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Problem Alignment Workshop

<https://uxforward.com/>

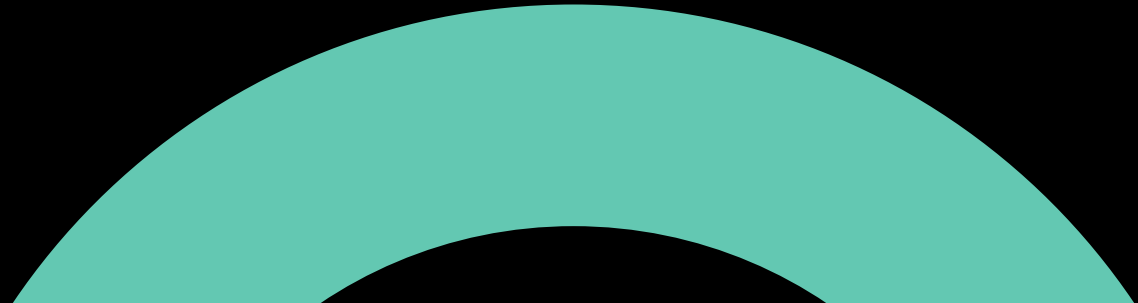


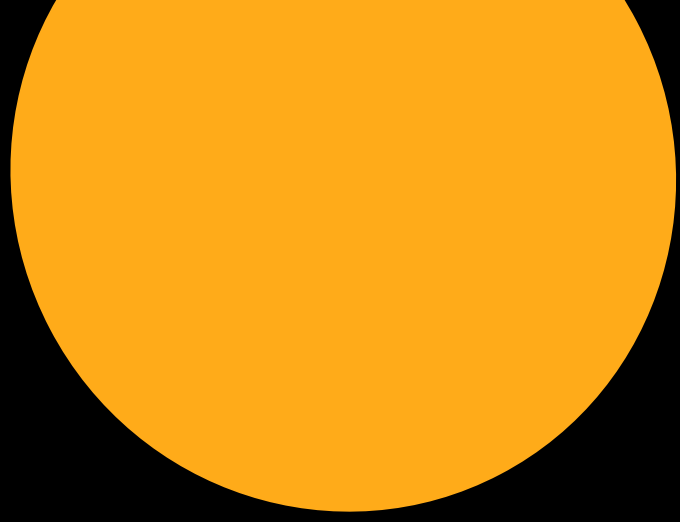
Introduction



I've benefited greatly by having an adaptable design process and knowing what tools to use in specific situations.

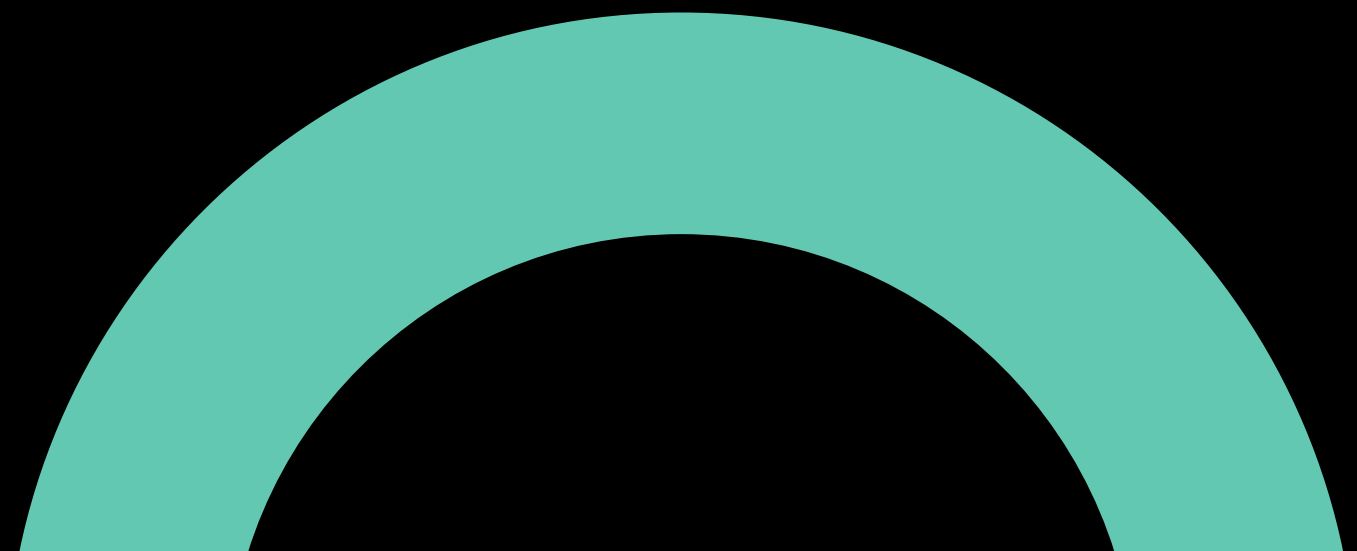
The problem alignment workshop is a great adaptable workshop.





