# Inception Cookbook Recipes, Prep & Facilitating

- Peter Graves in Agile Coach with Cognizant

## 1. Inception Intro

Typically one-week collaborative process to create a solution for 3-6 months of work.

- → Preplanning Set expectations. Prepare. Id teams.
- → Creating a Shared Vision Business & Product Context. Validate Shared Vision. Stakeholders.
- → Product and Tech Solutioning Personas. Roles & Goals. UX, As-Is. User Journey & Story Mapping
- → Release Plan Create a Road Map of next 2-3 releases focusing on next one. RAID. Id MVP/Rel
- → Showcase Verify internally & externally. Go-NoGo

# What is an Inception? Collaborative workshop to understand, align

and plan a MVP or

next release

Several weeks of planning

Many times, one-week Inception workshop

Showcase for Business and IT stakeholders. On Friday mid-day.

## Build, Measure & Learn loop

Created to kickoff new MVP or new release of a product, the Inception Cookbook builds answers for

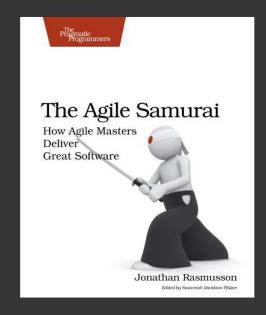
- Why is there a need for Shared Vision?
- What is in the walking skeleton, MVP, Releases?
- What bets the business will be testing?
- How will the business get feedback on the bet?

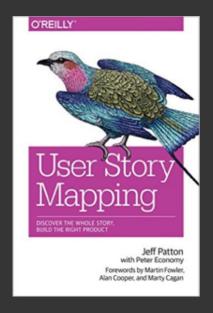
How to build and deliver the right product by using alignment on a Shared Vision

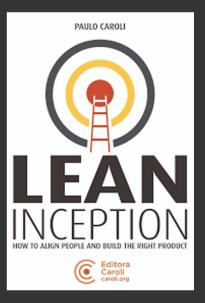


## Credit where credit due









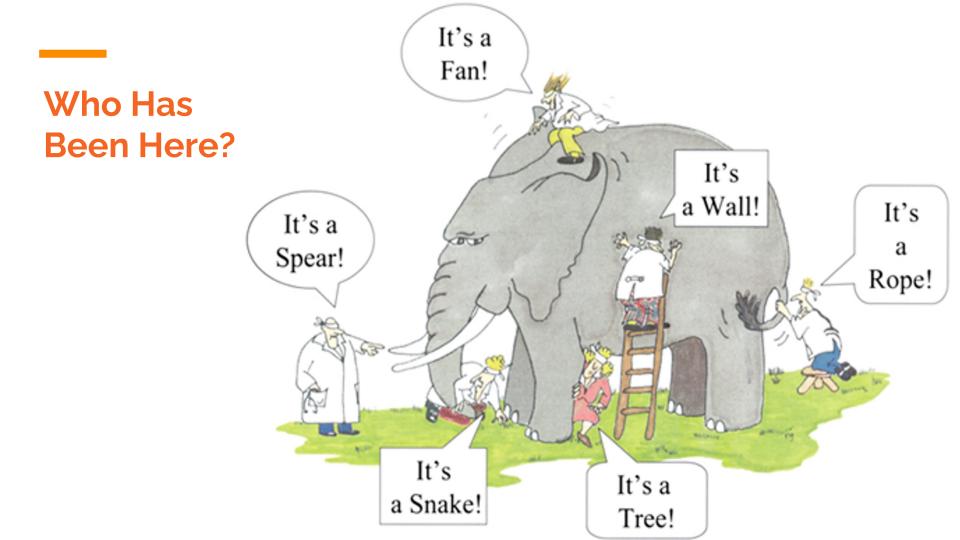
# Scrum and Agile are Silent on how to gain alignment and layout a release

#### Tip

Do we all agree on the value in setting an initial direction?

Does anyone want an incomplete product release or rework?

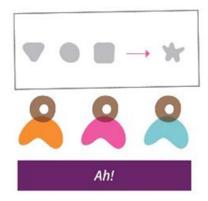
Who has been there?

