Workshop Impact Mapping

English

Scenario

Please take 10 minutes to read the entire booklet.

Business Context

GeekBooks is a new online bookstore targeted at technology professionals around the world. As a startup, the company is burning money fast (currently €110k/month) and is almost out of cash. Since the store is not live yet, we depend solely on investors to keep us afloat. The online store is being developed but a first public release is still months from completion.

Vision and Strategy

At GeekBooks, we provide technology professionals with a richer experience over brick-and-mortar bookstores and online competitors by creating immersive experiences far beyond shopping. Unlike Amazon and other competitors, we provide community-building social experiences like book club chats, coding dojos, and communities of practice in an inspiring incubation environment, and by encouraging hackathons and prototyping.

We will leverage industry best practices and Features such as those offered by Amazon.
This includes:

- Tailoring our bookstore specifically to technology professionals
- Have the easiest, fastest, and best online bookstore purchasing experience
- Books in both electronic and print form
- Start in US and expand into the global market
- Support multiple languages
- Support online communities of practice (book club chats and coding dojos, to start)
- Sell items other than books to students
- Gamification and challenges

Our credo is ‘enjoy a lifelong learning’. Gaining knowledge should be fun. We will provide such an experience and so create fans rather than customers. This should ultimately result in a business that grows exponentially.

Objectives and Milestones

We have an investor demo in five weeks to secure our second-round funding. This event is critical for our survival and growth! However, we won't be able to complete everything before the demo. We need to prioritize what we can accomplish, as long as it rocks the investors.

The goal for this quarter (12 weeks) is to get the foundational store functionality out of the way and go-live with an MVP that enables us to validate our vision. That will allow us to build confidence and trust with the investors.

Then, in the subsequent quarters, we will realize the Features that will differentiate us on the market. As a result, we should see traffic and sales double every quarter.

But having the online store up and running is not enough. There is more to running and online bookstore. We need to be able to fulfill orders. This includes shipping packages, accounting, supply chain management, procurement, billing & collecting, customer support, payment processing, fraud detection, compliance, community engagement, marketing & advertising, and what not. We have none of this in place. These capabilities need to be developed as well as we grow our business.

The ambition is 'To have fulfilled 100,000 orders this time next year'. The strategic intent behind this is that this would validate product/market fit and proof to potential investors that we are ready to scale. More investments are crucial for survival and growth.

SWOT

Strengths

- Some of the best software engineers in the industry
- A nimble organization
- Adopting Agile
- Co-located
- Great vision and strategy!
- Working here is great fun!

Weaknesses

- Difficulties finding qualified personnel
- No System Team in place
- No Customer Service Team in place
- Lack of Funds
- Could use additional software engineers and testers
- Technical debt starts to build and there are no architectural guidelines or agreed development practices
- Who is in charge?
- What do we make and/or buy?
- What is our value proposition and business model?

Opportunities

- Develop new online social experiences rather than copy existing ones
- Accelerate global expansion through faster content translation
- Develop product offerings beyond books
- Build an advertising model

Threats

- Amazon has clear dominance
- LinkedIn tech communities continue to grow
- General Data Protection Regulation

Current Team

- Daniel, CEO. It's his job to get investors on board and close deals with external suppliers, and he loves hustling. He spends most of his time on the phone and in his car.
- Peter, COO. It's his job to grow the business and the company. The product vision is his. He is a very creative designer and marketeer, but not a very good planner and organizer.
- Casper, CTO. It's his job to get all the technology, including the online store, up and running. He is a trained software engineer and architect but has time for neither, as he spends a lot of time running daily affairs and servicing the outdated office and IT equipment Daniel bought on a bootstrap.

- Cathy, Office Manager and Management Assistant. She makes sure everything in the office runs smoothly. She's great at resolving conflicts and organizational impediments and facilitating meetings. However, technology is not her forte.
- Pauline, Marketing Manager. A great copywriter, growth hacker and market researcher who is also very good at planning and setting priorities.
- John, Lead Developer of the online store. He is a senior software and network engineer with 25 years of experience.
- Reed, an experienced UX designer and tester. Has created amazing user experiences in the past. Is new to the team.
- Jeanette, talented software engineer. Has great ideas and creates flawless code.
- Ben, talented junior software engineer. Fresh out of college, so he needs a lot of coaching. Makes rookie mistakes when coding, but rocks social media.

Current Stakeholders

- Fred, Daniel's dad. He invested the first €25k in our business as seeding capital. That is as much as Fred could spare.
- ABN AMRO, the bank where we opened a €50k credit line.
- Amazon, where we host our virtual servers. Expensive, but reliable and low maintenance.
- Frank, the Angel Investor who put in €150k as an early investment and might be tempted to put in another €500 if we meet our demo objectives.
- Marion, the Angel Investor who put in €100k as an early investment and might be tempted to put in another €350 if we meet our demo objectives.
- A small community of Geeks who function as a customer panel. We use them to test ideas and beta releases.

The difference between Impact Maps and Benefit Maps

Both techniques can be kept simple, focus on impact to be made, create strategic alignment, foster cooperation, and help discover deliverables and changes to the way of working to put on the backlog.

