

METHOD

LIGHTNING DECISION JAM

Area of CoP Activity:

Learning and Developing Practice
Taking Action as a Community

CoP Lifecycle Phase:

Inquire
Design
Grow

ADAPTABLE
ONLINE

CoP Success Factor:

Community Interaction
Sharing Best Practice
Learning
Strategy

EIGE Step:

Step 1: Getting Started
Step 3: Setting up a GEP
Step 6: What comes after the GEP

Group Size:

Small to medium sized groups

Difficulty Level:



Time Needed:



Facilitator Preparation:



Participant Preparation:



Description:

Lightning Decision Jam is an activity to help groups make decisions, discuss challenges and solve problems. It also helps to structure discussions and focus on the most relevant aspects.

More Information:

www.sessionlab.com/methods/lightning-decision-jam-ldj
www.ajsmart.com/courses/lightning-decision-jam/

LIGHTNING DECISION JAM¹

NEW

Short description

By using this activity groups will be supported in making decisions, talking about challenges, and solving problems. Often discussions end up being unstructured, open ended and not goal oriented. This activity helps to get some structure into your discussions and have a clear process.

When to use

This method is best used if you need to structure a discussion on a specific topic or if you need support in making decisions. This can be helpful at the beginning of a process, but also in the middle of it or when thinking about next steps – every time when decisions have to be made. It helps to save time by not having endless discussions, but instead create a structured process when solving problems and making decisions.

How to

A: Brief explanation

The Lightning Decision Jam is a 9-step activity. It starts with the identification of problems, issues and mistakes, which is briefly presented in the plenary. Participants then select problems to be further discussed. The selected problems are then rephrased. If the problem identified is 'It is difficult to get support staff on board', it can be converted/ rephrased into: 'How might we get support staff on board?'. The next step is to look for solutions for the different problems, starting with the one with the most votes. The solutions are then voted on, just as it has been done with the problems. Solutions are prioritised and participants decide on which solution to implement. The last step is to convert the developed solutions into tasks that can be implemented and acted on. By following those nine steps, important challenges are identified, solutions developed, and a decision made on what to do next without getting lost in a large discussion.

B: Detailed step-by-step guide

This activity consists of nine different steps addressing a topic that has been defined before starting, such as how to organise an event, how to implement GE measures etc. There is a video with detailed explanations to look at provided by the developers of this activity: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNpVaNIUS4U>.

Step 1: What are the problems?

Each participant takes seven minutes to themselves to think about problems, concerns and issues concerning the defined issue and to write them down on post-its. Those can be things like 'I'm worried that we won't have enough time to work on that' or 'I feel like I'm not getting enough support'. Anything that comes to the participant's mind.

Step 2: Share the problems with the group

Each participant has 4 minutes to present the problems/ issues they wrote down and to pin it on a pin board or something similar. It is important that no discussion emerges at that point. It is simply a presentation of the thoughts of all of the participants.

Step 3: Rank the problems

Each participant receives dots or sticky notes to rank the presented problems/ issues by sticking them next to it. This should also happen without any discussion and should not take up more than six minutes. It is allowed to vote for your own topic and to give both of your votes to one problem. The problems should then be rearranged according to the result of the ranking. Depending on how much time you have and how big the group is you need to decide how many problems you would like to tackle in the next steps.

Step 4: Rephrase the problems

The aim of this step is to use the format 'How Might We' and to rephrase the chosen problems accordingly, which could look like this: 'It is difficult to get support staff on board', converted/ rephrased into:

¹ <https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/lightning-decision-jam-ldj>

'How might we get support staff on board?'. By rephrasing the problems this way, they become solvable as well as standardised. This process should not take longer than six minutes (depending on the number of problems chosen) and without starting a big discussion.

Step 5: Find solutions

The group first addresses the problem with the most votes. The participants have seven minutes to write down possible solutions for the problem. This again happens quietly, without a discussion, which allows several different solutions. As these solutions will not be explained to the rest of the group, they should be understandable by just reading them. After the seven minutes, participants quickly pin their solutions on a wall or whiteboard.

Step 6: Rank the solutions

This step is basically a repetition of Step 3, but here the participants rank the solutions that they came up with. Each participant has six votes (in form of a sticky note/ dot) and they have ten minutes for this process.

Step 7: Choose solutions

Within 30 seconds participants should bring solutions in the right order based on the voting results of Step 6. If one solution got less than two votes, they can be excluded.

Step 8: Decide what to act on

With the help of an effort-impact matrix (how much effort does it take to implement the solution & to which degree would a solution solve the problem), it will be determined which solutions should be to try out right away, and which should be kept in mind for later.

This is a very important step, and the facilitator needs to be proactive here, because it tends to be close to an open discussion. The facilitator will place each of the solutions in the matrix.

The facilitator now takes the solution with the most votes, holds it over the centre of the matrix and participants tell the facilitator with 'higher or lower' where to place it. It might happen that discussions emerge. That is something the facilitator should keep under control, so that the placement of the solutions does not take up more than 10 minutes. After finishing this step, you have an overview over the solutions and how high their impact is and how much it is taking to implement them. The solutions to focus on from now on are on the top left of the matrix, the 'sweet spot' (see template below).

Step 9: Convert solutions into pursuable tasks

The solutions that have the highest impact with the least effort that is needed to implement them will be looked at further: The facilitator asks the participant who suggested the solution to propose actionable steps toward seeing if the solution works. It should be possible to implement those actionable steps within one or two weeks (although this can vary depending on the solution). This is going to be repeated for all the solutions with high impact/ little effort. The solutions that have been placed in another part of the matrix should not be thrown away right away as they can become important if the other solutions fail.

