourly diary/  
Pen/Camera



## How it works

1. This method is worthwhile to gain a different perspective about those who use your product/service, other stakeholders or potential users. It will help to put their needs, and any challenges or problems they have, into context.
2. Identify who you want to shadow and why.
3. Make arrangements with that person. This may involve gaining not only their permission, but that of, for example, their employer, employees, family, carer or doctor.
4. Shadow the person through a typical day in their life. Observe and document events that happen to them on that day, things they do and how they feel. Shadowing will give you the chance to gain feedback and may help you to identify opportunities, for example where someone has a problem which currently has no solution. It may also enable you to test theories or practical elements.
5. To achieve a more detailed understanding of your users or another significant group, you could replicate the shadowing process over a number of days with a number of people.
6. Review the information you have gathered and use it to design solutions and make improvements where possible.



# Circles of Influence

Understanding what influences stakeholders helps you to design effective engagement methods and highlight potential new channels or targets.

**People:** 4+

**Time:** 40+ mins

**Materials:** Flipchart/Markers/  
Stakeholder map



## How it works

1. Before the session, draw a circle the size of the flipchart paper, and label it 'Circle of concern'. Then draw a circle about three-fifths the size within the bigger one, and label it 'Circle of influence'. Repeat until you have one sheet for each stakeholder, with the stakeholder's name or descriptor (e.g. patient safety manager) in the centre of the circle of influence.
2. Divide the group into smaller groups and give each a prepared flipchart. **(1 min)**
3. Groups discuss who/what might most strongly influence that stakeholder. Write that name/descriptor in the inner part of the circle of influence. Think about other influences, and add them to the inner or outer part of the circle of influence – eg their family, peers, strategic partners, social media. **(5+ mins)**
4. To give a fuller picture, consider other elements of interest or concern in the stakeholder's life and add these to the circle of concern – eg the local community, government, the environment. **(5 mins)**
5. Focus on the circle of influence. Are you using the best method/s of engagement with this stakeholder? Where are their main influencers located, and does that offer any leverage? What influences the influencers? **(5 mins)**
6. Repeat until all the flipcharts have been completed. **(15+ mins)**
7. Regroup as a whole and discuss the results. **(10+ mins)**

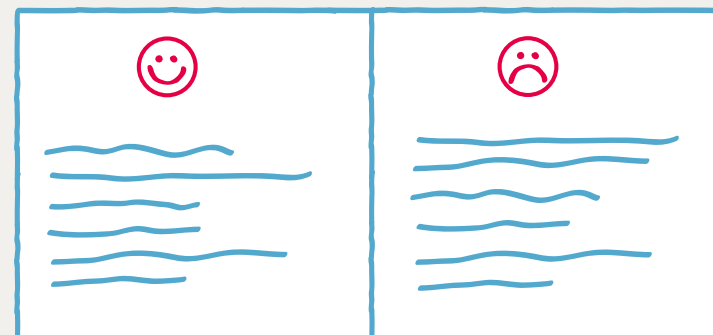
# Hopes and Fears

Everyone involved in a project expresses their hopes and fears, to set expectations from the outset about what can and can't be addressed.

◀ **People:** The project team

**Time:** 45+ mins

**Materials:** Whiteboard/  
Markers/Sticky notes/Pens



## How it works

1. Write the main aim of the project on the whiteboard. **(1 min)**
2. Ask the gathered project team – ideally everyone with a role and not just the core decision makers – to individually write down their hopes for the project, on separate sticky notes. For example: “I want to see a 10% reduction in the average length of hospital stay”, “I hope this helps management understand how hard it is for us to achieve their targets.” **(10 mins)**
3. Then ask the team to individually write down their fears about the project. It’s important to be able to express doubts and anxieties at this stage, so they can be addressed openly before the project gets underway. For example: “I think weekend bottlenecks will still impact on discharge rates”; “I’ve never done this kind of thing before and I’m not sure how it’s going to work.” **(10 mins)**
4. Stick all the notes to the whiteboard, in two columns under the headings ‘Hopes’ and ‘Fears’. **(3 mins)**
5. As a group, discuss the hopes and fears. View them in light of the main project aim and establish which ones the project can address and which ones are outside of its scope or remit. **(20+ mins)**



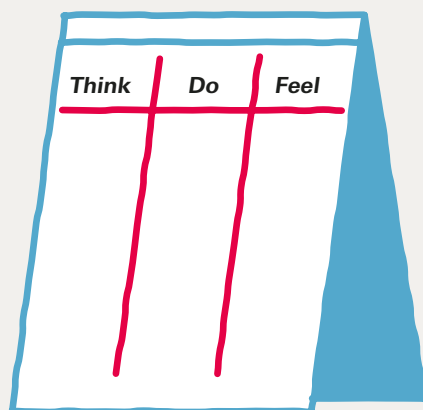
# Persona Empathy Mapping

Empathy mapping helps teams consider how other people are thinking or feeling.

**People:** 1+

**Time:** 30+ mins

**Materials:** Flipchart/Markers/  
Sticky notes



## How it works

1. Before the session prepare 'personas' relevant to your challenge or project. Personas should describe the person you'd like the participants to think about, or represent a larger group (eg Tracy who is a young person with a disability). Write a short description of this person.
2. Ahead of the session, also write down one or more extreme scenarios relevant to your persona.
3. Ask participants, in their groups, to divide a sheet of flip chart paper into three sections, labelled 'Think', 'Do', 'Feel'. **(3 mins)**
4. Give each group time to read through their persona before introducing the extreme scenario. When sharing the scenarios try to bring them to life. **(5 mins)**
5. Allow groups time to fill in their empathy map sheets, fleshing out what they think their persona would 'think', 'do' and 'feel' in that situation. **(10 mins)**
6. Ask teams to reflect. Give them some prompts: eg What did they learn? What will they change as a result? **(10 mins)**
7. Feed back to the wider group. **(5 mins)**

# Six Thinking Hats

This method helps to focus discussion on one viewpoint of a topic at a time, enabling more effective discussion and a more complete picture overall.

