Designing effective workshops

HOW TO MAKE SURE YOUR WORKSHOP DOESN'T TURN INTO AN 8-HOUR LONG MEETING

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What makes a workshop effective?

workshop definition

work·shop
/ˈwərkˌSHäp/ ◀)

noun
noun: **workshop**; plural noun: **workshops**

1. a room or building in which goods are manufactured or repaired.
   synonyms: workroom, studio, atelier; More

The 'presentation' workshop

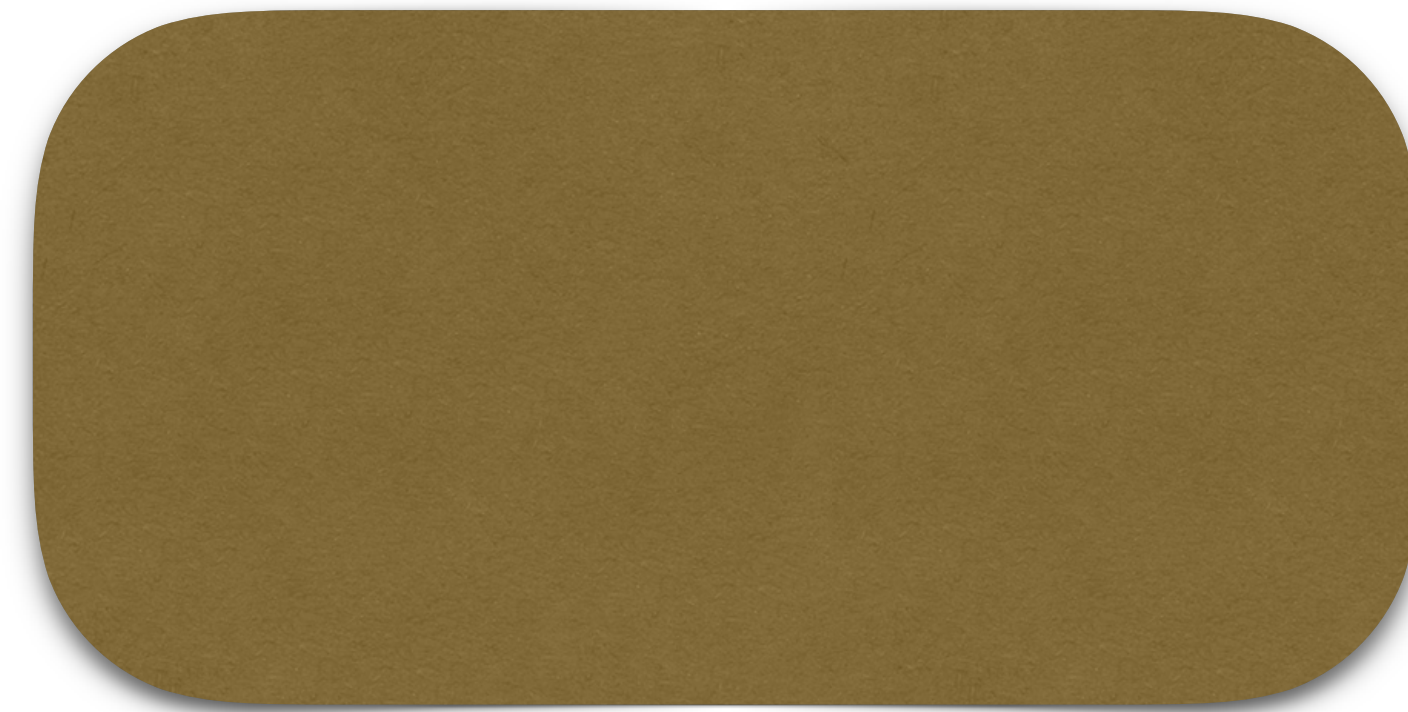# The 'meeting' workshop

work·shop

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2. a meeting at which a group of people engage in intensive discussion and activity on a particular subject or project.
   synonyms: study group, discussion group, seminar, class; support group
   "a workshop on combating stress"

A brief history of collaborative workshops

1970s

Cooperative design emerges in Scandinavia

1987

UTOPIA and Florence projects

1990s

Participatory design as an HCI research method

1999

IDEO's 'Shopping Cart' concept featured on Nightline

2000s

Agile processes popularize 'sprints'

2004

The Future of Competition: **Co-creating** *Unique Value with Customers*

by Prahalad and Pramaswamy

2016

Sprint: *How to Solve Big Problems and Test New Ideas in Just Five Days*

by Jake Knapp

Google workshop definition

work·shop
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Use over time for: workshop