Impact maps differ from benefit maps in the sense that impact maps are stakeholder oriented (outside-in, benefits for our stakeholders) while benefit maps are centered around our own ambitions (inside-out, benefits for us). Where a benefit map focusses on changes to our own way of working and the enablers required, the impact map focusses primarily on discovering key functional requirements to impact the stakeholder's way of working. Further, a benefit map also helps to visualize causality and dependencies between branches while an impact map is a more hierarchical model.

Therefore, a benefit map is best used to improve our organization and optimize our value streams or programs. An impact map is best used to quickly improve value propositions (products and services). Both instruments are vital in defining and refining your portfolio(s). At Dennis van der Spoel Consulting we have used both techniques when working with our clients regardless of frameworks used (e.g. Scrum, PRINCE2, AgilePM, MSP, AgilePgM, MoP, AgilePfM, SAFe, LeSS, etc.)

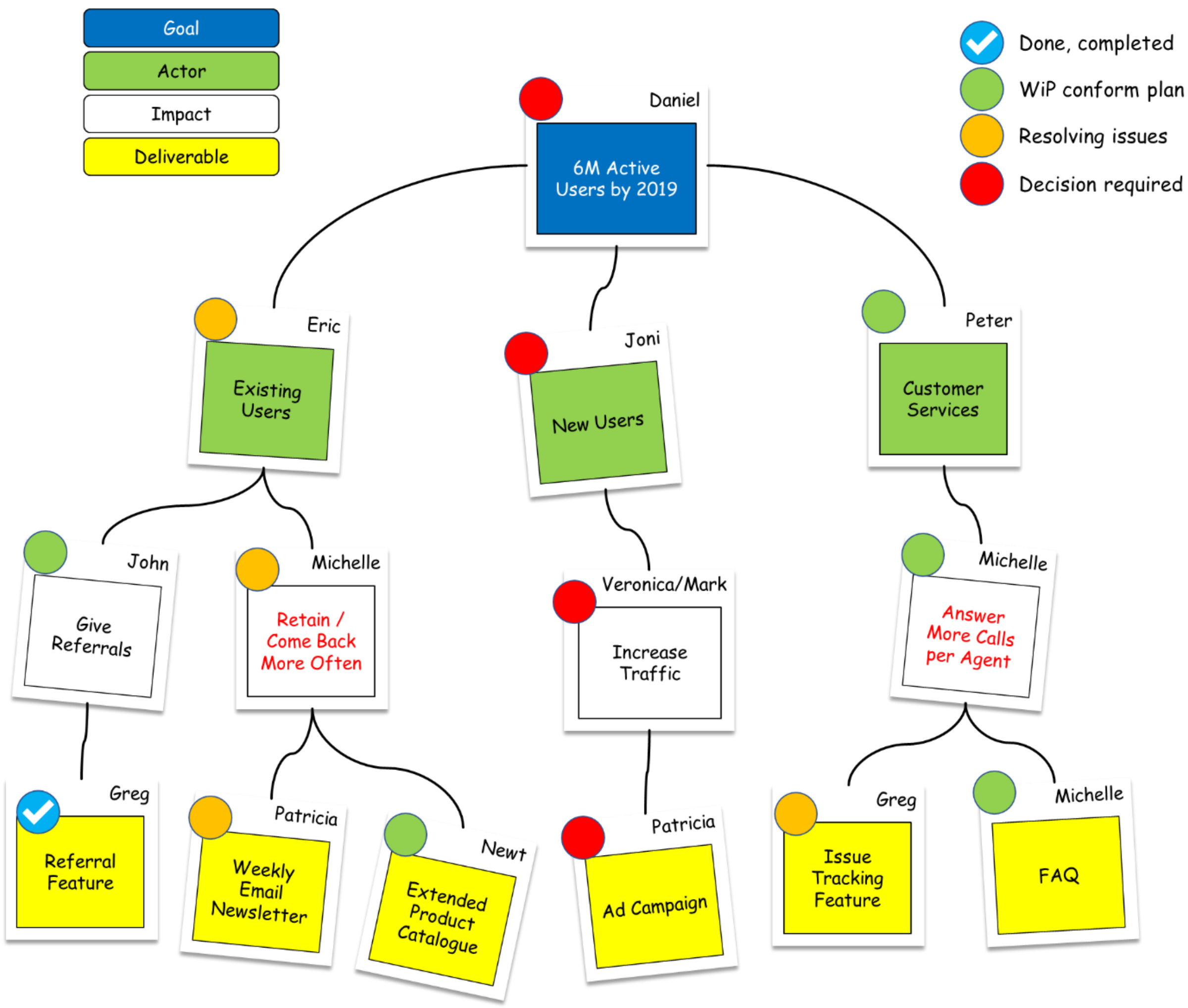
Always keep in mind that, as an exercise, the map itself is not the goal; the objective is to attain alignment, cooperation, and flow and ultimately to *'move the needle'* for ourselves and our stakeholders.

