



# **LIGHTNING DECISION JAM**

# CONTENT

## INTRODUCTION

## THE SOLUTION

- 1 *DESCRIPTION*
- 2 *INSTRUCTIONS*
- 3 *STEPS*

## STEP FIVE

## STEP SIX

## STEP SEVEN

## STEP EIGHT

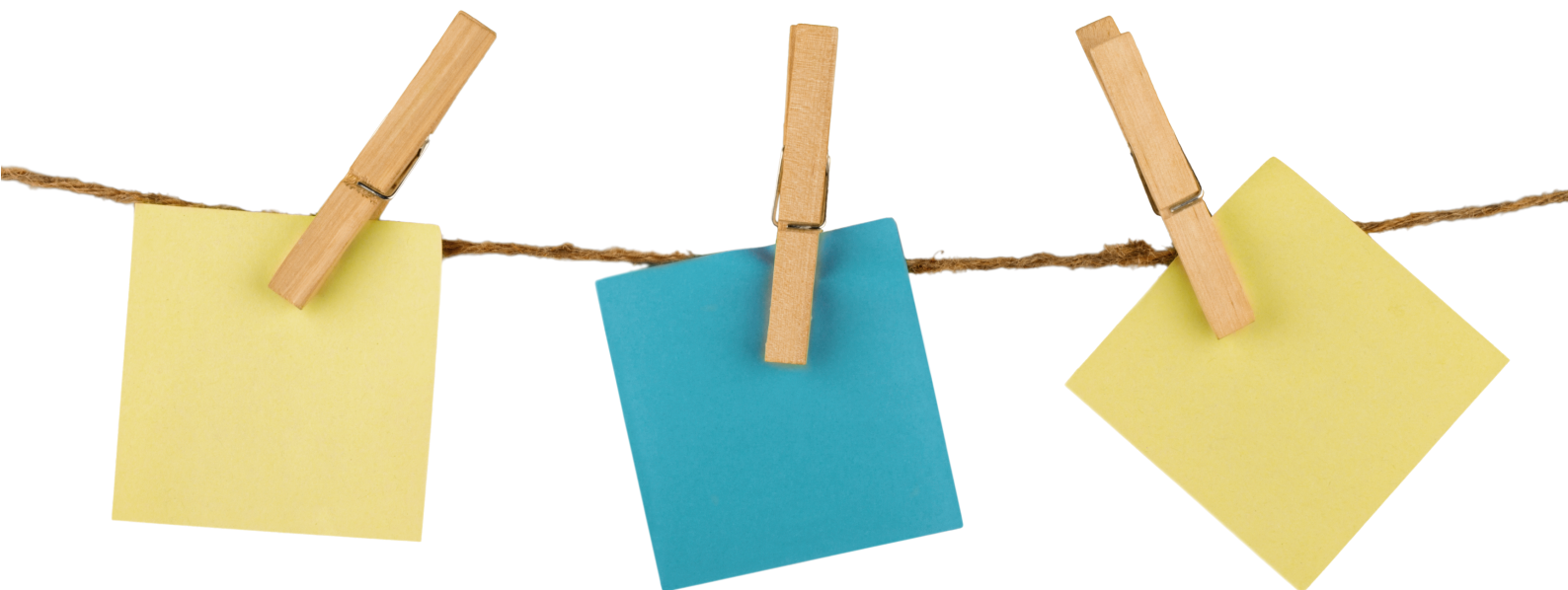
## CONCLUSION

## STEP ONE

## STEP TWO

## STEP THREE

## STEP FOUR



# Introduction

Creative problem solving and clear decision-making is what separates good leaders from the best. Yet we have all been there-endless meetings, multiple email exchanges and useless, open-ended, unstructured discussions. Projects stall, teams lose momentum, and everything goes overbudget, people become disengaged and productivity suffers causing many products , services and new ideas to be released late and full of compromises, all because the team is so fatigued from working on endless, unprioritized problems.

# The Solution

**REPLACE ALL OPEN, UNSTRUCTURED DISCUSSION WITH CLEAR AND CONCISE PROCESS.**

At first this might feel weird, but the only way you're going to see the results of this is to try it for yourself. The freedom to discuss might seem conducive to creativity, or more informed decision-making, when it's in fact the enemy. Structure and discipline create the freedom needed to be creative.

