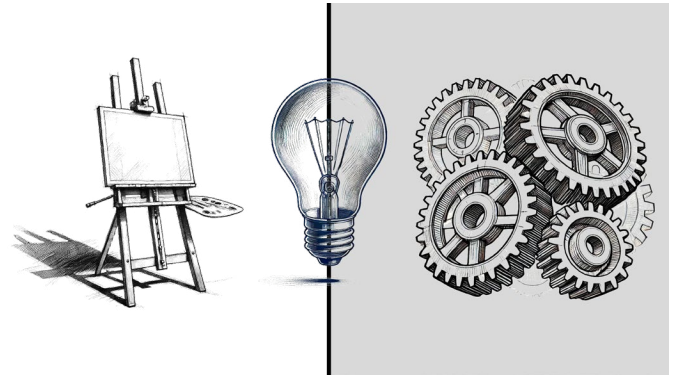# TOOL BRIEF: HOW, NOW, WOW MATRIX

OVERVIEW:

The "How, Now, Wow Matrix" is a prioritization tool that helps individuals and teams categorize ideas based on their originality and practicality. The exact origin of the matrix is unclear, it is widely utilized in creative industries and product development.

The matrix is divided into three sections: "How" for innovative but challenging ideas, "Now" for practical and immediately actionable ideas, and "Wow" for ideas that are both innovative and achievable.

STEPS FOR USING THE METHOD

1. **Create the Matrix:** Draw a two-dimensional matrix with one axis labeled "Originality" and the other "Feasibility". Divide the matrix into three sections: How, Now, Wow.

2. **Idea Generation:** Generate a list of ideas or solutions you're considering.

3. **Categorization:** Place each idea in the matrix according to its originality and feasibility.

4. **Analysis:** Review the placement of your ideas to determine which to pursue first, with a focus on "Wow" ideas as prime candidates.

NOTE: The Feasibility axis is not intuitive. The higher the value, the less easy it is to implement the idea. One way to read this is items lower on the axis are easier to implement than those that are higher on the axis.

PROS:

- **Encourages Balanced Innovation:** Helps balance creativity with practicality.

- **Prioritizes Ideas:** Clearly identifies which ideas to act on first.

- **Engages Critical Thinking:** Forces a deeper analysis of each idea's feasibility and originality.

- **Adaptable:** Useful for individuals and teams across various contexts.

CONS:

- **Subjectivity in Categorization:** The placement of ideas can be subjective and vary by individual perception.

- **May Overlook "How" Ideas:** The matrix may lead to the neglect of high-originality ideas that are harder to implement.

- **Requires Clear Criteria:** Effective use depends on clear definitions of originality and feasibility.

WHEN TO USE:

- **Idea Prioritization:** When you have a list of potential solutions or creative projects and need to decide which to tackle first.

- **Product Development:** Ideal for evaluating feature or project ideas based on their novelty and implementation ease.

- **Strategy Planning:** Useful in strategic contexts to balance innovation with practical action steps.

WHEN NOT TO USE:

- **Individual Decision-Making:** Less effective for personal reflection or solo ideation.

- **Urgent Situations:** Not suitable for crisis management or quick-response scenarios requiring immediate action.

- **Highly Technical Problems:** May not fit issues needing deep technical expertise or specialized solutions.

BEST PRACTICES: HOW, NOW, WOW MATRIX

The "How, Now, Wow Matrix" is an effective tool for prioritizing ideas and innovations based on their originality and feasibility. This matrix helps teams and individuals focus their resources on ideas that are most likely to achieve strategic goals while maintaining a balance of innovative and practical projects. Here are some best practices for using this technique:

- **Clear Criteria Definition**: Begin by defining what qualifies an idea for each of the three categories: "How" (high originality, low feasibility), "Now" (low originality, high feasibility), and "Wow" (high originality, high feasibility). Clear criteria ensure consistent and objective categorization.

- **Diverse Input:** Encourage contributions from various team members or stakeholders to gather a broad range of ideas. Diversity in input can enhance the creativity and comprehensiveness of the ideas being sorted into the matrix.