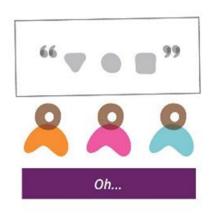


# Why We Do Inceptions?

Together with the stakeholders, create a shared vision of the product strategy, the core user experience, scope of delivery and working principles.









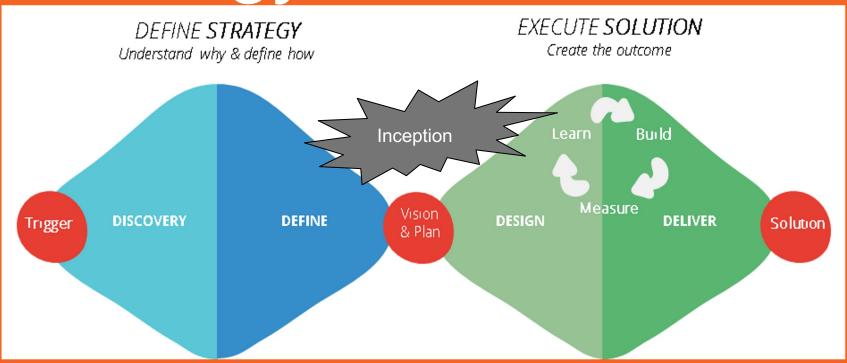
## **Inception Objectives**

Build a shared understanding of project vision and goals

Evaluate highlevel scope and core processes Evaluate key risks, issues and constraints in delivering the MVP Roadmap and Release Plan