The Lightning Decision Jam (LDJ) is an exercise created by AJ&Smart as an easy way to make faster decisions and find quick direction. The LDJ is inspired by the core principles of the Design Sprint:



Work together-alone



Tangible items are better than discussion










Getting started is more important than being right









Don't rely on creativity

## WHAT TO USE THIS EXERCISE FOR:

Anything which requires a group of people to make decisions, solve problems or discuss challenges. It's always good to frame an LDJ session with a broad topic, here are some examples:

-  How we create the optimal workday
-  How we onboard a new employee
-  How we Improve our office environment
-  How we organize events
-  Keeping up with our competition
-  Improving sales flow
-  Tactics for the next salespush

## SUPPLIES YOU'LL NEED

-  Rectangular sticky-notes, we like yellow
-  Square sticky-notes (2 different colors, we like pink and blue)
-  Sticky dots, 2 different colors
-  Sharpies or whiteboard markers (has to be fat marker, so that participants are forced to write short notes)
-  A Timer ( you can use your Phone)
-  A nice playlist of focus music

## IDEAL GROUP SIZE

To make this exercise worthwhile you'll need a range of input and opinions, but you don't want so many people that the logistics of running the exercise gets difficult. You can technically use the LDJ with just 2 people, An ideal size is 4 to 6 people, and the maximum is 8 (more than this and the whiteboard gets crowded and the sticky-notes become hard to keep track of).

## **TOTAL TIME NEEDED**

The times we've suggested in the exercise are more of a guideline and may only be relevant to the first time you run through it. The exercise itself usually takes between 30–45 mins. For larger groups (or tackling multiple problems) all the steps can take up to 1.5 hours.

## **CHOOSE A MODERATOR**

You absolutely need to select someone on the team to take the role of the moderator. They can join in the process but they must focus on making sure discussions don't breakdown and they need to keep the time.

## STEPS

- Start with things that are working
- Capture all the problems
- Prioritize problems
- Reframe the problems as standardized challenges
- Ideate without discussion
- Prioritize solutions
- Decide what to execute on
- Make solutions actionable



# 1. Start with things that are working



## MATERIALS NEEDED

Square sticky-notes (pick a color) and markers

Start by drawing a sailboat on a whiteboard. It needs to have water line half way down, a billowing sail, and an anchor that hangs down below the water. The top half (the wind in the sail) represents things that are moving us forward or working well, and the bottom half (the anchor) represents things that are holding us back or not going well. Make sure there's enough space for a good number of sticky-notes in each half. (Example on next page)

The first step is for everybody in the team to sit at a table and (without discussion) spend 4 minutes writing all the things that are working well with the topic. These can really be anything from “we all get along well as a team” to “the quality of our designs lately has been really high”. Really anything that people are happy about and want to continue. People should write one problem per sticky-note, and once the 4 minutes are up, each person will have a pile of sticky-notes in front of them.

Encourage the team to try and write as many as possible. The moderator now selects one person at a time to stand up at the sailboat and very quickly explain each sticky-note as they stick them in the top half. Nobody else in the team is allowed to speak here unless they don't understand something on a sticky-note. The moderator should give no more than 1 or 2 minutes per person. Make sure to not spark any discussion. Only allow questions to clarify the content of a sticky-note.

You won't actually end up using these sticky-notes going forward, but it's really important to start with the positives for two reasons:

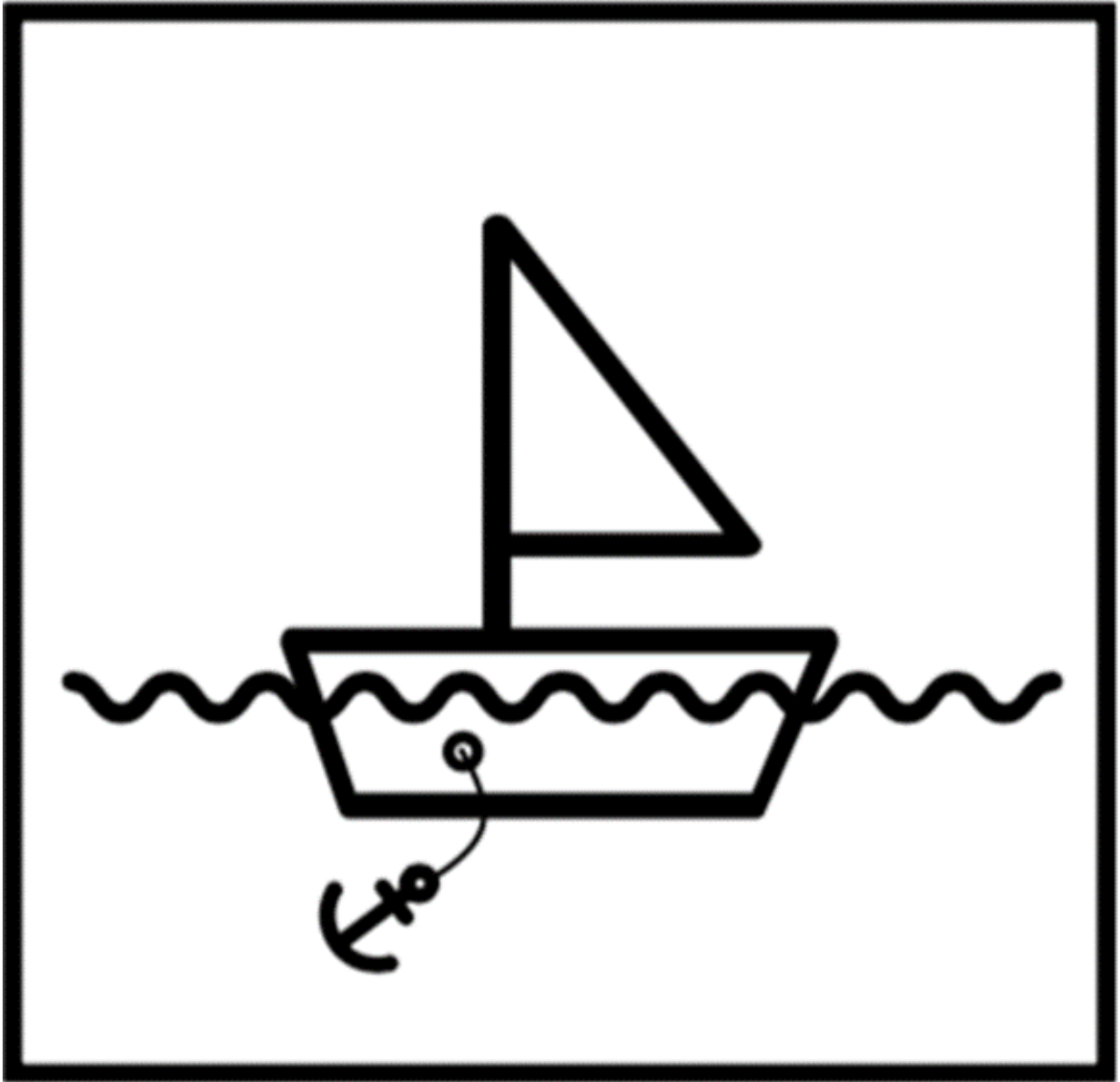


Thinking about the positive things first makes it easier to find corresponding negatives/problems in the next step



If the group starts with negatives immediately, the atmosphere can quickly turn to criticism and complaining, instead of problem solving

## SAILBOAT EXAMPLE



## 2. Capture all the problems



### TIME

5 minutes



### MATERIALS NEEDED

Square sticky-notes (same color) and markers

---

Now the team spends 4 minutes writing all the challenges, annoyances, mistakes or concerns with the topic. Again in silence, without any discussion. These can really be anything from “I don’t feel like we’re making progress” to “I feel like project X is getting more attention than my project”. Really anything that is bugging us. Encourage the team to try and write down as many problems as possible. Our experiences shows that the most important problems arise quickly.

This time the team does not read out their sticky-notes. Instead, when the 4 minutes is up, the moderator tells everyone to stand up at the same time and put all their sticky-notes in the bottom half of the sailboat. This should take about 1 minute.