◀ **People:** 4+

**Time:** 50+ mins

**Materials:** Flipchart/Markers/  
Six thinking hats questions



Facts



Positives



Negatives



Feelings and  
hunches



Possibilities



Overall  
reflections

## How it works

1. Define the topic or issue for discussion. **(2 mins)**
2. Introduce the concept of the six thinking hats: a method developed by lateral thinker Edward de Bono to help people study a topic from various angles, one at a time. The six hats focus on: facts (white hat), positives (yellow), negatives (black), feelings and hunches (red), possibilities (green), and overall reflections (blue). **(6 mins)**
3. Introduce a set of questions to represent the hats (drawn up before the session). **(2 mins)**
4. Next, ask everyone to mentally put on their white hat. Ask the white hat question (eg “What do we know about this? What information gaps are there, if any?”) and let the discussion unfold. Write key points on the flipchart. Follow on with the other questions. **(30+ mins)**
5. If the discussion veers off track, remind participants what hat they’re wearing for that particular question. The key is for everyone to have their say about each element rather than the discussion becoming gridlocked or ‘hijacked’ by some of the participants. If things are getting bogged down on one question, switch to another.
6. Wrap up the discussion with a summary of the key points that emerged. Think about how you could take these forward. **(10 mins)**





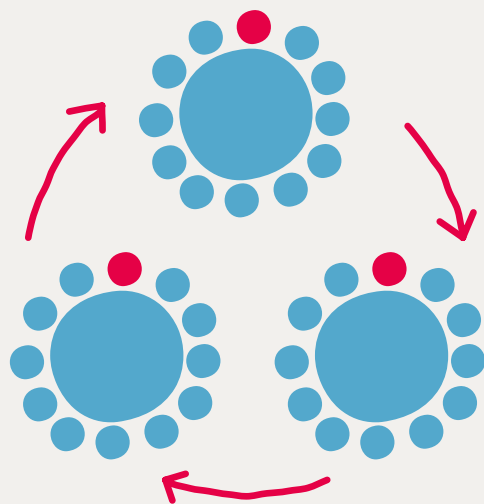
# Speed Consulting

This exercise enables groups to quickly give (and receive) input on a number of issues through quick group consultancy.

**People:** 10+

**Time:** 30+ mins

**Materials:** Flipchart/Markers



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6. When the time is up, ask the groups to rotate and repeat 2-3 times. **(30 mins)**
7. Finish the session by asking the issue owners for feedback on the process. Ask the 'consulting team' to do the same. **(5 mins)**



# User Personas

This helps you to gain perspective on individual stakeholder needs and motivations in order to design different solutions for different groups.

**People:** 4+

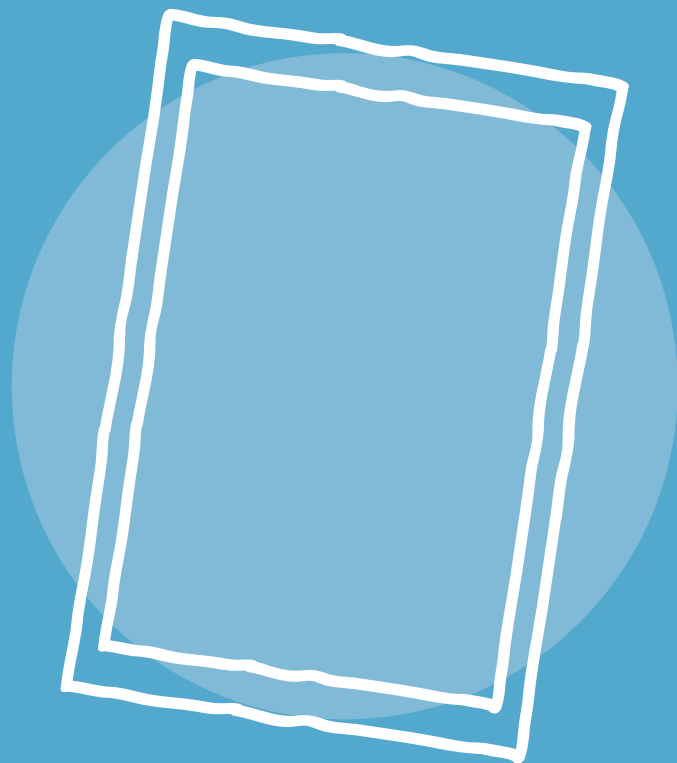
**Time:** 45+ mins

**Materials:** Flipchart/Markers/  
Stakeholder map



## How it works

1. Using your stakeholder map, as a group choose some stakeholders (eg patients, nurses, pharmacists, commissioning managers, educators) from each section. It would be useful to create a persona for all of your stakeholders where possible. **(5 mins)**
2. Divide into small groups. Each group selects one of the shortlisted stakeholders to focus on. **(2 mins)**
3. Using a flipchart, create a profile of your stakeholder, starting with demographic data (age, sex, location), occupation and modes of communication. Drill down further: what are their motivations, frustrations, needs and wants? What do they think about, and how do they interact with, the service or product? Developing the persona and visualising the data helps you to identify any barriers to the service/product there might be for that stakeholder and potential opportunities for engagement. **(10+ mins)**
4. Where possible, make use of quantitative stakeholder research when creating user personas. Using real data helps to build a more accurate picture of your stakeholders and flag up ways to tailor solutions to meet their needs.
5. Regroup as a whole, share and discuss each persona. There may be some unexpected commonalities as well as obvious differences. The exercise may also help to redefine or redirect the service/product. **(30+ mins)**



I want to:  
**Reframe  
a problem**

**Goal  
Roadmapping**

**Lateral  
Thinking  
about Users**

**Lateral  
Thinking  
Prompts**

**Segmentation**

**Six Thinking  
Hats**

**TRIZ**

**Two Brains**

**User journey  
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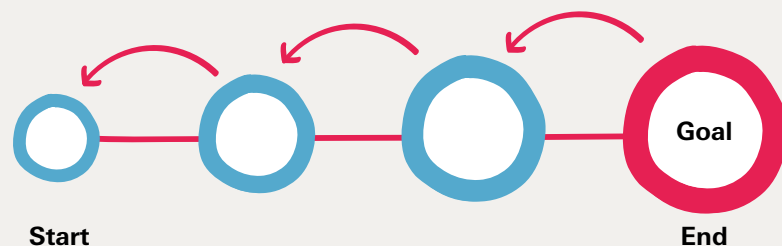
# Goal Roadmapping

This method helps you visualise a route, with clear markers, to achieving your goal – working backwards from the end point.

