



Framing Problem

| Problem Framing Tool

Explore a problem space and formulate a robust problem statement to ensure that you are solving for the right problem.

WHEN

Use Problem Framing at the start of the effort, then revisit it periodically to track your progress.

WHY

This approach helps a team to:

- Establish a consensus about the team's purpose.
- Gain a sense of what "done" will look like.
- Define the scope of the team's initial activities and goals.
- Reduce the likelihood of working at cross-purposes

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

STEP 1: Focus on the characteristics and elements of the problem. Ask, "What is the problem we are trying to solve?" (Don't discuss solutions yet.) Participants should describe a specific undesirable situation that the team is working.

STEP 2: Identify which problem elements are most important and most viable for your team to attack. This helps teams begin with the end in mind, and defines a specific goal.

STEP 3: Establish a refined problem statement that reflects the priorities from the discussion. Use it to focus the team and remind them of a common purpose.

STEP 4: Determine why the problem hasn't already been solved. Gather perspectives from team members and identify ways to remove barriers and obstacles.

STEP 5: Identify who else has this problem. Identifying other instances of the problem can lead to collaboration opportunities. Agree on who in the group will reach out to the individual, group, or organization wrestling with a similar problem.

STEP 6: Identify who does not have this problem and try to determine why. Perhaps the problem is solved in that domain (see step 7), or perhaps the problem did not occur in the first place.

STEP 7: Ask, "Who has solved this problem already?" and then identify opportunities to copy, reuse, or otherwise leverage their solutions. Solutions from other domains may be applicable with adaptations. Discuss issues of relevance, applicability, or other barriers to adoption. Document which opportunities should be investigated.

STEP 8: Revisit the problem statement from Step 1 and ensure that it reflects the nuance from the successive steps. Create a definition of what "done" looks like. What difference will it make for your team? Document the finalized problem and outcome statement and share it with your team.



Problem Framing Tool | Worksheet

Defining the Right Problem		
What is the problem?	Who has the problem?	What is the scope?
	When and Where do they experience it?	Small ↔ Big Trivial ↔ Serious Static ↔ Dynamic
Who else has it? <i>Colleagues, competitors, other domains, etc.</i>	What are the elements of the problem? <i>Physical, social, emotional, professional, primary, secondary</i>	Who does not have it? <i>Colleagues, competitors, other domains, etc.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> It's New <input type="checkbox"/> It's Hard <input type="checkbox"/> It's Low Priority <input type="checkbox"/> Other	Why haven't we solved it?	Why not? <input type="checkbox"/> Avoided <input type="checkbox"/> Mitigated <input type="checkbox"/> Solved <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Stated another way, the problem is:		
How might we create ways to _____ <small>ACT ON PAIN/GAIN</small> for _____ <small>PERSONA</small> while considering _____ <small>OTHER STAKEHOLDERS</small> as we aim to _____ <small>JOB TO BE DONE</small> ?		