This workshop should be used in the starting phases of your design process.

In the design process, problem alignment will help the team get started to understand what to focus their efforts on first.





Sometimes just getting started is better than being right.





This Workshop will

- Align team on the product/ feature vision.
- Uncover opportunities for your product.
- Get the team ideating on important obstacles and blockers related to opportunities.
- Align the team on what to start solving first.

This workshop is best when run in the beginning or understanding stages of a project.

It will help the team gather information and challenge assumptions.

It relates to understanding our stakeholders and our participants, helps us explore existing knowledge, and it will help define your problem.





Be water, my friend

With an adaptable design process, you'll be able to make this workshop your own.

You'll get my pro tips on what to start solving first when starting a project.

You can use this to guide your project with alignment and a collective understanding of the team.

**What's the
point of this
workshop?**

Why?

I wanted to share my proven frameworks I use in my product design process.

I want to show others how I innovate and empower my team to come together and create great products.

How?

I've done the research, experimented with other processes, compared notes with other leading product designers, ran and ideated on countless workshops, and have compiled my workshop frameworks.



What is it?

The problem alignment workshop is an exercise for getting the team to hear each other's thoughts and begin the product design process with the teams' collective thoughts.

This can be for a current product or a new concept. You'll need the right teammates for the project.



What can it do for you?

You can use this to host your own Problem Alignment workshop.

You'll find an agenda, step by step workshop script, proven problem alignment tools.

You'll have the team's input and alignment on what to start solving next.



**Problem
alignment is the
first step in the
design process?**

Nope.



**Where does
problem
alignment stand
in the design
process?**



Problem alignment is a step in the understand phase of the design process.

The first step is just getting started, if it happens to be problem alignment, then so be it.

Aligning the team with a problem to get started with is one of many actions that could be taken in the understand phase of design.

I like to ideally be doing other actions in parallel to aligning the team with a problem.

To be short, the problem alignment workshop should not be the first or only exercise ran in the understand phase of the design process

Starting out

For me, the starting point of any design challenge is of course a problem.

I find it tremendously helpful to allow the team to share their collective thoughts, hear each other out, and align the team with the objective before heading into the ideation phase.

Where to start?

Starting with Vision Quest ensures the team is starting with a problem.

Once you've established the vision, you can focus on what you want to see solved in relation to your problem.

Then align the vision to meet the needs of stakeholders, and users.

Core Principles of the problem alignment workshop



Together, alone.

We work collaboratively as team to understand each others perspectives.

This workshop allows for that opportunity to have all team members to express their perspectives.

We'll be doing this quietly, by writing our thoughts down.

Tangible items are better than discussion.

Producing your thoughts is more powerful than talking about them.

We use a process that allows for everyone to express their opinion without everyone talking over each other.

We first work alone then share our ideas to the group.

**Getting started is
more important
than being right.**

If everyone feels comfortable, the likelihood of your workshop succeeding is much higher.

Ask everyone to keep a positive frame of mind and to trust the process.

No need to get caught up in coming up with the best ideas.

It's more important for the team to ideate a lot of thoughts, if you see a teammate struggling to remind them, there are no bad ideas.

Who should facilitate?

Anyone with the time to prepare and practice can run the problem alignment workshop.

Maybe you're stepping out of your comfort zone, working on holding more productive meetings, or a workshop pro, as long as you follow the instructions you should be fine.

**Who should
Participate?**

Having cross functional team members with insights based on real data.

(either from research, or from being in the field interacting with users/customers)

Co-creating personas or journey maps would move the needle from "guessing" to "data driven inputs" and make these sessions worthwhile

- For the problem alignment workshop, anyone on the team that is considered a stakeholder or subject matter expert.
- I think it's best to have a good mix from different segments of the business.
- "Do real research with real customers."

**How many people
should
participate?**

I've facilitated workshops with people in groups of 2 to 25 for a variety of situations.

For the problem alignment workshop:

3-7 is my magic range.

3 is the bare minimum.

4-5 is ideal.

5-7 can be tricky but still very effective.

**How long will this
take?**

30-60 minutes

Although the workshop is timeboxed, the length of the workshop is usually fairly dependent on the number of participants.


The more participants the longer you can expect the workshop to run.

Workshop checklist

It could be an online collaborative workspace.

Or

Some open space.

1. It could be a meeting room or a dedicated space.
 2. White board
 3. Whiteboard markers
 4. Markers
 5. Post it notes
 6. Small circle dots
- 
- A decorative teal curved shape, resembling a thick arc or a partial circle, is located in the bottom right corner of the page.



