Practical Guide to
LIGHTNING DECISION JAMS

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Practical Guide to Lightning Decision Jams: Solve Any Business Problem Within an Hour

Organizations rely on people with problem-solving skills, who can assess difficult or unexpected situations and calmly identify solutions. And while these competencies are highly valued in the workplace, they are useful in all activities of our daily lives. So, how can we make sure we do it effectively?

Because one thing is for sure: there are always going to be problems in the workplace. They happen all the time and are opportunities to improve the organizational system. But we don't usually feel comfortable dealing with conflict, and it requires a careful balance of teamwork and leadership. The good news is, there are many techniques that can aid us into becoming conflict-friendly professionals through innovative processes like Lightning Decision Jams, which we will be covering today.

Problem-solving starts with defining the problem, identifying the cause, finding viable solutions, and implementing the best one for each specific situation.

"You can never solve a problem on the level on which it was created." — Albert Einstein

And although problem-solving may seem like a straightforward process, most often than not, teams will stumble over some of the critical steps due to ongoing - and unnecessary - discussion and disagreements. Enter Lightning Decision Jams! The premise behind the success of LDJs is to replace all open, unstructured discussion with a transparent process.
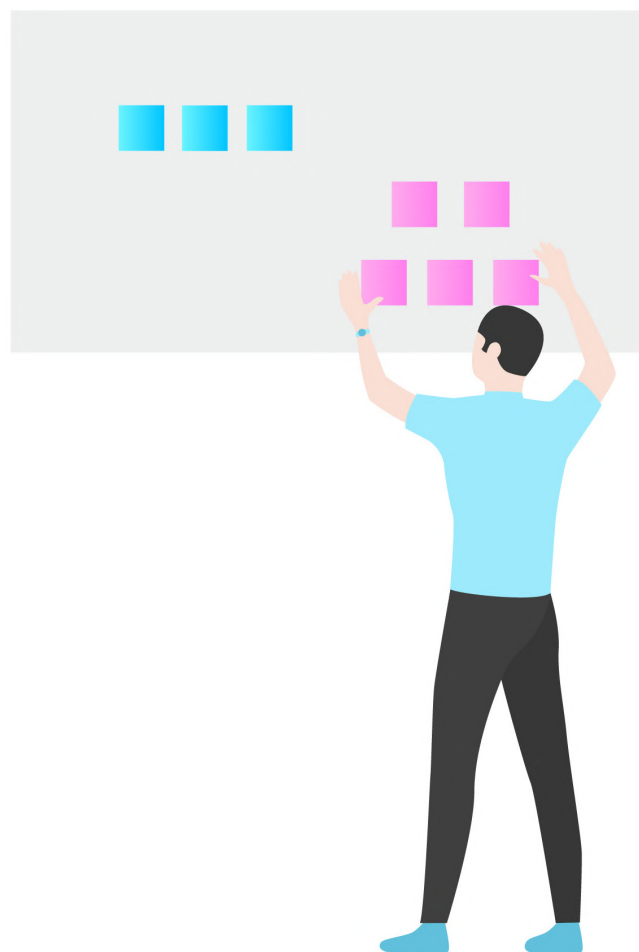
What the h*** is an LDJ?

A Lightning Decision Jam (LDJ) is a super fast and effective process that solves any kind of internal problems within an organization through a mix of design thinking and design sprint methodologies. Created by the guys over at AJ & Smart, they define it as "a short exercise to solve internal team problems as fast as possible".

It takes between 40 to 60 minutes and always leaves the teams with precise, actionable results. The LDJ gives every participant involved an opportunity to share their thoughts, vote on issues, and offer viable solutions in a more efficient way than the traditional meeting.

How does it benefit business?

An LDJ cuts out unnecessary discussion replacing it with a rapid creation of solution ideas and voting for the best one. By using this approach, teams are able to speed up the time it usually takes to make decisions. Each team member is given the time to come up with ideas, so everyone's opinion is heard, and the best idea is chosen based on a democratic vote. The rapid pace of the workshop forces everybody to learn from their mistakes quicker.