**People:** 1+

**Time:** 30+ mins

**Materials:** Whiteboard/  
Markers



## How it works

1. Goal roadmaps can be created as tables, flowcharts or more informal outlines depending on the preference of the group.
2. Start by clearly defining your goal, and make it SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely. Write your goal at the top of the whiteboard.
3. At the bottom of the whiteboard, define the current position relative to your goal, for example 'Where are we now?'. **(10 mins)**
4. Next you need to fill in the gaps. Work backwards from your goal through 'stepping stones'. Consider what actions need to be taken, by whom and using what resources, to achieve your goal. Where possible, give estimated timeframes for stepping stones. Be creative in your approach and explore all scenarios. **(20+ mins)**
5. Setting out the various stepping stones can generate new ideas, identify interdependencies between steps and highlight areas of concern. List any potential 'roadblocks' or risks along the way and how they might be overcome.
6. When the roadmap is finalised, pass it on to all of the project team as a reminder of the direction of travel and the destination.

# Lateral Thinking about Users

Break away from traditional modes of thinking and generate fresh ideas, to deepen your understanding of your stakeholders.

**People:** 4+

**Time:** 45+ mins

**Materials:** Flipchart/Markers/  
User personas



## How it works

1. Before the session, write down one or more realistic scenarios relevant to each user persona. A sample scenario might involve a diabetic patient, and need an imagined response from the points of view of both a practitioner and a researcher.
2. Divide the group into smaller groups and give each one a user persona to read. **(3 mins)**
3. Then pass on the relevant user scenarios to read. **(3 mins)**
4. Ask the groups to write down their most obvious ideas about the scenario and then 'hack' them by creating other ideas that are the reverse, a combination, subtraction or exaggeration of their initial ideas. Encourage participants to put aside assumptions, perceptions and conventional logic. Expanding the scenario above, for example: if the diabetic patient wants to try homeopathy instead of practitioner-prescribed treatment, how might the practitioner respond? What might the researcher advise? **(20+ mins)**
5. Each group then feeds back to the wider group. **(10+ mins per group)**
6. Reflect together: has turning ideas on their head sparked any ideas for innovation? What might participants think about changing or doing differently as a result of the exercise? **(10+ mins)**

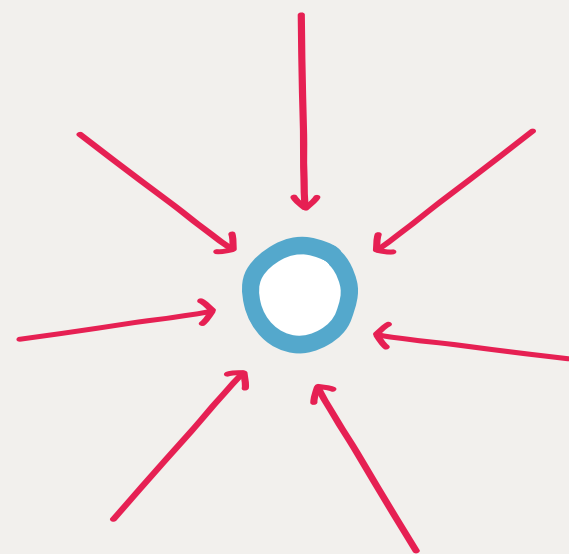
# Lateral Thinking Prompts

Using approaches from one discipline/context and applying them to another can be a great way to reframe intractable problems and innovate solutions.

**People:** 2+

**Time:** 1 hr 5 mins

**Materials:** Flipchart/Markers/  
Inspiration from other contexts



## How it works

1. Before the session, do some ideas-gathering so you have a starting point for the exercise. This may be done through desk review, speaking to experts in other areas, or observing and experiencing other services and processes.
2. As a group, clearly define the issue or problem to be addressed. Write this on the flipchart. **(5 mins)**
3. Lateral thinking involves letting go of conventional logic, perceptions and assumptions, and using a creative approach – opening your mind to develop new ideas. Explain that in this session you'll be applying ideas, methods, tools, theories and/or practices from another discipline/context to your challenge. For example: learning from hospitality industry techniques to improve customer experience and applying that to improving patient experience. This method is particularly useful in addressing complex issues where many things have been tried to no avail. **(10 mins)**
4. Discuss the elements from the other discipline/context and start brainstorming. Use the flipchart to capture the flow of ideas. **(30+ mins)**
5. Review the material and pull out any ideas which could be developed into a practical solution within the framework of your project or service. **(20+ mins)**
6. Feed back these ideas to the relevant team members to get working on.



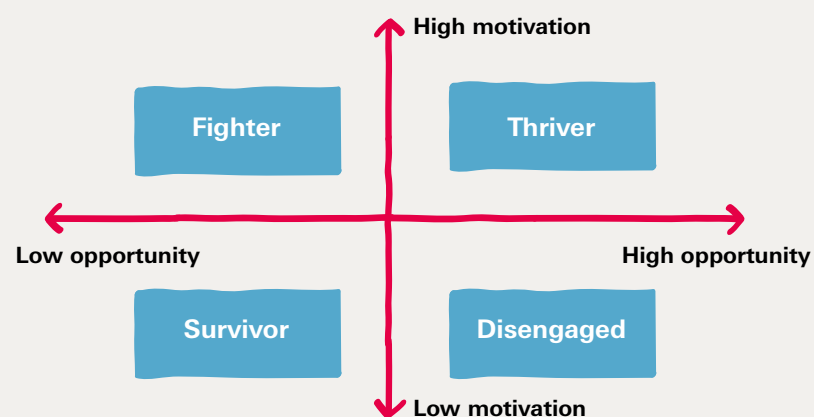
# Segmentation

This exercise helps to narrow down specific groups ('segments') of your users to target through tailored elements of your project/service design.

**People:** 4+

**Time:** 25+ mins

**Materials:** Whiteboard/  
Markers/User personas



## How it works

1. Before the session, create a four-quadrant matrix on the whiteboard by drawing two double headed arrows – one vertical, one horizontal – to split the board into four. Label the vertical arrow 'High motivation' (top) and 'Low motivation' (bottom). Label the horizontal arrow 'Low opportunity' (left) and 'High opportunity' (right). Label the top left area 'Fighters', top right 'Thrivers', bottom left 'Survivors' and bottom right 'Disengaged'.
2. As a group, select a user and work out where to place them in the matrix. Do they, could they or don't they engage with your product or service? Consider their lifestyle, personality and values to establish on what part of the 'opportunity' scale they fit. For example, for a weight management programme, some of the target audience might have high motivation but low income ('Fighters'), others may have low income plus the mindset of 'too old to change' (Survivors), while others may be better off financially but lack commitment to overcome challenges such as family not being supportive ('Disengaged'). **(5 mins)**
3. Discuss other users and add them to the matrix. **(20+ mins)**
4. You can use other variables, eg demographic and environmental. Exploring the 'where, who, why and how' of your users will help you to engage with them more effectively and may reveal unmet need.