- **Visual and Accessible Format:** Use a large visual format that's easily accessible to all participants, such as a whiteboard or digital collaboration tool. Visualizing ideas in the matrix format helps participants understand where each idea stands and fosters further discussion.

- **Iterative Review:** Revisit and revise the categorization as ideas develop or as more information becomes available. Some ideas might shift between categories as feasibility or originality perspectives change based on further analysis or development.

- **Encourage Exploration of 'How' Ideas:** Allocate time and resources to explore "How" ideas that may initially seem less feasible. These ideas can lead to breakthrough innovations or can be developed into "Wow" ideas with some problem-solving and resource allocation.

- **Balance the Portfolio:** Aim for a balanced portfolio of "Now" and "Wow" ideas to pursue, ensuring a mix of short-term wins and long-term innovations. This balance keeps the organization or team steadily moving forward while also investing in future growth.

- **Action Plans for 'Wow' Ideas:** Develop detailed action plans for "Wow" ideas, including what resources, timelines, and processes are needed to implement them. Prioritize these plans to capitalize on their high impact and feasibility.

- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Implement feedback mechanisms to continuously collect insights on the implementation challenges or successes. Feedback is crucial for adjusting strategies and understanding the real-world impacts of the ideas.

- **Documentation and Tracking**: Keep thorough documentation of all ideas and their progress through the matrix. Tracking developments can provide valuable learnings for future brainstorming sessions and strategy adjustments.

By following these best practices, you can maximize the effectiveness of the "How, Now, Wow Matrix," turning creative brainstorming into actionable projects that align with strategic objectives. This ensures that both innovative and feasible ideas are recognized and appropriately prioritized.

MODERN METHODS: ENHANCING THE HOW, NOW, WOW MATRIX WITH AI

How to Use AI with the Tool

- Integrating AI technologies into the "How, Now, Wow Matrix" can streamline the process of idea categorization and enhance the strategic decision-making associated with innovation management. AI can automate the analysis of idea feasibility and originality, provide predictive insights, and facilitate more dynamic interactions during brainstorming sessions.

Setting the Stage

- Definitions and Parameters: Define specific parameters for what constitutes originality and feasibility within your context. Providing AI with detailed criteria helps ensure that the categorization aligns with organizational standards and goals.

