

Idea Generation Tool

Kill a Stupid Rule



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WHY THIS TOOL?

Processes should simplify your business, but excess procedure will suffocate it. Kill a Stupid Rule offers a simple solution to complex processes that were created in the name of “efficiency.” Most companies find that their most vilified rules aren’t actually rules at all. They’re often annoying procedures like standing reports or conference calls, expense-reimbursement protocol, and layers of approval. Challenging accepted rules and methods of doing business enables us to change them for the better. Through this exercise, employees are empowered to identify rules that constrain their productivity, and leaders get a strong pulse on where change is most needed.



For a video introduction to Kill a Stupid Rule, click on the image above or go to: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTqOyYxWgEc>

HOW IT WORKS

SUGGESTED AUDIENCE:

- Relevant for all levels of staff
- Include at least one senior leader with authority to kill or suspend rules

SET-UP:

- Include as many team members as possible from your business unit for a variety of perspectives
- Assign a scribe to capture answers to the group-discussion questions

RECOMMENDED TIMING:

Step 1. Identify stupid rules:	15 mins.
Step 2. Plot stupid rules on matrix:	10 mins.
Step 3. Evaluate + discuss as a group:	20 mins.
Step 4. Kill stupid rules:	10 mins.
	55 mins.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS:



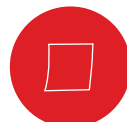
Worksheets
(enough for each participant + a few extra)



Colored whiteboard markers and pens (separating ideas by color will help organize your thoughts)



Whiteboard or flipcharts
(pre-draw the Impact/ Implementation Matrix)



Plenty of sticky notes
(5 notes per participant, plus a few extra)



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STEP 1: IDENTIFY STUPID RULES

Using the worksheets below, list 3 or more rules that frustrate you or slow down your productivity. Then decide whether those rules should be killed or modified. Feel free to focus only on internal rules instead of customer/client rules (or vice versa). As you're considering which rules to choose, keep the following in mind:

- **Red rules vs. green rules:** Red rules are government-regulated and illegal to change, so they're off-limits. Everything else is a green rule and fair game.
- **Focus on your business unit or function:** By concentrating on the rules that affect the area you operate within, you're in a better position to make the case for killing or modifying a rule.
- **Not a gripe session:** This exercise is an ideal opportunity for a productive discussion about what doesn't work, but keep it centered on solutions, not cross-talk or complaining.
- **Rewrite the rule:** If you can't kill a rule for some reason, provide specific suggestions on how to modify and make it less frustrating.

Internal Rules

Consider:

- Which systems or protocols frustrate you at work?
- Which processes/reports/forms would you eliminate or simplify to make your job easier?
- What rules slow you down or prevent you from doing your best work?

Rule #1. _____

Kill it? _____

Or modify it? How? _____

Rule #2. _____

Kill it? _____

Or modify it? How? _____

Rule #3. _____

Kill it? _____

Or modify it? How? _____

Customer/Client Rules

Consider:

- What regularly frustrates our clients/customers about us?
- What makes it difficult to do business with us?
- Why do customers/clients choose our competition over us?
- What 1 thing would you immediately change for our clients/customers if you could?

Rule #1. _____

Kill it? _____

Or modify it? How? _____

Rule #2. _____

Kill it? _____

Or modify it? How? _____

Rule #3. _____

Kill it? _____

Or modify it? How? _____



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TIP FOR SUCCESS:

- Leaders should respond objectively—not defensively—when the group shares their lists of stupid rules.

Discuss as a group:

- How many people were able to come up with at least 3 rules? How about 5? 10? Share them now.
- Was it easy to come up with rules to kill or change? Why/why not?
- Was it easier to brainstorm internal or customer/client rules? Why?
- How many of our suggestions are actual corporate rules (vs. assumptions about how things “should” be done)?

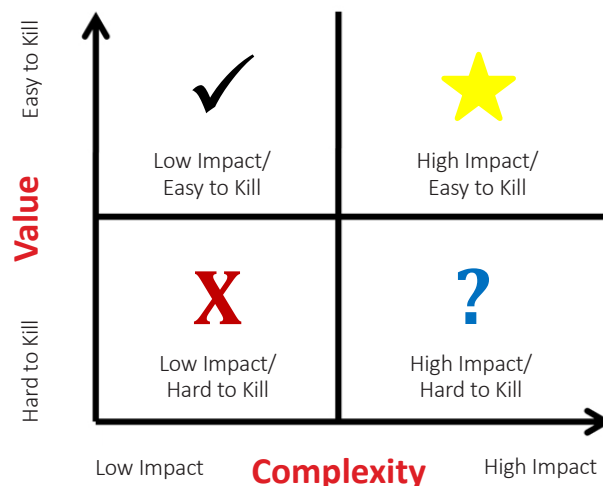
STEP 2: PLOT 2 STUPID RULES ON MATRIX

From your worksheets, choose the 2 rules you most want to kill or change and write them on separate sticky notes. Ask yourself the following questions:

- In your opinion, would it be easy or hard to kill the rule?
- In your opinion, would killing this rule have a high impact on your business unit?



Based on your answers to those questions, you should now be able to determine whether killing each rule would have a high impact on the business, low impact, or somewhere in between. Use this knowledge to plot your 2 rules on the large matrix in the room according to how easy to kill and how much its death will impact the business. For example, if you believe your rule is low impact and hard to kill, it should be placed in Quadrant 1 (lower left). If it's high impact and easy to kill, plot it in Quadrant 4 (top right). There's no right or wrong placement because you define what goes where according to your own perspective.



TIP FOR SUCCESS:

- Leaders should take note of any rule that appears more than once; this is a strong indicator of a problem area in the business.
- Participants typically place rules in the top half of the grid, with the majority in top right box. Conversely, the lower right quadrant might be full. Very few rules will be placed in the lower left quadrant, so it's important to lead an objective discussion about the true impact or ease of implementation.
- Look for rules that appear in the upper-right quadrant of the matrix. These are easy to change with a high business impact, and killing them will give your team a quick win.



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STEP 3: EVALUATE + DISCUSS AS A GROUP

Each team member should now share which 2 rules they plotted and why they believe it should be killed or modified. Use the questions below to guide the discussion:

- In which quadrant were most of our rules placed?
- Are there similarities in the types of rules on the matrix? (Mostly related to reports? To HR processes? Etc.?)
- If most of our rules fall in the top right quadrant—easy to implement and high impact—why haven't we discussed eliminating them before now?
- Which rule/s should we kill immediately?
- Which rule/s should we modify immediately?

STEP 4: KILL STUPID RULES

Now it's time for the moment of truth—and action. Among these “rules,” take an employee vote on which one should be killed. Then do it, right on the spot. If possible, kill a few more. (Or do the next best thing: kill a rule for a few months and promise that if no one misses it, the change will be permanent.)

Discuss as a group:

- Is anything preventing us from killing more rules?
- If so, what can we do to change that?
- Should we do this exercise a few times a year?
- Do stupid rules tend to originate from a specific business unit or division? What if we invited them to a rule-killing session to jointly explore solutions?