The Workshop

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Problem Alignment Workshop

<https://uxforward.com/>

Core Principles

When participating please remember:

- Work together, alone.
- Tangible items are better than discussion.
- Getting started is more important than being right.
- Don't rely on creativity



Agenda

01. Define the vision
02. How might we...
03. Can We...
04. Decide what to execute on

The exercise should take between 40-60 minutes.

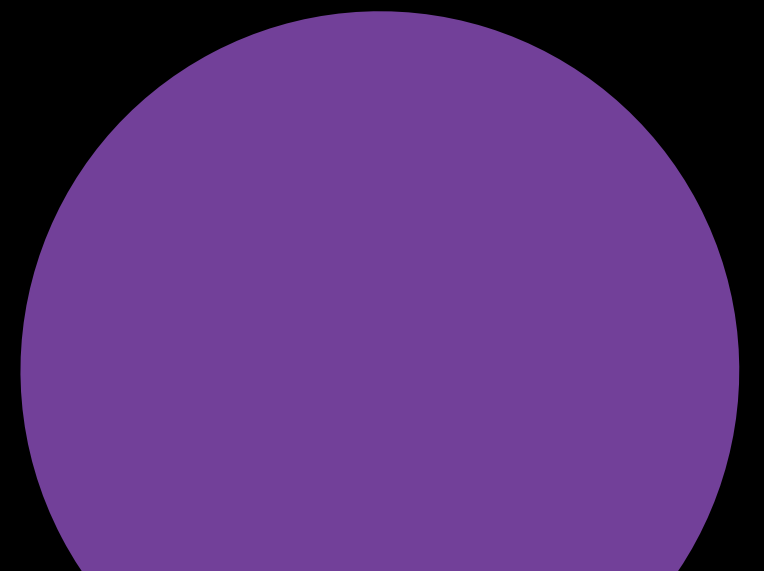
What's a good vision?

It's problem centered.

- A good vision starts with a problem.
- What do you want to see solved in relation to your problem?
- Will the vision align leadership, your team, your customers, and users?

Set timer for 5 minutes

The Vision Quest should take 5
minutes to complete





Vision Quest

Today, when _____

Customer/ user segment

Wants to _____

Desirable activity/ outcome

They have to _____

Current solution(s)

Write vision on whiteboard



Vision Quest

This is unacceptable,

because _____

Shortcomings of current solutions

We envision a world

where _____

Shortcomings are resolved

We're bringing this world about

through _____

broad technology/ approach

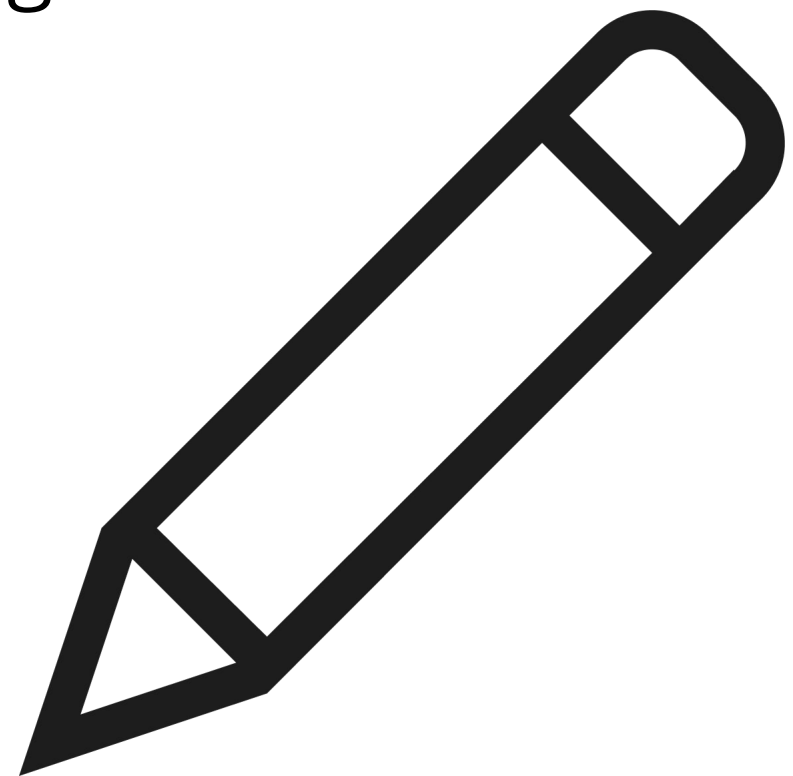
Write vision on whiteboard

How Might We...

HMW...

