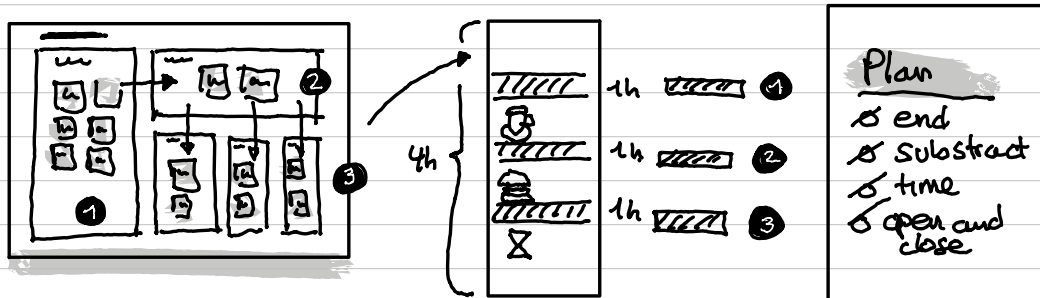


What does it take to create a workshop?

In short: The minimum process to design a good workshop goes like this:

- define what is the result you want at the end
- remove all the standard things (break, intro, outro, buffer, late start) to see how much time you really have
- build a minute by minute plan of how you'll use the time that you really have.



Define the end goal and make it visual

It's kind of strange to me how many people create workshops where they put in exercises without being crystal clear what they absolutely want to get at the end. It's as if you cooked by just putting ingredients that sound fun together. Sure people will have a full belly but it won't be something coherent.

So how do you start by making the end clear?

What has helped me in the last few years is to do one of the following two things:

- build the end report: create the slide deck with filler words and images of the report that will be sent after the workshop.
- draw the end summary canvas: create the one page visual canvas, just like the business model canvas that you'll use to summarize the end result.

Subtract

The second step is to verify how much time you really have to arrive at this result. To make this you need to remove the basic blocs that are always present in a workshop but that aren't the activities themselves. This includes time for:

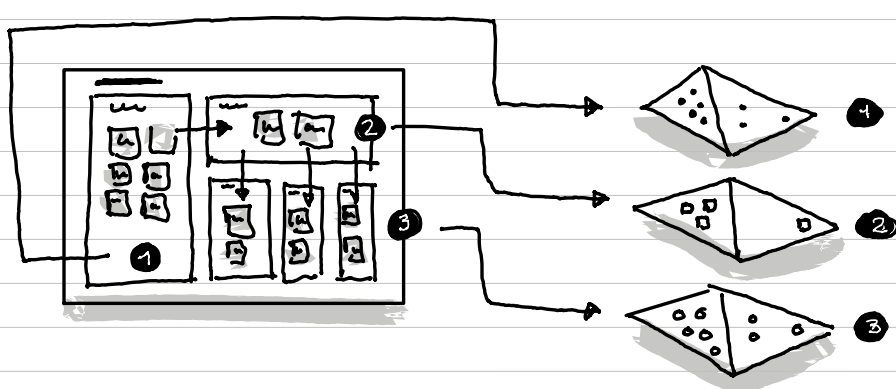
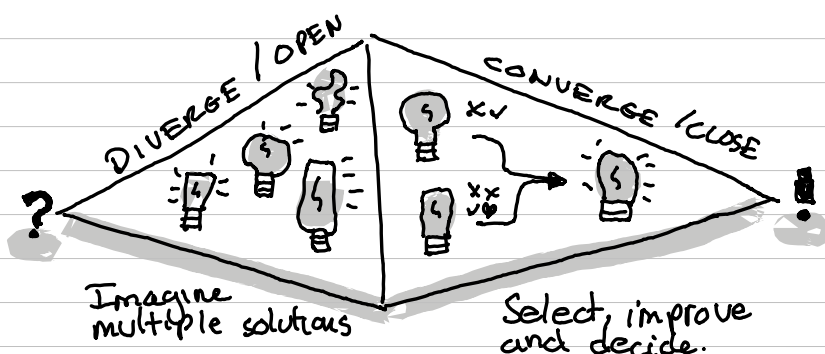
- A late start: 10 minutes, because there is always someone who is late.
- Introduction and conclusion: because people need to understand the plan, what they did and the next steps.
- Breaks: because when people are together for more than 1 hour they need time to breath, go to the toilets, stretch their legs, etc.
- Buffer: extra time for when things go longer but you can't make them shorter.

Now you can do some basic math: total time minus all the fixed blocs gives you the real time you have at your disposal.

Time each step by minutes

The third step is to look how you can get to the end result you want with the real time you got.

The usual structure of most workshop activities is like a diamond:



There is a phase where we open things up by looking at several ways to answer the challenge. The second phase is the moment where we choose which are the most promising options, improve them and finally select one.

How do you do that?

- To open: you list ideas, sketch them, etc.
- To close: you give feedback, improve and vote.

Going further

Here a few resources to go further

- Basics of workshop facilitation
- Spreadsheet template for workshop planning
- Decision making activities
- Library with hundreds of workshop activities