

# 4 HOURS DESIGN THINKING WORKSHOP

*Template designed by Manuel Sainsily  
Inspired by IBM Enterprise Design Thinking*

**A few rules  
before we start...**

## **Write before you talk.**

Write or sketch lots of your ideas on sticky notes before talking about them. During discussions, capture the main points on sticky notes and post to the wall.

## **Everyone participates.**

Everyone has to put sticky notes. No excuses.

## **There are no bad ideas.**

Start big. Diverge to capture everyone's ideas.

Together: discuss, cluster, and seek patterns. Then, converge to determine the strongest ideas.

## **Stay engaged.**

Avoid side conversations. Use a "parking lot" to capture issues that are off-topic.

**Stay focused on your users.**

Tell stories about users to keep them at the center.

**Start on time, stay on time.**

To meet our goals, we need to watch the clock.

**Yes, and...**

Instead of dismissing the ideas, push on them.



**Ready, set, go!**



**Let's start with a short story.**



MRIs are cold and scary...



And noisy...



**So kids used to be sedated...**



Which affected the scans...



And forced parents to reschedule...



Doctors had to take a step back...



**Spent time observing their users...**



Used the power of roleplaying...



Found a creative & low-cost idea...



That met their user needs.

*"New opportunities for **innovation** open up when you start the creative problem-solving process with **empathy** toward your target **audience.**"*



**Activity:**  
Empathy Map



**Primary Goal:**  
Build empathy for your users



**Time required:**  
20min exercise + 5min presentation

## Overview

On a large team, not everyone has the chance to talk to every user. Empathy Maps help synthesize your team's collective knowledge about your users as a group, bringing you closer to a common understanding of who they are.

## **Introduction**

As a group, reflect upon your team's collective knowledge about your users, and create a common understanding of their goals and motivations.

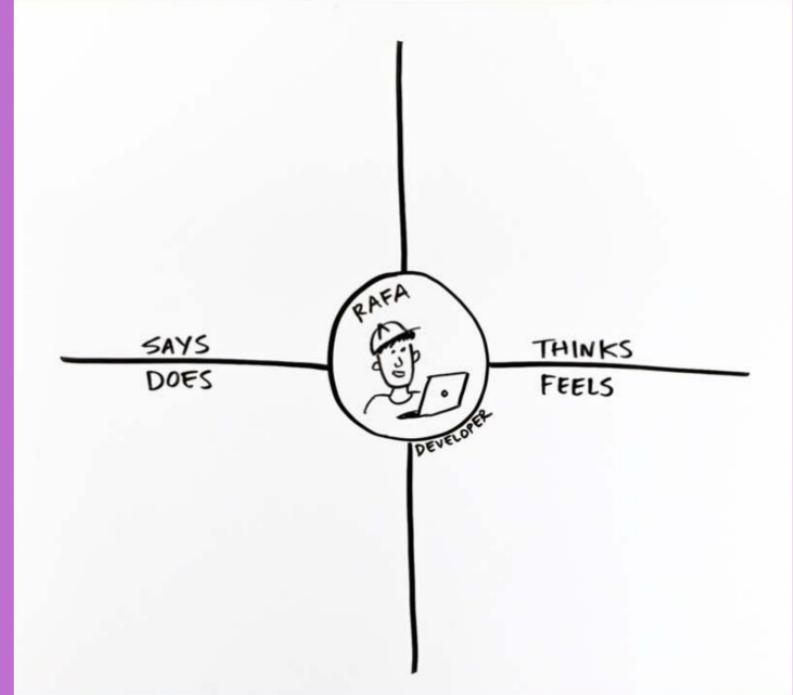
## **Introduction**

It's important to remember  
that you are not your users.

**You ≠  
User**

## Setting up

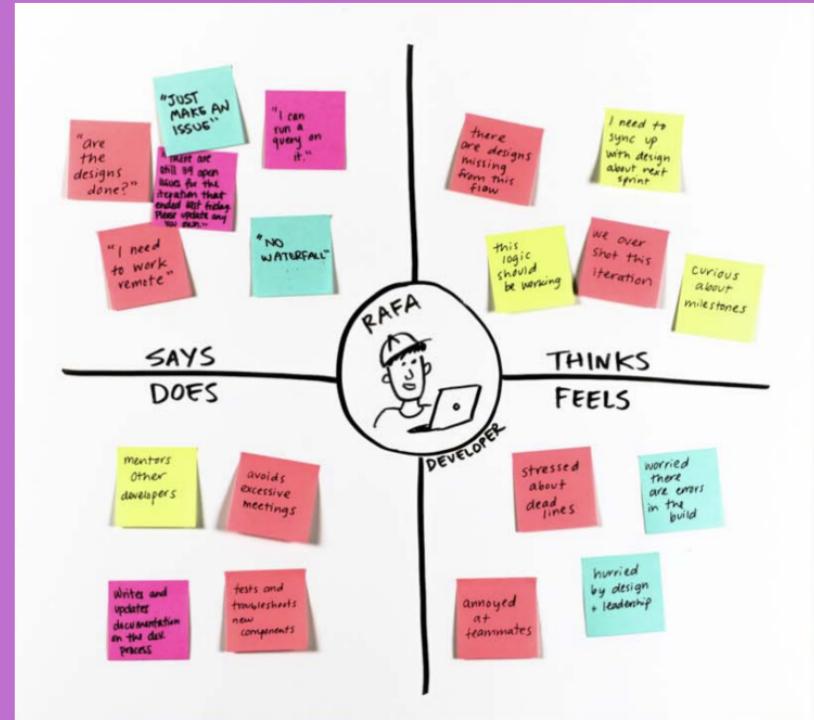
Give a name and brief description of who are your users and what they do.