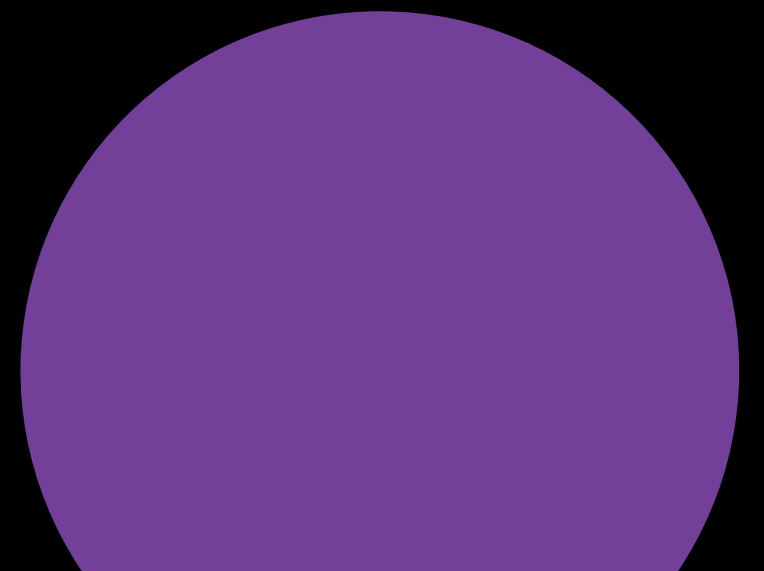
- Used for big picture concepts.
- Capturing the challenge.
- Aligning the team on that challenge.

HMW...



Set timer for 5 minutes

The HMW exercise should take 5 minutes to complete.



How Might We...

Start by explaining what the challenges are.

Everyone can have their individual turns to chip in with their knowledge of topic.

The group listens and writes HMW statements to rephrase the challenges they're hearing.

Then the group can ask more questions to get clarification and detail.

Examples

Too
Narrow

HMW...

make the button blue

Sweet Spot

HMW...

Engage more with customers

HMW...

increase revenue with current
product?

HMW...

Encourage customers to do X

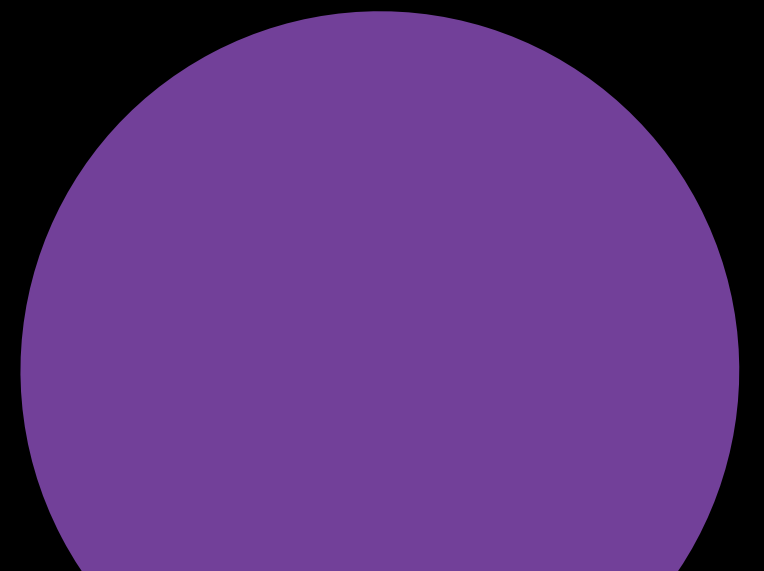
Too
Broad

HMW...

