

PRIORITIZING IDEAS



Time needed: 30-60 minutes

Description: There are a variety of different ways that this can be done. It could be done in advance of a workshop by the content leads/hosts to help focus prioritization work in a certain direction. It could be done during the workshop itself, if the participants' co-creating different prioritization criteria is a helpful input to the process. The key part of this technique is to get clear on who will make the evaluation criteria, what factors they will use to make them, and then what evaluation criteria you will use to guide you through the process. It is important to do this very carefully, as it can either continue to support creative, generative thinking and work even as ideas are being evaluated, or it can clamp down on the creative process too early if the criteria are too constraining.

Source: Adapted from IDEO

How it works:

1. Develop some possible criteria to sort the ideas for solutions that have been generated. Here are some examples of types of criteria to consider, and keep in mind that different criteria will be more or less important in different contexts. If you are developing these in advance, or co-creating them in a workshop, the process is the same.

- Systems change criteria - potential to create ripple effects and catalyse systems change
- Innovation criteria — potential to be a game-changer
- Stretch criteria - potential to challenge and stretch current thinking and practice
- Lab criteria - requires a social innovation, experimentation, and learning- oriented lab process to progress this idea, i.e. it wouldn't be



explored otherwise

- User criteria — potential to fit with the needs and wants of users on the ground, in the real world.
- Efficacy criteria — potential for progress toward solving the problem.
- Implementation criteria — potential to initiate, scale.
- Economic criteria — potential benefit exceeds potential cost.
- Agency criteria - potential for actors involved to do something of impact
- Timeliness criteria - potential for significant progress on this idea at this time
- Enabling conditions criteria - potential for the necessary supports, resources, permissive space,

time, and other enabling conditions to be in place

2. Once you've developed your long list of potential criteria, choose 2-5 that are the most important for the prioritization work that needs to happen at this moment, to help work sorting the ideas that have been generated.

3. Communicate and explain these to one another, whether they have been generated in advance or co-created in the workshop. It's important that everyone interprets them in the same way as you move into applying them.

4. Check back on them after you've started applying them to make sure they are providing a useful frame for your work. If not, take a pause and adjust as needed.



SIFT, SORT, RANK



Time needed: 45-60 minutes

Set-up: 1-6 people, loads of pre-generated ideas on post-it notes, wall space

Source: Adapted from Moura Quayle, Strategic Design Toolkit

Description: This is a technique to help you make sense of a large number of ideas. You can sift, sort and/or rank - all three do not need to be done together.



How it works:

1. Use your evaluation criteria to sift, sort and rank your ideas to help them take shape. Right-size your approach to your needs. Do you need to clean up your ideas, organize, and arrange them so that you can get a better view into what they are telling you? Do you need to work your ideas further and find points of integration, discuss what additional questions they reveal, or be more descriptive and specific about how an idea might work? Do you need to narrow all the one down to one concept to prototype? This technique is flexible based on what your needs are. One important consideration is to find the balance between working intuitively and quickly, while also working thoughtfully and strategically. You also don't want to narrow too quickly, otherwise you're likely to miss some important opportunities.

Sift

- Sift through: put through a sieve so as to isolate that which is most important or useful.
- Sift out: separate something, may be "just do it" things, ideas to be scrapped.

Sort

- Arrange systematically in groups; separate according to type, theme, etc.
- Look at a group of things, one after another in order to classify them or make a selection.

Rank/Prioritize

- Give something a rank, priority, or place within a set of evaluation criteria or a grading system. (Max Axes is an example of a ranking technique, heat mapping/hot dots is another).
- Keep both sets of notes for your work later. Sometimes insights take a little while to land, and you might find a spark of inspiration when you come back to these later.

MAX AXES

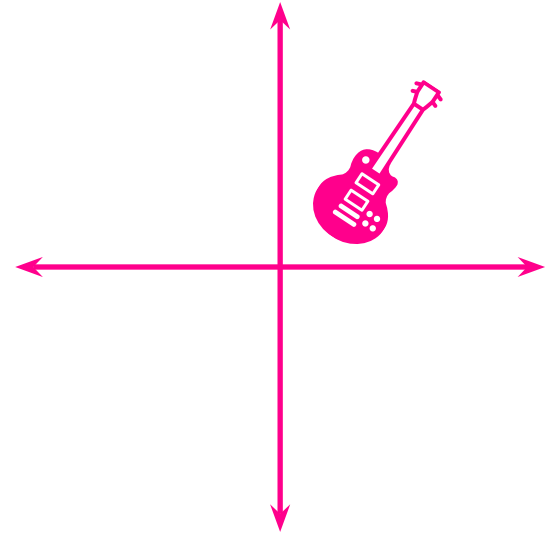


Time needed: 30-45 minutes

Set-up: large piece of paper/whiteboard/wall with tape to make axes, lots of ideas on post-it notes, evaluation criteria

Source: Adapted from Moura Quayle, Strategic Design Toolkit

Description: A good idea generation session will produce 50+ potential solutions. Max Axes is a tool that helps teams sort and prioritize those that are the best fit. By having to choose just two values for the two axes, teams are forced to prioritize among their many project criteria. The values represent two extremes, such as expensive and cheap, low and impact, level of feasibility, or amount of stretch. This can be used in combination with other tools for prioritizing and decision-making.



How it works:

- Choose two values for the two axes that are extremes. Use evaluation criteria and the larger context of the innovation process that you are using to help determine what could be on the axes. If you are a facilitator guiding a group through this process, it is better to predetermine these in advance, rather than use group process time to negotiate them.
- Post-it notes are the easiest to use, and they can be moved around as you work through this technique.
- Of the ideas that have been generated, and potentially those that have already been sorted or sifted in some way, place them along axes. Move quickly and intuitively at first. If there are ideas that aren't strong or don't make sense, move them off to the side or scrap them. It's also helpful to have an area for "just do it" ideas that are fairly straightforward and make sense,

and do not require further experimentation and learning through prototyping to understand their potential.

- Once the ideas have been placed on the axes, the group should discuss and reflect on which potential solutions have ended up in which quadrants. What does the placement mean? Is there a quadrant with a set of ideas that feel stronger or weaker in their potential to move forward with?