# Six Thinking Hats

This method helps to focus discussion on one viewpoint of a topic at a time, enabling more effective discussion and a more complete picture overall.

◀ **People:** 4+

**Time:** 50+ mins

**Materials:** Flipchart/Markers/  
Six thinking hats questions



Facts



Positives



Negatives



Feelings and  
hunches



Possibilities



Overall  
reflections

## How it works

1. Define the topic or issue for discussion. **(2 mins)**
2. Introduce the concept of the six thinking hats: a method developed by lateral thinker Edward de Bono to help people study a topic from various angles, one at a time. The six hats focus on: facts (white hat), positives (yellow), negatives (black), feelings and hunches (red), possibilities (green), and overall reflections (blue). **(6 mins)**
3. Introduce a set of questions to represent the hats (drawn up before the session). **(2 mins)**
4. Next, ask everyone to mentally put on their white hat. Ask the white hat question (eg “What do we know about this? What information gaps are there, if any?”) and let the discussion unfold. Write key points on the flipchart. Follow on with the other questions. **(30+ mins)**
5. If the discussion veers off track, remind participants what hat they’re wearing for that particular question. The key is for everyone to have their say about each element rather than the discussion becoming gridlocked or ‘hijacked’ by some of the participants. If things are getting bogged down on one question, switch to another.
6. Wrap up the discussion with a summary of the key points that emerged. Think about how you could take these forward. **(10 mins)**



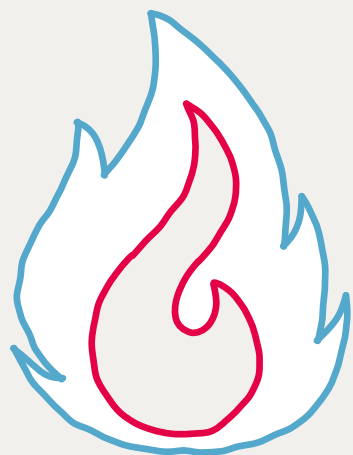


This exercise enables teams to stop counterproductive activities or behaviours and make space for innovation.

◀ **People:** 4-8 per group

**Time:** 35+ mins

**Materials:** Flipchart/Markers/  
Sticky notes



## How it works

1. Introduce TRIZ; decide what the worst imaginable unwanted result could be in relation to your top strategy/objective. **(5 mins)**
2. First alone, then in a small group, make a list all of the things that your organisation might do to ensure it achieves this unwanted outcome. Go wild! The facilitator then gathers all feedback from the whole group. **(10 mins)**
3. First alone, then in a small group, go through your list (from step 2) to find anything you currently do in your organisation that in any way resembles any of the items on it. Make these into a second list. **(10 mins)**
4. First alone, then in a small group, make a list of all the things that need to be stopped – and what the first steps could be to stopping them. Who can help? **(10 mins)**

Prioritise those solutions which feel more possible to achieve first or those with the most votes – or a combination. Potentially use a decision matrix to plot risk vs achievability.

**For further information visit the [Liberating Structures website](#).**



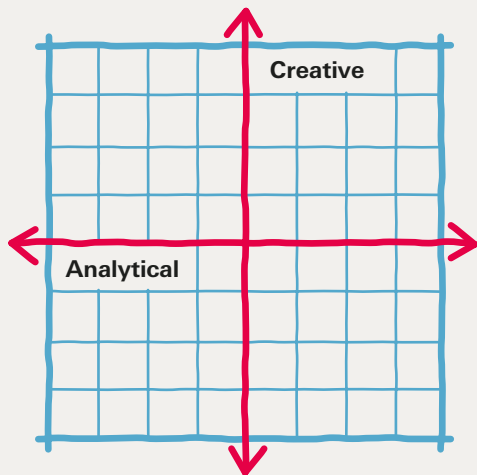
# Two Brains

This method enables teams to develop the right mix of rational and practical ideas useful for selling or pitching any idea.

**People:** 3+

**Time:** 20-30 mins

**Materials:** Flipchart/Markers/  
Sticky notes



## How it works

1. Before the session create a 4-quadrant table on a flipchart or whiteboard. Label the vertical axis 'emotional (right brain)', with a scale from negative to neutral to positive appeal, going from bottom to top. Label the horizontal axis 'practical (left brain)', with a similar scale for practical appeal from left to right.
2. Clearly define the problem/task to address. **(2 mins)**
3. Ask each participant to write down their ideas for addressing the problem individually on sticky notes. **(3 mins)**
4. Introduce the 'Two Brains' activity to the participants. **(3 mins)**
5. Have everyone divide their sticky notes into left brain and right brain ideas. **(2 mins)**
6. Ask everyone to add their sticky notes where they think they fit on the table. **(5 mins)**
7. Encourage the group to discuss, and move sticky notes around if needed. **(5 mins)**
8. Have a discussion about your findings. Which combination of right and left brain ideas will you take forward? **(5 mins)**

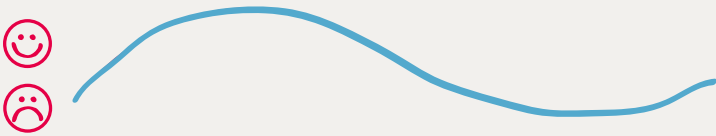
# User Journey Mapping

Plotting the interaction a user has (or may have) with a product/service, their ‘journey’, highlights opportunities and challenges.