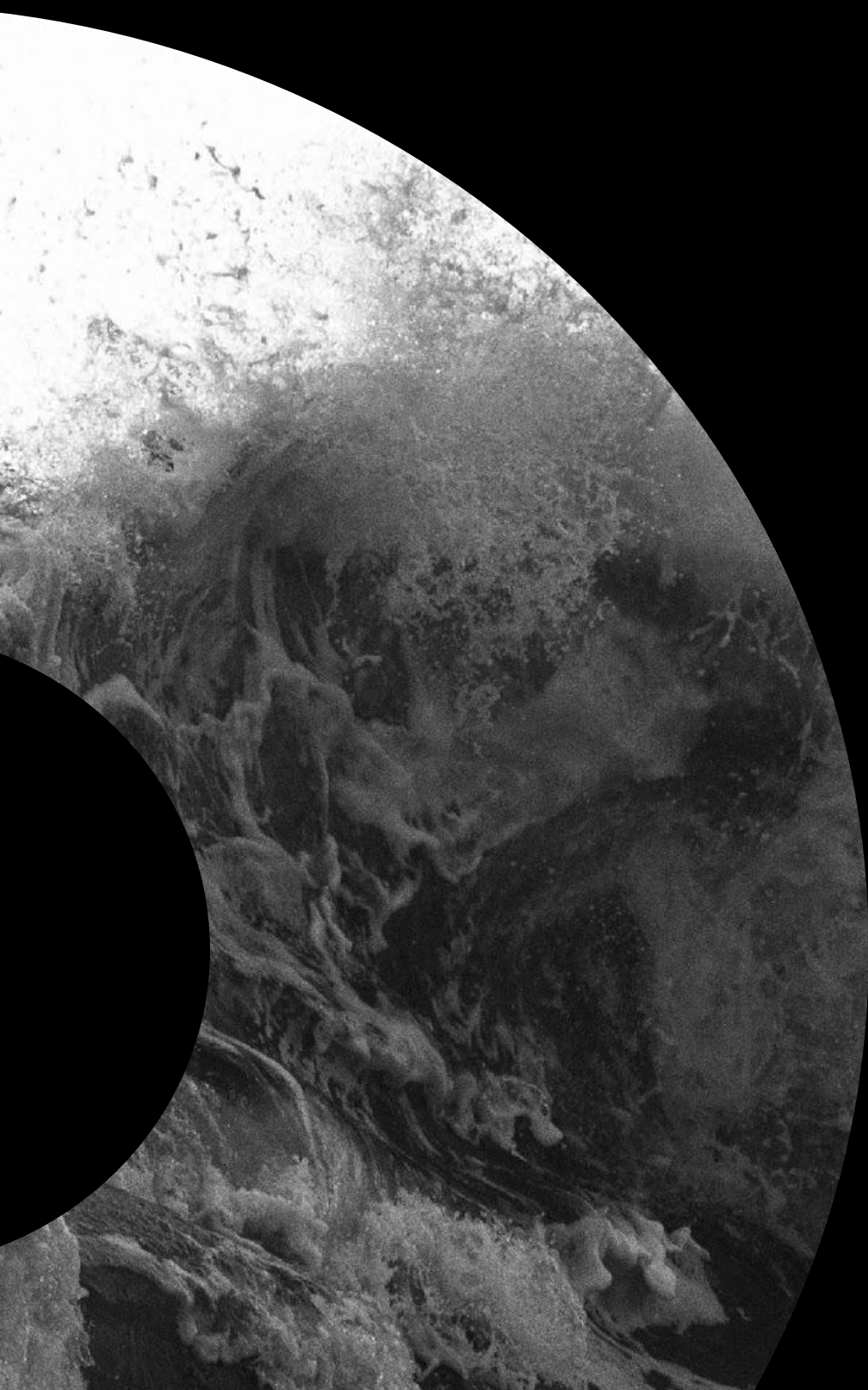
reinvent web search

Set timer for 5 minutes

Voting should take 5 minutes to
complete



Vote

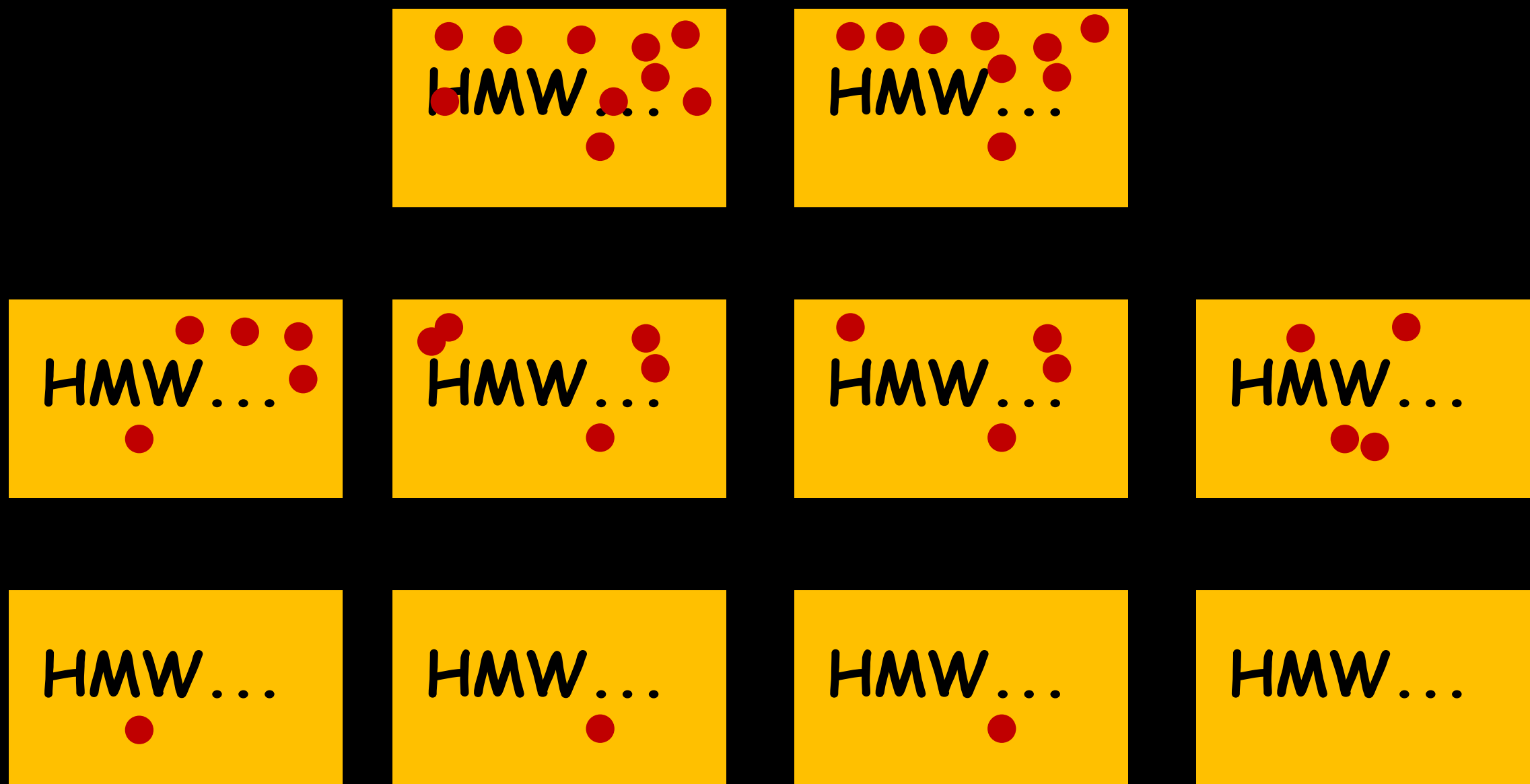


Use two dots to vote for the HMWs you think will have the most impact. You can vote on your own.