- Example Prompt: "I have a list of new product ideas based on current technology trends and customer feedback. Can you help categorize these ideas into the 'How, Now, Wow' matrix based on predefined originality and feasibility scores?"
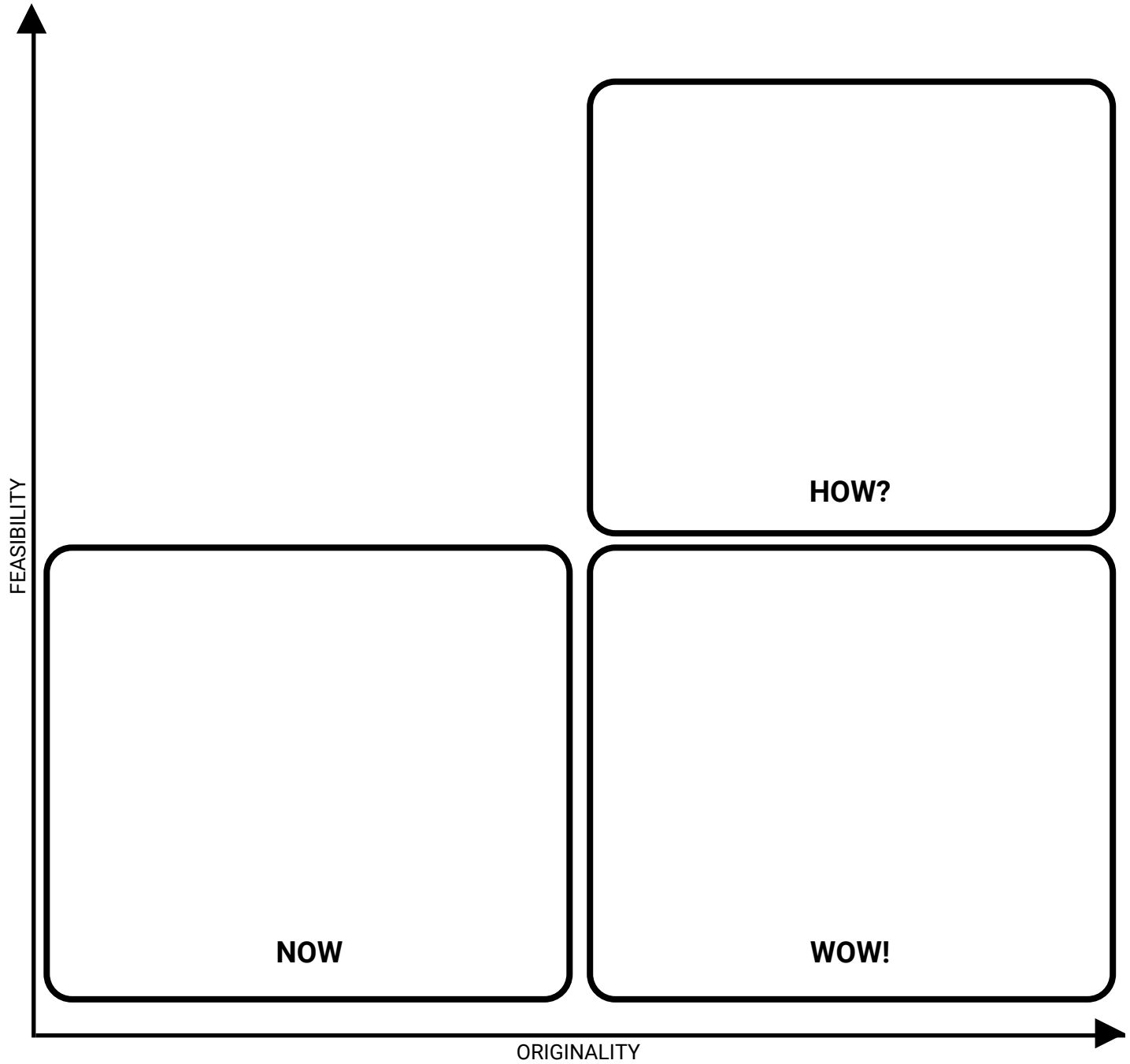
AI Applications and Sample Prompts

- Automated Idea Categorization:

  ◊ Application: Use AI to initially sort ideas into the matrix based on data-driven analysis of each idea's originality and feasibility.

  ◊ Prompt: "Here are the details of each idea, including market research and technical assessment. Please categorize them into 'How', 'Now', and 'Wow' based on our criteria."

- Predictive Analysis for Feasibility:

  ◊ Application: AI algorithms analyze past project data to predict the feasibility of new ideas, considering factors like cost, required technology, and time to market.

  ◊ Prompt: "Based on historical data of similar projects, which of these ideas are likely to be most feasible and should be classified as 'Now'?"

- Originality Scoring:

  ◊ Application: AI can evaluate the originality of ideas by comparing them against a database of existing solutions, highlighting truly innovative concepts.

  ◊ Prompt: "Assess the originality of these ideas by comparing them to our global database of patents and products."

- Dynamic Reevaluation:

  ◊ Application: As ideas develop and more information becomes available, AI can dynamically reassess and re-categorize ideas within the matrix.

  ◊ Prompt: "Update the categorization of these ideas in the matrix based on the latest R&D reports and customer feedback analysis."

- Integration with Digital Tools:

  ◊ Application: AI can be integrated into digital mind mapping or brainstorming tools, providing real-time suggestions and enhancements during live sessions.

  ◊ Prompt: "During our live brainstorming session, suggest real-time modifications to our ideas to increase their feasibility or originality."

TEMPLATE: HOW, NOW, WOW MATRIX

DATE:

FEASIBILITY

HOW?

NOW

WOW!

ORIGINALITY

NOTES: