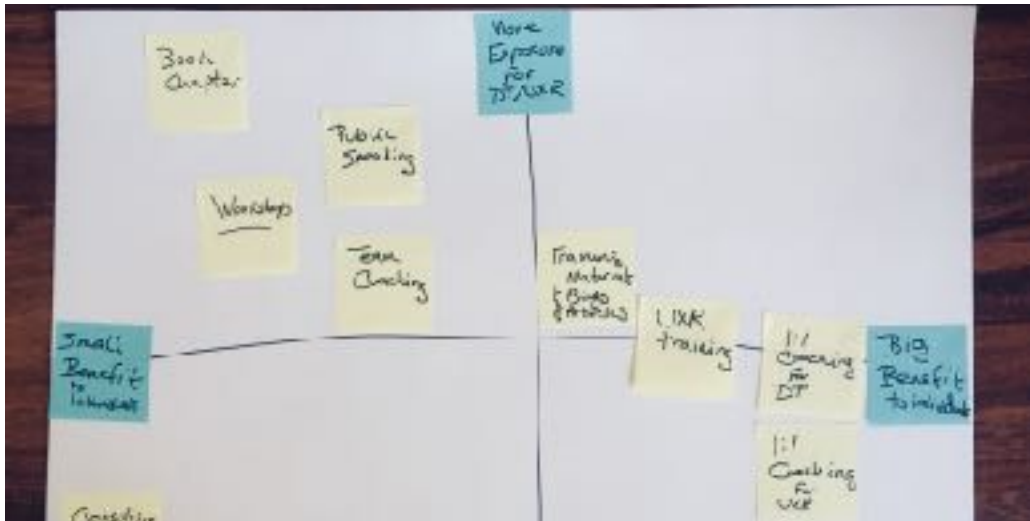# 2x2 Narrowing

2x2 Narrowing is a way to focus on criteria that are important when narrowing a set of options. This tool is useful for teams who have just finished ideation or brainstorming.

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What it is

This is an activity that uses a board, sticky notes and sharpies and involves an entire team. It can also be done using online tools. It is intended to help a team align around the criteria important for selecting options, and to use to assess the individual options.

What you get at the end

You will end this activity with a narrow set of options that meet the agreed upon criteria.

Why do a 2x2 to narrow, rather than vote?

When people vote on options, they often end up using their own criteria for choosing, and can be influenced by the votes of others. Because of this, the options that float to the top with voting can often not be the best options for accomplishing what your team really wants to accomplish. By being explicit about criteria and agreeing on them, the activity becomes about analyzing and assessing the options, which is really the goal of narrowing.

How to Do It

Step 1. Review, Discuss & Brainstorm Criteria

Based on the goal of the project, the customer problem statement, the passions of the individuals, and the requirements of the organization, gather the team together to list possible criteria for selecting the options that were previously generated (for example, in a brainstorm activity). Once the list of possible criteria is created, have the team rank order or vote on the criteria that they consider to be most important. Select the top 2 to use for the first round of narrowing.

If there are many items in the list, a useful lens is to segment the criteria into Customer-Back criteria (meaning that these are criteria that would matter to the customer) and Business-Back criteria (meaning that these are criteria that would matter to the business). Focusing first on the Customer-Back criteria, select the top 2 to use for the first round of narrowing. (You can use the top 2 Business-Back criteria for the second round).

Step 2. Draw 2 lines and label the dimensions.

Draw two lines that cross. Choose one of your criteria chosen in step 1. Write it down in such a way that each end of the vertical line has the endpoints of a dimension related to that criteria. For example, if your criteria is that it should be Easy to Use, then the top of the line should be labeled "Very Easy to Use" and the bottom of the line should be labeled "Very Difficult to Use". Do the same for the other criteria on the horizontal line. Align the endpoints so that the options that meet both criteria will fall into the upper-right quadrant.

In the example below, the labels I used were "More Exposure for DT/UXR" (this aligns to my mission of elevating Design Research and Design Thinking) & "Less Exposure for DT/UXR" one one dimension and "Big Benefit for Individuals" (aligning to my personal passion for

empowering individuals) and "Small Benefit for Individuals".

Step 3. Review the Criteria

Get the team together and review the criteria. Make sure that everyone agrees with them and understands what they are.

Step 4. Map the Options

Take each option generated earlier and map them to the criteria. Make sure that everyone agrees with the quadrant that each option falls into. Repeat until every option is mapped.

If you have a large number of options, different members of the team can take different options and map them, then have the group review the placement and make changes if needed.

Step 5. Negative Poll and Narrow

Ask the group if they can live with removing the options that did not fall into the upper right quadrant. Were there any that anyone wanted to advocate for including with the options you will move forward with? Get agreement to narrow down to only the top right options and those that were advocated for. Remove the options that did not make the cut.

Step 6. Determine if More Narrowing is Needed

If there are still more options than you want to move forward with, remove the labels for the dimensions and go to the next 2 criteria (if you narrowed first on Customer-Back criteria, you should put up your top 2 Business-Back criteria), and repeat the process from step 2.

Step 7. Agree and take the next steps

Finally, once you have gotten to the number of narrowed options you were aiming to move forward with, get final agreement in the team to move forward with those options. Make sure you take those next steps!