Impact Map Exercise

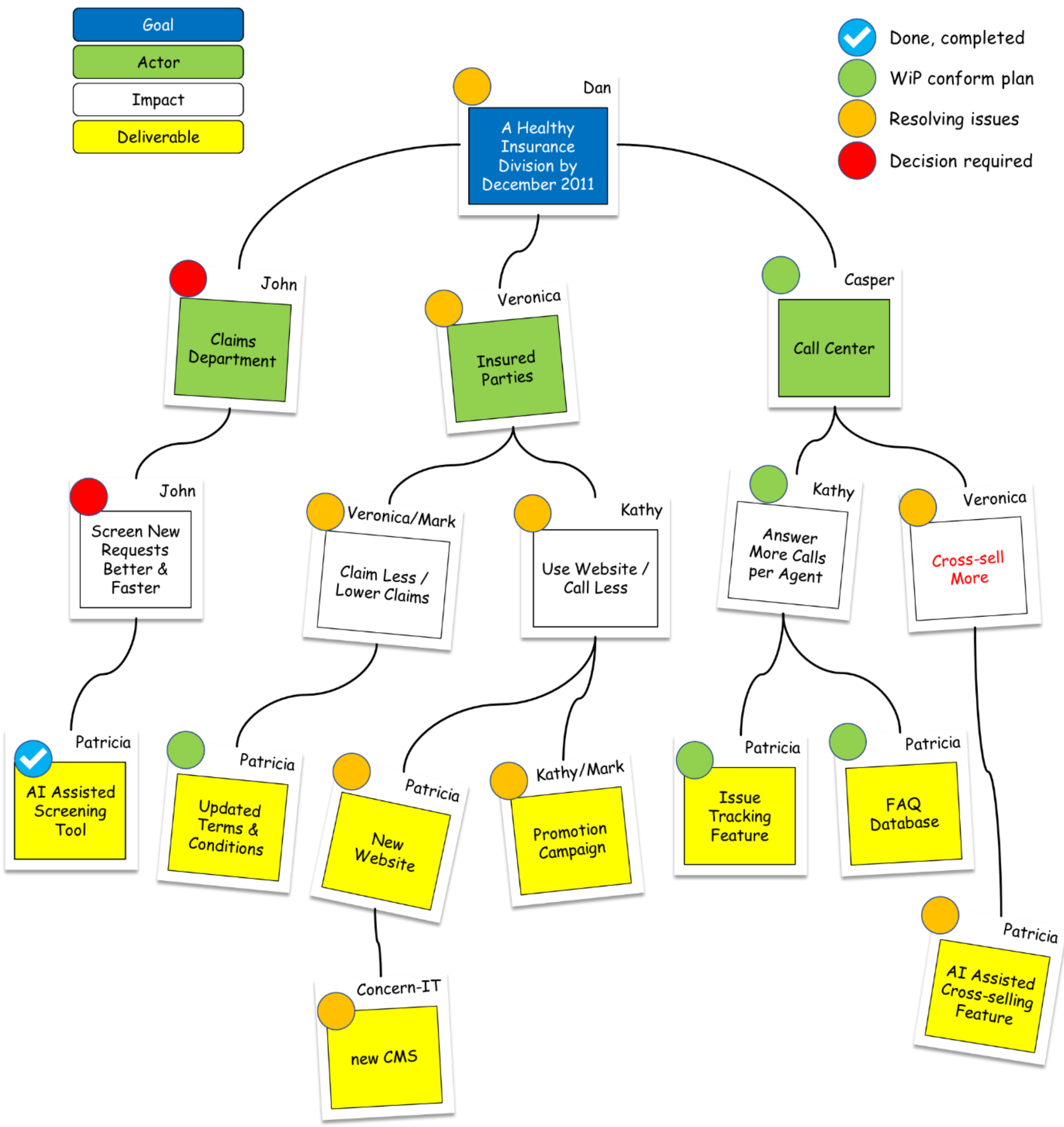
Impact mapping is a strategic planning technique. It prevents organizations from getting lost while building products and delivering projects, by clearly communicating assumptions, helping teams align their activities with overall business objectives and make better roadmap decisions. The idea of the impact map was first conceived by Gojko Adzic who adopted and combined ideas from various sources. We have built on his ideas.

Impact maps visualize the dynamic relationship between delivery plans and the world around them, capturing the most important assumptions as well as delivery scope. They help us adapt plans effectively and react to change, while still providing a good road map for delivery teams and a

big-picture view for business sponsors. Impact mapping helps to reduce waste by preventing scope creep and over-engineered solutions. It provides focus for delivery by putting deliverables in the context of impacts they are supposed to achieve. It enhances collaboration by creating a shared big-picture view for technical and business people. Here are some examples:



Goal
Actor
Impact
Deliverable
Done, completed
WiP conform plan
Resolving issues
Decision required
Daniel
6M Active Users by 2019
Eric
Existing Users
Joni
New Users
Peter
Customer Services
John
Give Referrals
Michelle
Retain / Come Back More Often
Veronica/Mark
Increase Traffic
Michelle
Answer More Calls per Agent
Greg
Referral Feature
Patricia
Weekly Email Newsletter
Newt
Extended Product Catalogue
Patricia
Ad Campaign
Greg
Issue Tracking Feature
Michelle
FAQ



Business sponsors will learn how to ensure their organization benefits more from agile team delivery capability, and how to steer product management and delivery better to achieve strategic goals faster.

