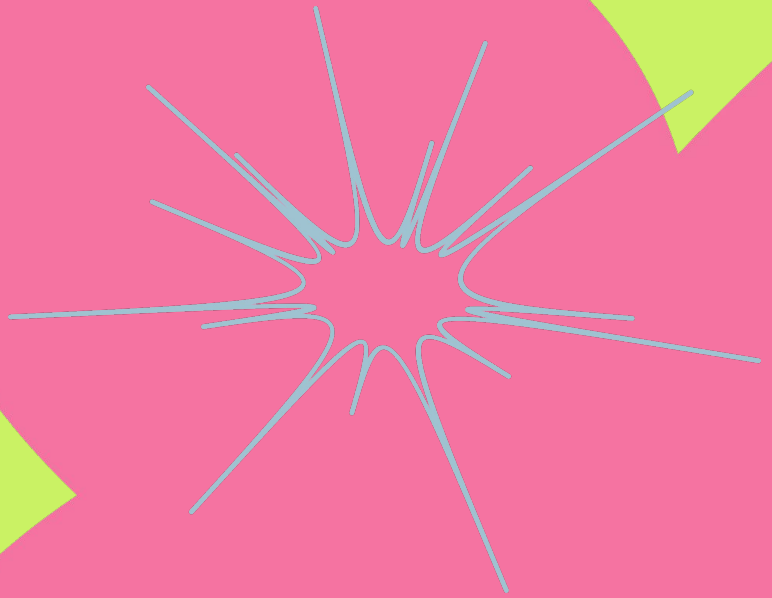
Thoughtful Execution

A framework that helps teams ship with impact.

By Annina Koskinen, Principal Designer



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Introduction

The Framework

Thoughtful Execution is not a formal process, but rather a reminder of the necessary steps in order to develop products in a thoughtful way. It leaves freedom for teams to decide which methods and tools to use for tackling each step of the journey.

These steps are presented in a tree structure, which encourages you to follow them in order. This approach leads to going wide in problem identification and hypothesis creation before zooming into a single solution.

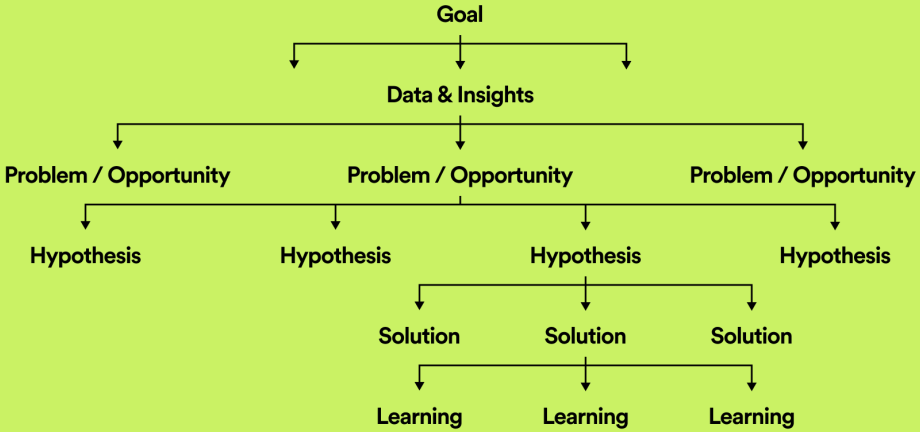
💡 If you haven't yet, check out this blog post for more information about this tool.

Thoughtful Execution Framework

How to Use

This framework can be used to structure and document the thinking of ongoing projects, or to introduce and organize new ideas when you feel like your project is stuck. The thoughtful Execution Tree allows you to see how different ongoing efforts map and influences the bigger picture.

💡You can create a digital representation of your tree using our Figma template or make a physical version on a wall, with post-its. It's highly recommended that all team members participate in filling in the tree to create alignment, and keep on updating it as more learnings are created.



Step-by-step

#1 Set a Goal

It's important that your project has a goal that can be measured, so that you can understand the effect of your work on the product and business.

