thoughtbot

Designer Skill Self Evaluation

A tool for Designers at thoughtbot to evaluate where their design skill set currently is and to help plan where you would like to be.

How to use this tool

Consider your energy

Which aspects of your role generate energy?

Which ones deplete your energy?

Consider your strengths

How can you better apply your strengths in your current role?

What future roles might be well-suited to your strengths?

What could you share or teach others?

Examine growth areas

Which areas do you need to work to improve in your current role?

Which areas do you want to work on to help you get to your ideal role?

How might you challenge yourself to gain new skills?

Skill Level Definition

1. Execute with Support

You can execute tasks with support from someone more skilled. (Current Apprentice Expectation)

2. Execute Independently

You can execute tasks & processes without support. (Current Designer Expectation)

3. Execute Proficiently

You demonstrate proficiency of skill. You can speak and write about Level 1 skills. You can mentor Level 1 Designers.

4. Execute Expertly

You demonstrate expertise of skill. You can speak and write about Level 3 skills. You can mentor Level 1–3 Designers.

5. Execute Masterfully

You demonstrate mastery of skill at a level few others can. You can speak and write about Level 5 Topics. You can mentor Level 1–4 Designers.

EXAMPLE: USER RESEARCH SKILLSET

You have done some learning into how to perform user interviews and usability test. You have sat in on interviews and usability tests but haven't yet prepared for or lead one.

You can plan for, execute, and synthesize findings from user interviews and usability test. You regularly perform them and understands why we use them.

You are seen as one of a few experts within thoughtbot. You are a regular advocate for User Research in sales and marketing. You have written articles on User Research best practices.

You are seen as an expert within thoughtbot. You are the goto person within thoughtbot when people have questions on User Research. You lead how we evolve our User Research practice at thoughtbot.

You are seen as an expert within the industry. You are the goto person in the community when people have questions on User Research. You are invited to give talks on user research best practices.

User Research

You regularly conduct user interviews and usability tests on the projects that they are working on.

You can plan a research study to gain understanding, test assumptions, or test usability.

You execute your plan by facilitating people through interviews, usability tests, ethnographic research or other methods.

You synthesize findings from research to the rest of your team and can create actionable steps from it.

Group Facilitation

You can lead a group of people through design exercises.

You can handle difficult situations or personalities during group meeting.

You foster a highly-collaborative and inclusive design process.

You incorporate your entire team in the act of designing.

Product Thinking

You can lead a project team.

You think strategically about how to release design in small pieces and regularly look for opportunities to validate the team's ideas.

You establish the project's key success metrics with the client and team.

You help prioritize, refine and cut features based on the validation or invalidation that you find using research.

You communicate potential design process and infrastructure improvements while weighing clients' needs and budget.

Design Process

You follow a process that gets you to the best result in the shortest amount of time.

You seek out new processes and techniques, try them out and assesses whether the broader team should use them.

You employ a broad set of design tools to best solve and communicate user flows, interaction, and motion.

You know which tool to use depending on the scope and phase of the project.

You seek out new tools, try them out, and assesses whether the broader team should use them.

Visual Design

You demonstrate and articulate an understanding of layout, typography and visual hierarchy.

You establish and execute on a consistent brand and interface for a product.

User Experience Design

You take responsibility for the user experience for the products that they are working on.

You design flows rather than individual screens.

You ensure a consistent and intuitive experience across all of the features and products they are designing.

You ensure that the copy for the product interface is consistent and follows the tone of the brand.

Implementation

You understand that your designs need to be carried through to the platform that they are designed for.

For web applications, you implement your designs with HTML & CSS, maintaining a clean markup and style, and working with our Developers in Git.

You figure out how these same implementation principles apply to mobile, service design, and experience design.

Consulting & Communication

You explain your design decisions to teammates, clients, and users.

You share work early and often and seek out constructive feedback on the work they have done.

You give constructive and impactful feedback to other team members.

You educate clients and prospective clients on how design makes them more successful.

You communicate complex ideas clearly and succinctly.

Leadership & Mentoring

You take initiative to lead rather than waiting for somebody else to.

You take part in our design community by writing, participating in online forums and networks, and attending meetups and conferences.

You mentor and teach other Designers, Apprentices at thoughtbot, and externally to thoughtbot.

You participate in our hiring process for Designers and recruit other designers that they feel are a good fit for our team.
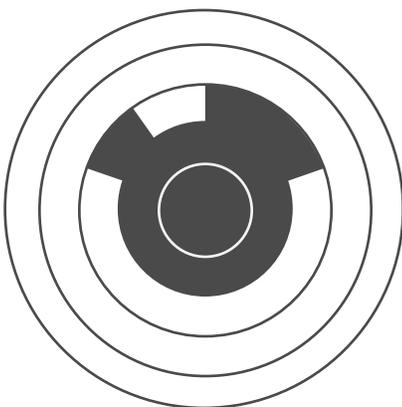
Business & Sales

You participate in the sales process by talking to prospective clients, rating potential client projects, and providing feedback for existing clients.
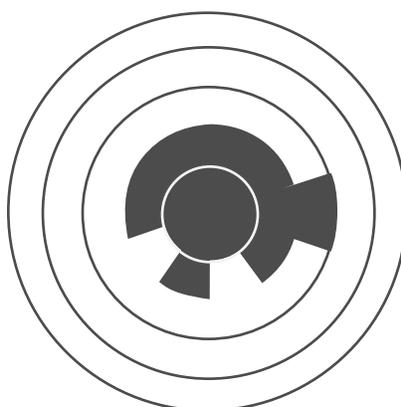
You contribute to marketing by sharing work you've done through case studies, Instagram, Dribbble, or other platform.