Analysts and Product owners will learn how to link between business sponsors and teams more effectively, how to select and prioritize stories and features to achieve a bigger impact.

Developers and testers will learn how to engage with business stakeholders and product owners to get better direction and focus delivery on things that really matter.

It enhances collaboration by creating a shared big-picture view that business sponsors and delivery teams can use for better prioritization and as a reference for more meaningful progress monitoring and reporting.

In short, Impact Mapping helps to ensure that the right business outcomes are achieved, or that unrealistic projects are stopped before they cost too much, by clearly communicating underlying assumptions and allowing teams to test them.

Depending on the type and scope of the impact map and frameworks used, a deliverable may represent the following work items:

- a portfolio epic or program if it's on a portfolio map
- a solution epic or capability or plateau if it's on a solution map
- a program epic or project if it's on a program map
- a feature or work package if it's on a project or team map

The following reference table of work items may proof useful. However, sizes of work items may vary wildly from context to context. This table is just an example based on my own personal experience:

Man-days	**Costs**	**SAFe work item**	**SAFe Kanban Level**	**PRINCE2/MSP/MoP work item**	**PRINCE2/MSP/MoP Planning Level**
10K-60K	*€ 5M-€ 30M*	*Portfolio Epic*	*Portfolio*	*Program*	*Portfolio*
5K-20K	*€ 2.5M-€ 10M*	*Solution Epic*	*Solution*	*Plateau*	*Program*
750-10K	*€ 375K- € 5M*	*Capability*	*Solution*	*Capability*	*Program*
500-5K	*€ 250K- € 2.5M*	*Program Epic*	*Program*	*Project*	*Program/Portfolio*
40-200	*€ 20K-€ 100K*	*Feature*	*Program*	*Work Package*	*Project*
5-6	*€ 2,500-€ 3,000*	*Story*	*Team*	*Specialist Product*	*Team*
½-1	*€ 250-€ 500*	*Task*	*Team*	*Task*	*Team*

An impact map is a visualization of scope and underlying assumptions, created collaboratively by senior technical and business people. It is a mind-map grown during a discussion facilitated by answering the following four questions:

- WHY?
- WHO?
- HOW?
- WHAT?

We will play multiple steps. Each step represents a layer in the impact map:

1. Goal
2. Actors
3. Impacts (behavior change)
4. Deliverables

Most steps consist of multiple rounds (timeboxes):

1. Diverge, where we collect items (**3** – **15 minutes**)
2. Converge, where we clarify, select, and order items (**15** – **90 minutes**)
3. Retrospective, where we reflect on the process and learn (**3** – **15 minutes**)

Like all things agile, the impact map is created in an incremental and iterative process. In practice you will never get it right the first time around, you will always need multiple sessions to create your first map as insights will change. That is the true value of the impact map; not the map itself, but the discussions and learnings the team will have while creating it. So, although the timeboxes seem very short, they provide plenty of time if you suppress the urge to get it right the first time and inclination to settle all debates in the first session. The first pass should be quick and dirty. Park questions and disagreements on a flipchart to be settled later in consecutive workshops or in separate meetings.

When creating your first impact map you typically need 3 iterations / sessions spread over a 2 to 5-day period to get a robust version. However, you should have a complete map after the first session. Later sessions are used for refinement, processing feedback and backbriefing the leading indicators and norms the owners have set for their items.

There also is no completed state of the impact map, as circumstances will change over time. That's why the impact map should be updated at the end of each program increment/tranche or project stage.

Preparation

- Create teams of 5 to 9 people
- Each team member will play one or two roles of the GeekBooks team, as mentioned in the scenario.
- The person who plays Cathy will facilitate this workshop. This role will rotate with each step.
- Everyone reads the entire scenario and the exercise up to Step 1.

After assigning team roles to team members, distribute 4 distinct colors of sticky notes and a black marker to each participant.

Suggested color coding for sticky notes (post-its):

- Blue: goal (optional)
- Green: actor
- White: impact
- Yellow: deliverable

Create a space for your impact map, for instance by attaching big sheets of paper to a wall, thereby creating a surface of $2m^2$ to $6m^2$. There should be room for 20 (project) to 40 (program) sticky notes and arrows to indicate the relationships between them.

Depending on the dimensions of your surface, you will be working from top to bottom or from left to right. (The end objective is either at the top or at the left.) Alternatively, you can start from the center and work outwards if you are adept at using mind-maps.

Step 1: Setting the Goal

The first sticky of an impact map answers the most important question: Why are we doing this? This is the goal we are trying to achieve. It might sound like common sense to know this upfront, but from my experience very few people working on delivery know the actual expected business objectives. These are sometimes drafted in a vision document, but more frequently exist only at the back of senior stakeholders' minds. Even when they are communicated, business goals are often defined in vague terms. Knowing why we're doing something is the key to making good decisions about cost, scope and timelines, both at the start and later when things change.