Pick the most important challenges to solve.

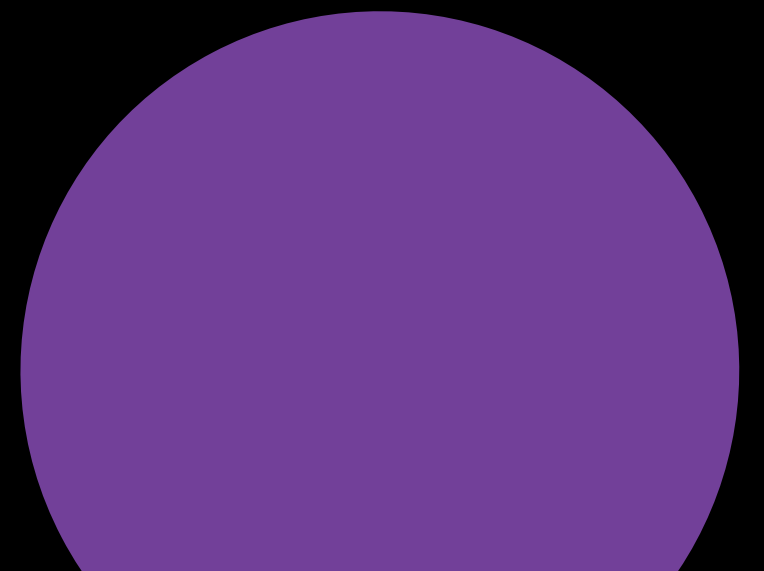
Separate the winning HMWs
its into a pyramid.

Read HMWs.



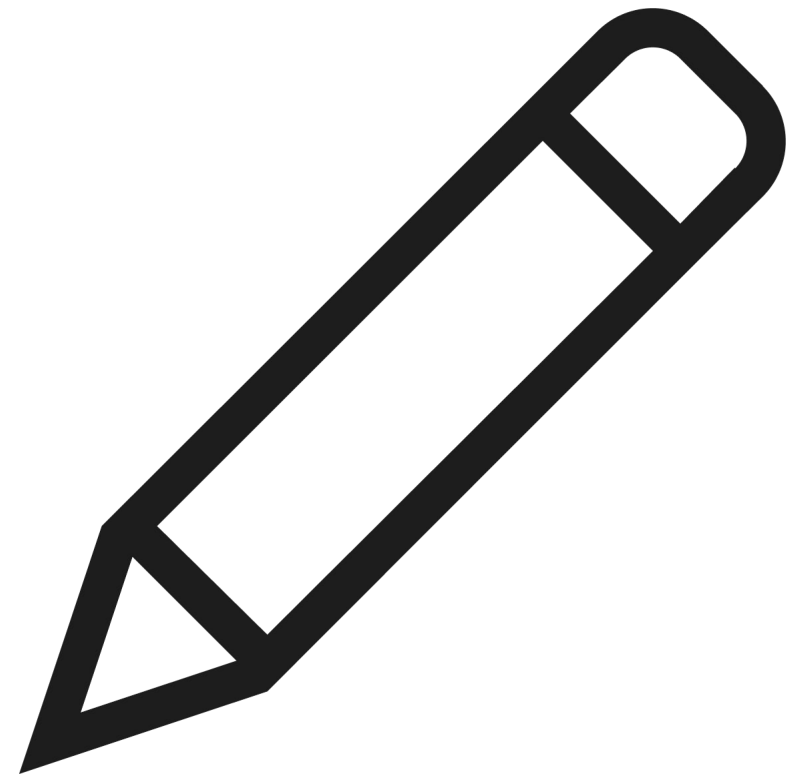
Set timer for 5 minutes

The can we exercise should take 5
minutes to complete



Can we...