Establish technical, testing and metrics approaches

## Strategy to Product



#### **LEAN INCEPTION AGENDA**



#### Tip

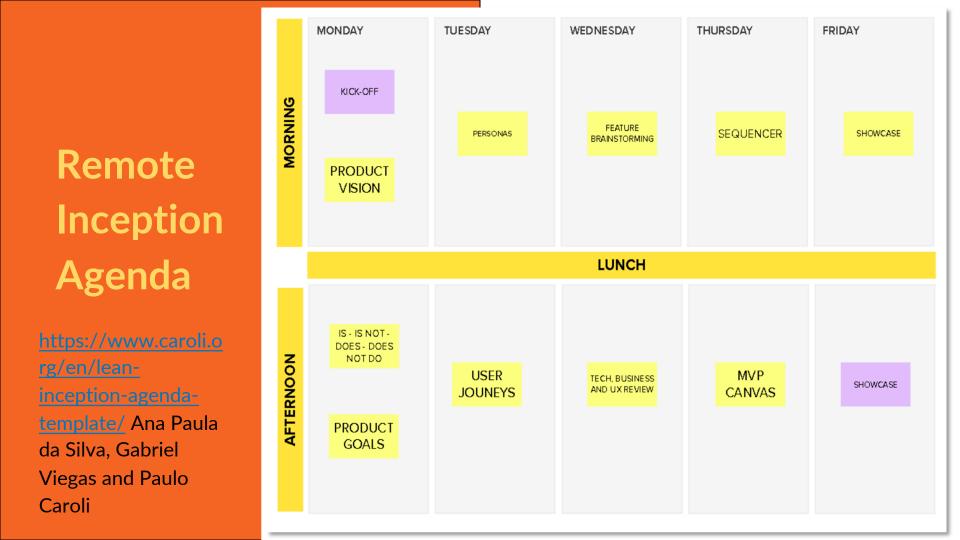
This is permanent until changed

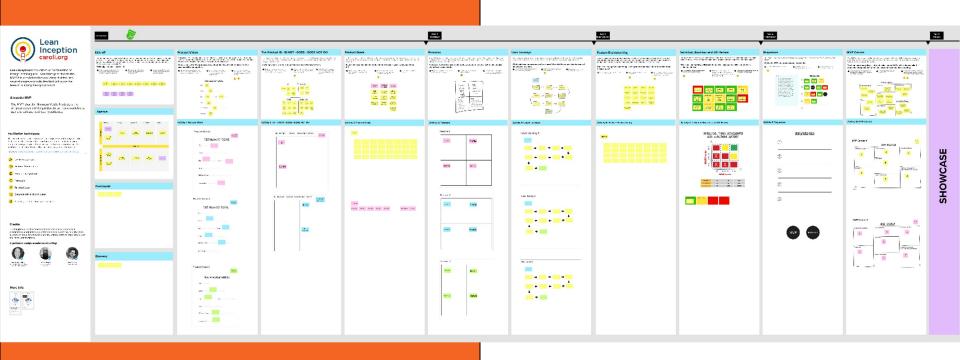
Very high level for attendees

Tours and afterhours

Detailed spreadsheet schedule is needed

https://www.caroli.org/en/lean-inception-agenda-template/





https://www.caroll.org/en/remote-lean-inception-on-mural/ Ana Paula da Silva, Gabriel Viegas and Paulo Caroli

## 2. Preplanning

## Preparation is key to a successful Inception and Setting Expectations

- → Who will attend and when 000 and vacations
- → Planning / Review Meetings Schedules, goals, vision, attendees,, user journeys, presenters
- → Logistics Big room, technology, hotels, supplies, transportation, meals, events
- → Scheduling the Inception Long lead time for offshore, vacations, other company events / meetings
- → Showcase Planning



#### Tip

Contact List - location, TZ, Role, phones, email, teams, t-shirt size, PTO

COMM Plan - Who What When How

Past Inception Decks

Risk Logs, PM stuff!

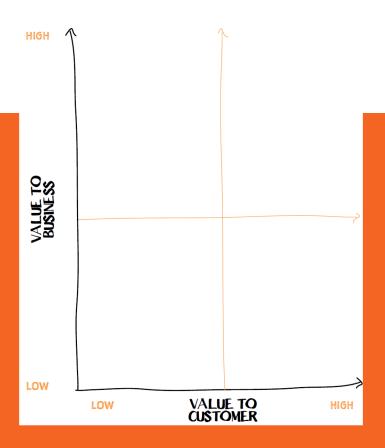
#### **Prioritization Matrix**

Maybe Value to Business vs Cost

Impact vs Effort

Weighted Shortest Job First (SAFe link)

#### PRIORITISATION



#### \_

## Who Gets Invited

#### Business

**Executive Sponsor** 

Product Owner / Manager

End Users / Customers

Subject Matter Experts as needed

Decision Makers all week!

#### **Technology**

Dev Team, possibly other Dev Teams or PO / TLs

Quarterback, Inception Facilitator, PO, SMs, SA/BA

Other PO and Tech Leads

DBAs, Enterprise Architect, Security, DevSecOps

#### Showcase Stakeholders

Leaders needed to make Go/NoGo decision

Impacted business and tech stakeholders

## 3. Shared Vision

Typically one-day for understanding business and project contexts.

- → Kickoff Sponsor kick-off, Business Context, Scope, Bets.
- Introductions
- → What is an Inception? Grounds Rules
- → Product Vision / Elevator Pitch
- → Technical Vision
  Provide a simple unifying message for what is to come
- → Sliders / Hopes & Fears
  First Icebreakers are important
- → As-Is or current product demo



#### **Tips**

- 1.Peel Post-Its horizontally!
- 2. Write legibly! (BLOCK CAPS)
- 3.Try not to write in fragments
- 4. Use the Glossary
- 5.Use black Sharpies



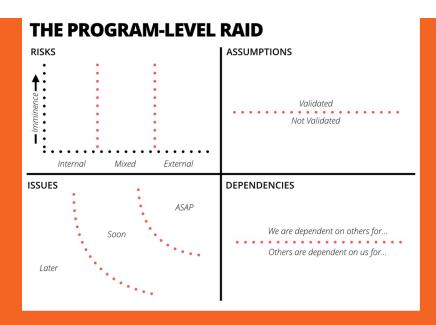
- Business and Project Context
- Current business issues, pain points, challenges
- ☐ History and need for this Inception
- ☐ High Level Vision and Bets
- ☐ OKR, Metrics, AC for MVP
- ☐ Initial Scope / Features
- ☐ Be available do homework and to review Kickoff deck