A workshop should...
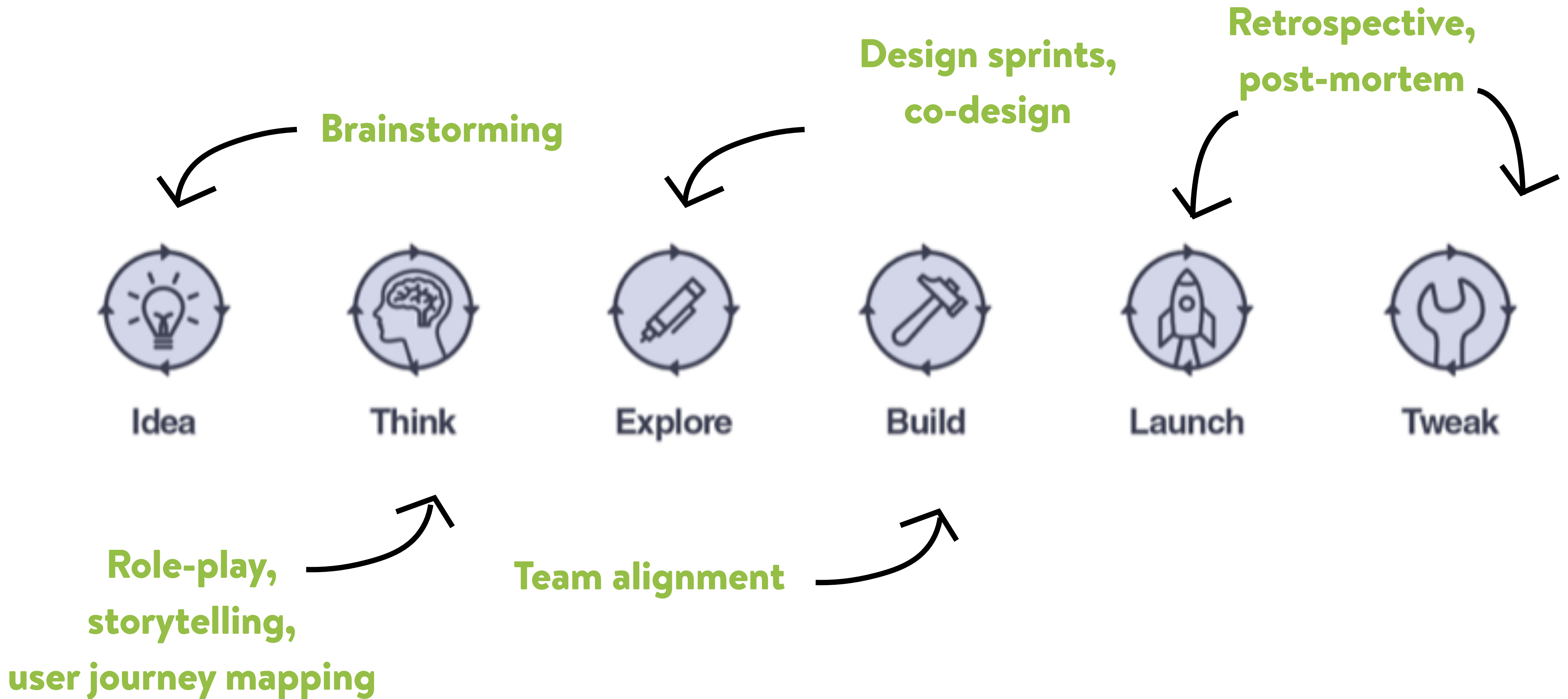
- **Bring together relevant participants**

  - Users, stakeholders, clients, team members, etc.