Research shows that people have to know the objectives of any activity in order to react correctly to unforeseen problems. And unforeseen problems are a fact of life in any but the most trivial initiatives. If a product milestone or project succeeds in delivering the expected business goal, it is a success from a business perspective, even if the delivered scope ends up being different from what was originally envisaged. On the other hand, if it delivers exactly the requested scope but misses the business goal, it is a failure. This is true regardless of the fact that delivery teams can blame customers for not knowing what they want.

By having the answer to ‘WHY?’ impact maps ensure that everyone knows why they are doing something. That helps teams align their activities better, identify true requirements and design better solutions.

Cathy will write the ambition from the scenario on a blue sticky and place that on top (or on the right or center) of the surface. She will add Peter’s name to the post-it.

(We assume we already agree on this goal and who owns it, but it usually takes a previous workshop to come to a consensus about the goal and ownership. Optionally you may have a brief brainstorm on the goal using the blue stickies. First define and agree on a pain point to resolve or ambition to be attained, then set a goal related to that pain point or ambition and choose an associated metric to make it SMART).

Tips:

- The purpose of a goal definition is to allow the delivery organization and business sponsors to re-evaluate the plan as new information becomes available. For this reason, good goals tend to be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Realistic and Timely.
- Goals should not be about building products or delivering project scope. They should explain why such a thing would be useful.
- Goals should present the problem to be solved or milestone to be reached, not the solution to the problem or the way to do it. Avoid design constraints in a goal definition.

Good examples are: ‘Starting to trade in Brazil by March next year’, ‘6M users by the end of 2019’ or ‘Increasing conversion by 50% in three months’.

Step 2: Actors

We will now discover the actors. Let's define quality as 'value delivered to some person'. To deliver high-quality results, we first have to understand who these people are, and what kind of value they are looking for from our products or outputs. In addition to those directly getting value out of our products and services, we also have to consider a host of others who can make decisions that influence the success of a product milestone or the outcome of an initiative. Our deliverables do not work in a vacuum and they rarely control all the actors who are involved with it.

People have their own needs, goals and preferences, which all come into play if we truly care about achieving a business goal instead of just delivering a product or service. Yet most requirement models completely ignore this – they focus on what the product or service should do and not who will benefit from it and who will be worse off when it is delivered. Then somewhere mid-work a new actor appears from nowhere and everything changes fundamentally, or someone with sufficient decision-making influence just stops the delivery in its tracks.

Impact maps make us think about all these decision-makers, user groups and customer segments. By mapping out different actors, we can prioritize work better – for example focusing on satisfying the most important actors first.

Round 1: Diverge

For this step we will use the green sticky notes. This round should be completed in 3 to 15 minutes. I suggest the following timeboxes:

	Duration
Training exercise, like this	3 minutes
Real case, agile context	5 minutes
Real case, waterfall context	15 minutes

Cathy will ask participants to each individually (without consultation) to write down the answer to these questions:

- "***Whose behavior do we want to impact?***"
- "***Who can help us to achieve our goal? Who can obstruct it?***"
- "***Who are the consumers or users of our product? Who will be impacted by it?***"

Each participant can write as many answers as he/she likes, but each one goes onto a separate sticky note. <u>Do not put any stickies up on the wall yet.</u>

Have each participant order their own answers according to priority, as time constraints will force us to be selective.

Examples of actors: Mike Smith from the marketing department, Under-18 users with a mobile device at a concert, Apple iTunes store approvers, Accounts that have been inactive for 6 months, Credit committee at our bank, Cohort December 2015, Millennials looking for a job in finance, Our contact at WWF, etc...

Tips:

- Important actors are those who can significantly influence the success of a project or product milestone, including end-users and internal or external decision-makers.
- Look for three types of actors:
    1. Primary actors, whose needs are fulfilled, for example players of a gaming system
    2. Secondary actors, who provide services, for example the fraud prevention team
    3. Off-stage actors, who have an interest in the behaviors, but are not directly benefiting or providing a service, for example regulators or senior decision-makers
- Be specific. Avoid generic terms such as 'users' – different categories of users might have different needs, and not all users of a system might be important to consider for a particular project.
- Try to define actors in this order: specific individual, user persona, role or job title, group or department.

Round 2: Converge

This round should take 15 to 90 minutes. I suggest the following timeboxes:

	# Sticky notes per participant	Duration
Training exercise, like this	2	15 minutes
Real case, agile context	3	20 minutes
Real case, waterfall context	unlimited	90 minutes

Cathy will facilitate a **brief** team discussion:

- Let each participant in turn clarify his/her most important sticky note and stick it on the work space. If a very similar sticky note has already been put on the board by someone else, the participant selects the next sticky on his/her list.
- Repeat this process until there are enough sticky notes on the work space. Park stickies that are not used on a backlog for future reference.
- Next, arrange or group the stickies on the work space into a logical constellation or clusters.
- Discuss until everyone agrees that all stickies are mutually exclusive and that all stickies are crucial in realizing the Goal:
    - Remove doubles and split ambiguous notes to settle debate, and

- Remove stickies that are not likely to ‘move the needle’, and
    - Replace stickies where required to reflect the clarifications given.
- Model relationships between the actors and the goal on the map.
    - Draw a line to visualize the causality between actor and goal.
- Appoint and write down the name of the owner on each sticky note (make sure this person is in the room and accepts ownership). Owners will be held accountable (not merely responsible) for satisfying the needs of their actors and own the associated metrics.