## Capture observations

Everyone records what they know about the user or stakeholder.

Use one sticky note per observation and place it within the appropriate quadrant.



# Cluster

Within each quadrant, cluster sticky notes that relate to each other.

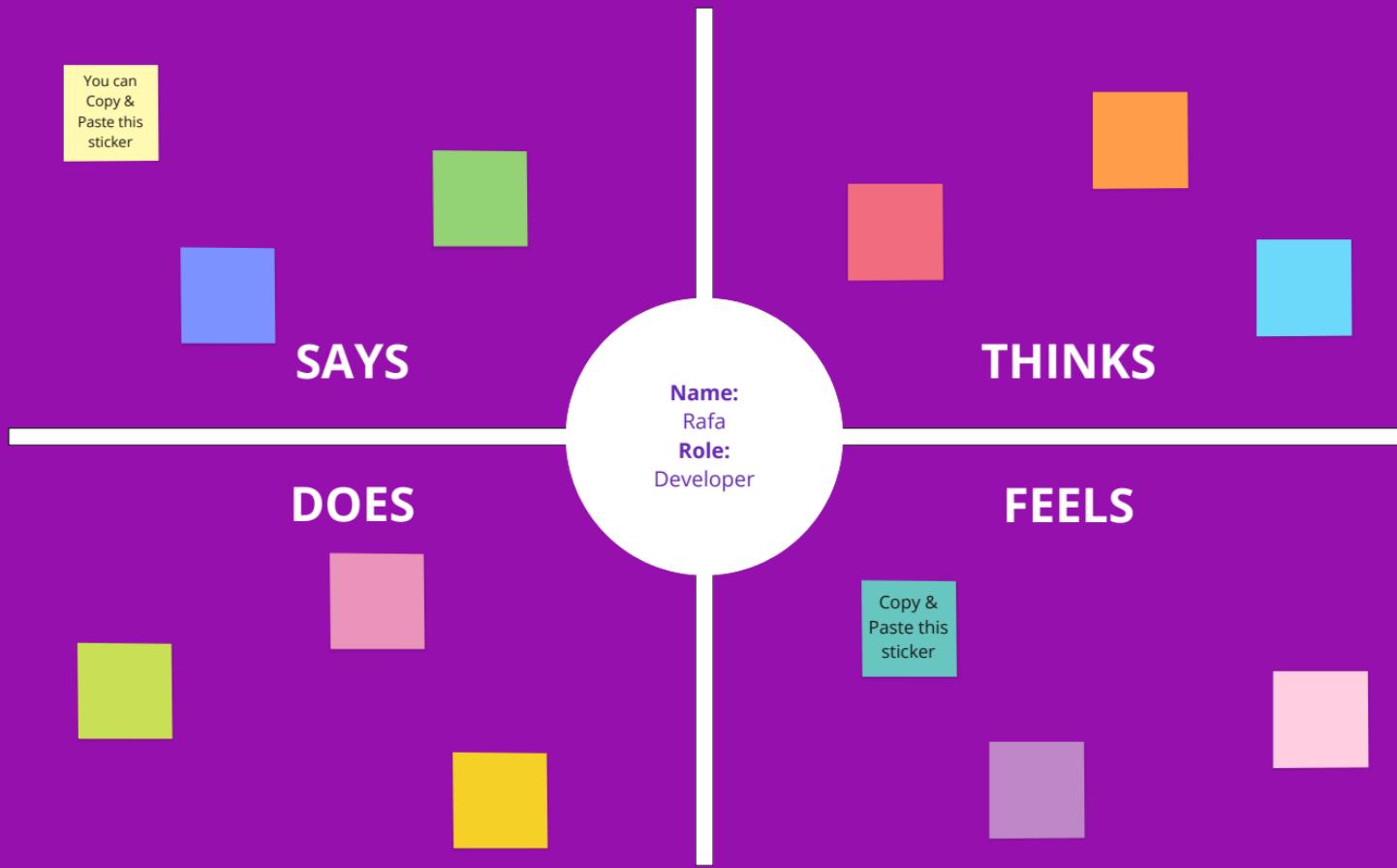


## Cluster

Imagine how these different aspects of your user's life influence what they need.