Can we...



Can we...

1 -3 Can we... questions each.

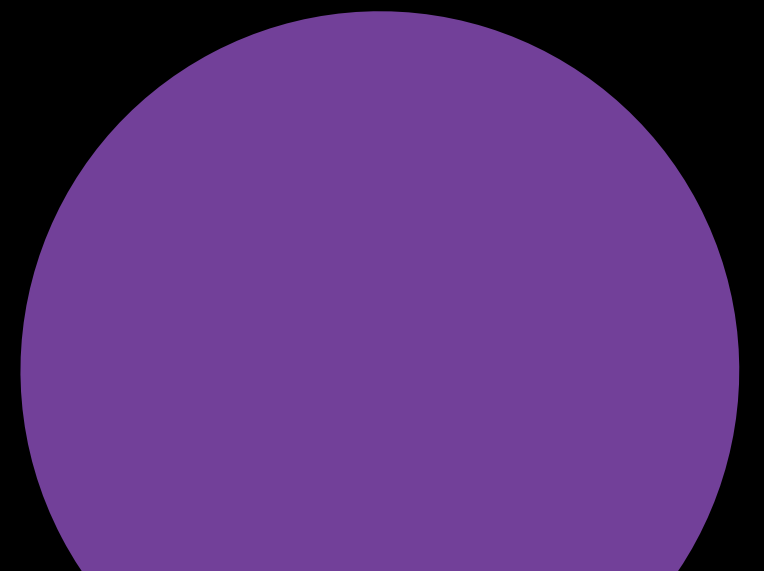
Think about questions that are most important to answer.

Not inventing new information, base can we questions on what you've learnt today

Example: Can we replace the need of third party incentive engines and services?

Set timer for 5 minutes

The can we exercise should take 5
minutes to complete



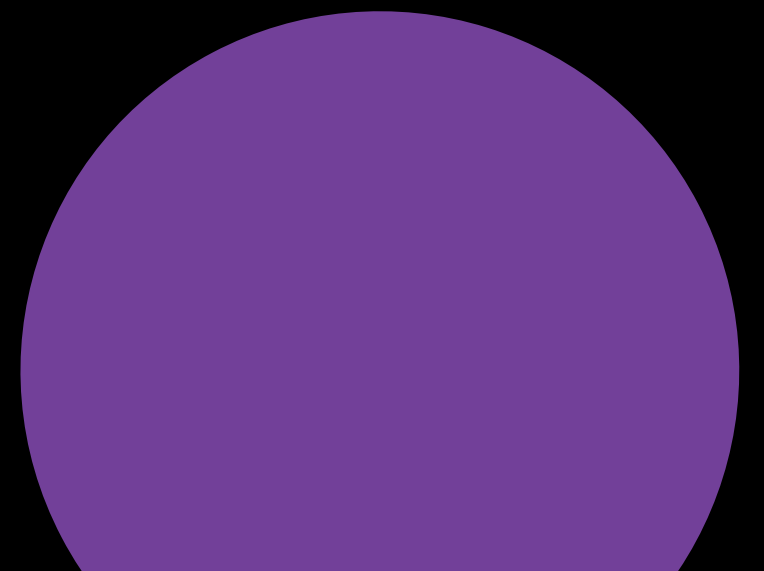
One at a time



- Read aloud your Can We...
- Place them on the wall

Set timer for 3 minutes

Voting should take 5 minutes to
complete



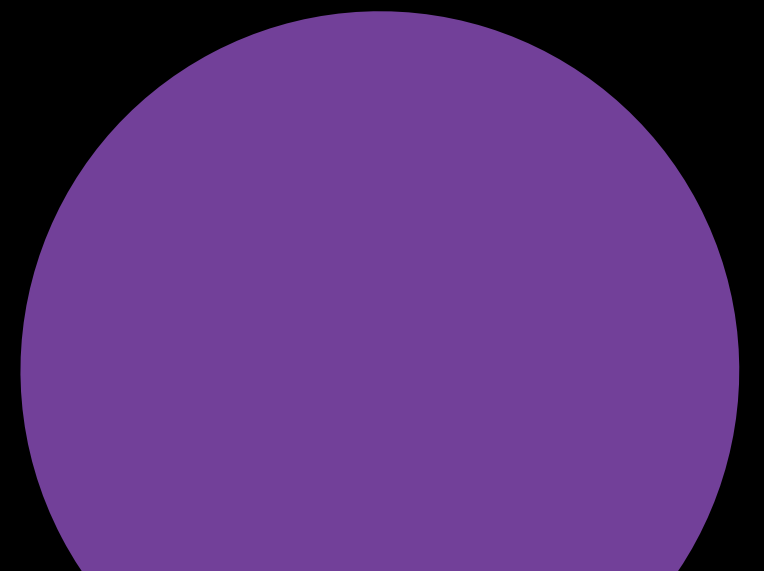


Vote

Use one dot to vote for the most important obstacle you think has the biggest chance of holding us back from moving in the right direction.

