MAVERICK SPARK
WORKFORCE-IDEATION-IGNITION

# Solve Workforce Challenges with Design Sprints.

## Solutions in days not months.

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# About us.

Maverick Spark was founded by 3 mildly grizzled industry veterans with an urge to make problem-solving faster, easier and more effective.

We help organisations to solve operational workforce issues in days instead of months.

We've combined decades of cross-industry leadership experience with a customised Design Sprint process that delivers practical solutions for workforce and OD issues. It's called Maverick Sprint.

Your team is the creative engine. We provide the spark plugs.

In this eBook we explain what Design Sprints are, where they came from and why they're so effective. We also describe the customised version that we have created to address operational workforce issues.

To learn more, please visit our website. Or even better, get in touch:

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# Foreword

## Customised Design Sprints to address operational HR and workforce issues.

The Design Sprint was invented by Google and Google Ventures to help organisations solve problems quickly. It was originally intended to create and test prototypes of new products and services over 5 consecutive days.

In this eBook we will describe the original methodology and explain why it is so powerful. We will also explain why we created a new version to address operational workforce issues.

Before we describe the original Design Sprint methodology, we would like to describe our own backstory to give you some context.

We are 3 mildly grizzled mavericks. We spent decades leading transformational change in large organisations. It was often a long, difficult and costly process. We wanted a better way of solving workforce problems.

Immediately after experiencing the magic of a Design Sprint, we knew we'd found a radically different approach that would lead to practical outcomes in much less time at a reasonable cost.

But we also realised that the original model wouldn't always be possible for the people we work with. We needed to tweak the process.

## Why did we create our own version?

We know that many teams cannot devote 5 consecutive days to solving a single problem. They are too busy.

But they probably could devote three to five days spread over a slightly longer period. So, we created Maverick Sprint, a customised Design Sprint process that is more flexible and accessible.

It makes the power of a Design Sprint available to everyone, however busy they are.

Maverick Sprints are a group activity that last for between 3 and 5 days depending on complexity. Our facilitators work with a core group of 3-7 people from your team. Internal and external domain experts join when they are needed.

The compressed timeframe, cross-functional collaboration, and urgency make sprints ideal for workforce challenges that need fixing immediately.

We promise a reasonable fixed price, a clear deadline, agreed outcomes and only pleasant surprises.

Your team is the creative engine. We provide the spark plugs.

# Chapter 1: Introduction to Design Sprints

## What is a Design Sprint?

A Design Sprint is a structured, time-constrained process used to solve complex problems through designing, prototyping, and testing ideas with users.

Developed at Google and Google Ventures, it combines elements of design thinking, agile methodology, and user experience design into an intensive five-day workshop.

This method allows teams to rapidly uncover deeper insights into their target audience, iterate potential solutions, and validate ideas before committing significant resources.

## Where did it come from?

Design Sprint originated from a need to bridge the gap between abstract strategic planning and practical implementation.

It was pioneered by Jake Knapp and a team at Google Ventures, aiming to help start-ups make significant progress in a very short period.

The method draws on various disciplines, including business strategy, innovation, behaviour science, and more, making it a versatile tool for tackling a wide range of challenges.

The methodology was originally intended to create prototypes of products or processes that are tested with end-users. This requires a certain amount of time and resources.

We will explain later how shorter versions have been created that are not intended to deliver a prototype and therefore require less time.

But it is worth understanding how the original methodology works because it is still widely used and is highly effective.

## Fundamental principles.

Design Sprints are guided by core principles that ensure their effectiveness:

1. **Time-boxed delivery.**

The original sprint is limited to five days, which compels teams to focus on the most critical elements of the problem and fosters a sense of urgency to deliver prototypes and tests quickly.

2. **Focusing on user outcomes.**

Every sprint revolves around understanding and improving the user's experience. This user-centric approach ensures that the solutions developed are both relevant and practical.

3. **Collaborative cross-functionality.**

Sprints bring together people from various functions like marketing, product development, and user experience to create a multidisciplinary team that can address the problem from all angles.

4. **Iterative learning.**

By prototyping and testing within the same week, teams can learn from each iteration, refine their ideas, and pivot as needed based on real user feedback.

Sprints are very flexible and can address a wide range of issues. But they work best when a problem or issue meets some basic criteria:

- A problem you've failed to solve, or to address.

- You can see no obvious solution.
- It requires a cross-functional team to solve it.
- It is worth investing time to solve.
- It's time to do something different.

## Maverick Sprint: Adapting the original model.

We founded Maverick Spark because we were disillusioned. We had spent decades leading transformational change in large organisations. It was often a long, difficult and costly process.

We wanted a better way of solving workforce problems. That's why we created Maverick Sprint.

We combined our business experience with Google's Design Sprint methodology to create an accelerated process that is more accessible to more organisations.

Recognising that the traditional five-day sprint may not fit every organisation's needs, Maverick Sprint adapts the standard model making it more flexible and accommodating. Here's how Maverick Sprint enhances the traditional framework:

1. **Flexible scheduling.**

Unlike the traditional model that requires five consecutive days, a Maverick Sprint can be delivered in 3-5 days over a slightly extended period. This flexibility helps teams manage their time more effectively without losing the intensity of the sprint.