Tips:

- Beware of confusion due to a multitude of Actors. One leads to another and the list of potential Actors is endless. Only keep the conditional Actors. Consolidate and be selective, remove insignificant Actors until you have a maximum of 3 to 7 crucial Actors. Too many actors will spread you thin.
- Prevent non-committal Actors. Each Actor must have an owner appointed among the attendees. Question: "***Who is willing to take accountability for actually delivering value to this actor?***" Do not write down positions or departments, use names instead.
- Cover stickies for which no one claims ownership with a blank sticky of the same color. Invite the person who might be the best owner for that sticky note for the next workshop to see if he or she volunteers to take ownership.
- Ask the owners to work with their team to define their actor using an empathy map before the next session. This will improve the benefit hypotheses we are modelling.
- Keep a list of issues/impediments (if any) on a flip-chart. That is homework for another session.

Round 3: Retrospective

Cathy will facilitate a short retrospective of step 2. This round should be completed in 3 to 15 minutes. I suggest the following timeboxes:

	Duration
Training exercise, like this	3 minutes
Real case, agile context	5 minutes
Real case, waterfall context	15 minutes

Briefly take time to discuss:

- What did we do well, that if we don’t discuss we might forget?
- What did we learn?
- What should we do differently next time?
- What still puzzles us?

Tip: someone should take notes on a flip-chart. These notes should be actionable. Each action should be owned by a participant.

Step 3: Impacts

Someone else will get the chance to play Cathy – Switch roles if there is a candidate. The new Cathy will now facilitate the next step.

We will now discover Impacts and changes in behavior. A key to successful delivery is to understand what Actors want to get done rather than understanding their ideas about a product or service. This helps delivery organizations investigate different technical options and explore solutions to produce good results. It also helps to focus delivery on supporting stakeholders in getting the job done instead of just delivering features.

By listing Impacts on the second level of a map, we consider the desired changes in the behavior of the Actors. This leads to better plans and helps with prioritization. Different Actors could help us or obstruct us in many ways on our route to achieving the key business objectives. Some of the Impacts will be competing, some conflicting, some complementary. We do not necessarily have to support all of them, but without considering delivery scope in the context of these activities it is very difficult to prioritize and compare deliverables. The hierarchical nature of the map clearly shows who creates an Impact and how that contributes to the Goal. This clear visualization allows us to decide which impacts best contribute to the Goal and identify the risks; this helps immensely with prioritization.

Round 1: Diverge

For this step we will use the white sticky notes. This round should be completed in 3 to 15 minutes. I suggest the following timeboxes:

	Duration
Training exercise, like this	3 minutes
Real case, agile context	5 minutes
Real case, waterfall context	15 minutes

Cathy will ask participants to each individually (without consultation) to write down the answer to these questions for each actor:

- "***What is it the actor wants to get done?***"
- "***How could/should the actor's behavior change?***"
- "***How can he/she help us to achieve the goal?***"
- "***How can he/she obstruct or prevent us from succeeding?***"

Each participant can write as many answers as he/she likes, but each one goes onto a separate sticky note. Do not put any stickies up on the wall yet.

Have each participant order their own answers according to priority, as time constraints will force us to be selective.

Tips:

- Impacts are not product features. Avoid listing product ideas here. Focus on business activities.
- Ideally show a change in Actor behavior, not just the behavior. Show how the activity is different from what is currently possible or conventional. So instead of just 'selling tickets', say 'sell tickets five times faster' or 'sell tickets online'. An expression such as 'selling tickets' is only valid if there currently is no (acceptable) way to that.
- Consider negative or hindering impacts as well as positive ones.
- Important Actors can often help or hinder the outcome in many different ways. Once you discover the first impact of an Actor, think about what else they could do.

Good examples of positive impact: Invite more friends into the community, Purchase tickets without calling the hotline, Use stairs instead of escalator, Sell more tickets online, Stop calling 911 for trivial matters, Give referrals with one click, etc.

Good examples of negative impact: Withhold the permit, Reduce the budget, Reject the application, Give bad press, etc.

Round 2: Converge

This round should take 15 to 90 minutes. I suggest the following timeboxes:

	# Sticky notes per participant	Duration
Training exercise, like this	2	15 minutes
Real case, agile context	3	20 minutes
Real case, waterfall context	unlimited	90 minutes

Cathy will facilitate a **brief** team discussion:

- Let each participant in turn clarify his/her most important sticky note and stick it on the work space. If a very similar sticky note has already been put on the board by someone else, the participant selects the next sticky on his/her list.

- Repeat this process until there are enough sticky notes on the work space. Park stickies that are not used on a backlog for future reference.
- Convert negative Impacts into positive ones. For example: ‘Reject the application’ becomes ‘Approve the application’. But use a red marker instead of a black one to indicate that this Impact is at risk and needs special attention later.
- Next, group the stickies on the work space to the associated Actors.
- Discuss until everyone agrees that all stickies are mutually exclusive and that all stickies are crucial in realizing the Goal:
    - Remove doubles and split ambiguous sticky notes to settle debate, and
    - Remove stickies that are not likely to ‘move the needle’, and
    - Replace stickies where required to reflect the clarifications given.
- Model relationships between the impacts and the actors on the map.
    - Draw a line to visualize the causality between Actor and Impact.
    - Each Impact ties to one Actor. Each Actor can have multiple Impacts.
    - Remove Impacts that have no causal relationship to an Actor or add an Actor.
    - If there is an Actor without any Impact, discuss why this Actor is on the workspace. Then either remove the Actor or add an Impact. You may need to invite additional participants to this workshop if the current group can’t think of an Impact for a crucial Actor.
- Appoint and write down the name of the owner on each sticky note (make sure this person is in the room and accepts ownership). Owners will be held accountable for achieving the impact and own the associated metrics.

Tips:

- Don't list everything an Actor might want to achieve (or what we would like them to do). List only the Impacts that really help move you in the right direction towards the central goal or the Impacts that can significantly hinder attainment of the Goal. Beware of confusion due to a multitude of impacts. One leads to another and the list of potential impacts is endless. Only keep those impacts that significantly ‘move the needle’. Consolidate and be selective, remove insignificant impacts until you have a maximum of 3 key impacts per actor.
- Prevent non-committal impacts. Each impact must have an owner appointed among the attendees. Question: "***Who is willing to take accountability for actually realizing this impact for this stakeholder?***" Do not write down positions or departments, use names instead.
- Cover stickies for which no one claims ownership with a blank sticky of the same color. Invite the person who might be the best owner for that sticky note for the next workshop to see if he or she volunteers to take ownership.
- Ask the owners to work with their team to make their impacts SMART before the next session.
- Keep a list of issues/impediments (if any) on a flip-chart. That is homework for another session.

Round 3: Retrospective

Cathy will facilitate a short retrospective of step 3. This round should be completed in 3 to 15 minutes. I suggest the following timeboxes:

	Duration
Training exercise, like this	3 minutes
Real case, agile context	5 minutes
Real case, waterfall context	15 minutes

Briefly take time to discuss:

- What did we do well, that if we don’t discuss we might forget?
- What did we learn?
- What should we do differently next time?
- What still puzzles us?

Tip: someone should take notes on a flip-chart. These notes should be actionable. Each action should be owned by a participant.

Step 4: Deliverables

Someone else will get the chance to play Cathy – Switch roles if there is a candidate. The new Cathy will now facilitate the next step.

We will now discover required deliverables a.k.a. features that we need to develop and service. Delivery plans and requirements documents are often shopping lists of features, without any context that explains why such things are important. Without a clear mapping of deliverables to business objectives, and a justification of that mapping through impacts that need to be supported, it is incredibly difficult to argue about making or not making an investment in certain items. In larger organizations with many stakeholders or product sponsors, this leads to huge scope creep as everyone's pet features and ideas are bundled in. No wonder such plans often fail.

An impact map puts all the deliverables in the context of the impacts that they are supposed to support. This helps with breaking deliverables down into independent chunks that provide clear business value and helps us launch something valuable sooner. A clear hierarchy allows us to group related deliverables, compare them and avoid over-investing in less important actors or impacts. It also helps us to throw out deliverables that do not really contribute to any important impact for a particular goal. Finally, by connecting deliverables to impacts and goals, a map shows the chain of reasoning that led to a feature suggestion, visualizing the assumptions of stakeholders. This allows us to scrutinize those decisions better and re-evaluate them as new information becomes available through delivery.

Round 1: Diverge

For this step we will use the yellow sticky notes. This round should be completed in 3 to 15 minutes. I suggest the following timeboxes:

	Duration
Training exercise, like this	3 minutes
Real case, agile context	5 minutes
Real case, waterfall context	15 minutes

Cathy will ask participants to each individually (without consultation) to write down the answer to these questions:

- "***What can we do, as an organization or a delivery team, to support the required impacts?***"or
- "***For each impact, what do we need to do, make, or buy enable it?***" or
- "***What do we need to do or deliver to entice this stakeholder to show this behavior?***" or
- "***What do we need to do, make, or buy to facilitate each impact?***".

Each participant can write as many answers as he/she likes, but each one goes onto a separate sticky note. <u>Do not put any stickies up on the wall yet.</u>

Have each participant order their own answers according to priority, as time constraints will force us to be selective.

Tips:

- Move from one impact the next, spend about one minute per impact to brainstorm on deliverables.
- Write relevant deliverables / features on individual sticky notes.
- Try indicating the state for the deliverable in which it will be of value to the user, if this makes sense.

