

Impact and Difficulty Matrix

Description

People tend to decide on ideas to implement based on difficulty of implementation but frequently have less than expected impact. The Importance and Difficulty Matrix is a chart for plotting items by relative impact and difficulty, thus it is a prioritization process which helps develop a plan of action and ensure time spent is well spent. Making thoughtful decisions is a challenging, yet essential, part of making progress. It is especially difficult to do so when you are dealing with various options and differing criteria.

Level ★★☆☆☆

🕒 30-60 mins

👤 3-20 people

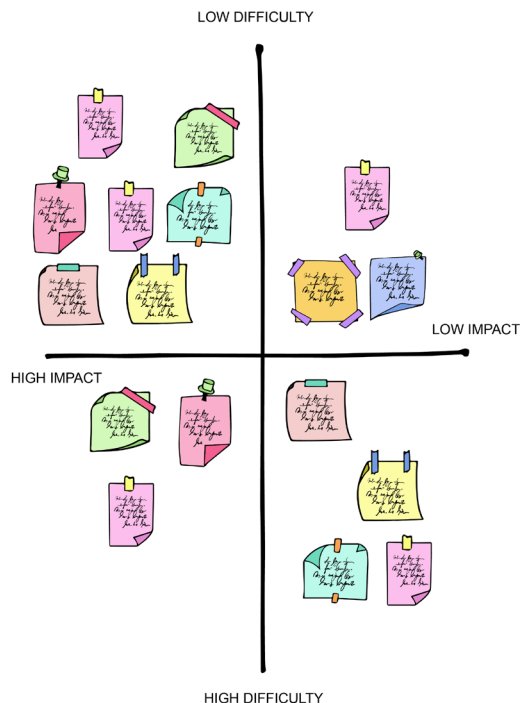
Materials & Prep

This exercise can be done on a whiteboard, a large poster board, or even just a piece of paper.

Access Online Toolkit



explorations.cyprusinteractionlab.com



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Case Study

A departmental committee on handling the department budget had a range of ideas and needs that required prioritisation. Not all ideas could be implemented under the limited budget. Thus what would normally have been a series of difficult meetings through this structured method the committee formulated a clear rationale based on a range of factors to justify the decisions made by the committee to the rest of the academic community and provided transparency and clarity.

Process

Step 1. Make a poster showing a large quad chart. Label horizontal axis impact. Label vertical axis difficulty (or effort). Placing impact (low to high) on the x-axis and difficulty (low to high) on the y-axis equips you to work out tensions between these opposing forces.

Step 2. Record your dataset on sticky notes.

Step 3. Plot items horizontally by relative importance and vertically by relative difficult.

Step 4. Consider the quadrants where items get placed. Look for related groupings and set priorities.

When you plot items according to both priorities, you and your team will likely arrive at a workable resolution. The items that land in the lower left quadrant are characterized as targeted because they are the easiest to realize. The upper left quadrant contains luxurious actions as they will cost much (effort-time-money) but with little impact. The items in the upper right quadrant are strategic because they require large investments to get big results. Last but not least, the items in the lower right quadrant are high value because they yield great impact at a low effort.