**People:** 8+  
**Time:** 55+ mins  
**Materials:** Flipchart/Markers/  
User personas

	Registers	Uses services	Leaves services
Question			
Feeling			
Pain points			
Opportunity			
Interaction			



## How it works

1. Divide the group into smaller groups and give each a user persona. **(2 mins)**
2. The groups read through their personas. **(5 mins)**
3. Each group draws a table with headings describing the various stages along the user’s journey: eg ‘Aware of’, ‘Accesses’, ‘Uses’, ‘Exits’. Include all the stages, even those that seem trivial, to ensure the complete journey is tracked. Down the left side of the table, list aspects to map: eg ‘Emotional state’, ‘Pain points’, ‘Opportunities’. **(5 mins)**
4. Each group imagines the journey from their user’s perspective and plots it in the table, filling in the detail under each heading. **(20+ mins)**
5. Review the pain points and why they may be occurring. What can be done to improve the user’s experience in these instances? Take notes. **(10+ mins)**
6. Discuss the opportunities and how they might be taken forward. Take notes. **(10+ mins)**
7. The groups all feed back to the wider group. See if there are any patterns in usage, and think about the order of the steps and if they are all necessary. **(5+ mins per map).**
8. It might be useful to display or disseminate copies of summarised user journey maps – outlining the steps – to support user awareness and confidence.







I want to:  
**Harness  
new ideas**

**Brand  
Thinking**

**Lateral  
Thinking  
about Users**

**Lateral  
Thinking  
Prompts**

**User journey  
Mapping**

**Methods  
Matrix**

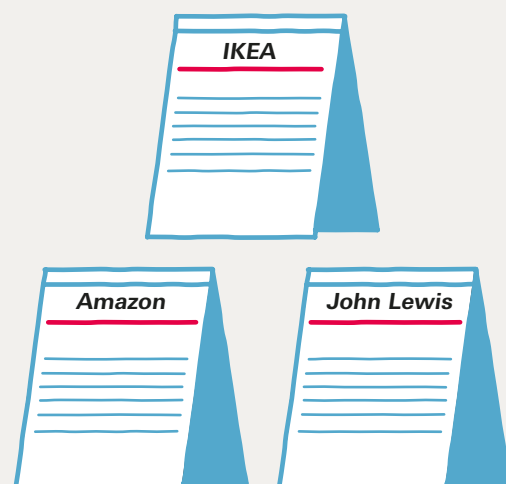
# Brand Thinking

Thinking about how other organisations, or brands, would do something opens you up to new ways of approaching a problem.

**People:** People: 1-15 (or break into groups)

**Time:** 20-40 mins

**Materials:** Flipchart/Markers/  
Print-outs of brand logos



## How it works

1. Clearly define the problem/task to tackle. **(2 mins)**
2. Choose 1-4 innovative brands (if running a group session you can pre-prepare cards with each of the chosen brands' logo).
3. Individually think about, and note down, 5-10 words or phrases to describe the brand or organisation (for example for IKEA it might be 'encourages a do-it-yourself attitude', 'simple and affordable' or Amazon might be 'personalised', 'easy customer feedback loops' or John Lewis, 'promotes employee engagement and partnership'). **(3 mins)**
4. Share your descriptions with the wider group and create a collated list of descriptor words and phrases. **(2 mins)**
5. Now go back to your problem/task and think about how your chosen brand/organisation would approach the problem. What would they do differently? What innovative ideas might they come up with? **(5-10 mins)**
6. Write down or draw your ideas. **(5-15 mins)**
7. Reflect on which of these new ideas, or aspects thereof, might be useful to take forward. **(3-10 mins)**

# Lateral Thinking about Users

Break away from traditional modes of thinking and generate fresh ideas, to deepen your understanding of your stakeholders.

**People:** 4+

**Time:** 45+ mins

**Materials:** Flipchart/Markers/  
User personas



## How it works

1. Before the session, write down one or more realistic scenarios relevant to each user persona.
2. Divide the group into smaller groups and give each one a user persona to read. **(3 mins)**
3. Then pass on the relevant user scenarios to read. A sample scenario might involve a diabetic patient, and need an imagined response from the points of view of both a practitioner and a researcher. **(3 mins)**
4. Ask the groups to write down their most obvious ideas about the scenario and then 'hack' them by creating other ideas that are the reverse, a combination, subtraction or exaggeration of their initial ideas. Encourage participants to put aside assumptions, perceptions and conventional logic. Expanding the scenario above, for example: if the diabetic patient wants to try homeopathy instead of practitioner-prescribed treatment, how might the practitioner respond? What might the researcher advise? **(20+ mins)**
5. Each group then feeds back to the wider group. **(10+ mins per group)**
6. Reflect together: has turning ideas on their head sparked any ideas for innovation? What might participants think about changing or doing differently as a result of the exercise? **(10+ mins)**

# Lateral Thinking Prompts

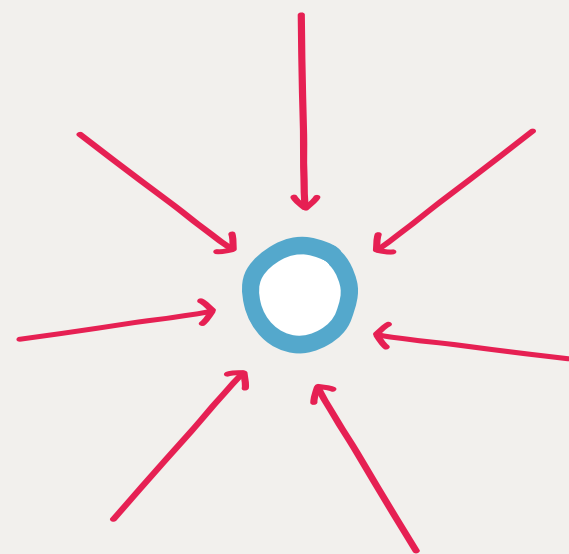
Using approaches from one discipline/context and applying them to another can be a great way to reframe intractable problems and innovate solutions.

◀

**People:** 2+

**Time:** 1 hr 5 mins

**Materials:** Flipchart/Markers/  
Inspiration from other contexts



## How it works

1. Before the session, do some ideas-gathering so you have a starting point for the exercise. This may be done through desk review, speaking to experts in other areas, or observing and experiencing other services and processes.
  2. As a group, clearly define the issue or problem to be addressed. Write this on the flipchart. **(5 mins)**
  3. Lateral thinking involves letting go of conventional logic, perceptions and assumptions, and using a creative approach – opening your mind to develop new ideas. Explain that in this session you'll be applying ideas, methods, tools, theories and/or practices from another discipline/context to your challenge. For example: learning from hospitality industry techniques to improve customer experience and applying that to improving patient experience. This method is particularly useful in addressing complex issues where many things have been tried to no avail. **(10 mins)**
  4. Discuss the elements from the other discipline/context and start brainstorming. Use the flipchart to capture the flow of ideas. **(30+ mins)**
  5. Review the material and pull out any ideas which could be developed into a practical solution within the framework of your project or service. **(20+ mins)**
  6. Feed back these ideas to the relevant team members to get working on.
- ▶

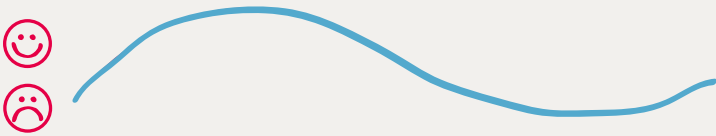
# User Journey Mapping

Plotting the interaction a user has (or may have) with a product/service, their ‘journey’, highlights opportunities and challenges.



