

Assumption Mapping

Surface the beliefs hiding under a plan, plot them by evidence and impact, and pick a short list of assumptions to test cheaply before committing resources.

DURATION

90

min

GROUP SIZE

4–6

people

WHAT YOU BRING

A concrete plan to stress-test -- an Impact Map, Story Map, Business Model Canvas, or one-page product brief -- visible in the room.

WHAT YOU LEAVE WITH

- A populated 2x2 evidence/impact grid, photographed
- A ranked top-left list of dangerous untested beliefs
- A cheap experiment, owner, and date for each top-left item
- A shared artefact to gate future commitments against

WHO TO INVITE

- **Facilitator.** Runs the clock, moderates grid placement debates, keeps evidence from drifting into opinion.
- **Product owner or initiative lead.** Holds most of the assumptions and decides which tests to fund after the session. Mandatory.
- **Developers.** Surface technical assumptions the business side misses -- feasibility, scale limits, data availability.
- **Designers and researchers.** Separate user-behaviour folklore from actually-researched claims about subscribers.
- **Business stakeholders / Ops.** Bring pricing, margin, and production-behaviour assumptions; without them the commercial side of the grid is thin.

USE WHEN

- About to commit significant effort to a new feature or initiative
- A confident team may be resting on beliefs that were never checked
- Straight after an Impact Map, Story Map, or Canvas
- A stalled initiative needs a continue-or-pivot call

AVOID WHEN

- × The work is small enough the session costs more than the build
- × Key assumptions were recently validated by research or experiments
- × The team can't yet articulate what they're building
- × No real decision is on the table -- it's not an awareness exercise

How the session runs

- **Phase 1 -- Orient on the plan (10 minutes)**

Put the plan artefact where everyone can see it and frame the session as finding the beliefs underneath, not attacking the plan. Reassure a defensive room; reschedule if the plan isn't concrete enough.

- **Phase 2 -- Generate assumptions (20 minutes)**

Fifteen minutes of silent sticky-note writing using 'We believe that...' or 'We assume that...'. Prompt across user, technical, business, team, and market categories until the wall holds 15-30 notes.

- **Phase 3 -- Share and cluster (15 minutes)**

Round the room, each person reads their notes aloud and places them on the wall, stacking same-belief duplicates lightly. Challenge any assumption a teammate tries to wave away as already known.

- **Phase 4 -- Plot on the grid (25 minutes)**

Place each assumption on the 2x2 of evidence against impact, debating concrete evidence and what breaks if the belief is wrong. Quadrant matters, exact position doesn't; split compound assumptions as they surface.

- **Phase 5 -- Prioritise testing (10 minutes)**

Work through the top-left quadrant, proposing the cheapest experiment that could answer each belief in a week. Dot-vote the order and push back on tests that have quietly become full builds.

- **Phase 6 -- Wrap-up, owners (10 minutes)**

Force commitment: every top-left assumption leaves the room with a named owner, a due date, and the result that would change the plan. Anything without those three doesn't count as scheduled.