A goal is typically formed based on company strategy and existing data and insights. It can be a quantitative business metric goal or a qualitative goal measuring a change in how your product is perceived. The type of the goal determines what kind of testing methods are needed to assess whether your design solution is having a positive, neutral, or negative impact on your metric.

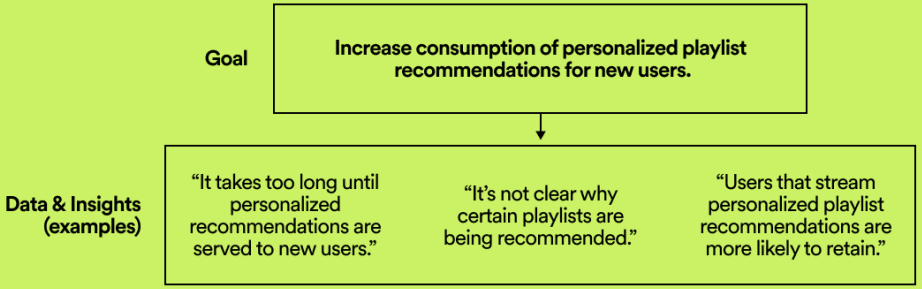
Step-by-step

#2 Data & Insights

Data and insights ideally come from multiple sources. You can look, for example, at quantitative data of existing user behaviour in your product, if available. You can also conduct qualitative research to understand the problem space or run user tests if you're iterating on an existing product.

If you have limited access to research and data, think of alternative ways of gathering quick insights. Benchmark similar products or run a quick expert evaluation on your product. If you have the possibility, you can also run learning experiments on your product that provide you with additional insights.

Through the analysis of the data you've gathered, formulate key insights and add them to the Thoughtful Execution tree.



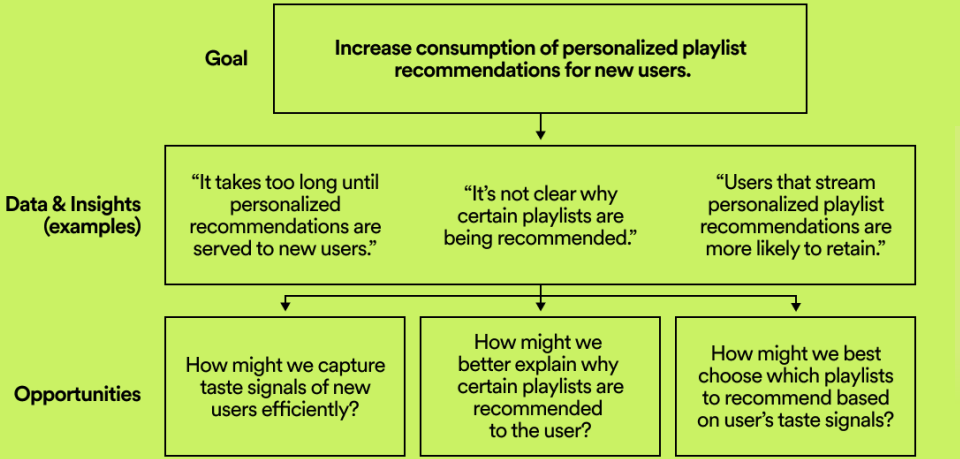
Step-by-step

#3 Problems and Opportunities

Through the analysis of data and insights you can identify user problem areas that need to be solved for.

If you're creating something new, you might not identify problems, but untapped opportunities that could provide user value. It's important to spend time articulating the identified problems and opportunities as meaningful and actionable "How Might We" statements that need solving, in order to help the idea generation that follows next.

💡Tips on how to do that can be found for example here.

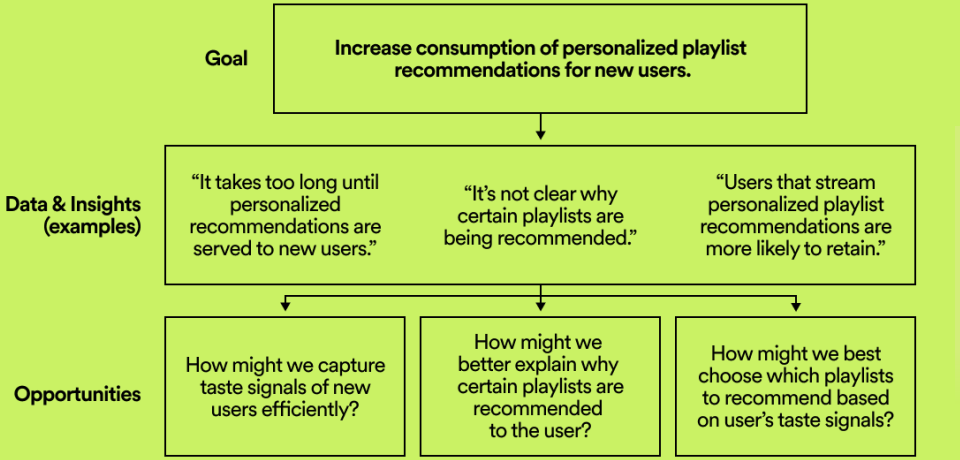


Step-by-step

#3 Problems and Opportunities

Depending on the scope of the project, you might first decide to zoom into only one of the identified problems or opportunities. It can also happen that addressing several of them at once is needed in order to move the metric of your goal.

If the first scenario is the case, consider if it makes sense to make another, more detailed, Thoughtful Execution tree just for that problem or opportunity.

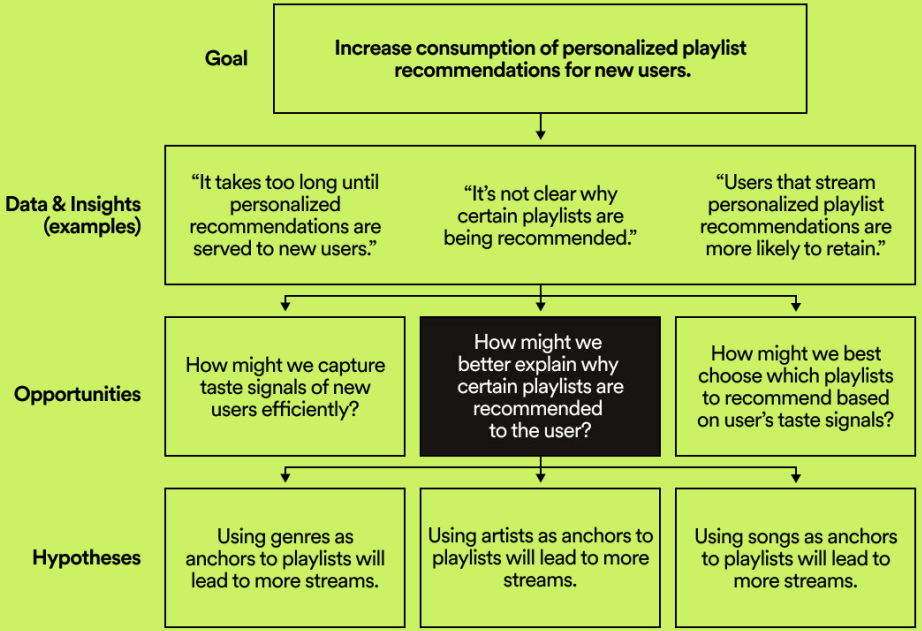


Step-by-step

#4 Hypotheses

Any problem or untapped opportunity can be solved in multiple ways. That's why you need to create multiple hypotheses for each and assess which one returns the most impact. There are many kinds of templates available on how to form a good hypothesis, but the key is to articulate which change you are introducing, what effect you expect it to have, and why. You need to be able to measure the effect, otherwise the hypothesis can't be tested.