- Can you imagine yourself in their shoes?





## Playback

Choose one person to play back the Empathy Map.

- Label anything on the map that might be an assumption or a question for later inquiry or validation.





**Activity:**  
As-is Scenario Maps



**Primary Goal:**  
Better understand the current UX



**Time required:**  
30min exercise + 5min presentation

## **Overview**

As-is Scenario Maps help to document collective understanding of user workflows and are best used as precursors to exploring new ideas or for finding the right problem to solve.

It allows to uncover what the team collectively knows or doesn't know.

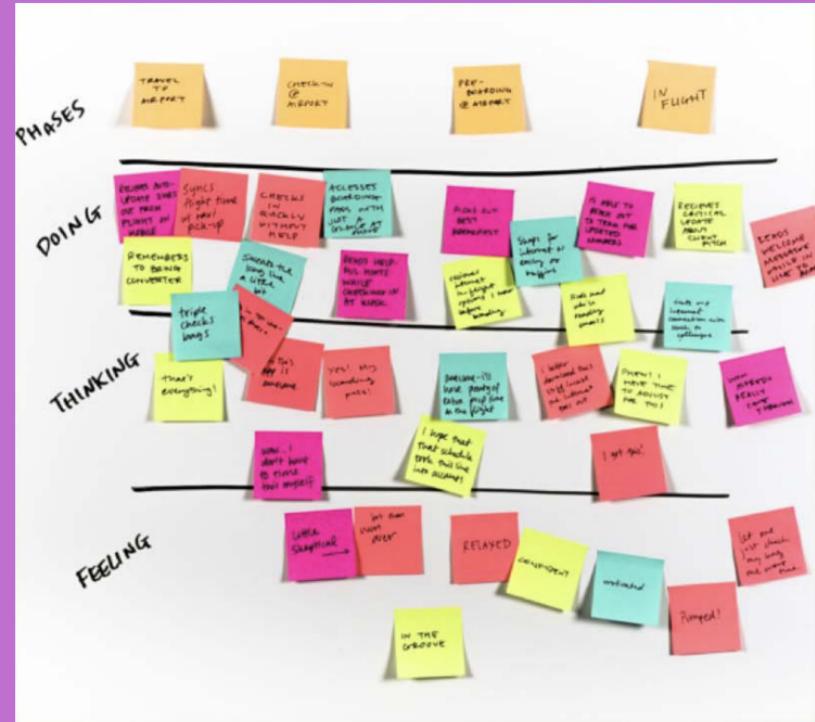
## **Introduction**

Build out a better understanding of our user's current experience in order to identify opportunities for improvement.

# Brainstorm

Individually brainstorm.

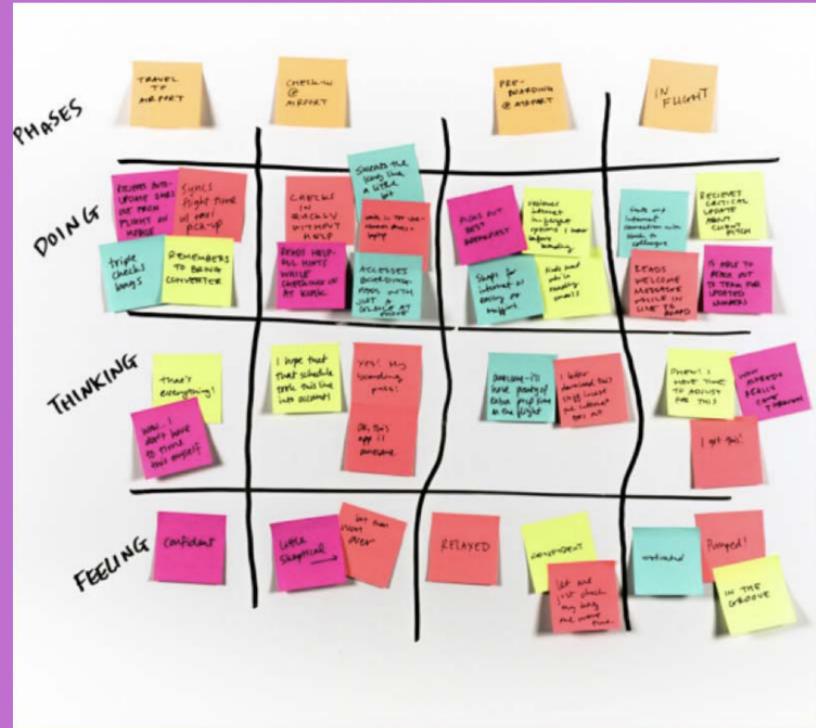
Ask yourselves, "What is our user doing, thinking, and feeling throughout their experience?" Fill in the corresponding rows, using one sticky note per answer.