- **Engage them through discussion and activities**
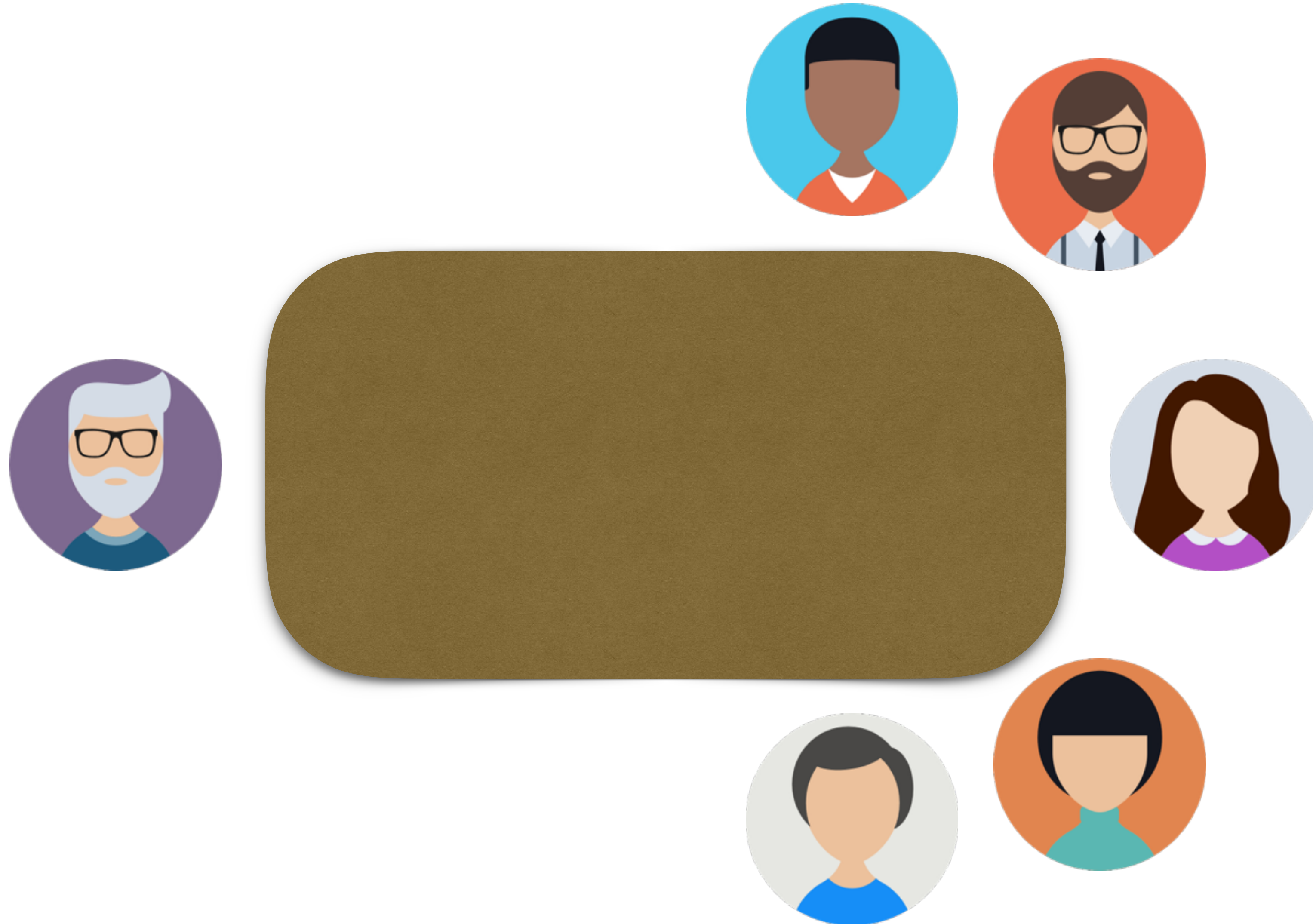
  - Brainstorming, user journey mapping, scoping, prioritization, etc.

- **Timeboxes the completion of tangible, concrete artefact**

  - Plan, roadmap, user map, wireframe, agreement, etc.

Brainstorming

Design sprints,
co-design

Retrospective,
post-mortem

Idea   Think   Explore   Build   Launch   Tweak

Role-play,
storytelling,
user journey mapping

Team alignment

The 'alignment' workshop

The 'alignment' workshop

How can you help two project teams, spread across three cities,
and consisting of four distinct disciplines, share the same product vision?

Workshop
Brief

Prep
exercise

Facilitation
kit

Agreement
on priorities

The 'role-play' workshop

The 'role-play' workshop

**How can you help your team members immerse themselves in
a problem experienced by a broad user segment, under varying scenarios?**

**Role
definitions**

**Role-based
exploration**

**Journey
mapping**

**Problem
ranking**

The 'gameplay' workshop

The 'gameplay' workshop

How can you answer questions that your users have never fully formulated or considered themselves?

Question definition

Game design

Materials

Hypothesis

An effective workshop doesn't just depend on how "cool" some activity is.

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It requires careful planning and facilitation.

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10 steps for designing effective workshops

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STEP 1:

IDENTIFY AN OPPORTUNITY

Why do you need to run a workshop in particular?
Is there an easier way to answer your questions?

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STEP 2:

FORMULATE YOUR QUESTIONS

What are you trying to answer with a workshop?

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DEFINE YOUR OUTCOME

In an ideal scenario, what would a helpful deliverable be?

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STEP 5:

DESIGN YOUR ACTIVITIES

What would be the best way to answer your questions and make your deliverable happen?

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CREATE YOUR AGENDA

How much time will you need to give each activity due diligence? How long do you estimate the workshop should take?

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STEP 7:

CREATE YOUR GUEST LIST

Who needs to participate in order for your deliverable to be valid?

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STEP 8:

CREATE YOUR SHOPPING LIST

What materials do you need?

How can you level the playing field?

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STEP 9:

GATHER AND SHARE INTEL

What do you need to learn about your participants?
What do they need to know in order to feel informed?

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RUN YOUR PILOT

What can you learn from a dry-run
to make the real thing as smooth as possible?

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10 steps for designing effective workshops

Step 1: Identify an opportunity

Step 2: Formulate your questions

Step 3: Set your scope

Step 4: Define your outcome

Step 5: Design your activities

Step 6: Create agenda

Step 7: Create your guest list

Step 8: Create your shopping list

Step 9: Gather and share intel

Step 10: Run your pilot

NEXT:

The "meta-workshop" activity