Set timer for 2 minutes

Reading Can we's should take 5
minutes to complete

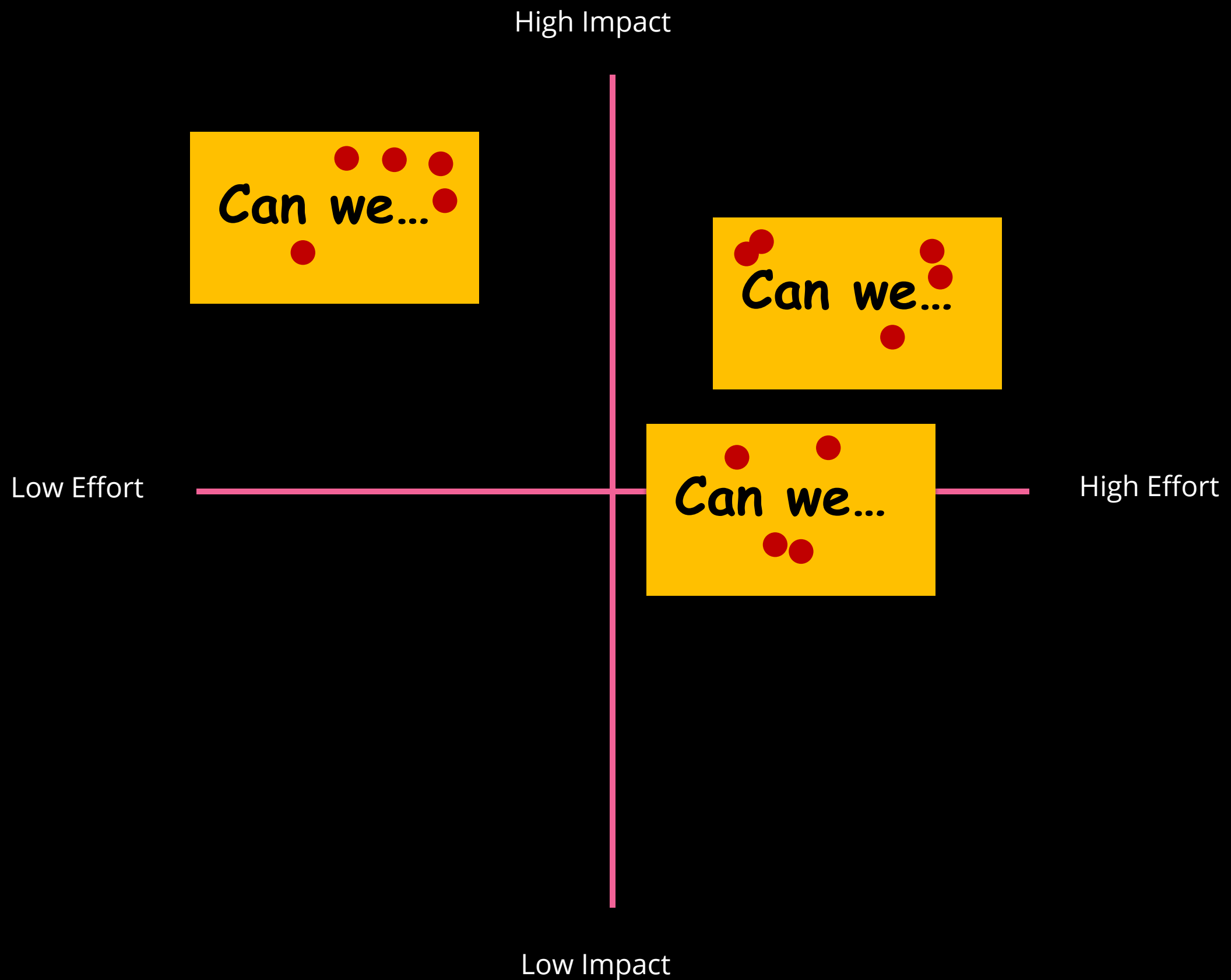


Separate the 3 Can we's

Decider uses red dots to understand what the group is thinking to make their decision.



Decide what to execute on



Create a plan



Do now

Do later