**People:** 8+  
**Time:** 55+ mins  
**Materials:** Flipchart/Markers/  
User personas

	Registers	Uses services	Leaves services
Question			
Feeling			
Pain points			
Opportunity			
Interaction			



## How it works

1. Divide the group into smaller groups and give each a user persona. **(2 mins)**
2. The groups read through their personas. **(5 mins)**
3. Each group draws a table with headings describing the various stages along the user’s journey: eg ‘Aware of’, ‘Accesses’, ‘Uses’, ‘Exits’. Include all the stages, even those that seem trivial, to ensure the complete journey is tracked. Down the left side of the table, list aspects to map: eg ‘Emotional state’, ‘Pain points’, ‘Opportunities’. **(5 mins)**
4. Each group imagines the journey from their user’s perspective and plots it in the table, filling in the detail under each heading. **(20+ mins)**
5. Review the pain points and why they may be occurring. What can be done to improve the user’s experience in these instances? Take notes. **(10+ mins)**
6. Discuss the opportunities and how they might be taken forward. Take notes. **(10+ mins)**
7. The groups all feed back to the wider group. See if there are any patterns in usage, and think about the order of the steps and if they are all necessary. **(5+ mins per map).**
8. It might be useful to display or disseminate copies of summarised user journey maps – outlining the steps – to support user awareness and confidence.





I want to:  
**Prioritise  
solutions**

**Actions for  
Retrospectives**

**Business  
Model Canvas**

**Circles  
and Soup**

**Goal  
Roadmapping**

**Min Specs**

**MoSCoW  
Method**

**Segmentation**

**TRIZ**

**Voting,  
Scoring,  
Rating**

**Methods  
Matrix**





# Actions for Retrospectives

Enables teams to learn from past events, projects or incidents in a way that results in actions for the team to commit to.

**People:** 3+

**Time:** 20+ mins

**Materials:** Flipchart/Markers



## How it works

1. Prepare a chart with four quadrants labelled 'Appreciations', 'Puzzles', 'Risks' and 'Wishes' and a central square with 'Actions'. **(2 mins)**
2. Ask your participants to individually write down their 'Appreciations: What you liked during the previous event'. **(2 mins)**
3. Plot these onto the quadrant and discuss as a group. **(5+ mins)**
4. Next, participants individually write down their 'Puzzles: Questions for which you have no answer'. **(2 mins)**
5. Plot onto the quadrant. Discuss as a group any actions that could help you get some answers. **(5 mins)**
6. Participants then individually write down their 'Risks: Future pitfalls that can endanger the event'. **(2 mins)**
7. Plot onto the quadrant. Discussing these is optional.
8. Ask the group to individually write down their 'Wishes: Not improvements, but their ideal situation'. **(2 mins)**
9. Plot these onto the chart. As a group discuss what actions take you closer to the wishes, retain the appreciations, avoid the risks and do not rely on the unanswerable questions. **(5+ mins)**
10. As a group, prioritise a set of actions – committing these to the central square. Agree when you will review the next batch of actions. **(5+ mins)**

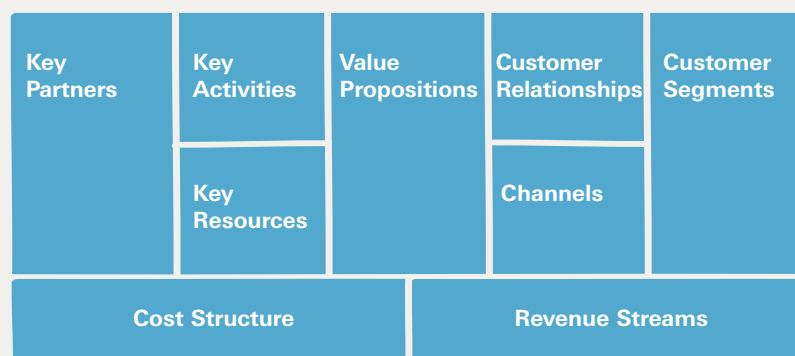
# Business Model Canvas

A focused outline of how a product or service operates or will operate, highlighting how the elements relate to each other and deliver value.

◀ **People:** People: The project team

**Time:** 40+ mins

**Materials:** Whiteboard/  
Markers/Business model  
canvas template/Sticky notes



## How it works

1. Before the session, draw a blank v model canvas template on the whiteboard.
2. As a team, start by filling in the middle section, the ‘Value proposition’ (or ‘What do we do?’). The rest of the canvas (there are nine sections in total) is about how to cost-effectively translate this into value for your users. **(2 mins)**
3. Next, add the ‘Key activities’ and ‘Customer/user segment’ details (‘How do we do what we do?’ and ‘Who for?’). You could make things more interesting by getting participants to write on sticky notes and stick these to the relevant section. Any divergence in views about elements of your product/service could be an opportunity for further discussion and possible innovation. **(10+ mins)**
4. Continue filling in the rest of the sections. Who are your ‘Key partners’? What are your ‘Key resources’? Outline your ‘Customer (user) relationships’ and ‘Distribution channels’. Review as you go to check how value is being delivered to users. **(20+ mins)**
5. Finally, the ‘Cost structure’ and ‘Revenue stream’ sections help you refine the incomings and outgoings to make sure your product/service is financially viable. **(10+ mins)**

Review the business model canvas regularly for any possible improvements.

For further information visit the [Strategyzer website](#).

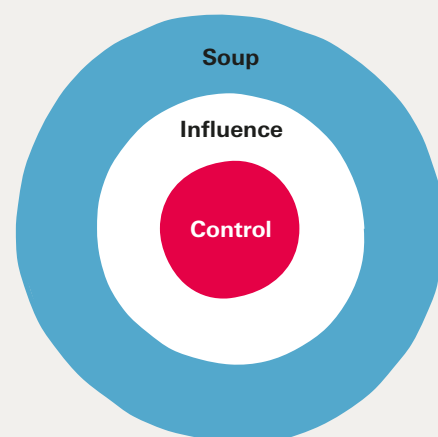
# Circles and Soup

This is a great way to wade through the 'soup' of an organisation when prioritising solutions or getting perspective on a problem.