Note > **Vote** > **Decide**

5 Objectives of an LDJ:

1. Align your team on one specific topic
2. Identify the most pressing problems
3. Identify different solutions quickly
4. Choose the best solution
5. Determine actionable results

Supplies needed:

◆ Rectangular post-its
◆ Square post-its (2 different colors)
◆ Voting dots (2 different colors)
◆ Permanent markers
◆ Timer

Not mandatory but useful: focus music playlist.

Total Time Needed: 1 hour

Team members needed:

◆ **Moderator:** someone who keeps time and makes sure no discussion breaks out. May or may not join the process
◆ Ideally, 2 to 8 participants

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Steps:

1. Brainstorm problems (7 minutes):

Every team member must sit at a table and, without discussing with one another, write down on a post-it every challenge, problem, annoyance, or concerns they have regarding the topic in hand. One issue per post it. Once the 7 minutes are up, each team member must have a pile of post-its in front of them.
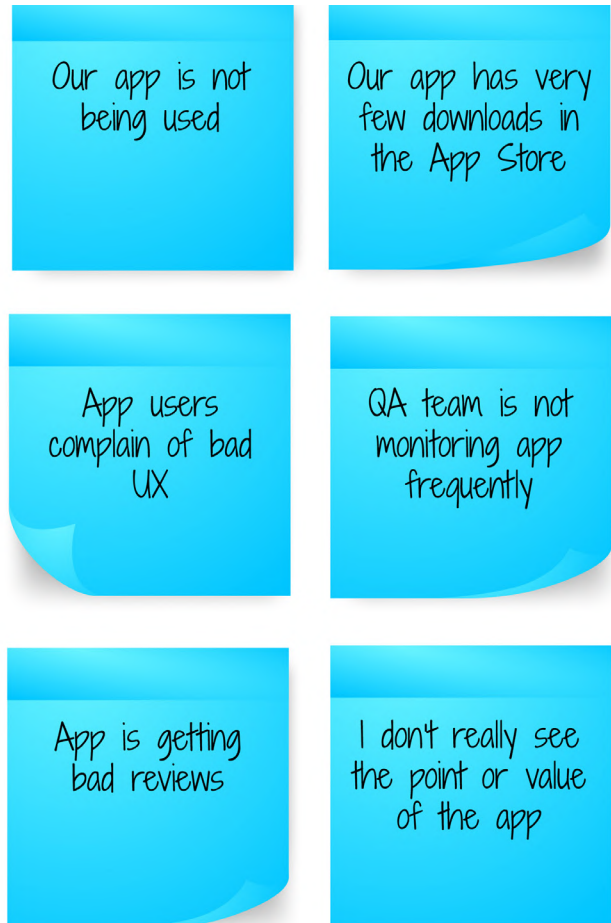
2. Present problems (4 minutes per person):

The moderator selects one person at a time to quickly explain each of their problems, in no more than 4 minutes in total. The person must be standing up at a wall or whiteboard and stick every post-it to the surface. Nobody else in the team is allowed to speak.

3. Select problems to solve (6 minutes):

Each team member gets 2 voting dots which they must distribute among the challenges they consider the most important to solve. You can vote for your own post-its, and/or put up both voting dots on the same post-it. Again, no discussion, no talking. Once the 6 minutes are up, the moderator must take the voted problems and arrange the post-its in order of priority.

4. Reformat problems as challenges (6 minutes):

The moderator has to rewrite or rephrase each voted problem as a standardised challenge ("How Might We..."). This approach aids in creating solutions.

Our app is not being used

Our app has very few downloads in the App Store

App users complain of bad UX

QA team is not monitoring app frequently

App is getting bad reviews

I don't really see the point or value of the app

Step 1.

