**Inclusive Impact-effort Analysis for Project Prioritization**

**Impact-effort matrix**

Sometimes called a PICK Chart, the impact-effort matrix (I-E matrix) is a tool used to help a group to determine priorities (Clough, 2009).

Using a 2 x 2 matrix with impact on one axis and effort on the other, and a list of ideas, the group discusses each item on the list.

When the group comes to a consensus about the impact, low or high, and the effort needed to implement, difficult or easy, they place the item in the corresponding quadrant on the matrix.

The items that fall into the easy to implement and high impact quadrant are the items to implement as they will have the highest payoff.

**Challenges of the classic I-E matrix**

- All group members need to be present to complete the activity
- Group dynamics (Moran, 2006) and the preferences of introverts and extroverts may keep people from voicing opinions in face-to-face meetings (Collins, 2016)
- Counterproductive meeting behaviors can reduce participation (Allen, Yoeger, Lehmann-Willebrock, & Jones, 2015)
- The gender composition of the group may prevent some from participating in discussions (Kasprowicz, Mendelberg, & Shaker, 2012)

**Digital approach to the I-E matrix**

Create the I-E matrix in a spreadsheet or Google Sheets and recruit participants.

1. List ideas; group by category if needed
2. Ant labels become column headings
3. Duplicate the sheet for each participant
4. Add a sheet for compiled data

Send the spreadsheet or a link to the Google sheet to participants with instructions.

After completing the analysis, send a report of the findings, including the spreadsheet with all responses, to participants and stakeholders.

**Advantages of going digital**

- Distance is not a problem. There’s no need to find a time when people can gather in one place. This may increase the number of participants.
- It’s inclusive. Participants do the work on their own, reducing issues that deter participation during face-to-face meetings.
- All responses are shared, making the process transparent.

**Practical Applications**

- Strategic planning: If a SWOT analysis results in a list of ways to overcome weaknesses, a list of opportunities, and a list of approaches to handling threats, an I-E matrix can be applied to each category to determine priorities.
- Departmental planning: Many departments have simultaneous ongoing projects and new opportunities and ideas from department members. An I-E matrix can help the department with an abundance of projects to prioritize them.
- Personal work priorities. This approach may be especially useful for those who have difficulty focusing because of too many possibilities.

**References**


**More information**

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