# Review and cluster

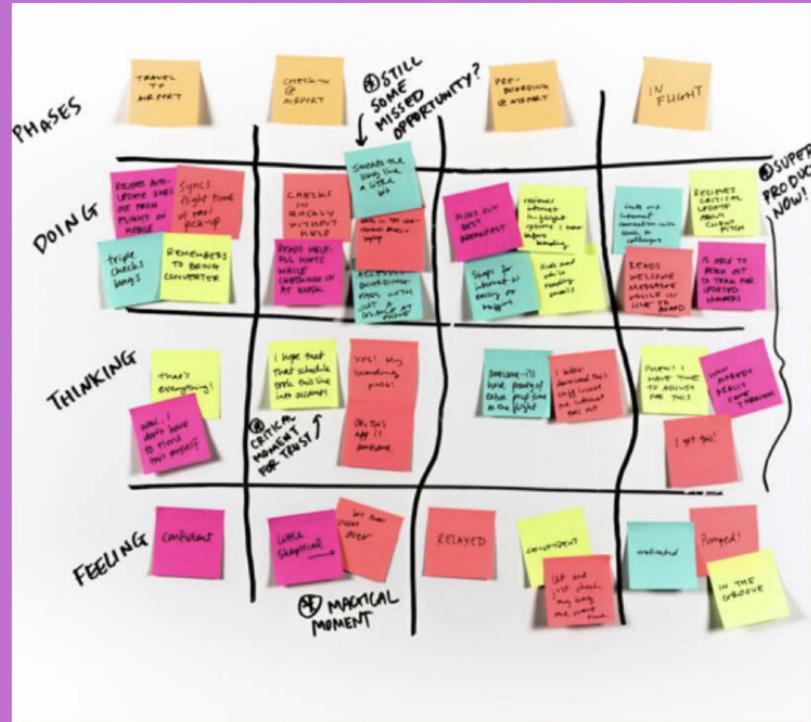
Cluster similar stickies, refine the order, and draw rough columns that represent the unique phases of your user's current experience.

Name the phases as they become clear.



## Identify highs and lows

Circle and label areas that are particularly positive or negative for your user, and blank areas where you still need to learn more



## PHASES

You can  
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2

3

4

## DOING

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sticker



## THINKING



## FEELING



## Playback

Choose one to two people to present the As-is Scenario Map.

- What areas are you certain are true?
- Where are there still gaps in your team's knowledge?





## **Activity:**

### Needs Statements



## **Primary Goal:**

Outline what users need in order to achieve their goals.



## **Time required:**

30min exercise + 10min presentation

## Overview

When you're trying to solve a problem it can be tempting to slip into a technical discussion that focuses on features and functions. If you get caught up in the details too early, you risk inadvertently solving the wrong problem. Reframe your thinking by writing Needs Statements and answer the question: "What does our user actually need?"

## Introduction

Frame the activity by writing the following prompt:

[Our user] needs a way to [addresses this need] so that they [benefit in this way.]

DEVELOPERS NEED A WAY TO \_\_\_\_\_  
[our users] [address this need]  
SO THEY CAN \_\_\_\_\_.  
[benefit in this way]

## Uncover needs

Have everyone diverge around the needs and benefits they believe they're solving for to fill out the prompt. Stay away from writing features as best as you can. If an idea is expressed in terms of the machine ("dashboard," "click," "log in," "export," and so on), that's a clue that it's a feature—not a user need.



## Cluster

Cluster similar ideas and discuss. As you converge, try writing a few needs statements that represent key elements. Make sure you use the same format as the original prompt.



**[OUR USERS] need a way to [ADDRESS THIS NEED]  
so they can [BENEFIT IN THIS WAY].**

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**Activity:**  
Big Ideas



**Primary Goal:**  
Find solutions to meet your users' needs



**Time required:**  
25min exercise + 5min presentation

## Overview

Everyone has ideas. Don't make the mistake of leaving idea generation only to the designers, the engineers, the project owners, or the executives. Everyone has a unique perspective on the user and the problem, so everyone should contribute ideas for solutions.

## Introduction

Think of a Big Idea as a single frame of a storyboard. Try sketching a visual depiction of what the idea might feel like. Label it with a one or two-word headline.

DIRECT  
LINE  
TO GET  
WHAT YOU  
NEED



hotline  
to design  
team

## Introduction

Begin the activity with a good prompt, such as a needs statement, a user story, a Hill, or just a pain identified in an As-is Scenario Map. Write this prompt somewhere everyone can see.

DEVELOPERS NEED A WAY TO INTERACT WITH THEIR DESIGN TEAMS SO THEY CAN PROTOTYPE FASTER.

## Diverge

Generate ideas, not features.

A big idea describes how a user might experience the solution. Features describe the implementation of a solution.



## Diverge

Create many Big Ideas and quickly share them with each other. Build off others' ideas, but stay out of the weeds and avoid drifting into features or talking about implementation details.

DEVELOPERS NEED A WAY TO INTERACT WITH THEIR DESIGN TEAMS SO THEY CAN PROTOTYPE FASTER.



