

Qualitative Cross Impact Analysis Matrix

	Item A	Item B	Item C	Item D	Item E				
Item A									
Item B						B and A			
Item C						C and A	C and B		
Item D						D and A	D and B	D and C	
Item E						E and A	E and B	E and C	E and D
Item F						F and A	F and B	F and C	F and D

How to use the tool

To cross impact, put a small set of forces, decisions, or changes in each of the numbered cells down the left side of the diagram. Repeat the same ones across the bottom. At the intersections of each pair, consider how the items could interact. This diagram offers up each pair just once, asking how they interact. (This tool uses a “stair step” diagram, rather than a full grid because it’s much harder to cross impact in both directions, as in distinguishing how number 1 affects number 2 versus number 2 affects number 1.)

Working through the cells you will make at least a few discoveries. Those are the gold in the pan.

- Take empty cells as a challenge—try to fill them.
- Be “crazy,” speculative, even silly, it draws out fresh thinking.
- Some interactions will not matter to your task, but you may not know that until you try them out.
- Go slowly. Allow yourself time to think.
- Rest and return later. Don't continue to struggle with your matrix if you get worn out by the process and aren't generating interesting ideas. Stop and start again later.
- A white board or chalkboard works great. Post-Its for ideas is a terrific way to allow you to try out, collect, and rearrange things.

Your goal is not to just somehow figure something out for each cell. It is to get to fresh insights. But as you scribble down the possibilities, know that that's part of the process--you doodle and write to discover.

Also, this exercise can help you find out “where the heat is,” as in, which forces seem most impactful. That can be a way of identifying and prioritizing your further work on exploring forces and trends at play.