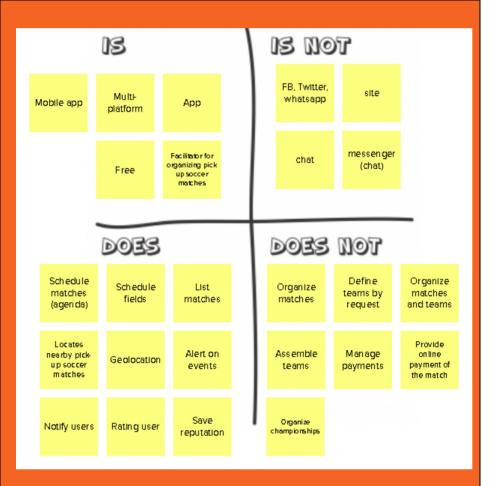


## RAID - Risks, Assumptions, Issues, Dependencies

This activity is poster used through Inception

As RAID items are identified, write them on the corresponding





## **Is-Is Not Activity**

Use Post-Its then have volunteer read note and another create affinity groups on poster

Lean Inception Agenda Template

<target customer> For Don't make your Leave enough segment too wide. blank space to fit in multiple <needs something> who post-its. Write the outcome, not a list Ask validating of activities. cproduct name> the product questions Be critical. cproduct category> is important? What problem does it Has to have a meaning which for the customer, no <key benefit, reason to buy> technical or corporate terms. comparing to <competition> Choose one or two competitors. Benefits should be hard to beat. <is better by what> our product

An activity to learn and converge on our product definition.

PO should facilitate to focus workshop from the beginning.

This confirms a Shared Vision is in place. Use PostIts or a Whiteboard to draft.

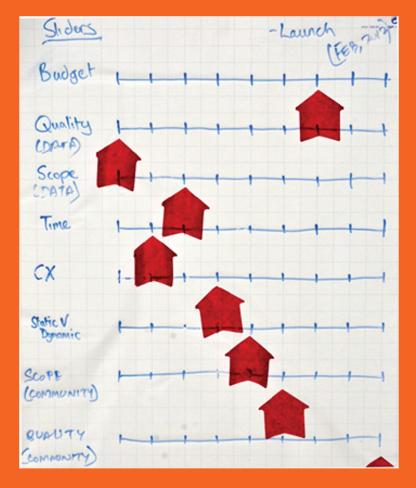
tp://www.scrumdesk



## **Hopes and Fears**

An activity to learn and gauge participants' attitudes about a project, product or workshop. "Hopes" reveal what can be accomplished. "Fears" reveal their doubts.

Identify emerging themes. Group together. Topics too sensitive to discuss?



#### **Trade-off Sliders**

A group activity to learn project priorities. What are most important and least important. This will help make decisions throughout the product inception and build.

This facilitated discussion will force rank each priority.

## 4. Solutioning

The heart of the Inception is User Story Mapping to create initial features and user stories.

- → Personas / Roles and Goals Possibly use Empathy Maps
- → User Journeys / VSM / Process High level steps and Tasks for each
- → User Story Mapping User Stories under each Task
- → Technical Solutioning

  Tech Runways needed, DB Changes,

  Security needs, new tech behaviors like

  TDD or Pair Programming for example
- → UX Wireframes Review



#### Tips for every day

- 1. Cleanup after yourself
- 2. Reset/Prep the room every evening!
- 3.Standup sharp at 9AM.
- 4. End Of Day Retro Core team reviews and Al

#### Soccer dude



#### Profile

- 28 years old
- married
- frustrated player
- works for a bank
- graduated.

#### Behavior

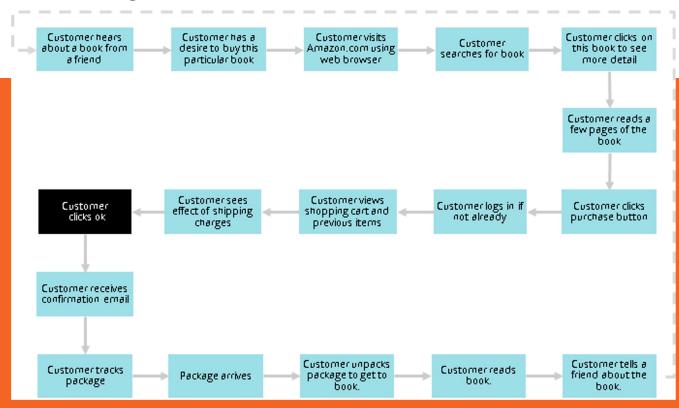
- complainer
- competitive
- active
- picky with the field
- spends hours on social networks