**People:** 3+

**Time:** 20+ mins

**Materials:** Whiteboard or flipchart/Markers/Sticky notes



## How it works

1. Begin with a purpose in mind (ie a situation that you are looking to improve – and whether you are diagnosing or seeking a solution).
2. Everyone writes down their ideas on sticky notes. **(5 mins)**
3. Draw a circle in the middle of a large blank sheet – this is the control circle. In here you can place all of the ideas within your control. This could be your organisation, team or you personally – whichever feels appropriate.
4. Draw an outer circle around this – this is the influence circle. In here you can place all of the ideas that you may not control, but you can influence.
5. Around this draw a larger circle – the soup. This represents organisational/ cultural spheres. Areas where you have neither control nor influence.
6. Ask participants to plot their sticky notes onto the circles and soup. **(5 mins)**
7. Discuss the outcome as a group; spending time on the areas where you have control and influence. **(10+ mins)**
8. If you are tackling problems and solutions, it is better to do this over two rounds on two charts.

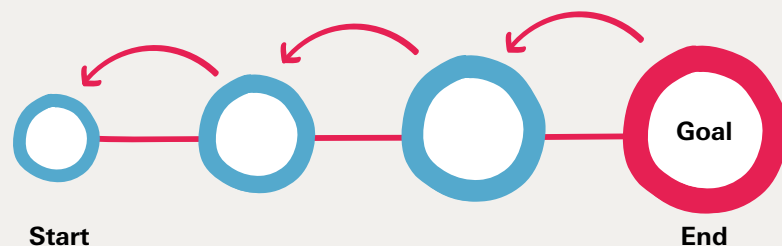
# Goal Roadmapping

This method helps you visualise a route, with clear markers, to achieving your goal – working backwards from the end point.

**People:** 1+

**Time:** 30+ mins

**Materials:** Whiteboard/  
Markers



## How it works

1. Goal roadmaps can be created as tables, flowcharts or more informal outlines depending on the preference of the group.
2. Start by clearly defining your goal, and make it SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely. Write your goal at the top of the whiteboard.
3. At the bottom of the whiteboard, define the current position relative to your goal, for example 'Where are we now?'. **(10 mins)**
4. Next you need to fill in the gaps. Work backwards from your goal through 'stepping stones'. Consider what actions need to be taken, by whom and using what resources, to achieve your goal. Where possible, give estimated timeframes for stepping stones. Be creative in your approach and explore all scenarios. **(20+ mins)**
5. Setting out the various stepping stones can generate new ideas, identify interdependencies between steps and highlight areas of concern. List any potential 'roadblocks' or risks along the way and how they might be overcome.
6. When the roadmap is finalised, pass it on to all of the project team as a reminder of the direction of travel and the destination.

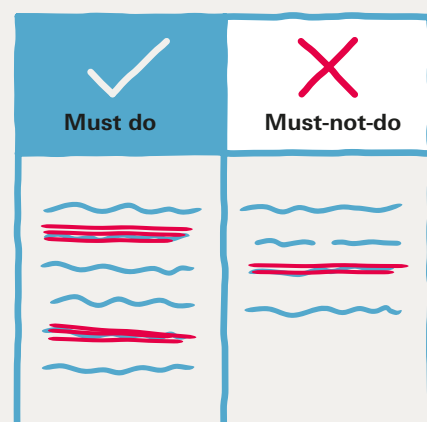
# Min Specs

By evaluating and deciding what is absolutely essential for success, you focus energies and resources and open possibilities.

◀ **People:** 4-8 per group

**Time:** 35+ mins

**Materials:** Flipchart/A4 paper/  
Markers



## How it works

1. Clearly define the problem/task to tackle. **(2 mins)**
2. Ask each participant to write down a list of all the things they would need to do/steps they would take to achieve a successful outcome. **(5 mins)**
3. Split the group in two – each group nominates a ‘scribe’ and merges their lists to make one final big list of ‘max specs’ – a pooled list of all of the steps. **(5 mins)**
4. During this time facilitator writes on a board ‘if we ignored this step could we still achieve our purpose?’
5. Ask each group to spend 15 minutes going sequentially through their ‘max spec’ list, applying the question to each step. If you could achieve the purpose without the step, then cross it off the list. After 15 minutes you should have a final ‘min specs’ list. **(15 mins)**
6. Ask each group to write their list of ‘min specs’ on their flip chart and to present it to the whole group. **(5 mins)**
7. Compare ‘min specs’ lists – for similarities and differences etc. **(5 mins)**

▶ **For further information visit the [Liberating Structures website](#).**



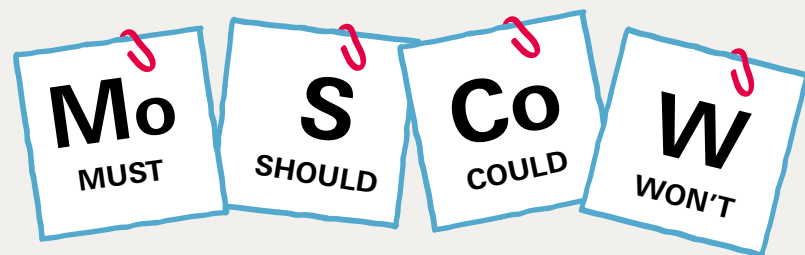
# MoSCoW method

A good way to prioritise project activities and meet deadlines, while ensuring the crucial aspects of a successful product/service are included.