You look for opportunities to expand existing client relationships, where our team might be able to have a larger impact on their success.
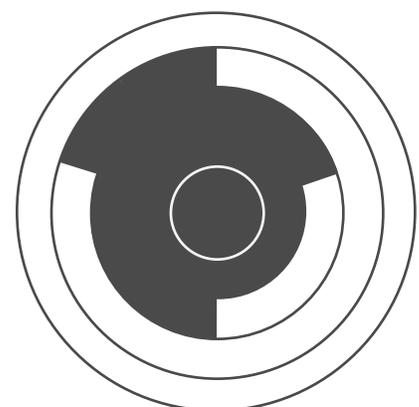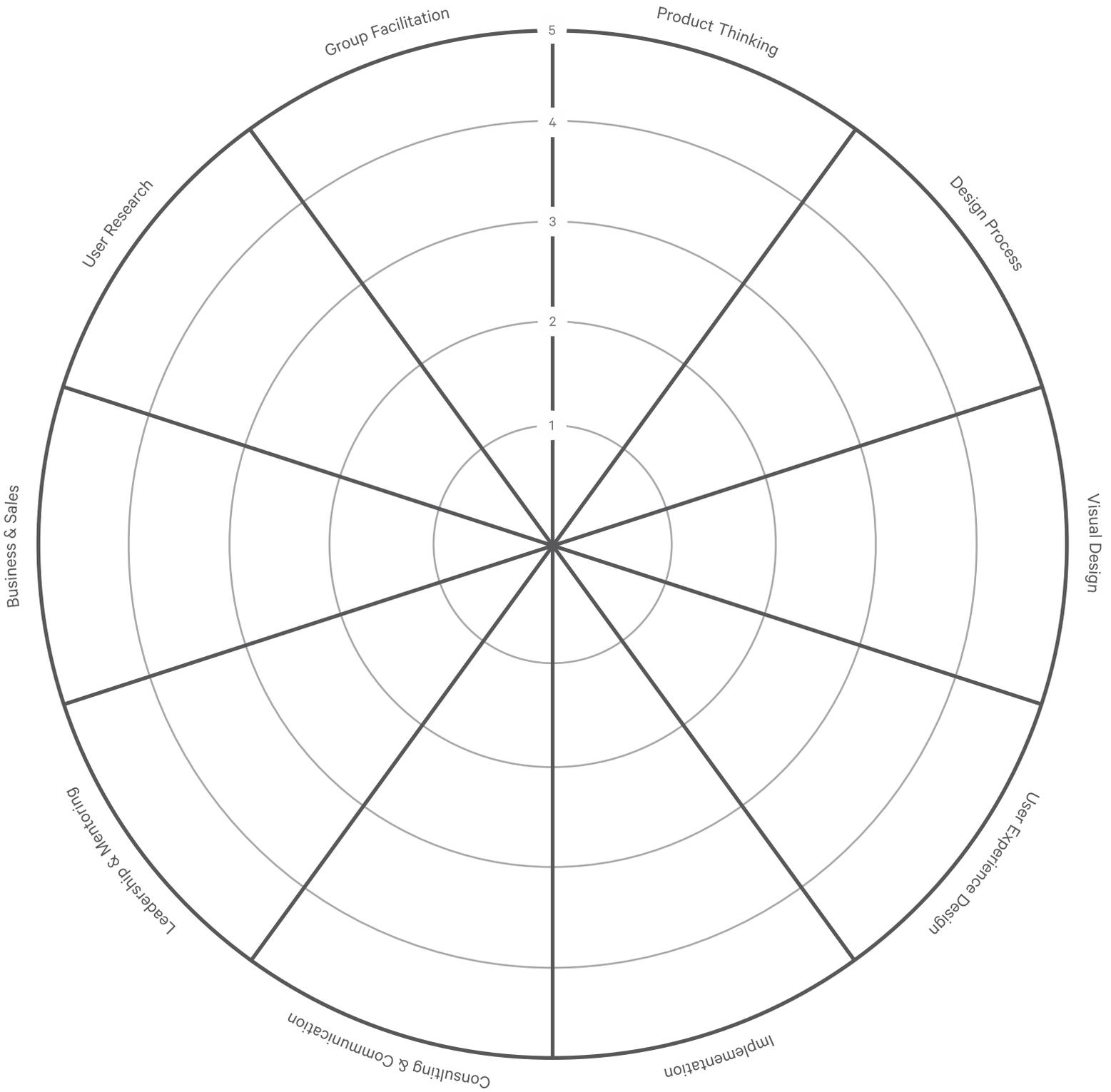
Example: Designer