Examples of deliverables / features: Improved exception reports, Standardized exception codes, Rebranded product, New website, Launched viral campaign, Referral feature, Extended product catalog, etc…

Round 2: Converge

This round should take 15 to 90 minutes. I suggest the following timeboxes:

	# Sticky notes per participant	Duration
Training exercise, like this	2	15 minutes
Real case, agile context	3	20 minutes
Real case, waterfall context	unlimited	90 minutes

Cathy will facilitate a **brief** team discussion:

- Let each participant in turn clarify his/her most important sticky note and stick it on the work space. If a very similar sticky note has already been put on the board by someone else, the participant selects the next sticky on his/her list.
- Repeat this process until there are enough sticky notes on the work space. Park stickies that are not used on a backlog for future reference.
- Next, group the stickies on the work space to the associated Impacts.
- Discuss until everyone agrees that all stickies are mutually exclusive and that all stickies are crucial in realizing the Goal:
  - Remove doubles and split ambiguous sticky notes to settle debate, and
  - Remove stickies that are not likely to ‘move the needle’, and
  - Replace stickies where required to reflect the clarifications given.
- Model relationships between the deliverables and impacts on the map.
  - Draw a line to visualize the causality between Impact and Deliverable.
  - Each Deliverable ties to one Impact. Each Impact can have multiple Deliverables.
  - Remove Deliverables that have no causal relationship to an Impact or add an Impact.
  - If there is an Impact without any Deliverable, discuss why this Impact is on the workspace. Then either remove the Impact or add a Deliverable. You may need to invite additional participants to this workshop if the current group can’t think of a Deliverable for a crucial Impact.
- Appoint and write down the name of the owner on each sticky note (make sure this person is in the room and accepts ownership). Owners will be held accountable for producing or procuring the deliverable.

Tips:

- Keep only the conditional deliverables. Consolidate and be selective, remove insignificant deliverables until you have a maximum of 3 to 10 crucial deliverables. Too many deliverables will blur your focus.
- Prevent non-committal deliverables. Each deliverable must have an owner appointed among the attendees. Question: "***Who is willing to take accountability for actually delivering this product or feature?***" Do not write down positions or departments, use names instead.

- Cover stickies for which no one claims ownership with a blank sticky of the same color. Invite the person who might be the best owner for that sticky note for the next workshop to see if he or she volunteers to take ownership.
- Ask the owners to work with their team to make a (Lean) Business Case before the next session. If possible at this point, they should also start working on breaking down their stickies into smaller work items in a separate process using a product-based planning technique* such as a Product Breakdown Structure, Work Breakdown Structure or Story Map, and prioritize work using a Product Flow Diagram or Prioritized backlog.
- Keep a list of issues/impediments on a flipchart. That is homework for another session.

*= A deliverable may represent a project, epic, product, work package, or feature. This startup is managed as a program. If deliverables represent epics (agile), they should be the starting point of a story map (in another workshop). If they represent projects (waterfall), they should be the starting point for a product/work breakdown structure (in another workshop). Ask the owners to work with their team to break-down their deliverables in a separate workshop before the next session. The result should thus be a product/work breakdown structure or story map.

Round 3: Retrospective

Cathy will facilitate a short retrospective of step 4. This round should be completed in 3 to 15 minutes. I suggest the following timeboxes:

	Duration
Training exercise, like this	3 minutes
Real case, agile context	5 minutes
Real case, waterfall context	15 minutes

Briefly take time to discuss:

- What did we do well, that if we don’t discuss we might forget?
- What did we learn?
- What should we do differently next time?
- What still puzzles us?

Tip: someone should take notes on a flip-chart. These notes should be actionable. Each action should be owned by a participant.

Finalize

Homework for next session:

- Goal owner: create a compelling story to tell to clarify and promote the goal.
- Owners of actors will be responsible for creating empathy maps for their actor.
- Owners of impacts will be responsible for making their sticky SMART. A journey map is optional.
- Owners of deliverables will be responsible for breaking down their sticky into a PBS/WBS or story map.
- The issues and impediments are divided among the participants with the assignment to resolve them as much and as quickly as possible.
- Everyone engages their departments and / or communities to validate the impact map.
- The aim is to gauge into the feasibility of the goal, the impacts and the costs.

Tip:

The impact map is not a one-off. Keep it updated. Update the map before the start of each new stage, tranche, or increment. Never aim to implement the whole map. Instead, find the shortest path through the map to the goal!

Important

When taking or assigning ownership, responsibility and accountability are often confused. Ownership means being accountable, not merely responsible. Responsibility may be bestowed, but accountability must be taken. In other words, responsibility can be given or received, even assumed, but that doesn't automatically guarantee that personal accountability will be taken. Which means that it's possible to bear responsibility for something or someone but still lack accountability.

The accountable person is the individual who is ultimately answerable for the output, outcome, activity or decision. This includes "yes" or "no" authority and veto power. Only one accountable person can take ownership of an action. The buck stops here.

The responsible person is the individual who actually completes the task. The responsible person is responsible for action/implementation/delivery. Responsibility can be shared and delegated. The degree of responsibility is determined by the individual with the "accountability."

Need Help?

We provide this instruction exercise for your convenience and learning. You are welcome to use it freely to your benefit. However, we understand that there can be many reasons why using an external facilitator might smoothen the process. At Dennis van der Spoel Consulting we have extensive experience with facilitating benefit & impact mapping workshops for our clients. We have literally done this dozens of times with fantastic results. Please contact us for a quote: info@dennisvanderspoel.nl or +31 (0)84 8755597.

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