**People:** 4+

**Time:** 45+ mins

**Materials:** Flipchart/Markers



## How it works

1. As a group, define what the product or service will be. For example: a mobile phone app to improve self-management in young people with arthritis. **(5 mins)**
2. List the project tasks/activities that you think are needed in order to develop the product/service. For example: finding participants; compiling information; ensuring data is secure; creating a user-friendly interface. **(10+ mins)**
3. Introduce the MoSCoW method. The acronym stands for: Must do, Should do, Could do, and Won't do. This method is used as a way of prioritising tasks when developing a product/service. Requirements considered a Must are vital to the project's success, Should are quite important, Could are less critical, whereas Won't items are not appropriate, of no importance or are 'would likes' that can be postponed. **(5 mins)**
4. Divide the group into smaller groups. Each group ranks the list items in order of priority from Must to Won't. For example: data protection is a Must; being able to create an avatar is a Won't; optimising the speed of the app is a Should or Could, though if it threatens the project deadline it may be downgraded to a Won't. **(15+ mins)**
5. The groups feed back to the wider group and together finalise the list of project requirements. **(10+ mins)**



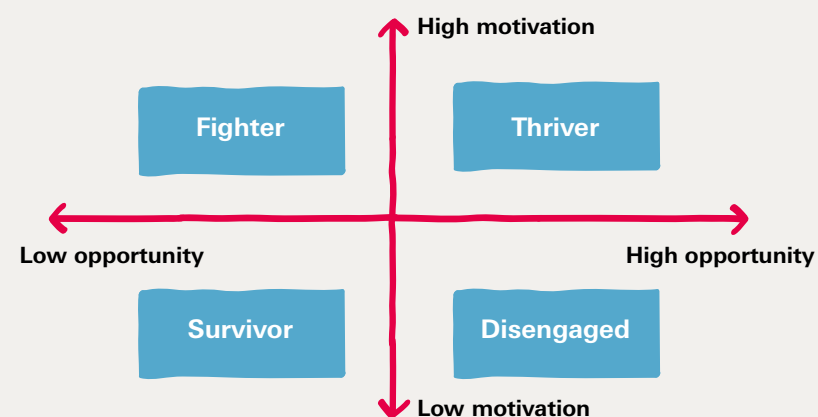
# Segmentation

This exercise helps to narrow down specific groups (or segments) of your users to target through tailored elements of your project/service design.

**People:** 4+

**Time:** 25+ mins

**Materials:** Whiteboard/  
Markers/User personas



## How it works

1. Before the session, create a four-quadrant matrix on the whiteboard by drawing two double headed arrows – one vertical, one horizontal – to split the board into four. Label the vertical arrow ‘High motivation’ (top) and ‘Low motivation’ (bottom). Label the horizontal arrow ‘Low opportunity’ (left) and ‘High opportunity’ (right). Label the top left area ‘Fighters’, top right ‘Thrivers’, bottom left ‘Survivors’ and bottom right ‘Disengaged’.
2. As a group, select a user and work out where to place them in the matrix. Do they, could they or don’t they engage with your product or service? Consider their lifestyle, personality and values to establish on what part of the ‘opportunity’ scale they fit. For example, for a weight management programme, some of the target audience might have high motivation but low income (‘Fighters’), others may have low income plus the mindset of ‘too old to change’ (Survivors), while others may be better off financially but lack commitment to overcome challenges such as family not being supportive (‘Disengaged’). **(5 mins)**
3. Discuss other users and add them to the matrix. **(20+ mins)**
4. You can use other variables, eg demographic and environmental. Exploring the ‘where, who, why and how’ of your users will help you to engage with them more effectively and may reveal unmet need.

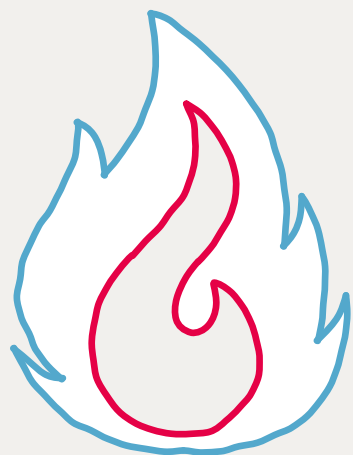


This exercise enables teams to stop counterproductive activities or behaviours and make space for innovation.

◀ **People:** 4-8 per group

**Time:** 35+ mins

**Materials:** Flipchart/Markers/  
Sticky notes



## How it works

1. Introduce TRIZ; decide what the worst imaginable unwanted result could be in relation to your top strategy/objective. **(5 mins)**
2. First alone, then in a small group, make a list all of the things that your organisation might do to ensure it achieves this unwanted outcome. Go wild! The facilitator then gathers all feedback from the whole group. **(10 mins)**
3. First alone, then in a small group, go through your list (from step 2) to find anything you currently do in your organisation that in any way resembles any of the items on it. Make these into a second list. **(10 mins)**
4. First alone, then in a small group, make a list of all the things that need to be stopped – and what the first steps could be to stopping them. Who can help? **(10 mins)**

Prioritise those solutions which feel more possible to achieve first or those with the most votes – or a combination. Potentially use a decision matrix to plot risk vs achievability.

**For further information visit the [Liberating Structures website](#).**





# Voting, Scoring, Rating

These are particularly useful when there are lots of decision makers in a group, to help prioritise issues, ideas to test or resources needed.

**People:** 6+

**Time:** 15+ mins

**Materials:** Whiteboard/  
Markers/Voting, scoring,  
rating tools

## How it works

1. Before the session, select one or more tools for the group to use in their decision making. There are many options available, including: dot voting, ideas rating sheets, score cards, polling websites (eg SurveyMonkey, Doodle poll), star ratings and scales (eg 1-10, most to least).
2. Write on the whiteboard in plain terms what needs to be rated, ranked or decided on. Use the opportunity to present as many items as possible, while you have the group gathered together, to achieve democratic decisions. **(2+ mins)**
3. Introduce the decision making tool/s to the group and then start the process. Decision making doesn't have to be burdensome – have fun with it. Participants might enjoy holding up score cards, for example. In other situations they might prefer voting anonymously. **(5+ mins)**
4. Collate the results and present them to the group. If there is time and it is appropriate, lead a brief discussion of the implication of the results and/or the steps to action them. **(10+ mins)**
5. Feed back the results from the session to stakeholders and your wider participation group as appropriate.



# Further links

A list of links to further reading and resources you might find useful.

We also encourage Q members to post about their experiences of using creative methods, on the Q [website](#).

1. [Service Design Tools](#)
2. [Service Design Toolkit](#)
3. [Development Impact and You \(DIY\) Toolkit](#)
4. [Liberating Structures](#)
5. [Game Storming](#)
6. [Mind Tools](#)
7. [Business Balls](#)
8. [Creating Minds](#)
9. [Social Design Methods Menu](#)
10. [Policy Lab Change Cards](#)

We hope you have found this toolkit useful, we would welcome any feedback on making this guide more useful.

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Registered company number: 1714937

