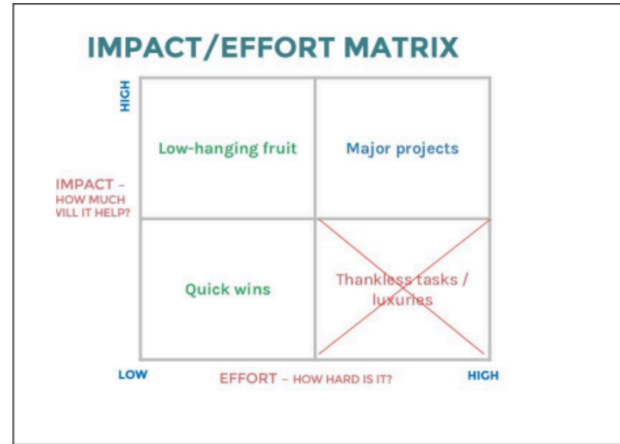


Impact-Effort Matrix

What is an impact - Effort (I/E) matrix?

An impact-effort matrix is a decision-making tool that helps teams or individuals choose the best option based on relative impact and effort. Level of impact (or how much an option will help) is plotted on the vertical axis and level of effort (or implementation difficulty) is plotted on the horizontal axis. Team members place their ideas on the matrix based on the level of effort (low to high) and the level of impact (low to high). This placement leads to ideas falling into four quadrants: quick wins, low-hanging fruit, major projects, and luxuries.



Quick wins: quick wins are projects that require little effort and have a lower impact relative to other projects. They fall in the lower left quadrant of the matrix. These tasks or solutions can be completed easily—these are your “Just Do Its.”

Low-hanging fruit: ideas in the low-hanging fruit category will have a high impact and a low amount of effort. They fall in the upper left quadrant of the matrix.

This is a great quadrant to prioritize because these projects take a relatively shorter amount of time to complete, but are some of the most impactful.

Major projects: major projects will have a high impact, but they’ll take a lot of effort to complete.

They fall in the upper right quadrant of the matrix. In many cases, these projects are multi-year projects that require many people to complete.

If you find that many of your projects fit in this category, try shrinking the change! Take on a smaller portion of the larger project.

Luxuries: luxuries are those projects that have low impact but high effort.

They fall in the lower right quadrant of the matrix.

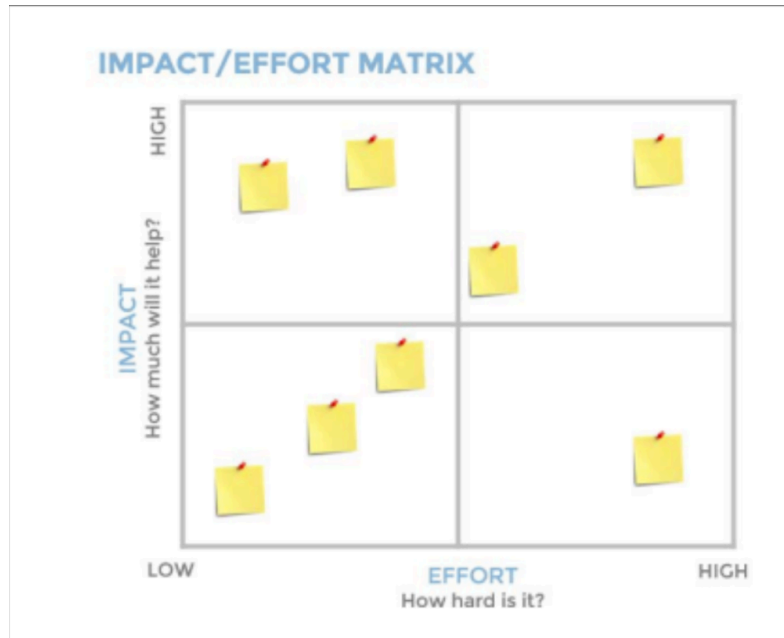
These ideas are a pain, and they take time away from other, more impactful ideas. If you can, avoid them!

When should I use it?

- After you’ve completed the gap analysis (root cause analysis) and brainstorming portions of the A3
- When you have a long list of ideas and need to prioritize them
- When you are choosing which ideas should become an experiment or go into your action plan
- When you have identified many root causes for a problem and need to choose which one to focus on first
- When team members are undecided about which problem, approach, or solution they should pursue
- When you want to prioritize meeting agenda items (low-hanging fruit items can be discussed early in the meeting, while thankless tasks might be relegated to the end of the meeting agenda if there is extra time)

How do I facilitate or create it?

- **Draw a vertical and horizontal axis on a large sheet of flip chart paper.** Write “impact” on the vertical axis and “effort” on the horizontal axis.
- **Draw a horizontal line halfway up the vertical axis, and a vertical line halfway across the horizontal axis.** These lines will define your matrix quadrants.
- **Ask team members to assess the effort and impact for each solution.** Team members should then place their solutions (preferably written on sticky notes) on the matrix by relative impact and effort. Consider having the team do this silently, as groups can get derailed in discussions over minute details.



- **Debrief with the team.** Are the ideas placed in the right spots? Which ideas should we prioritize based on this matrix?

Tips

- You can adapt the impact-effort axes to allow team members to analyze ideas based on other criteria, such as cost or time.
- Most groups underestimate the effort needed to implement an idea.
- When choosing ideas to implement, if you suspect the idea is miscategorized, prompt the group to discuss it briefly: “I see that we placed ‘Purchase a new computer system’ under high-impact, low-effort. Does that make sense to the whole group? What are the steps that would be involved in purchasing and implementing that system? Is it actually a major project?”
- You can use the impact-effort matrix to prioritize which problems to solve first
- You can use the impact-effort matrix to prioritize which ideas to implement first
- The impact-effort matrix is a flexible tool that can be used to help prioritize and make decisions in any situation