2. **Virtual and hybrid models.**

To cater for remote teams and hybrid working, Maverick Sprints can be delivered virtually. This adaptation is particularly useful for geographically dispersed teams.

3. **Customised.**

Each Maverick Sprint is tailored to the specific needs and operational requirements of our clients. By understanding their unique challenges and workflows, we can adapt the sprint process to deliver maximum value at a fixed cost, ensuring robust and rapid solutions to the most pressing problems.

## Benefits of sprints for workforce issues.

Sprints unlock transformative operational solutions in days not months. The process is flexible and can address a wide range of workforce issues that include:

- Optimising the hybrid working model.
- Organisational structures.
- Support diversity and inclusion.
- Workflows & processes.
- Technology & AI.
- Create a thriving culture.
- Talent acquisition and retention.
- Contingent workforce.
- Capacity & capability.
- Employee engagement & experience.
- Managing risk and planning for uncertainty.

As organisations continue to face rapidly changing environments and complex challenges, sprints offer a proven methodology to foster innovation, agility, and alignment.

In the following chapters, we will explore how sprints can address common workforce issues, ensuring that solutions are both innovative and directly tied to enhancing employee engagement and operational efficiency.

# Chapter 2: Why use Design Sprints for workforce issues?

## Addressing workforce challenges with sprints.

Workforce management encompasses a range of critical functions within any organisation, from recruiting and onboarding to employee engagement and retention.

These areas can be fraught with inefficiencies, outdated practices, or systemic issues that impact overall business performance.

Sprints offer a focused methodology for tackling these kinds of challenges head-on, providing a framework for rapid problem-solving and innovative thinking. For example:

1. **Organisational structures.**

Rapidly prototype and test new organisational models, reporting structures, or ways of breaking down silos that better align with the company's strategic objectives and workforce needs.

2. **Workflows & processes.**

Map user journeys and rapidly create solutions that uncover opportunities to redesign processes and optimise workflows. We use advanced technology to simulate different workforce scenarios.

3. **Technology & AI.**

Exploring and engaging both AI and other new technologies to enhance and improve all elements of the employee experience and improve efficiency and insight via real time data and analysis.

4. **Cultural change.**

Involving employees from across the organisation can challenge and shape behaviours and mindsets.

5. **Contingent workforce.**

Focusing on contingent worker experience can reveal gaps and generate ideas for better integrating contingent staff into the organisation. Stress-test solutions in a 'safe' virtual environment before implementation.

6. **Capacity & capability.**

Identify skill gaps and strategically develop workforce capabilities through targeted training initiatives and growth opportunities, preparing the organisation to meet current and future challenges efficiently.

7. **Employee experience.**

By mapping the end-to-end employee journey and experience, Maverick Sprints pinpoint high-impact moments that matter for attraction, engagement, development, and retention.

The compressed timeframe, cross-functional collaboration, user feedback loops and bias towards action make Design Sprints ideally suited to tackle open-ended workforce challenges in an agile manner.

By fostering worker-centric innovation, sprints enable organisations to rapidly advance solutions.

## Leveraging Design Sprints for strategic workforce planning.

Sprints not only solve immediate problems but also help organisations anticipate future workforce needs.

By involving a diverse group of stakeholders, including leadership and employees, sprints can uncover deeper insights into the evolving expectations of the workforce and the strategic steps needed to meet them.

As organisations seek more agile and impactful approaches to workforce management, Design Sprints offer a compelling solution.

They provide a structured yet flexible framework to rapidly develop, test, and implement solutions that can lead to significant improvements in employee satisfaction and operational efficiency.

In the next chapter, we will discuss how to prepare for a sprint, ensuring that all necessary elements are in place for a successful outcome.

# Chapter 3: Preparing for a Design Sprint.

## Introduction.

Preparation is key to the success of any sprint, especially when addressing complex workforce issues. This chapter outlines the essential steps and considerations for effectively setting up a Design Sprint, ensuring that the team is equipped and ready to engage in this intensive process.

**Step 1: Define the challenge.**

Clearly defining the challenge is the first critical step in preparation. For workforce issues, this means articulating the specific problem you are trying to solve.

Whether it's improving employee retention, redesigning a performance appraisal system, or creating a more inclusive corporate culture, the challenge should be specific, actionable, and meaningful to the organisation.

**Example:** "How might we redesign our performance management system to be more continuous and aligned with our employees' career goals?"

**Step 2: Assemble the team.**

A sprint team should be cross-functional and include stakeholders with diverse perspectives on the issue. We must assemble a group of superheroes with specific superpowers. For workforce-related sprints, the superheroes might include:

- HR, OD & workforce professionals.
- Direct line managers.
- Representatives from the affected employee groups.
- IT support (if a digital solution is anticipated).

- A senior executive sponsor to provide authority and drive post-sprint actions.