How Might We...
How Might We...
Improve our app's user experience
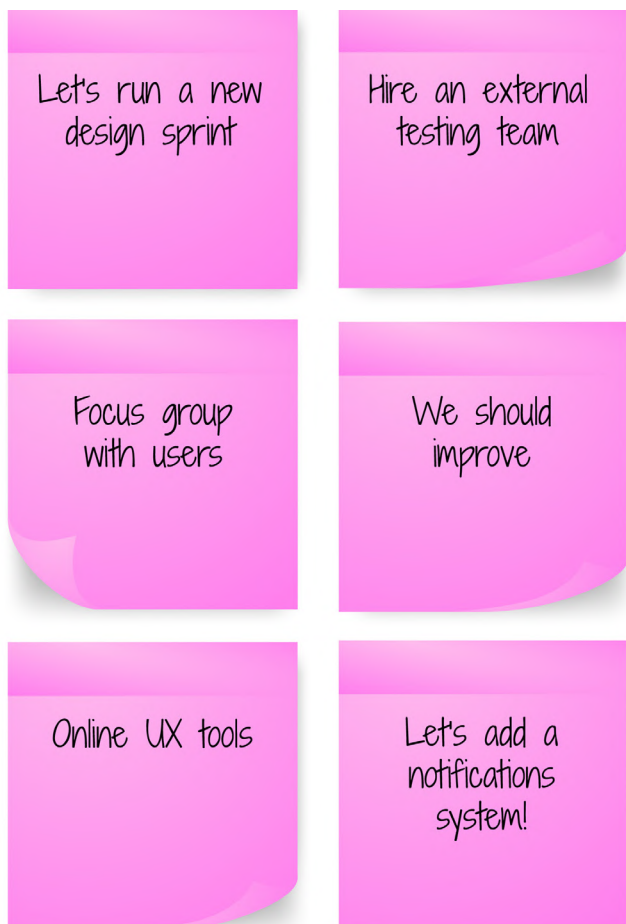
Step 4.

5. Produce solutions (7 minutes):

It's time to start creating solutions for the top voted How Might We's. If there are more than one top voted problems, start with the one far on the left. AGAIN: no discussion! Each team member will get 7 minutes to write as many possible ways to address the challenge or challenges. One solution per post-it. Quantity beats quality here. The biggest benefit of not allowing discussion precisely in this step, is that we ensure a variety of solutions. Once the time is up, everybody must paste their post-its on the surface (wall, whiteboard, whatever) as fast as possible (Preferably under one-minute) There is no individual presenting of solutions as this creates a bias towards the best presenters.

Let's run a new design sprint

Hire an external testing team

Focus group with users

We should improve

Online UX tools

Let's add a notifications system!

6. Vote on solutions (10 minutes):

Now each team member gets six dots to vote on the solutions they think would best solve the How Might We's. Because the members will need to read each post-it, a little more time is given for this voting process.
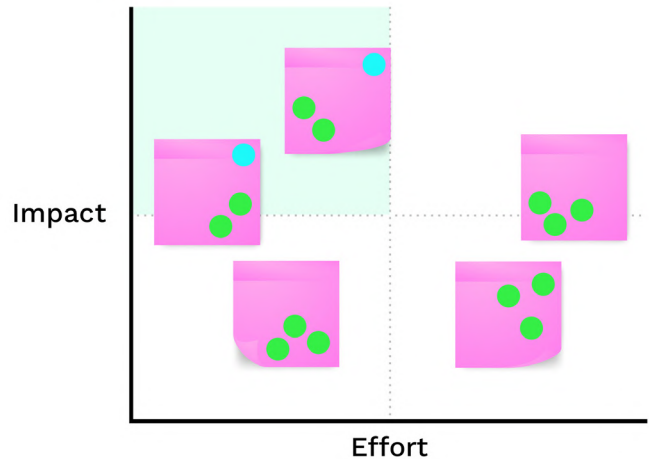
7. Prioritize solutions (30 seconds):

The moderator takes the voted solutions and arranges the post-its in order of priority. Ignore any post-it with less than two votes.