It's warmly recommended that a cross-functional team participates in creating the hypotheses to ensure a diverse set of ideas as well as alignment in the team. A typical way of producing many ideas to a single "How Might We" statement is to do a Crazy 8s exercise and, after the production of ideas, to formulate the hypotheses behind them.



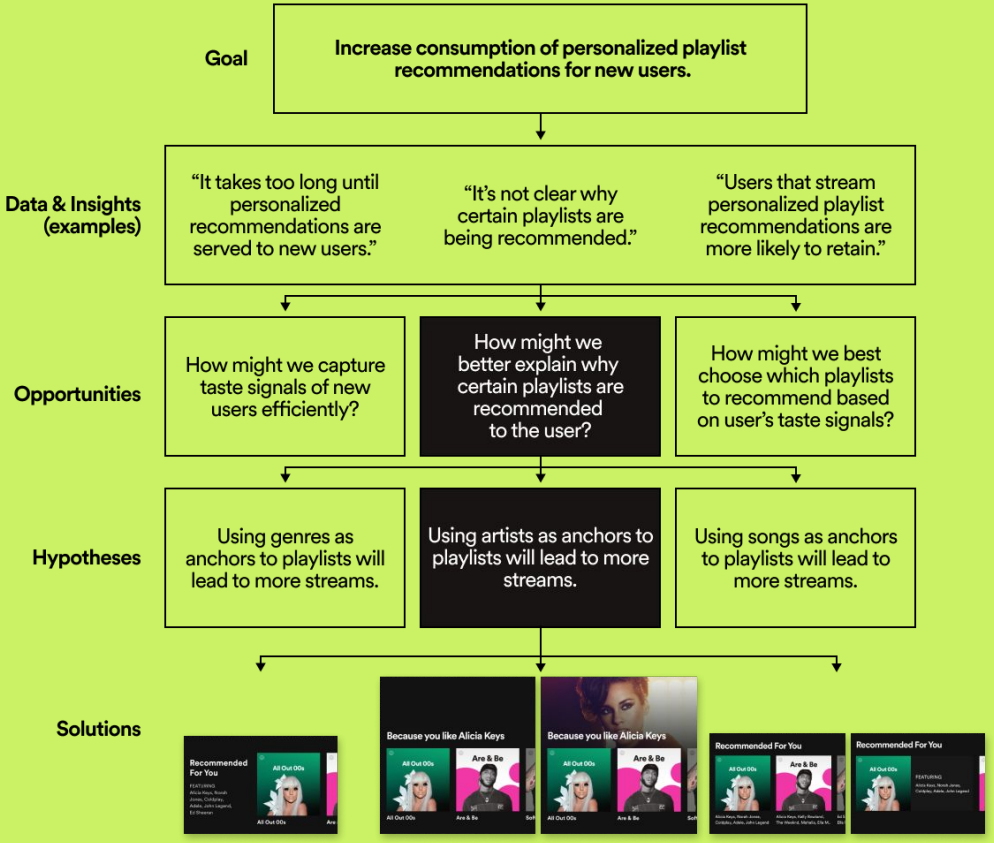
"If **change** then **effect** because **rationale**"

Step-by-step

#5 Design Solutions

After you've selected the hypotheses that you want to create solutions for, it's time to start designing.

In order to prove or disprove a hypothesis, it's necessary to try out multiple solutions to understand if different design decisions have different impact on the metrics in focus. Since building multiple solutions might be slow and costly, narrowing down the solution options through qualitative tests is recommended.