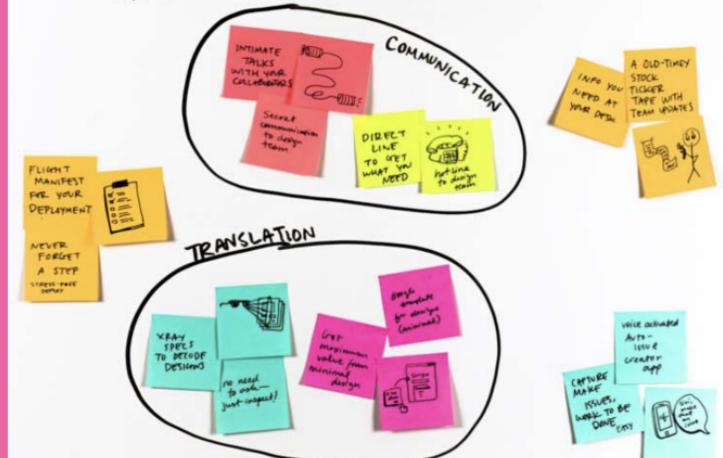
## Converge

Look for similar ideas and natural affinities.

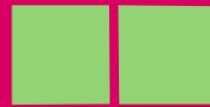
Move them physically closer together. As you do, name the clusters.

Converge on a set that you all want to pursue.

DEVELOPERS NEED A WAY TO INTERACT WITH THEIR DESIGN TEAMS SO THEY CAN PROTOTYPE FASTER.



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## Playback

Choose one person to play back each cluster of ideas.

- Feel free to discuss and add more ideas as you all review the clusters.





**Activity:**  
Prioritization Grid



**Primary Goal:**  
Intersection of importance and feasibility



**Time required:**  
25min exercise + 5min presentation

## Overview

While prioritization is most helpful at the beginning of a project, it's also worth taking time to prioritize before an iteration or sprint. You can use this activity to prioritize anything, from ideas generated in big-idea vignettes to user stories in your backlog.

Reflect by evaluating possible ideas through the lenses of user value, feasibility, or business value to inform decision-making.

## Introduction

Most people evaluate too soon and too often, and therefore create less.

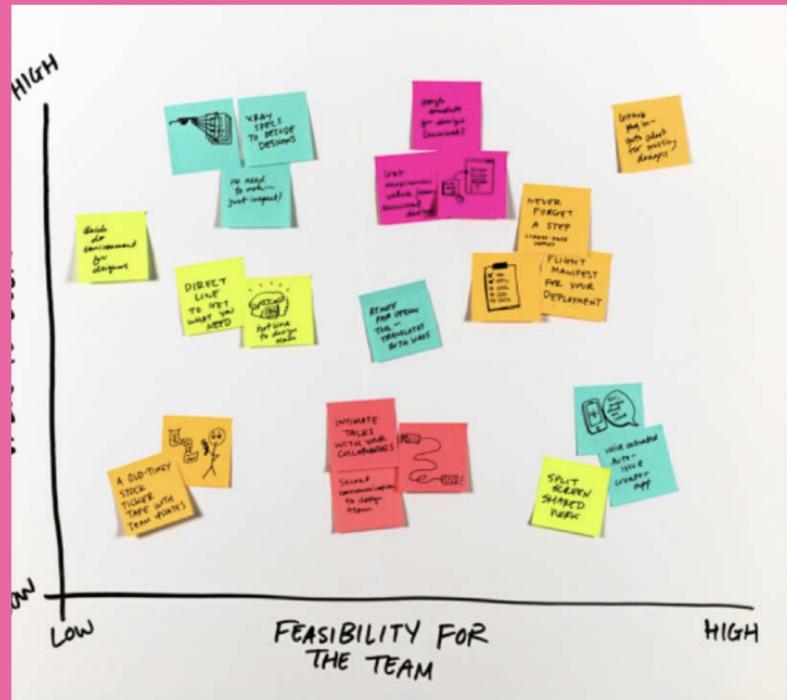
Create first, then use a Prioritization Grid to evaluate after that.



It's nearly impossible for our brains to **evaluate** and **create** at the same time.

