



# Subtrakt

**Useful for:** Innovation through simplification, avoiding the more is better trap, challenging legacy assumptions.

**Very good for:** invention, self-discovery.

**Good for:** empathy.

**Type of exercise:** individual or team.

## **General description:**

Any exercise that invites a group to look at an existing situation and identify the weakest or superfluous aspects. Often the expectation from creativity is to add a new feature or conjure something original - it can be important to remember that eliminating something can be revolutionary, subtracting an aspect from a pre-existing offering might radically change it. Also useful for mentally priming a team to consider minimalist approaches when searching for solutions in successive exercises.

## **Requirements:**

A worksheet with a list of attributes of the situation being examined. Scissors to cut 'unwanted' attributes from the worksheet. This type of exercise might require specific stimulus in the form of detailed information on the situation in exam.

## **Example assignments:**

- 'ZXY (subject) has 8 features how many can you eliminate before it ceases to be useful?' The worksheet could be a large diagram of the features, the task is to cut away the least important.
- 'Your team have to make service YYX (subject) easier to use, how can it be simplified?' The worksheet could be a poster, divided in half vertically, on the left a visualisation of the components of the current service, on the right an empty space. An envelope contains postcard-like pieces, each representing a component. The task is to create a new version in the space on the right of the poster, using as few components as possible, reconfigured and possibly augmented with new additions.
- 'Identify three things we currently do that could be simplified by eliminating something.' The worksheets could be medium size, one worksheet for each subject for a total of three. On the left the worksheet has an empty rectangle (space to describe the subject), in the middle a large minus sign, on the left an empty circle (space to describe the part to be eliminated).

## **Outcome:**

When reviewing the outcome, look at what is left in as well as that which is excluded and ask why certain things were considered indispensable. In some situations, where the exercise is performed from the point of view of a specific type of person/user it can be interesting to repeat the experience from the point of view of a different type of person/user.