Wild Card Analysis

Wild Card Analysis helps you explore low-probability, high-impact events. These events can disrupt assumptions. "Wild cards" help organizations prepare for change and develop adaptive capacity.

1 hour 45 min
Service Design Tools
Intermediate

H HOW TO RUN

1 Wild Card Brainstorming — 30 min

Generate wild card events across domains: natural disasters, technology, politics, economics, society, and health. Focus on low-probability, high-impact events. Aim for 20-30 potential wild cards.

2 Wild Card Selection — 15 min

Assess each wild card on impact magnitude, current probability (low), and relevance. Select 6-8 significant wild cards.

3 Impact Analysis — 40 min

For each wild card, determine how it would affect your organization. What are the secondary effects? What are the early warning signs? How prepared are you?

4 Preparedness Assessment — 15 min

Evaluate organizational resilience. Identify vulnerabilities. Assess adaptive capacity. Find blind spots.

5 Response Strategies — 5 min

Develop resilience principles. Create monitoring systems. Plan adaptive capabilities. Identify rapid response protocols.

KEY TIP

Encourage imaginative thinking. Look for events that would change everything.

O OBJECTIVES

- Participants will: 1
- Identify disruptive events
- 2
- Prepare for unexpected changes
- 3
- Develop resilience
- 4
- Challenge assumptions
- 5
- Create early warning systems
- 6
- Build contingency planning

M MATERIALS

- ☐ Wild card brainstorming templates
- ☐ Impact assessment matrices
- ☐ Futures wheel materials
- ☐ Early warning indicator worksheets
- ☐ Resilience assessment frameworks
- ☐ Scenario-independent planning guides

P PARTICIPANTS

5 to 10 people

F FACILITATOR NOTES

REMEMBER

- Consider cascading wild cards. Focus on systemic impacts. Consider how wild cards interact with current trends.
- Think about psychological responses. Build general adaptive capacity.
- Develop rapid sensing. Create flexible contingency plans. These are low-probability events.
- Don't let wild card planning dominate regular strategy. Use wild cards to stress-test assumptions.