## Evaluate ideas

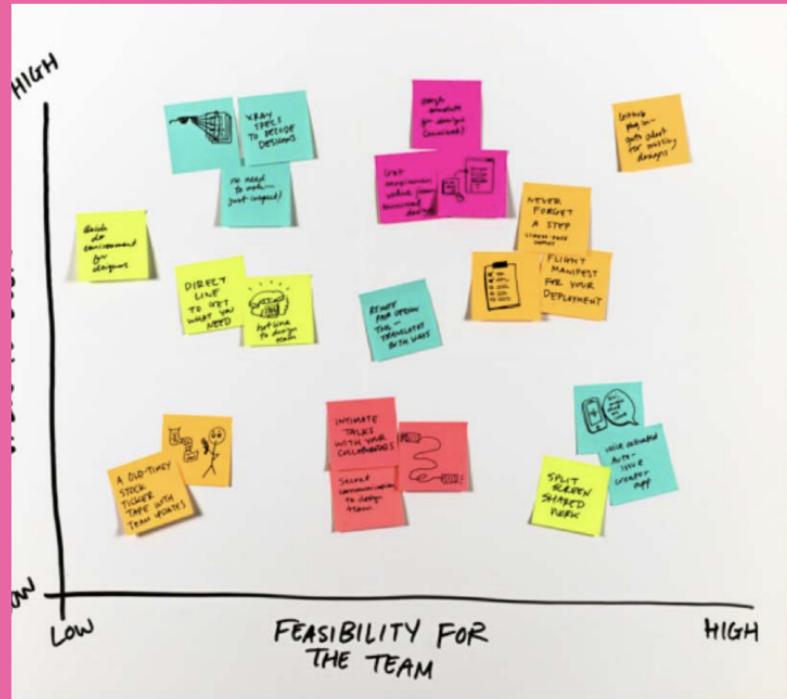
Quickly evaluate ideas **individually** that aim to help your user reach their goal, and roughly plot them on the grid where they make sense.



## Evaluate ideas

Discuss with your teammates and reposition the sticky notes in relation to each other.

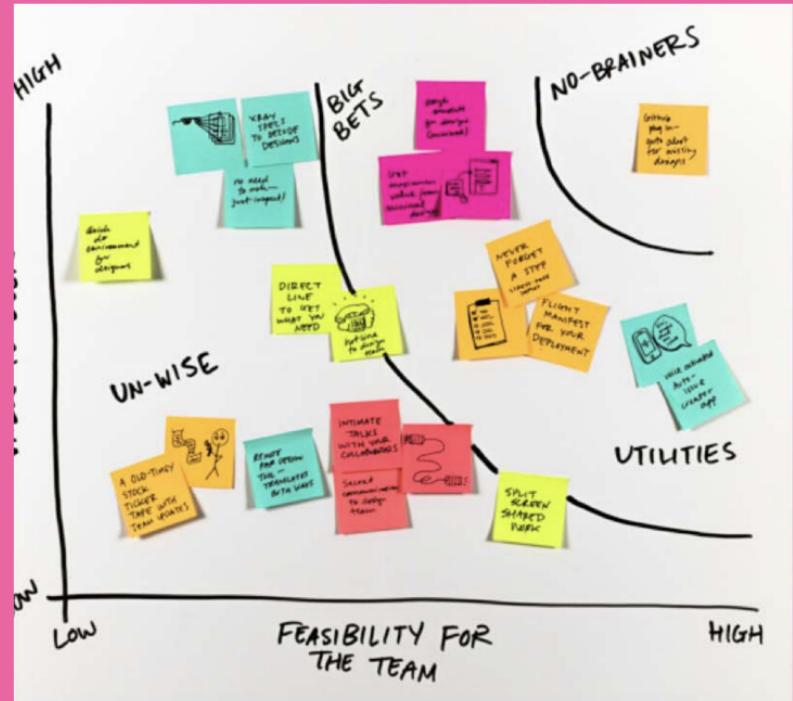
- When deciding on importance, focus on *value delivered to the user by the idea*.



## Focus conversations

Draw rough sections across the map radiating out from the upper left.

Label them *No brainers*, *Utilities*, *Big bets*, and *Unwise*.



HIGH

USER  
VALUE

LOW

FEASIBILITY FOR THE TEAM

HIGH

## Playback

Focus the discussion around *Big bets*: mid-feasibility, high-importance ideas that reflect significant investments with potentially big payouts.





**Activity:**  
Assumptions & Questions



**Primary Goal:**  
Reducing risk



**Time required:**  
20min exercise + 5min presentation

## **Overview**

Risks never disappear, but the sooner you can recognize and evaluate your team's assumptions and questions, the more quickly you can act to reduce the risk they pose.

Reflect as a team on what you know and what you still need to understand about your work. Brainstorm how to reduce risk by learning more.

# Introduction

You have to guess.

This is the basis for the scientific method. Form a hypothesis and test to see if it's right or wrong.



## Introduction

# Fail fast and fail cheap.

Guess early, test early, and learn early.

This activity helps you reduce the risk of being wrong.



## Collect assumptions

As individuals, write one assumption or question per sticky note. Withhold judgement or discussion until later.



