3 frameworks for product brainstorming and prioritization
Presented by [Eric Ulken](#) for the Product 101 workshop at the News Leaders Association conference, Oct. 8, 2021

These three tools will help you put your audiences/users/customers at the heart of your efforts and prioritize your work for maximum business value:

- **Product Vision Board:** A tool for considering the key business questions that should be asked of every new product initiative.
- **Jobs to Be Done statements:** A way to express new features and functionality in terms of a job users would "hire" you to do for them.
- **RICE Matrix:** A tool for prioritizing initiatives in terms of Reach, Impact, Confidence and Effort.

What is a product? It could be an app or a site, but also:

- A beat
- A newsletter
- An event
- A series or guide
- A podcast

How to use the Product Vision Board

(The Product Vision Board is a creation of [Roman Pichler](#).)

1. **Vision:** Briefly describe your product in a way that is memorable and compelling.

In the first three boxes, you'll consider *what you're creating, for whom and why*:

2. **Target Group:** Begin by describing the audience(s) or users you wish to serve with this product. It might be more than one group.
3. **Needs:** Capture the audience problems you are looking to solve. Be sure you really understand the problem before you move to "solutioning".
4. **Product:** Describe the features of the product that will solve these problems and consider how you'll create them.

Next, you'll think about the business context, which will help you *decide how you will know success.*

5. **Business Goals:** What kind of performance are you looking for with this product? What metrics are you looking to move, and by how much? Perhaps the goal is growing reach, or subscriber engagement, or revenue. Without a goal, you can't evaluate your performance.

We'll take the bottom part a little out of order by focusing first on two *external factors* that will help determine your likelihood of success.

6. **Competitors:** Who else is serving this need? (Don't just consider other news outlets here! Is this need being met by social networks, search engines or other media?) In what ways can you do it better? (This is a crucial question, because if you cannot fill the need better or more economically than a solution already available, why are you even bothering?)
7. **Channels:** Where do you need to show up in order to reach the audiences you're looking for and have a shot at your success metrics? This is probably not "everywhere" but rather the places where your target audiences are most likely to find you at the moment when they need your offering.

Finally, think about the factors that will determine your *return on investment*.

8. **Revenue Streams:** How will this product contribute to business outcomes, directly or indirectly? If this product supports your subscriber retention efforts, can you estimate how many subscribers it will help retain? Even if it's not possible or practical to estimate a product's contribution in financial terms, it is important to understand the potential size of the impact.
9. **Cost Factors:** This should consider both the one-time and ongoing upkeep costs across disciplines, from product development to marketing to news. Comparing cost factors and revenue stream estimates over time will help you understand your return on investment and when you can expect to see it.

Your Name + Your Vision
What is your motivation for creating the product?
Which positive change should it bring about?

Target Group
Which market or market segment
does the product address?
Who are the target customers and users?

Needs
Which problem does the product solve?
What benefit does it provide?

Product
What product is it?
What makes it stand out?
Is it feasible to develop the product?

Business Goals
How is the product going to
benefit the company?
What are the business goals?

Competitors
Who are your main competitors?
What are their strengths and weaknesses?

Revenue Streams
How can you monetise your product
and generate revenues?

Cost Factors
What are the main cost factors
to develop, market, sell, and
service the product?

Channels
How will you market and
sell your product?
Do the channels exist today?

Jobs to Be Done statements

As a... / When I...	I want to...	So I can...	Brief feature name
As a... / When I...	I want to...	So I can...	Brief feature name
As a... / When I...	I want to...	So I can...	Brief feature name
As a... / When I...	I want to...	So I can...	Brief feature name
As a... / When I...	I want to...	So I can...	Brief feature name

How to use: Use these statements to ground product features in actual user needs.

- *As a… / When I…:* The **who** and the **when**, describing the user and the situational context of the need.
- *I want to…:* The **what**, describing the benefit users are looking for.
- *So I can…:* The **why**, describing users' expected outcome.

Give each benefit a brief feature name and place it on the RICE Matrix for prioritization.