The reason this is done without explanation is to avoid any personal criticisms. Let the sticky-notes speak for themselves

# 3. Prioritize



## **MATERIALS NEEDED**

Rectangular sticky-notes and markers



## **TIME**

4 minutes

---

The moderator gives each member 3 sticky dots—Everybody must now vote on the challenges they consider to be the most pertinent to solve, without discussion. People can vote on their own sticky- notes and can put more than one dot on one challenge if they feel strongly about it. They should not use dots on the positive sticky-notes, only the problems.

Once the 3 minutes is up, the moderator quickly takes the voted problems and arranges them in order of priority

# 4. Reframe problems as a How might We Challenge



## TIME

3 minutes



## MATERIALS NEEDED

Rectangular sticky-notes and markers

---

Now, the moderator is going to rewrite the top-voted problem in the form of a standardized challenge. This will help us create an array of solutions and be a little bit more broad at the start.

# 5. Ideate without discussions



## TIME

6 minutes



## MATERIALS NEEDED

Square sticky-notes (the other color) and markers

---

Now each team member is given 5 minutes to write multiple solutions (1 per sticky-note) for the HMW, in silence, without any discussion.

Removing discussion here also ensures a variety of solutions. It's important for the moderator to tell the team members here that we're aiming for quantity over quality – Later we can curate. Solutions don't have to be written in any particular way – but they must be understandable to people reading. There is no individual presenting of solutions as this creates a bias towards the best presenters.

Once the 5 minutes is up everybody sticks their ideas on the surface(wall, whiteboard, whatever) as fast as possible, no need to be neat — just stick them anywhere. This should only require 1 minute.

# 6. Prioritize solutions



## TIME

5 minutes



## MATERIALS NEEDED

Sticky-dots and rectangular sticky-notes

---

First, another round of voting. The moderator now gives each team member 6 dots and 4 minutes to vote on the solutions they think would best solve the HMW.

Just like we did with the problems, the moderator now makes a prioritized list of solutions—Ignore anything with just one vote.

# 7. Decide what to execute on



## TIME

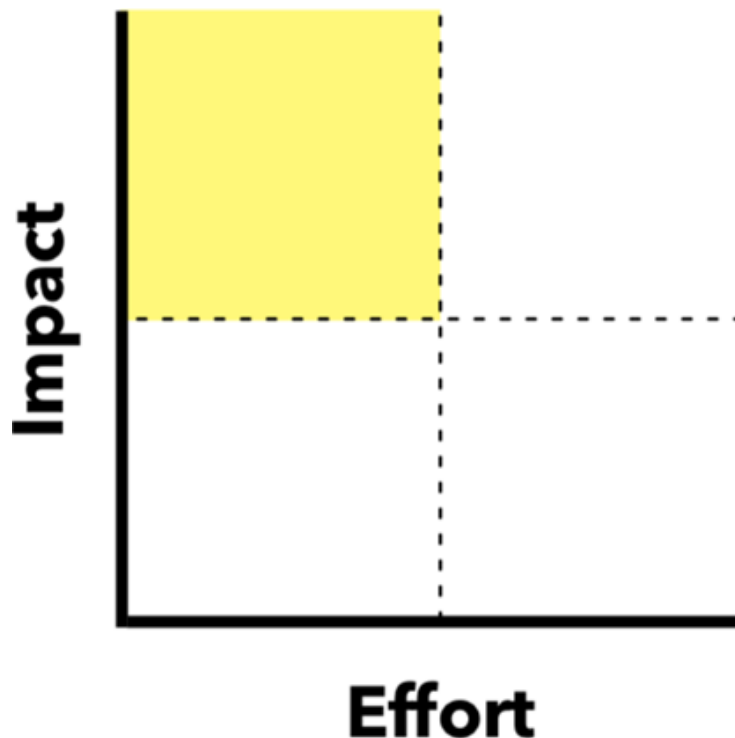
10 minutes



## MATERIALS NEEDED

Whiteboard (or surface to draw the Effort/Impact Scale) and markers

Now that you have a list of solutions that should solve the most important problem/s, it's important to know how much effort is required to execute the solutions so you can really decide which ones can be tried quickly and which ones might take more time to implement. Here we use a simple effort/impact scale to determine which solutions are simple enough to try right away, which are more effort and should be added to a project backlog, and which perhaps shouldn't be addressed at all.

