

PRODUCT MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The ICE Prioritization Framework

Impact × Confidence × Ease

A Practical Guide to Fast, Lightweight Idea Scoring

Prepared by	Harsh - Product Manager
Use case	Rapid idea scoring & experiment prioritization
Category	Product Strategy - Prioritization Frameworks

Table of Contents

- 1. What Is the ICE Framework? 3
- 2. The Formula 3
- 3. The Three Components.....4
- 4. Worked Example 5
- 5. How to Apply ICE - Step by Step 6
- 6. When to Use ICE and Its Limitations.....6
- 7. Reusable Scoring Template 7

1. What Is the ICE Framework?

ICE is a lightweight prioritization model that scores ideas on three factors Impact, Confidence, and Ease to help teams rank a large volume of candidate ideas quickly. It was popularized by Sean Ellis within the growth-hacking community, where teams often need to triage dozens of experiment ideas per week and a heavyweight scoring exercise would slow the team down more than it helps.

Each component is scored on a simple 1-10 scale by the team proposing or reviewing the idea, and the three scores are combined into a single ICE score. Because the scale is small, subjective, and fast to fill in, ICE trades precision for speed it is best used as a first-pass filter on a large backlog, not as the final word on a small number of high-stakes bets.

Why PMs use it

- Extremely fast to run a team can score a dozen ideas in a single meeting.
- Keeps growth and experimentation backlogs from becoming unranked idea dumps.
- Simple enough that any contributor, not just PMs, can propose and self-score an idea.
- Pairs well with RICE: use ICE to triage volume, then RICE for anything that graduates to a real roadmap bet.

2. The Formula

$$\text{ICE Score} = (\text{Impact} + \text{Confidence} + \text{Ease}) \div 3$$

Each component is scored independently on a 1–10 scale, then averaged. Some teams multiply the three scores instead of averaging them; averaging is more common because it keeps the final score on the same familiar 1-10 scale and avoids one very low score collapsing the total to near zero. Whichever convention a team picks, the important thing is to use it consistently across every idea being compared.

3. The Three Components

Unlike RICE, ICE does not require a hard analytics pull for each score the components are meant to be estimated quickly, in a meeting, using the team's best judgment. That speed is the whole point of the framework.

I - Impact

How much will this move the metric it's meant to move, if it works?

- 10 - could meaningfully shift a core business metric
- 5 - solid, noticeable improvement to a secondary metric
- 1 - negligible effect even in the best case

C - Confidence*How sure is the team that this will actually deliver that impact?*

- 10 - strong prior evidence a similar test has already worked, or the data is unambiguous
- 5 - a reasonable hypothesis, but genuinely untested
- 1 - a hunch with little supporting evidence either way

E - Ease*How simple is this to implement the inverse of effort, time, and risk?*

- 10 - can be built and shipped in hours with minimal risk
- 5 - a moderate, well-scoped effort across a sprint or two
- 1 - a large, complex, or highly uncertain build

4. Worked Example

The table below applies ICE to five growth-experiment ideas a team is triaging for next sprint on a B2B SaaS onboarding flow. Each component is scored 1-10 by the team in a single working session.

Idea	Impact	Confidence	Ease	ICE Score
Add progress bar to onboarding checklist	7	8	9	8.0
Send day-3 re-engagement email to inactive signups	6	7	8	7.0
Rebuild onboarding flow with AI-guided setup	9	4	3	5.3
Add social proof logos to signup page	5	6	9	6.7
Gate a feature behind a paywall during trial	8	3	5	5.3

Reading the result: the onboarding progress bar scores highest (8.0) because it is high on all three dimensions a well-understood UX pattern the team is confident in and can ship quickly. The AI-guided onboarding rebuild has the highest raw Impact score, but low Confidence and Ease pull its ICE score down to a tie with the paywall experiment both may still be worth doing, but as scoped, validated bets rather than this sprint's quick wins.

5. How to Apply ICE - Step by Step

1. Collect every candidate idea in one backlog growth experiments, small feature requests, or process tweaks all qualify.
2. Score Impact for each idea: how much would this move the target metric if it succeeded?
3. Score Confidence: how much evidence data, prior tests, research backs the Impact estimate?
4. Score Ease: how quickly and cheaply can this be built and shipped, relative to other ideas on the list?
5. Average the three scores to get the ICE score, and sort the backlog descending.
6. Run the top few ideas as the next sprint or experiment batch; don't over-plan beyond that horizon.
7. Record actual outcomes after each experiment they recalibrate the team's future Confidence scores.
8. Re-score the remaining backlog periodically, ICE priorities shift fast as new data comes in.

6. When to Use ICE and Its Limitations

Best suited for

- Triaging a large, fast-moving backlog of growth experiments or small ideas
- Teams that need a decision in minutes, not a data-backed scoring session
- Early-stage or resource-constrained teams without mature analytics instrumentation

Known limitations

- Scores are subjective and self-reported easy to inflate, especially Confidence and Ease
- No Reach dimension, so a high-scoring idea might still only affect a tiny slice of users
- Averaging can mask a fatal weakness in one dimension that a stricter model would surface
- Not rigorous enough on its own for large, expensive, or strategically risky bets

PM Practice Tip

- Use ICE to triage volume fast, then apply RICE's Reach and hard-data discipline to anything
- that graduates from "quick experiment" to "actual roadmap commitment."

7. Reusable Scoring Template

Copy the structure below into your own experiment tracker. Keep the 1-10 scale definitions for Impact, Confidence, and Ease visible at the top of the sheet so every contributor scores on the same basis.

Idea	Impact (1-10)	Confidence (1-10)	Ease (1-10)	ICE Score	Owner