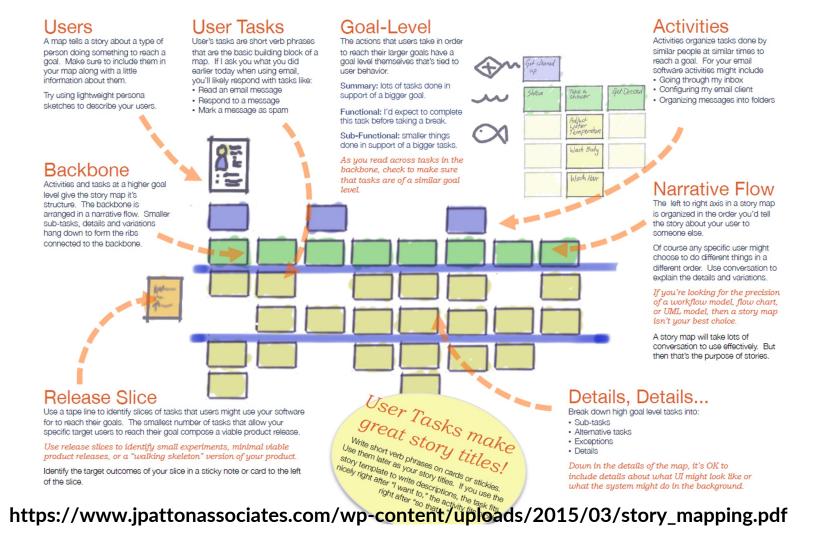
#### Needs

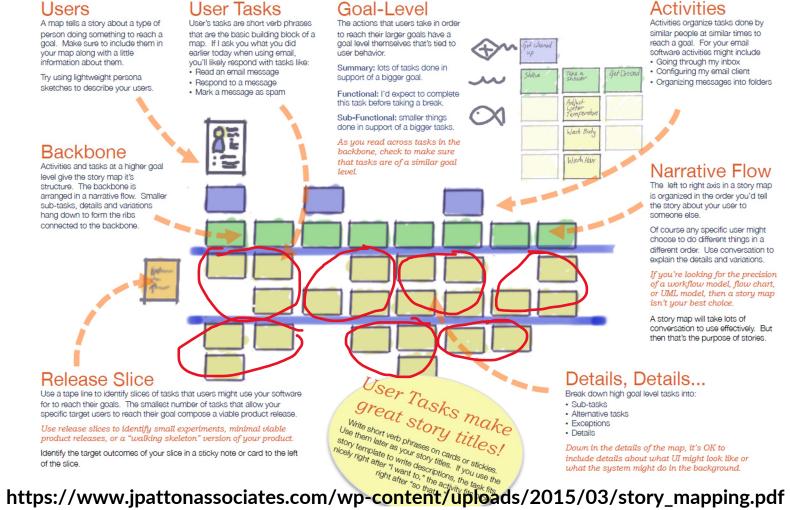
- to play every week with anyone and anywhere
- but looks for high-performance matches
- plays at night on weekends

# Personas / Empathy Maps

## **User Journey for Online Bookstore**







## Complexity, Completeness and Volatility

Used to qualify the level of uncertainty in each feature

Add Contingency for the unknowns

#### Feature CCV Activity

Feature	Points	Complexity	Completeness	Volatility	Total CCV	% Adjust	Adjusted Points (contingency)
Α	45	1	2	1	4	33%	60
В	15	1	2	2	5	37%	21
С	30	3	3	1	7	50%	45
D	20	3	2	1	6	40%	28
E	25	1	1	1	3	30%	33
F	40	3	3	3	9	60%	64
Total	175						251