## ASSUMPTIONS

## ASSUMPTIONS

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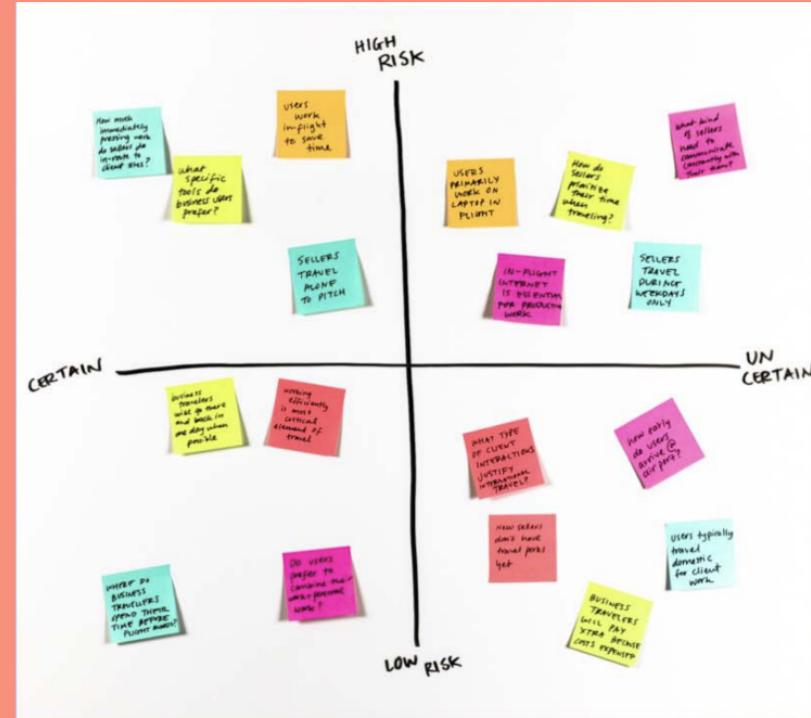
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# Identify high-risk uncertainty

Evaluate each idea quickly and individually. Roughly plot them on the grid where they make the most sense.

Begin to discuss with your teammates and re-position the ideas in relation to each other.



HIGH  
RISK

CERTAIN

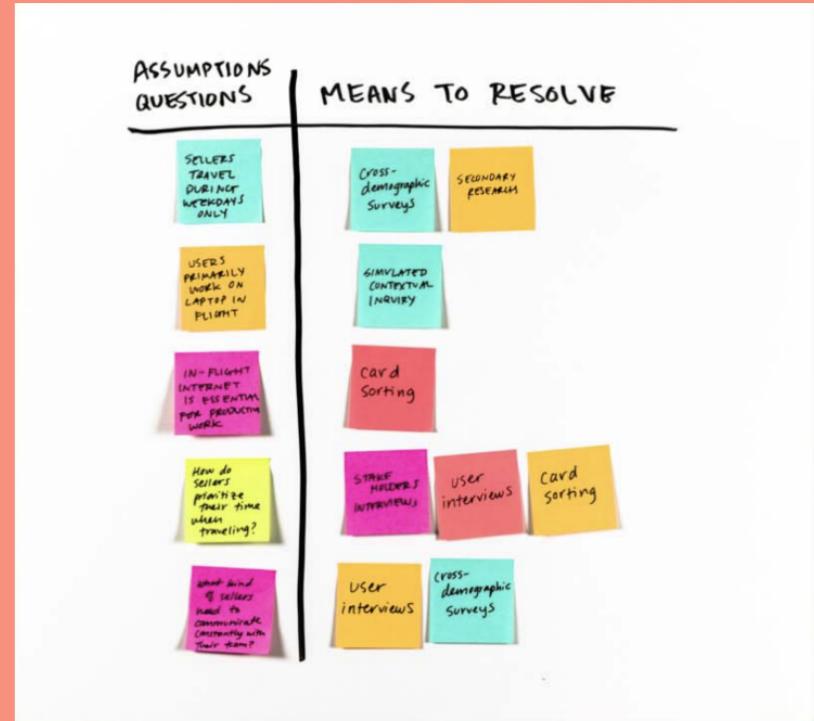
UN-  
CERTAIN

LOW  
RISK

## Build an action plan

Pull high-risk and uncertain items from the upper-right quadrant into a new space.

- For each item, diverge on different ways to validate or invalidate these assumptions and questions.
- Is there someone you can talk to directly to get an answer? Could you validate an assumption through direct observation? Could you build a prototype to test a hypothesis?



# ASSUMPTIONS & QUESTIONS

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# MEANS TO RESOLVE

## Playback

Choose one person to play back your team's Assumptions & Questions.

- Have someone else play back how you plan to resolve them.





## **Activity:**

Experience-based Roadmap

## **Primary Goal:**

Define an MVP



## **Time required:**

25min exercise + 10min presentation



## Overview

This activity happens once you've identified your user's real problems, and established a direction on how to solve them. This will help you scope what you'd like your users to be able to do, and when you'll deliver those experiences.

## **Introduction**

Reflect as a team to scope your long-term experience into what you want your users to be able to do, and when.

## **Introduction**

The concept of delivering just enough to learn something about how to move forward.

