



The Innovation Lab

AGILE INNOVATION SPRINTS

WHAT IS AN "AGILE INNOVATION SPRINT"?



An “agile innovation sprint” is an exercise where a group of people come together for a specific period of time to investigate a new idea, concept, or technology. There is no formulaic design for this exercise, rather the process is meant to be adapted to suit a group’s needs. It can take between a day and a week to conduct and can finish with a prototype or valuable knowledge gained. Regardless of varied outcome(s), it has been argued that the true value of the exercise lies in the group’s experience of it and collective lessons learned.

To breakdown the term “agile innovation sprints” in more minute detail, “agile” refers to the approach or philosophy to project management where teams can achieve their objectives by breaking them down into series of small tasks. “Sprint” refers to the pace or nimbleness at which these small tasks are performed.

In the context of innovation, “agile sprints” invite a specific set of principles that underpin the agile innovation ideation process. These principles include collaboration (putting people first over processes and tools), working prototypes over comprehensive documentation, responsiveness to change (rather than rigid planning), and continual knowledge sharing through respectful two-way interactions.

Historically, “agile innovation sprints” have been practiced within the software development and IT industries. However, in recent years they have been increasingly employed in other innovation-based industries, including in early childhood settings to support social and technological innovation.

HOW DO AGILE SPRINTS RELATE TO INNOVATION?



HOW DO AGILE SPRINTS DIFFER FROM A "SCRUM"?



Whenever “agile sprints” are mentioned in innovation contexts, there is often another term that pops up in the same conversations and that is “SCRUM”.

There are two common misconceptions about “SCRUM”. Firstly, “SCRUM” is not an acronym, rather it is derived from the sport of rugby where a number of players come together to form a united front. Secondly, “SCRUM” is not synonymous with agile innovation, rather “SCRUM” is a variety or methodology of agile innovation. There are other varieties of agile innovation sprints including “Kanban” and “lean development”. To find out more about these methodologies, click on the comprehensive breakdown [here](#).

“SCRUM” is perhaps the most often employed methodology of agile innovation sprints because the SCRUM process is transparent and straightforward to all involved (see next slides). It is also interdisciplinary as staff members from different workstreams can participate, it delivers the most valuable innovations the earliest, and it often facilitates rapid innovation breakthroughs whilst increasing overall team satisfaction, coordination and happiness. The final distinguishing factor of “SCRUM” is that it most commonly results in an innovation product to be developed further, rather than innovation in other forms such as an idea, service, process or otherwise.

An agile innovation sprint - in the form of SCRUM or otherwise - is a powerful tool for driving innovation and achieving results quickly. It's a structured yet flexible process that allows teams to collaborate effectively and put their best foot forward.

To employ an agile innovation sprint, you need to have a clear goal in mind and assemble a diverse team of individuals who can contribute their unique skills and perspectives. With a focused approach, you can validate whether or not a product idea has real potential and if there's enough demand for it. If there is, then the next step is to develop a plan for bringing it to life.

There are several reasons why you should conduct an agile innovation sprint. The most notable are that it can help you and your team to:

- quickly identify and overcome critical challenges experienced by different workstreams;
- test any assumptions that may be hindering your collective progress;
- clarify areas of current and future risk and uncertainty;
- spot capacity and capability gaps to be bridged;
- collate several ideas into a single strong innovation ideation proposal backed by full-team support, ready to present to decision-makers and secure management buy-in.

WHY SHOULD YOU DO AN AGILE INNOVATION SPRINT?



**THERE ARE
SEVERAL CORE
COMPONENTS OF
AN AGILE
INNOVATION SPRINT**

Define the challenge, set clear objectives, and schedule the sprint

Gather resources, prepare documentation, and sort logistics

Assemble the Team, communicate expectations, outline the agenda

Plan and implement feedback mechanisms



CORE COMPONENTS EXPLAINED

Define the challenge, set clear objectives, and schedule the sprint:

- Clearly outline the challenge you want to address and why - ensure the challenge is broad enough to generate multiple ideas, but specific enough to be achievable;
- Define what you hope to achieve by the end of the sprint - for example, a prototype, a process, a service, or otherwise;
- Set aside and schedule a specific timeframe to conduct the sprint (usually between one day and one week).

Gather resources, prepare documentation, and sort logistics:

- Collate the tools, materials and space you need for the sprint - for example, sticky notes, loose parts, whiteboards, pens, an open space room, etc;
- Ensure there is sufficient documentation of the sprint process, decisions made, and feedback provided;
- Choose the right workspace to support ideation and creativity, with the necessary technology support to facilitate remote participants if needed, as well as snacks and drinks on hand during breaks.

Assemble the Team, communicate expectations, outline the agenda:

- Choose a diverse team of individuals from different workstreams affected by the challenge so as to include varied perspectives and skillsets - typically between three to nine members works best;
- Ensure all individuals know their roles and what is expected of them;
- Clearly explain the process plan for the agile sprint so all participants know and understand the activities they will be engaging in and are supported to think creatively.

Plan and implement feedback mechanisms:

- Consider how to gather feedback of participants throughout the sprint process - for example, through interviews, focus group discussions, surveys, usability tests, feasibility tests and more.

EXAMPLE 1 – AGILE INNOVATION SPRINT FRAMEWORK

Day 1: Define

- Define your challenge (see the Innovation Lab's [Crafting a Challenge Statement Tool](#) for inspiration);
- Articulate key assumptions associated with your identified challenge (see the Innovation Lab's [Crafting an Assumptions Test Statement Tool](#) for inspiration).

Day 2: Explore

- Ideate your innovative solution(s) (see the Innovation Lab's [Crafting a Solution Statement Tool](#) for inspiration);
- Map the stakeholders affected by the challenge and those to involve in your innovative solution (see the Innovation Lab's [Stakeholder Mapping Tool](#) for inspiration);
- Explore the market potential and positioning of your proposed innovative solution (see the Innovation Lab's [Creating a Business Model Tool](#) for inspiration).

Day 3: Plan

- Make note of the risks associated with your solution (see the Innovation Lab's [Risk Statement Template](#) for inspiration)
- Finalise your proposed innovative solution (see the Innovation Lab's [Crafting a Leverage Hypothesis Statement Tool](#) for inspiration) to present to management and/or test with target audiences whilst monitoring their feedback;
- If there is positive feedback illustrating that the innovative solution is desirable, feasible, usable, and viable and meets other agreed upon performance criteria then develop a plan to bring it to life.

EXAMPLE 2

AGILE INNOVATION SPRINT FRAMEWORK

Names of team members:

Date:

Target audience's needs:

Key assumptions:

The path forward:

Proposed innovative solution:

Risks and market potential:

Innovation Sprint Journey: Milestone 1

Milestone 2

Milestone 3

  CONGRATS! 

You have completed your agile innovation sprint.