

# Method for Prioritization

**How to prioritize projects and intake of work**  
Concept from Design Strategy Team Meeting  
July 31, 2019

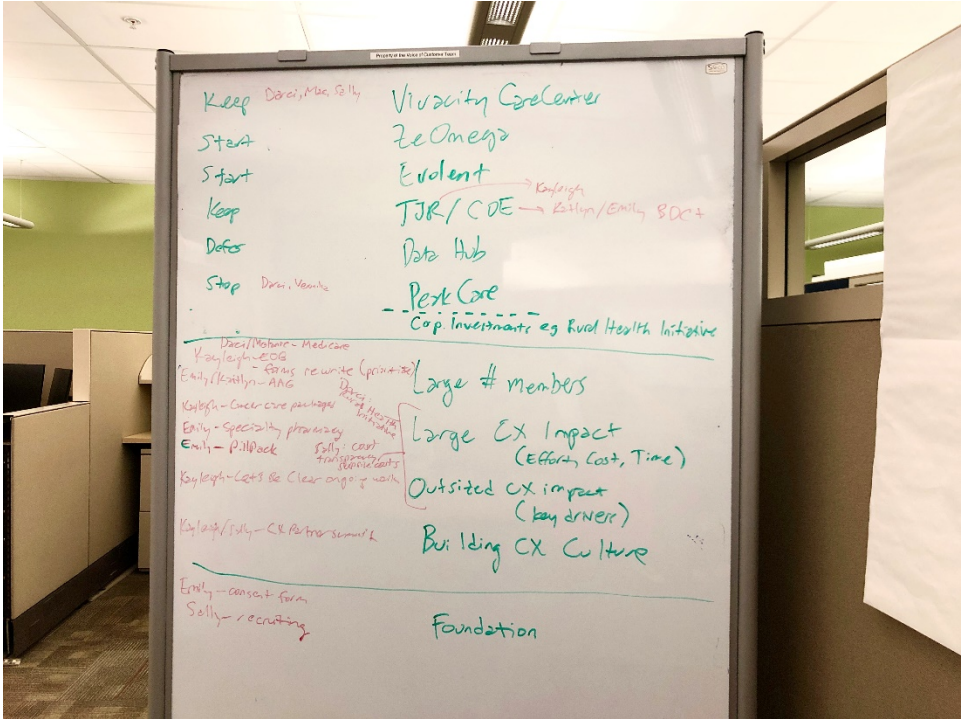


Figure 1: Whiteboard brainstorming session of project prioritization

It's no surprise much of the working population feel overworked in their positions. Reportedly, 28% of workers feel often or very often overworked, with the majority of those people being in the middle of their career life. The statistics aren't the most relevant part of this topic however, what matters most are the effects of being overworked.

Being overworked is a constant lose-lose situation, "it's detrimental for everyone—the worker and the employer." Overworked employees are "more likely to report making mistakes at work; feel angry toward their employers for expecting them to do so much; resent coworkers who do not work as hard as they do; look for a new job with another employer." For many, it doesn't take a study to understand the impact of being overworked, as these feelings may have crossed our minds at one point or another. Knowing this, it becomes crucial to identify how we can mitigate these feelings and potentially tackle the root of the issue.

After my manager recognized the sheer quantity of items she and the rest of the team had on their plate, she worked through a process to ensure all participants were left feeling satisfied. What that process really meant: She was happy about where her time was

being spent, we were happy about where our time was being spent, and Premera was happy about the impact of our newly focused work.

With only so many hours in the day, it's important to ensure we're only being pulled in the directions that are most beneficial to our company and its values. Sometimes it can be hard to see just how thin you are being spread without taking a moment to assess and regroup. Equally harmful, it may be difficult to even recognize *why* you are doing the work that has piled up on your desk.

At our weekly Design Strategy Team Meeting, we took the opportunity to evaluate the projects that each of us were actively participating in. Much of the discussion centered on the realization that we are often too busy *reacting*, instead of taking a moment for evaluation and reflection. To ensure each of us were on the right track and focusing our efforts in the right places, a method was developed for the assessments of current and new projects.

The first step was establishing the company's primary goals, which were then sorted in order of importance. With roughly six goals listed, we were able to see where Premera currently stood as a whole, removing us from our day to day tasks and allowing us to understand the bigger picture.

#### **1. Establish the company's primary goals**

- **Allows us to see the bigger picture**

The next step was to determine categories of influence that were important and relevant for the company and our work. By doing so, we have clearly defined areas that will make the greatest impact on our customers and company, which should allow us to understand *why* and *if* the work we are doing is important.

#### **2. Determine categories of influence**

- **Provides reasoning as to why we do our work**

With these categories in place, it is important to establish clear criteria and factors for each. By doing so, the classifications of our work become less arbitrary, and we can begin to make active and thoughtful decisions to help ourselves prioritize.

#### **3. Establish clear criteria and factors for each category**

- **Creates standards for uniform and thoughtful decisions**

Next, we must recognize that some of our time will need to be spent on foundational elements. By this we mean work that will ultimately help enhance processes and improve the functionality of the team. While this category of work may not be visible to outsiders, the effects can certainly still make quite a substantial impact.

#### **4. Recognize work that focuses on foundational elements**

- **Allows you to improve processes and functionality**

With a structure now in place, we can evaluate the work and projects we are doing to see whether or not they align with the goals or fit into the categories we have established. Adapting an approach of "start, stop, keep," we can identify which projects we should go after, which projects we should wrap up or not take on, and which projects we should

continue working on. We now have the ability to let go of certain projects and to take on certain projects based on clearly outlined criteria.

5. Ask ourselves, "What am I doing that directly relates to what we have defined, and what am I doing that does not?"
  - Helps determine which projects to start, stop, and keep

### **Outside Source**

<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/feeling-overworked-526272>