3 = 30%

4 = 33%

5 = 3796

2 - 2/90

7 = 509

7 = 509

8 = 5590 9 = 6096

How to Order and Prioritize Features

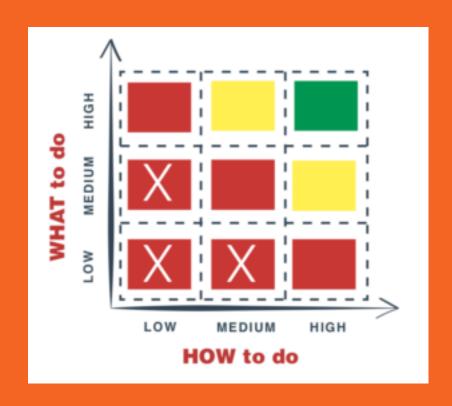
#### How

- 1. Write each work item on a post-it
- 2. Identify the level of confidence: WHAT versus HOW
- 3. Talk about value and relative effort
- 4. Order the items (on the Sequencer)

## What vs. How

Have we done this before?

Do we know what we want from each feature?



How to Order and Prioritize Features

Sechenges
1
2
3
4
<u> </u>

How to Order and Prioritize Features



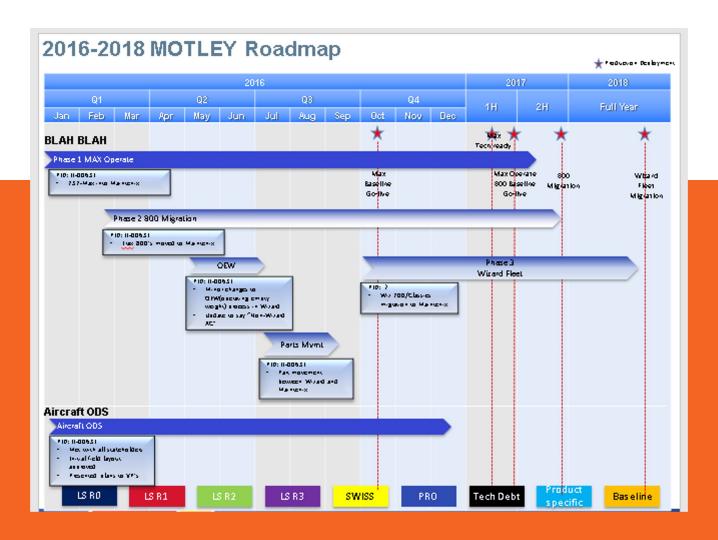
How to Order and Prioritize Features



### 5. Release Plan

Typically one-week collaborative process to create a solution for 3-6 months of work.

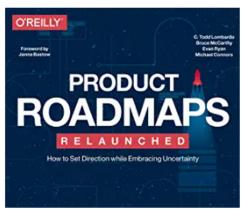
- → User Stories into Features
  Team exercise to group into Features
- → Sequencing of Feature Roadmap
- → Estimating
  Initial story estimate from Dev Team
- → Feature Summary and Contingency Planning (CCV) Sum up User Story estimates and do CCV exercise.
- → Exercises Don't Skip Headwinds & Tailwinds, Inception Retro
- → Create Release Plan



### Product Roadmap

#### Reference:

Product Roadmaps Relaunched: How to Set Direction While Embracing Uncertainty by Lombardo



#### Digital Platform Starter Kit Roadmap

**Product Vision:** Best-in-class standardized CI CD pipeline for EM apps utilizing best practices for on-prem and cloud-ready automated build, test & deployment. Ease adoption with support & training. Reusable code for services such as containers, monitoring / logging, DB Connectors, SAP Connectors & Authentication.

Enables EM dev teams to focus on business value delivery of digital projects.

	Q4'18	01'19	02'19	Future
	Enhancements: Integrated CD Pipeline Logging & Error Handling SAP Communication Code Quality (Sonar) Metrics & Visibility Path-to-Production OpenShift Config & Secrets	Enhancements:  SK Generator  SK Usability  Jenkins setup Automation  Kafka Message Broker	• SAP & HANA Authentication • ISTIO Cluster • Continuous Delivery (Blue / Green releases, Post-release Testing)	Enhancements: • Secrets Management with ITPA (CyberArk)
	Adoption / Technical Support:  Release 1 Showcase  CX360 support  Customer API support  SK SharePoint	• Adoption / Technical Support: • Wiki Tech notes • Requested Training and Support Topics, Docs, Support Topics • Move from Yammer to GitLab for Issues and Requests	<ul> <li>Adoption / Technical Support:</li> <li>Training Dev – PMs/Managers</li> <li>Training Dev – Technical</li> </ul>	Adoption / Technical Support:
•	Architecture / Infrastructure:  • Port to new cluster	Architecture / Infrastructure:	Architecture / Infrastructure:	Architecture / Infra:
•	Dependencies / Risks:	Dependencies / Risks:  New PM to support SAP Auth.  Capacity for Support and Dev	Dependencies / Risks:	Dependencies / Risks:

#### MVP CANVAS

Segmented Personas	IIVP PROPOSAL	expected result	
2	1	5	
	Features		
	4		
Journeys		METRICS TO VALIDATE THE BUSINESS HYPOTHESES	
3	COST S SCHEDULE	6	
	7		

MVP Canvas

MVP Canvas 1



#### Tip

Remember. If something sounds like common sense, people will ignore it.

Highlight what is unexpected about your topic.

Have some Showcase handouts

#### 6. Showcase

Typically one-hour collaborative

PowerPoint presentation of each Inception activity as well as each final poster version

- → **PrePlanning**What, Who, When, Where, Why, How
- → Prep of Showcase is Daily Task Every day add activities to Showcase
- → User Journey / Story Mapping Explain and review core activity
- → Wallwalk Final Posters (RAID)
- → Release Plan review

  Features w/Est, Product Roadmap and
  Release Plan. Most time is here
- → Next Steps



#### **Tips for Showcase**

- 1. Schedule Early
- 2. May need big room for all Stakeholders
- 3. Have Team Present
- 4.Ask for Go/NoGo decision

\*\*\* Add the Showcase

each day or be overwhelmed!

#### **Inception Showcase Deck**

- 1. What are we building and why
- 2. What's compelling about this project
- 3. What are the big rocks we need to move
- 4. Who's in our neighborhood
- 5. What does our solution look like
- 6. How big is this solution, Walking Skelton, MVP, R2,..
- 7. Where are we prepared to bend and flex
- 8. Approximately what is it going to take (time and dollars)

Review deck
(Thursday PM or
(Thursday PM or
Fri AM) with key
stakeholders.
NO surprises in
Showcase!

## **Showcase**

Most Stakeholders have two questions

- 1. What are you building?
- 2. When will it be done?

## **Showcase Deck**

- 1. Photos of each poster
- 2. Sequencer outputs
- 3. RAID ROAM'ed
- 4. Roadmap
- 5. Request to proceed with first sprint.

## **Business Context**

Scope and priorities - What we are building and why

- ☐ Team / Attendees / Team Photo
- ☐ Hopes & Fears / Tailwinds & Headwinds
- ☐ Business Strategy around Project
- ☐ Shared Vision/Objectives, In/Out of Scope, Value Proposition, Elevator Pitch & Workshop Goals
- Key Metrics for product and process
- ☐ Stakeholder Mapping Influence vs. Support/Engagement

## STORY DISCOVERY

Understand Who uses and how the product will solve a business problem. WOW factor, WIIFM, also What are the big features. What does solution look like?

- ☐ Personas -> Roles & Goals
- ☐ Current System Demo
- ☐ Key User Journeys w Pain Points
- Value Stream Map or UserStory Mapping
- Lo-Fi Prototypes or Wireframes
- ☐ Epics / Features (Prioritized) / User Stories added to User Journeys
- Non-Functional Requirements

# TECHNICAL VISIONING

Understand technical constraints, As-is Arch, and Best Initial Arch

- □ Technical Architecture As-is and To-be, Languages,
   Integration, Infrastructure /
   Tech Stack, DB, DevOps
- ☐ Testing Strategy

# ESTIMATION & PLANNING

Size of solution, Sequencer, RAIDs, Feature Prioritization, Release Plan, MVP Canvas, RAID, Who is in our neighborhood, Drivers, Release Plan, Product Roadmap.