The ideal team size is between 3 and 7 participants, allowing for a range of insights while remaining manageable.

**Step 3: Agenda and logistics.**

Organising the practical details of the sprint is vital. Choose a time when all key participants are available and free from major distractions.

If the sprint is in-person, secure a space that is conducive to creative thinking and collaboration, this might include movable furniture, whiteboards, and areas for breakout sessions.

For remote sprints, ensure all participants have access to necessary online collaboration tools and understand how to use them effectively.

**Step 4: Gather data and materials.**

Before the sprint begins, gather all relevant information and materials. This may include:

- Employee feedback surveys.
- Performance data.
- Existing process documentation.
- Industry benchmarks or case studies.
- Technical tools or platforms for prototyping solutions.

Having this information at hand will speed up the process and ensure that decisions are informed by actual data and not just assumptions.

**Step 5: Prepare the sprint questions.**

Formulating the right questions can help steer the sprint towards its objectives. Questions should be open-ended and designed to provoke thought about the current issues and potential solutions. For instance:

- "*What barriers prevent our employees from fully engaging with their work?*"

- "*How might we simplify our hiring process to reduce time-to-hire and improve candidate experience?*"

**Step 6: Stakeholder engagement.**

Engage stakeholders early in the process, especially those who may not be directly participating in the sprint but whose cooperation may be essential for implementing the solutions.

This includes senior management and key department heads. Early engagement helps to ensure alignment and buy-in, reducing potential resistance to changes proposed by the sprint team.

Thorough preparation sets the foundation for a productive Design Sprint. By clearly defining the challenge, assembling a diverse and capable team, and ensuring all logistical and material needs are met, the sprint is positioned for success.

With the right setup, teams can dive deep into workforce challenges, creating innovative solutions that are both impactful and achievable. In the next chapter, we will explore each phase of the Design Sprint in detail, providing a roadmap for translating preparation into action and results.

# Chapter 4: The five phases of a Design Sprint.

## Introduction.

A traditional Design Sprint is structured around five distinct phases, each designed to build upon the previous one to move from problem understanding to tested solution within a week.

This chapter explores each phase in the context of addressing workforce issues.

**Phase 1: Understand & map.**

The sprint begins with gaining a deep understanding of the problem from multiple perspectives. The team maps out the customer's (or employee's) journey to identify pain points and areas of opportunity.

**Phase 2: Sketch.**

During the sketch phase, participants individually generate a wide range of ideas and solutions in a silent brainstorming session, which encourages independent thinking without group influence.

**Phase 3: Decide.**

The team reviews all the sketches and ideas, and through a structured decision-making process, selects the most promising solutions to prototype.

**Phase 4: Prototype.**

The focus shifts to building a realistic prototype of the selected solutions. The prototype should be good enough to elicit useful feedback from users but simple enough to be built within the time constraints of the sprint.

**Phase 5: Test.**

On the final day, the prototype is tested with real users, in this case, employees or managers. The goal is to observe how they interact with the

prototype and to gather insights that can validate or refute the hypothesis established earlier in the sprint.

The five phases of the Design Sprint are designed to turn abstract challenges into concrete solutions tested through user feedback.

By following these phases, HR teams can address complex workforce issues with innovative, user-validated solutions.

# Chapter 5: Role of the facilitator.

## Introduction.

The facilitator plays a very important role in a successful sprint, they guide the team through the sprint process from the scoping phase t the end of the final session. They ensure that the sprint is productive, enjoyable and that the objectives are met.

## Responsibilities of the facilitator.

- **Time management:** Keep the sprint on schedule, ensuring that each phase is given adequate time without overrun.
- **Process guidance:** Help the team understand the tools and methods being used and ensure that sprint rules are followed.
- **Neutral stance:** Remain impartial, facilitating discussions and decision-making without influencing the content.
- **Conflict resolution:** Manage dynamics within the team to prevent conflicts from derailing the process.

## Skills Required.

- **Strong organisational abilities:** To manage the logistics of the sprint, from pre-sprint preparations to real-time activity transitions.
- **Effective communication:** To clearly articulate process steps and help team members understand each other's viewpoints.
- **Empathy:** To recognize when team members are frustrated or confused and to intervene appropriately to keep the team motivated.

The facilitator’s role is critical in steering the sprint towards its goals. A skilled sprint facilitator ensures that the team remains focused, engaged, and productive throughout the process.

# Final thoughts.

We have explored the transformative power of Design Sprints through the unique lens of Maverick Spark, showcasing our tailored approach to solving operational and workforce challenges.

As the landscape of work undergoes rapid evolution, the necessity for adaptive, robust, and efficient solutions becomes more apparent. Maverick Spark stands at the forefront of this change, offering a uniquely tailored approach that blends deep sector knowledge with extensive subject matter expertise delivered through a groundbreaking process.

Our approach addresses immediate operational challenges in a way that is engaging, enjoyable and deeply embedded in the practical realities of your business.

## Ready to accelerate your problem-solving?

If you need to drive innovation and solve workforce challenges in a way that is dynamic and sustainable, get in touch:

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