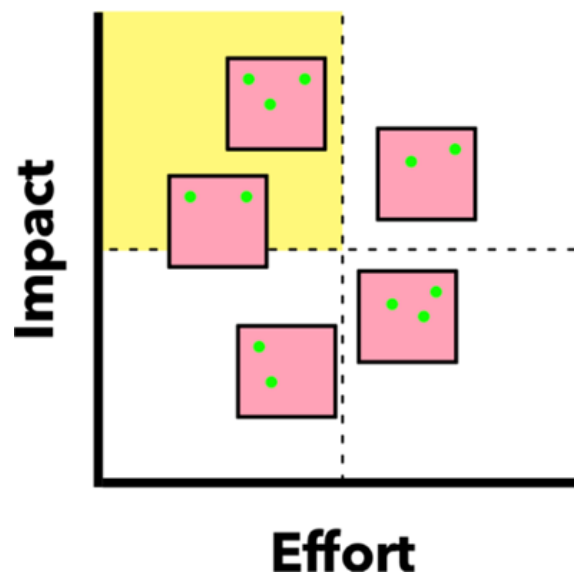




## SO HERE'S WHAT THE MODERATOR NEEDS TO DO:

- Draw the Effort/Impact scale
- Start with Impact:
  1. Take the top voted solution sticky-note
  2. Hover it over the center of the Effort/Impact scale
  3. and simply ask “is the impact higher or lower?”
- The moderator should then move the sticky-note up or down the Impact axis until the team members stop saying higher or lower. Often some small discussions break out here, so the moderator has to be diligent in finding a consensus and stopping any conversations extending past 20 seconds
- Once the impact has been determined, the moderator uses the same method for effort: saying “is the effort higher or lower.”
- This time the moderator moves the sticky-note left or right, until the group stops saying higher or lower
- Repeat the process for the other top-voted solutions

Once the top voted sticky-notes have been added to the scale, you'll have something that looks like this:



Now you have a clear overview of which high-impact solutions could be executed on and tested very quickly (In the yellow sweet-spot on the top left), and which high-impact solutions will take more effort (top right). The moderator should now quickly mark all sticky-notes in the sweet-spot with a contrasting dot so we can identify them later

# 8. Make solutions actionable



## TIME

5 minutes

The moderator now takes the “sweet-spot” solutions from the Effort/ Impact scale asks the team and to come up with 3 actionable steps toward testing the solution. The person who wrote the solution can start with a suggestion. A good guiding principle is that the action steps to test out the idea should be able to be completed in a timeframe of 1-2weeks.

Remember, these actions steps shouldn't outline the entire solution. Only a small version of an initial test to validate if the idea will work.

Don't overthink it. The first step should be the most frictionless step, which could be done immediately. This also motivates people to just get started.

Don't get discouraged if the solution doesn't work after a couple of weeks. Not all solutions will solve the problems. This exercise is made to get the team used to solving problems and trying out approaches without overthinking or over-discussing.

Let's look at one example:

START USING  
SOMETHING  
LIKE SLACK

**2 WEEK TEST OF SLACK FOR  
ENTIRE TEAM - STARTING MONDAY**

- QUICK ONBOARDING TUTORIAL MONDAY MORNING
- NO EMAILS FOR 2 WEEKS
- SPECIFIC CHANNELS FOR EACH PROJECT

Once all these solutions are written up, your team now has actionable tasks that can be committed to. As for the solutions that didn't make it in to the "sweet-spot", you can put all the higher effort solutions (from the top-right quadrant) into your backlog so they don't get forgotten. What you might see happening is that the sweet-spot actions actually end up solving problems in a way that the higher effort solutions become obsolete!

# Conclusion

That's it! In a short amount of time, your team has been able to define important challenges, identify possible solutions and prioritize what to execute on almost entirely without discussion!

Interested in increasing your innovation capacity; applying a design-sprint framework to a current business challenge or opportunity; or learning more about the Great People Inside platform and how it can benefit your team and organization.?

If you're ready to explore our working together, we're here and ready to talk with you! We'll answer any questions you have about our innovation coaching, training and consulting services, or about the GPI people-assessment platform.

Learn more here:

<https://www.strategiesbydesigngroup.com/free-consult/>