Example: Apprentice

Example: Experienced Designer

Group Facilitation

Product Thinking

Design Process

Visual Design

User Experience Design

Implementation

Consulting & Communication

Leadership & Mentoring

Business & Sales

User Research

5
4
3
2
1

1. Execute with Support   **2. Execute Independently**   **3. Execute Proficantly**   **4. Execute Expertly**   **5. Execute Masterfully**

Effort / Impact Exercise

HIGH

Impact

LOW

Effort

HIGH
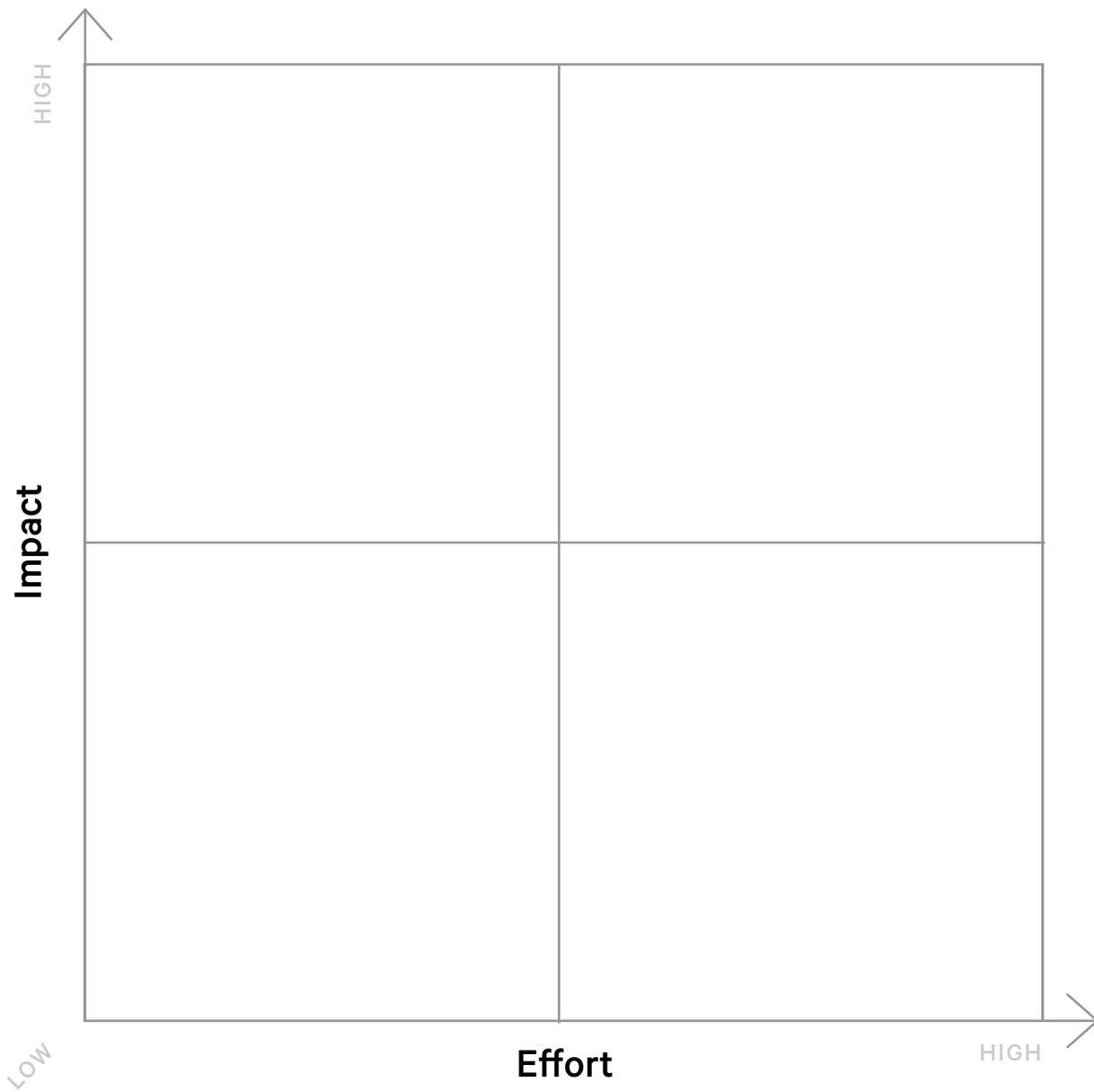
How to use this tool

1. List out the tasks, meetings, anythigh else that you have going on in your head.

2. For each one, judge the effort that they take and the impact they have. Map them to one of the four quadrants.

3. After all are mapped out evaluate and plan which things need more attention, which can be delegated and which should be dropped.

Questions to ask when evaluating

- Any surprises on how you're spending your time and energy? (Unseen realities)

- Of the top two quadrants, what efforts give me energy? Which depelete me?

- What quick wins or low priority tasks can I delegate to my team?

- Would any align with their goals and growth opportunities as low-risk tasks?

- What top 3 tasks across the top two quadrants are my priority for the next week? Month?