PLAN THE IMPOSSIBLE

BRAINSTORM CANVAS FOR LEAN / A3

The Three Key Questions — Your Compass

An invitation to explore shared understanding, openness and alignment within your existing Lean A3 sessions.
Page 1 introduces the application. Page 2 contains the shared core canvas.

PREPARATION

Deepen your Lean A3 dialogue with The Three Key Questions as your compass.

Start with your existing Lean A3 and the facts from the work. Explore whether you share the problem and purpose, welcome other insights and can commit to a workable step. Examine how intention, people, resources and action fit together: Business Alignment. At each A3 stage, ask: Is there Clarity? Is there Receptivity? Is there Confidence?

A3 STAGE	I CLARITY	II RECEPTIVITY	III CONFIDENCE
Problem & purpose	Which problem are we investigating, and which improvement would create value?	Which customer or frontline experience are we missing?	Do we support this challenge and understand why it matters?
Analysis & causes	What is fact, what is assumption, and what supports our explanation?	Which alternative explanation or observation could change our understanding?	Is there enough evidence to choose the next experiment?
Countermeasures & plan	What do we want this countermeasure to achieve, and how will we see its effect?	What requires learning, organising, adding or letting go?	Does the step fit our intention, people, resources and authority?
Follow-up & learning	What actually changed, and what do the results tell us?	What are we learning that could change our assumptions or approach?	Are we confident to continue, or do we return to an unresolved point?

INTEGRATE THE CANVAS INTO YOUR LEAN A3 SESSION

1 Choose an A3 moment

Use the canvas at the start, when choosing, when in doubt or during follow-up. Bring your A3 and the facts.

2 Explore with the compass

Make it clear → make it possible → act with confidence. If in doubt, return to the key question that needs attention.

3 Bring the outcome back into the A3

Record the agreed step, owner and review point. Test its effect in the work and revisit what needs attention.

FACILITATOR NOTE | I · WE · ALL

At each key question, consider the individual, the team and all relevant people involved. Where is Clarity, Receptivity or Confidence still missing? Keep this as a reminder, not an extra step; return to the key question that needs attention.

A3 context: Lean Enterprise Institute. Compass application: Edwin M.R. Middelkoop MBA.

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The Three Key Questions - Your Compass

Brainstorm Canvas

Prepare the issue. Move it through the three communicating vessels.
Conclude with a shared Momentum Step.

ORGANIZATION / PARTICIPANTS	FACILITATOR	DATE	VERSION

Three communicating vessels - each with its own receptive center

PREPARATION

Prepare the ground

What needs to be in place for an unbiased exploration?

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Connect**
  Make contact and tune in to one another.
- **Context**
  Reason and relevant background.
- **Signals**
  Facts, data and observations.
- **People involved**
  Who needs to hear, speak or contribute?
- **Boundaries**
  What is fixed, and what is open?

◇ **What is still missing?**

Start with what is available.

I CLARITY

Be clear | See what is

Key Question 1: **Is there Clarity?**

LEVERAGE CHECKS

- **Reality**
  What do we observe, without explanation or judgment?
- **Intention**
  What do we truly want to understand or set in motion?
- **Significance**
  Why does this need our attention now?
- **Criteria**
  How will we recognize real progress?

◇ **What becomes clear?**

BREAKTHROUGH QUESTION

If we solve this but nothing fundamental changes, what have we really understood?

II RECEPTIVITY

Feel clearly | Open possibilities

Key Question 2: **Is there Receptivity?**

LEVERAGE CHECKS

- **Contrast**
  What lies between the current and desired reality?
- **Perspective**
  Which voice, information or possibility is still missing?
- **Influence**
  What can we influence, and what do we need to let go of?
- **Conditions**
  What do we need to learn, organize, invest in, stop or add?

◇ **What becomes possible?**

BREAKTHROUGH QUESTION

What wants to become possible that our current thinking or actions do not yet allow?

III CONFIDENCE

Act clearly | Move with confidence

Key Question 3: **Is there Confidence?**

LEVERAGE CHECKS

- **Desired outcome**
  Where do we plant our flag, and what is then truly different?
- **Congruence**
  Are people, resources, decisions and behavior aligned?
- **Commitment**
  Is there enough ownership and confidence to move forward?
- **Letting go**
  What do we do wholeheartedly, and which specific outcome do we let go of?

◇ **What inspires confidence?**

BREAKTHROUGH QUESTION

What would we choose today if we had complete confidence in our Alignment?

MOMENTUM STEP

Bring alignment into motion

What follows naturally from what becomes visible?

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Decision**
  Which direction has shared support?
- **First step**
  What happens before our next check-in?
- **Ownership**
  Who takes the lead, and who supports?
- **Signal**
  How will we see that movement is emerging?

If in doubt: return to Clarity or Receptivity.

Observe
Attune
Observe again

ALIGNMENT EMERGES WHERE THE THREE VESSELS MOVE CONGRUENTLY.

THEME / ISSUE ◇

What truly needs our shared attention?

problem - opportunity - decision - tension - change - signal

EXPECTED OUTCOME OF THIS EXPLORATION ◇

What should be clearer, become possible or gain shared support by the end?

Insight - direction - decision - commitment - movement

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