8. Decide executable solutions (10 minutes):

An effective way to decide which solutions to execute first, is by knowing how much effort is required to execute them through a very simple scale measuring effort and impact. Effort means how much struggle it will take as a team to implement the solution, and impact is the degree to which the team thinks it would actually solve the problem. The scale looks like this:
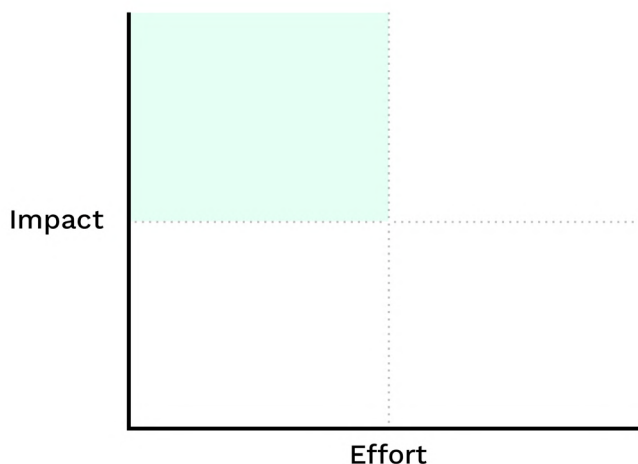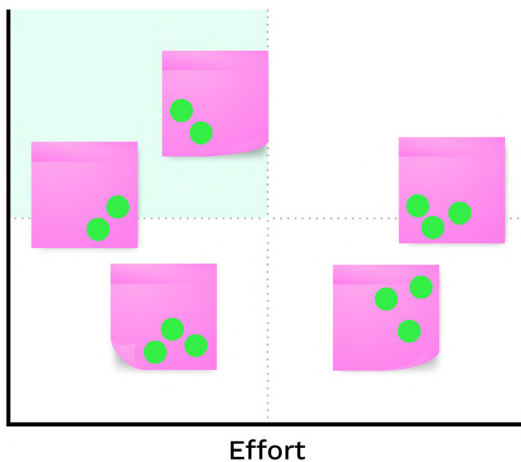
Impact

Effort

The moderator will now take each solution one by one and add them to the effort/impact scale, like this: he will take the top voted solution, hover it over the center of the Effort/Impact scale and ask the team "higher or lower for effort?" Once the effort has been determined, the moderator asks the same question for impact: "Higher or lower?" Usually some small discussions break out here, so the moderator has to be diligent in finding a consensus and stopping any conversations that go past 20 seconds. Once all post-its have been added to the scale, you'll have something that looks like this:
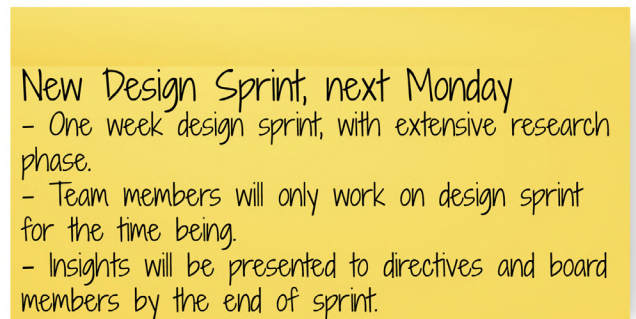

Now you have a clear overview of what high-impact solutions could be executed and tested quicker (the green sweet-spot on the top left), and which high-impact solutions will take more effort (top right). The moderator now has to mark all post-its in the sweet spot with a contrasting dot so they are clearly identified:

9. Turn executable solutions into actionable tasks (5 minutes):

The moderator now takes the solutions from the "Sweet Spot" off the Effort/Impact scale and asks the person who wrote the solution to give actionable steps in order to test the solution. The actionable tasks must be able to execute on a timeframe of 1 or 2 weeks max. For example:

Let's run a new design sprint

New Design Sprint, next Monday
- One week design sprint, with extensive research phase.
- Team members will only work on design sprint for the time being.
- Insights will be presented to directives and board members by the end of sprint.

Once all the solutions are written up, your team now has actionable tasks that can be committed to. As for the solutions that didn't make it to the "Sweet Spot" can be turned into actionable post-its and added to a backlog for further experimentation if needed.

Final Thoughts

And you're done! Within an hour, your team has been able to define important challenges, produce solutions, and prioritize what to execute on. By taking the best of different problem-solving methodologies like design sprints, design thinking, and Agile; Lightning Decision Jams can shift creative teams back into the path of critical thinking whenever direction and focus have been lost.

Remember that to effectively manage and run successful teams, projects, businesses, you name it... leadership must guide team members to develop and implement problem-solving techniques, with structure and discipline.

So, next time you run up against a problem, rather than panicking and extending the discussion, try tackling it through the steps outlined through this e-book.

About iTexico

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