RICE Matrix: A useful tool for prioritizing efforts
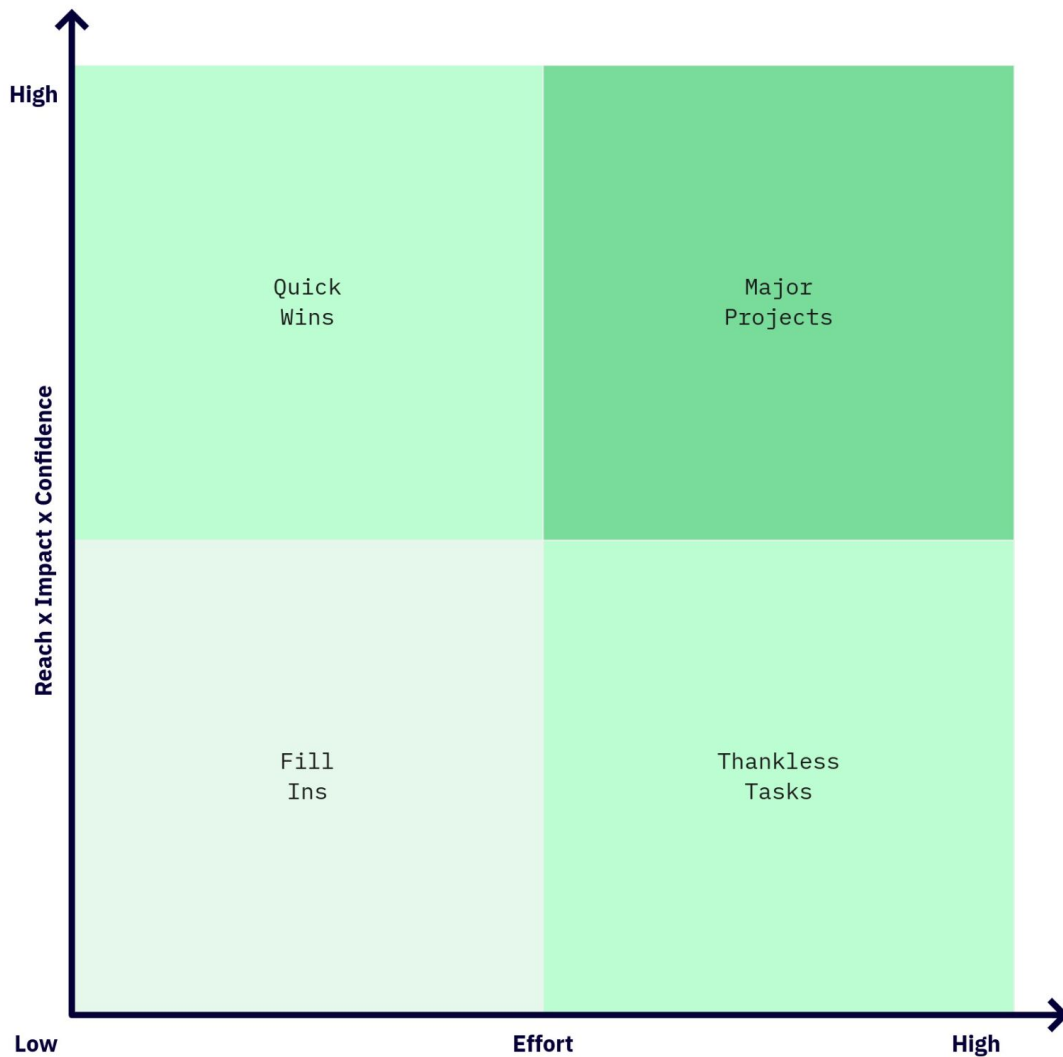
- **Reach:** How many people will this affect?
- **Impact:** How much will this (positively) affect each person?
- **Confidence:** How confident are you in your estimates/assumptions?
- **Effort:** How much time/money will this take to create and maintain?

How to use:

- For each initiative you are prioritizing, estimate its benefit on the vertical axis as a combination of *reach*, *impact* and *confidence*, and its cost in terms of *effort*.
- Projects in the upper-left quadrant yield the best benefit for cost and represent low-hanging fruit. Do these first. Steer clear of things in the lower-right.

(The RICE Matrix is a simplified adaptation of [Intercom's RICE score](#)*.)*