- Working Agreements
- □ Velocity Planning Game
- Estimation with Planning Poker or T-Shirts or Forced Ranking
- MoSCow Prioritization
- ☐ Feature estimates w CCV
- □ RAID with Constraints, Decision Log & Parking Lot
- ☐ Release Plan Walking Skelton, MVP, Release 2,...
- □ Product Roadmap
- ☐ Staffing and Start Dates
- MVP Canvas
- ☐ Sliders Trade-offs Exercise

## 7. Redux

**Typically one-week collaborative process to** create a solution for 3-6 months of work.

- → PrePlanning Set expectations. Prepare. Id attendees.
- → Creating a Shared Vision Business & Product Context. Validate Shared Vision. Id Stakeholders.
- → Product and Tech Solutioning

  VSM. Personas. Roles & Goals. UX, AsIs. User Journey & Story Mapping
- → Release Plan Create a Road Map of next 2-3 releases focusing on next one. RAID. Id MVP
- → Showcase Verify internally & externally. Go-NoGo



## Good luck!

I hope you'll use these recipes and tips to Align the People and Build the Right Product.

For more tips or facilitating for your Inceptions,

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## **Appendix**

The Details

- ☐ Supplies / Tools
- Posters
- ☐ Technology / Big Rooms

#### **Supplies List**

#### Room Supplies

- Post-its (different sizes & colors)
- Story cards (different colors)
- Roll of 36" Paper User Story Map
- Blue Painters Tape 1" & 2"
- Scissors
- Meeting Name Tents Color paper
- Giant Post-it flip chart
- Normal flip chart paper
- Whiteboards printing
- White Board Pens Several pkgs
- Sharpies Several Colors
- Voting dot stickers

#### **Technology**

- Laptops one for each monitor and camera
- Video cameras & tripods (GoPros)
- Large Monitors and projectors
- USB Microphones
- Connected Speakers
- Laptop Chargers
- Excellent video conferencing
- Adapters, power strips, cables (AC & VGA)
- Laser Pointer / Clicker
- Camera (SmartPhone Pics)
- Smart Phone Timers

#### **LUNCH, Drinks & Snacks**

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## Planning Meetings - Assignments and Review Cycles

- Identify Core Team and Inception Facilitation Team -Quarterback and Inception Facilitators (Agile Coaches, ART RTE, Scrum Masters, other POs, BAs)
- Review User Journey[s], Feature List, Priorities, ...
- Room Reservations, Meals, Snacks, COFFEE and TEA
- Review Inception Schedule and Assign Presenters
- Sponsor Meeting Inception Slides
- What is an Inception Intro for newbies
- Review Inception Deck and Showcase Deck
- Technology Presentation from Enterprise Architect / Tech Leads





# 7 TRICKS TO A WINNING START

- 1. Understand expectations
- 2. Meet people
- 3. Have a product owner from the beginning
- 4. Have a core group not lots of people dropping in and out
- 5. Logistics
- 6. Plan the inception with your team
- 7. Do your homework

**Bonus: User Journey Go Ugly Early** 

## **Notes**

#### Helpful Tips for PrePlanning



- Each Inception is unique
- DO NOT skip Icebreakers
- Several weeks for prep are needed
- Create all posters ahead
- Test technology / conferencing
- Send invites at least 2-4 weeks ahead with room reservations
- Send email with location, hotels, maps, & security instructions
- Standup & Retro for 15 mins EACH day
- Study up on Remote Facilitation
- Plenty of breaks
- Be flexible as possible timebox

## **Inception Posters on Large Post-Its**

- Week Agenda and Daily updated Agenda
- User Journey Map or Value Stream Map as the basis for...
- User Story Mapping setup large roll or paper with areas labeled
- RAID Risks, Assumptions, Issues, Dependencies be creativity
  - O Update Daily to cleanout resolved Issues
- Parking Lot Should be addressed by end of Inception or create a RAID item
- Elevator Pitch For [target customers] Who .... Use PostIts first pass then fill-in
- Retrospective for each day
- Personas with Roles / Goals
- Prioritization Matrix Helps delineate MVP features
- Stakeholder Maps see PM 101
- Trade-Off Sliders
- Decision Logs Business Rules and Architecture Decision Logs
- Glossary for Business and Tech terms with explanations, ABBREVIATIONS, TLAs
- Project Context Diagram and Interfaces

The Inception Room will need the space for a large group, facilities as well as

Technology for Wi-Fi and cabled connections for a room full of attendees as well as

cameras and monitors.