# **MVP**

**(Minimum Viable Product)**

## Introduction

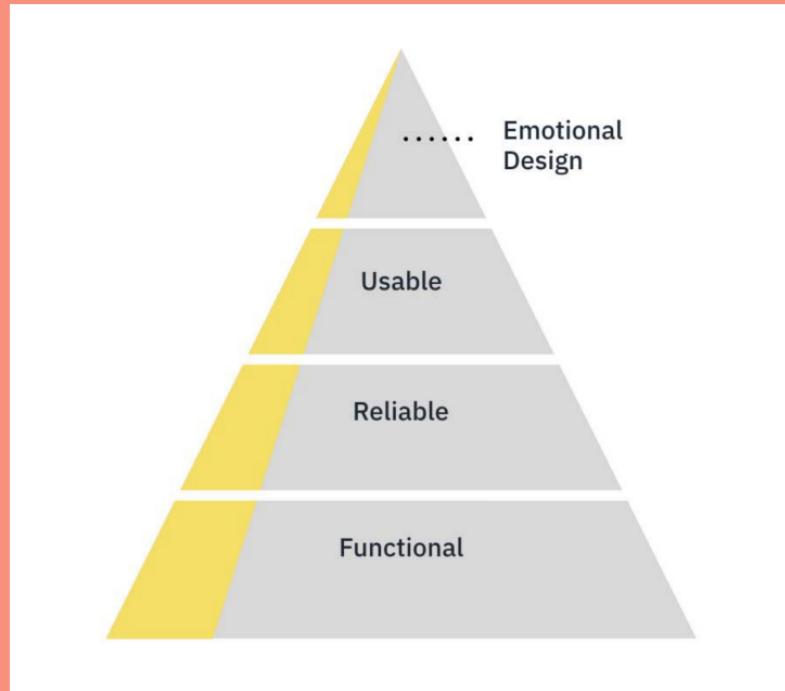
Is this a minimum viable pizza?

No. If you take away the crust, all you have is cheesy meat sauce.



## Introduction

A **true** minimum viable product is a **full** experience that works.  
It's reliable, usable, and even **delightful**.



## **Introduction**

This is a representative of a minimum viable pizza slice.

It has all of the ingredients that make up the product, but more bite-sized.



## **Setting up**

What makes a good experience-based roadmap?

Experiences, not features.

Written from users' perspective.

Clarity for near-term action, vision for long-term outcome.

## Ideate

Using sticky notes, complete the sentence with user tasks related to your solution.

- **Example:** Our user can...sign up for a trial.

OUR USER CAN...

SHORT TERM

LONG TERM



# OUR USER CAN...

**SHORT  
TERM**

You can  
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**LONG  
TERM**



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Paste this  
sticker



## Sort

Begin to reposition them in relation to each other.

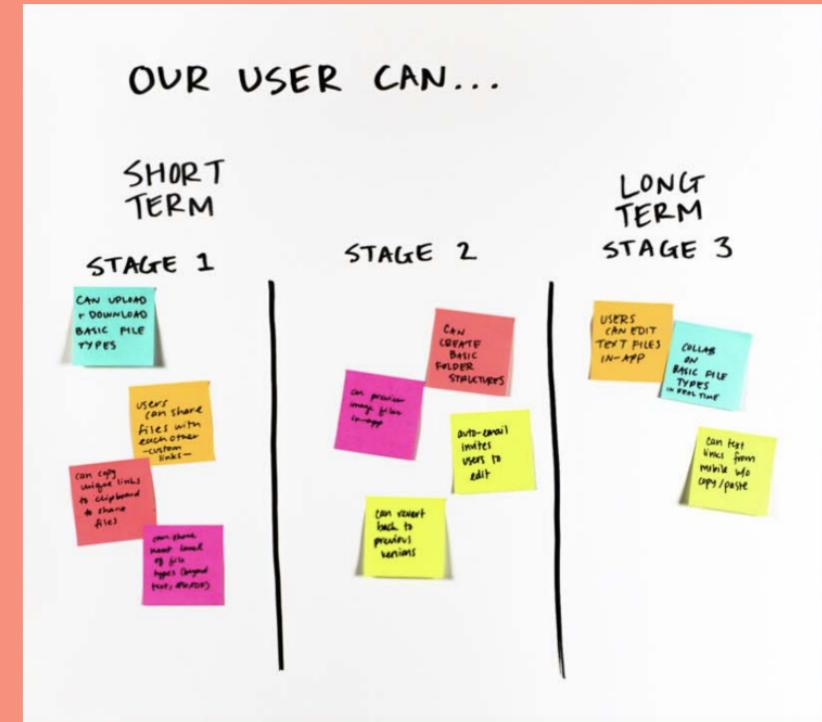
Do certain ideas need to be implemented in the near-term, or can they wait until a future date?



## Establish stages

Draw lines to delineate a timeline in three stages.

Each stage should allow users to achieve at least one complete task.



## Establish stages

What does each stage mean?

Stage 1

**We know**  
we will  
build this.

Stage 2

**We think**  
we will  
build this.

Stage 3

**We might**  
build this.

# Playback

Choose one person to play back each stage.

Use the first stage's sticky notes to inform your next planning session.





**THANK YOU**