This activity can also be used for virtual meetings. It is suggested to use an online whiteboard tool. Some platforms have an integrated whiteboard (not all have the same features!), but you can also use something like Mural. In those online Whiteboard tools, you can then basically do everything just like when meeting face-to-face. It might be a good idea to prepare the whiteboard prior to the meeting (e.g., the matrix), so that you do not lose much time. Especially helpful are platforms that have voting features, where participants can vote easily. If that is not an option, you can do it via chat.



If the chosen platform does not have a whiteboard integrated and you do not want to use another tool, you can also do this by sharing a doc.

Additional ideas / information:

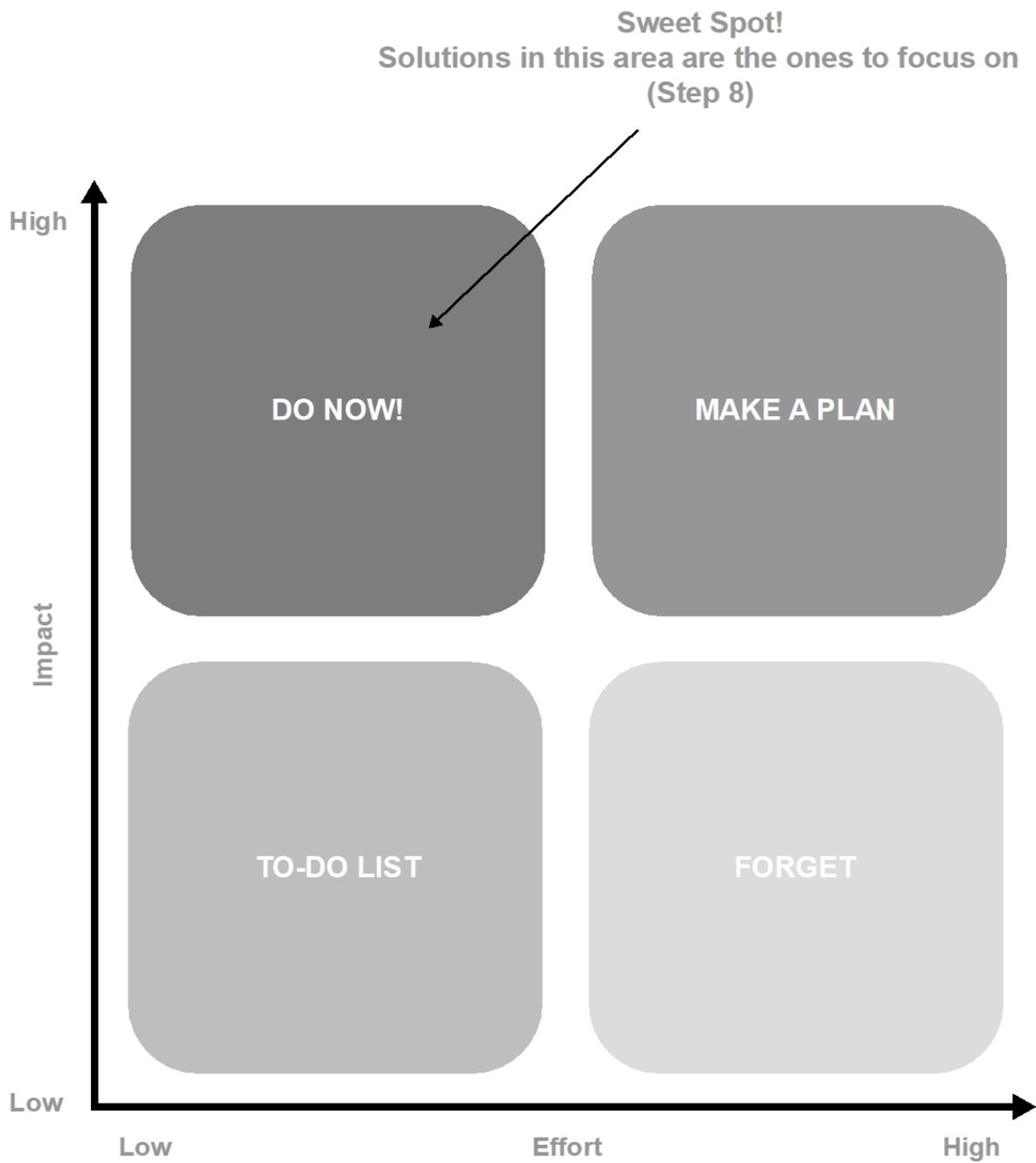
- Although this activity seems rigid and very structured, this is what makes it good and effective. At the same time this allows a different kind of freedom, especially when participants can bring in all the ideas or problems they have.
- Depending on the number of participants, the problems suggested in the beginning etc. might have to be limited.
- When conducting this activity online, it is helpful to not facilitate it alone. It is a rather complex activity with lots of different steps and it is always helpful to have support (e.g., checking the time, rephrasing etc.).

Template:



Template

LIGHTNING DECISION JAM



REFERENCES

AJ & Smart 2020. The Lightning Decision Jam. Available from: www.ajsmart.com/courses/lightning-decision-jam/.

Courtney, Jonathan 2020. Lightning Decision Jam (LDJ). Available from:
<https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/lightning-decision-jam-ldj>.