WORKSHEET + WORKED EXAMPLE

What Is Worth the Effort?

An editable impact-effort map with a next step for each option.

20 minutes | Impact-effort matrix

Use it in three moves

1. Choose a shared outcome and time horizon. Agree what impact and effort mean before rating the options.

2. Add each option and its evidence. Leave uncertain ratings blank; the tool keeps them unplaced.

3. Discuss the map with people who would do or receive the work. Check dependencies and hidden effort before choosing a next step.

Define impact for this decision

Name the recipient and benefit. Use a common scale: 1 small, 3 meaningful, 5 major; state what those mean here.

Define effort and the review boundary

Include time, dependencies, change burden, and maintenance. Use 1 small, 3 moderate, 5 large, with examples.

What Is Worth the Effort?

YOUR WORKING NOTES / CONTINUED

Keep confidence visible

What evidence supports the estimates? Who should correct them?

Choose a next move

Quick wins: try. Major projects: plan and fund. Small benefits: consider only if useful. High effort/low impact: reconsider. None is automatic.

Review effects and estimates

Who checks whether the benefit and burden matched the estimate?

One item at a time

Copy this page for additional items. Use one row, option, task, or possibility per copy. The web tool handles calculations and comparisons where included.

Option

A concrete change

Impact · 1–5

1 small, 3 meaningful, 5 major

Effort · 1–5

1 small, 3 moderate, 5 large

Evidence and confidence

What supports or limits the estimate?

A question for me

Whose effort is absent from our estimate?

See one way through

FICTIONAL WORKED EXAMPLE / NOT THE ANSWER TO YOUR SITUATION

Define impact for this decision

Impact means fewer missed handoffs. A 3 helps one shift; a 5 helps all shifts. These are discussion anchors, not measured outcomes.

Define effort and the review boundary

A 1 fits in half a day; 3 needs two people for a week; 5 crosses teams and requires ongoing support. Scores 3–5 are shown as higher effort or impact.

Keep confidence visible

Shift colleagues will review the estimates. The software option has low confidence until access requirements are checked.

Choose a next move

Try a clearer handoff prompt first. Investigate the software dependency before comparing it fairly.

Review effects and estimates

Review with both shifts after two weeks, including any work moved onto the receiving team.

Example item 1

Option: Clearer handoff prompt

Impact · 1–5: 3

Effort · 1–5: 1

Evidence and confidence: Two shifts reported the same missing detail

Example item 2

Option: New workflow software

Impact · 1–5: 5

Effort · 1–5: 5

Evidence and confidence: Low confidence until access and support are checked

The thinking behind it

An easy change for one team can create hard work for another. Count effort across the whole handoff.

An impact-effort matrix compares expected benefit with the work required. This original implementation uses explicit 1–5 discussion scales, a visible split at 3, and confidence notes. The numbers organize a conversation; they are not measured economic value.

Read You Have a Culture Problem by Nic Payne