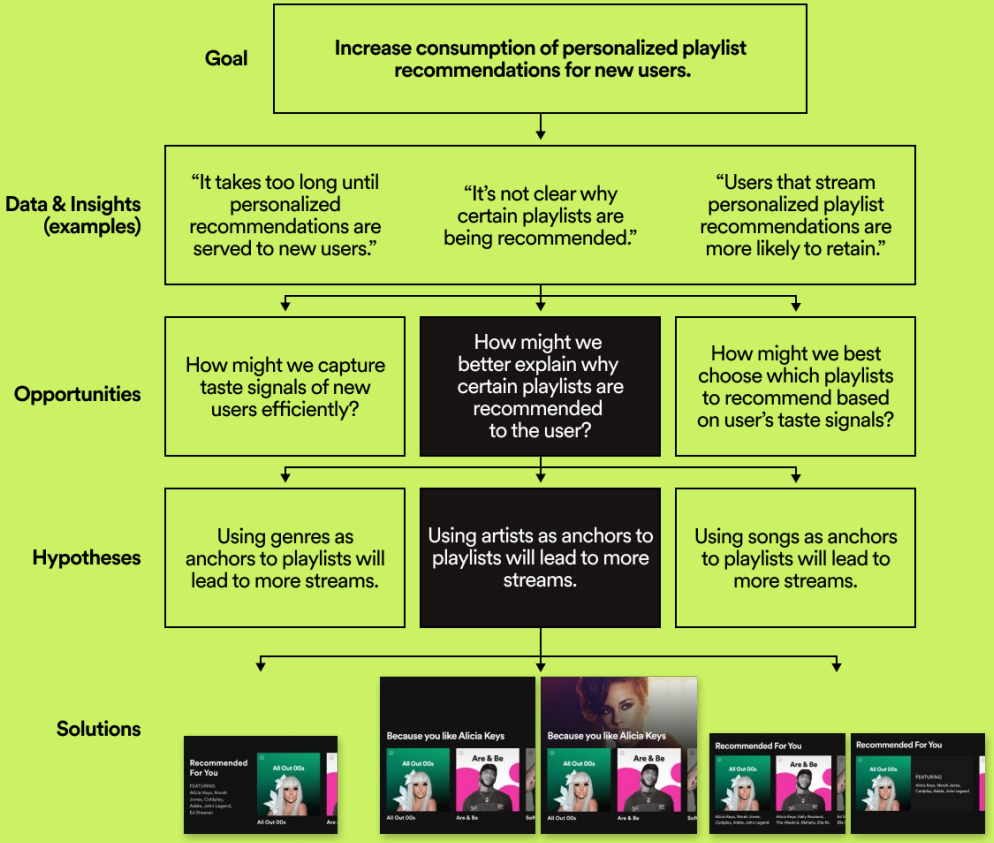


Step-by-step

#5 Design Solutions

In the design solution phase it's useful to think boldly and freely before scoping to a minimum viable product that will be tested. Explore both short-term incremental improvements as well as longer-term directions that require bigger changes. Typically, it’s best to think freely and holistically first, before scoping the solution into something that can be built as a first step.

💡The less mature the product you are working on is, the bigger the leaps you might need to make to reach measurable impact on your metric.



