Start at the End

The "Start at the End" exercise flips traditional planning. Instead of starting with actions, define what success looks like and work backward. Adapted from Google Ventures' Design Sprint, it brings clarity to goals before solutioning.

45 minutes
Google Design
Intermediate

H HOW TO RUN

1 Long-Term Goal Setting — 15 min

Ask, "Where do we want to be in 6 months? 1 year? 5 years?" Discuss and debate. Write one clear, ambitious long-term goal. Post it visibly.

2 Sprint Questions — 20 min

Ask, "What questions must we answer to reach our goal?" Have each person write questions independently (2 min). Share questions and group similar ones. Vote on the most important/risky questions. Select 1-3 questions.

3 Assumption Mapping — 10 min

List assumptions underlying your goal and questions. Identify the most dangerous assumptions. Determine which can be tested this week. Mark the riskiest.

KEY TIP

Push for a concrete, measurable goal. Questions should be answerable within a week.

O OBJECTIVES

- Define a clear, measurable long-term goal
- Generate and prioritize key sprint questions
- Identify risky assumptions
- Align the team on goals
- Focus the sprint or project

M MATERIALS

- ☐ Large whiteboard or wall space
- ☐ Sticky notes (different colors)
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ Dot stickers
- ☐ Camera/phone
- ☐ Goal and question template

P PARTICIPANTS

5 to 7 people

F FACILITATOR NOTES

REMEMBER

- Don't let the team jump to solutions too early. The goal should feel ambitious.
- A vague goal (e.g., "improve user experience") won't work. If the decider isn't present, the exercise will be less effective.
- This goal becomes the North Star. Sprint questions guide prototyping. Refer back to these often.