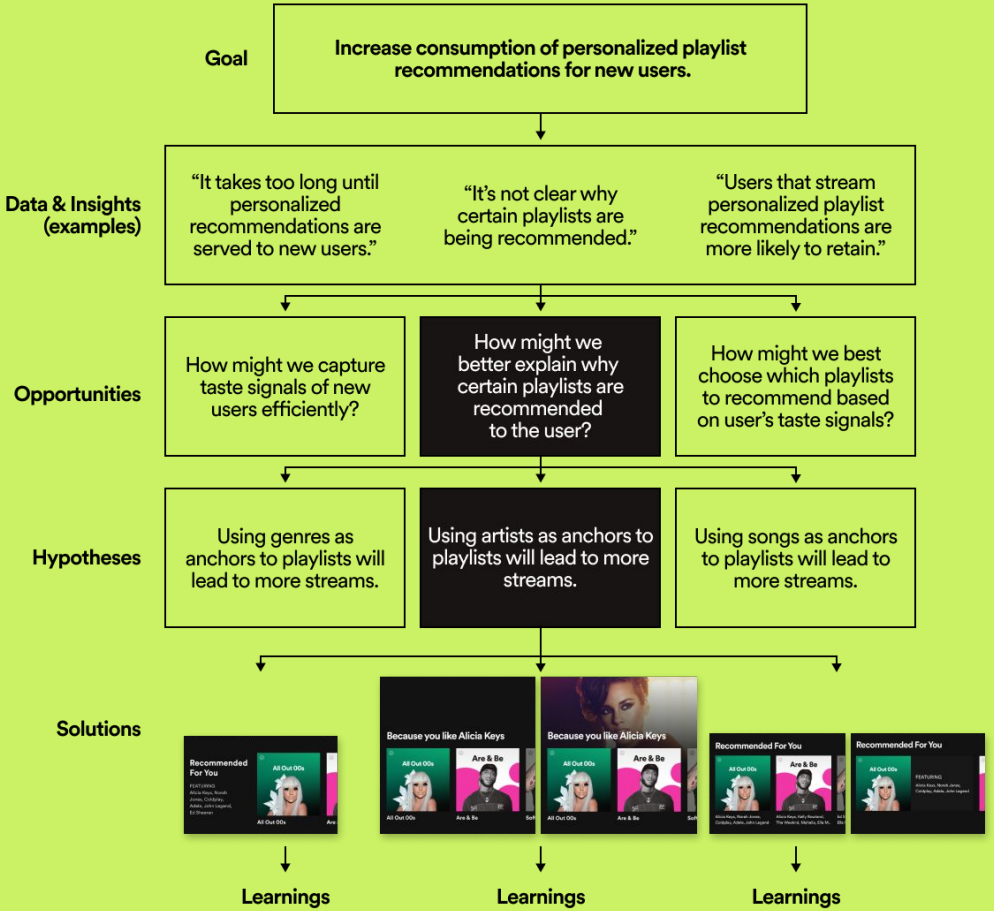
Step-by-step

#6 Learnings

When you have designed solutions, it’s time to test the most promising ones to assess if you’ll see the impact you’re after.

Start analysing the ideas in terms of feasibility. Consider speed but also anticipated impact. "Which ideas would bring the biggest learnings" versus "What would be the easiest to build?"

💡Remember that qualitative tests can inform a lot about what makes sense to A/B test.



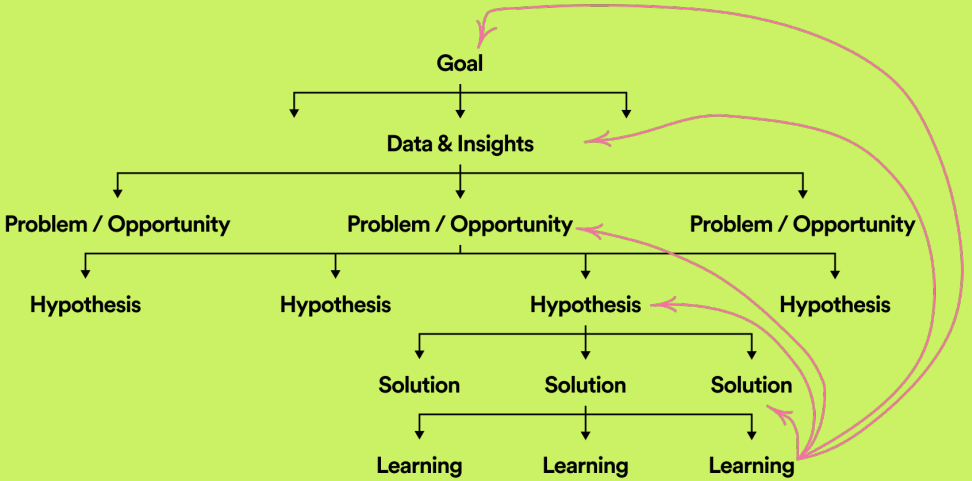
Step-by-step

#6 Learnings

These learnings will help you assess whether your hypothesis is correct or not.

If you try out multiple solutions without seeing the effect that you're after, it might be time to move on to another branch in the tree.

If on the other hand your MVP shows promising results, it's likely that, by iterating the solution further, you will see even more positive impact. It's important to keep iterating before jumping onto another opportunity.

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