

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Time: 5-10 minutes per Problem Statement

WHEN

to use it

You have a hypothesis, or understanding, about the customer problem and need to articulate it to gain shared-vision or customer feedback.

WHY

use it

Enables stakeholders to clarify the problem, the root causes and associated emotions. Use the problem statement with the target customer to get feedback on how well this statement reflects their problem, and how painful this problem is relative to others, from their perspective.

HOW

to do it

1. WRITE the problem statement template on a large board or poster (or print the problem statement template).
2. Each team member should GENERATE their own problem statement, filling in the 5 phrases:

Problem Statement Template

I am _____.

"Who" with 3 characteristics

I am trying to _____.

Outcome/Job

but _____.

Problem/Barrier

because _____.

Root Cause

which makes me feel _____.

Emotion

3. SHARE all problem statements with group
4. CHOOSE which problem statement(s) to test with customers

PROBLEM STATEMENT

TIPS

for using it

- Challenge team to get uncomfortably narrow on the problem and root cause. This will help you learn where your assumptions are correct or wrong
- Write each word on a Post-It's to rapidly prototype different ways of phrasing the problem statement.
- Try several very different problem statements with your customers to learn more. Ask them which problem statements sound like them, and WHY. What would they change?

USE WITH

other methods

Complementary method:

Works well with the Target when having customers evaluate multiple problem statements.

Recommended sequences of methods

Customer interviews -> Problem Statement -> Customer feedback

Problem Statement -> Storyboard the problem -> Customer Feedback

CONTACT

with questions

Your local Innovation Catalyst, or the DIG Team for more information.

PROBLEM STATEMENT FACILITATION

MAKE SURE
THE "WHO" IS
UNCOMFORTABLY
NARROW

- The person should be unique and come to life
- Based on a real person, a thorough persona
- Make sure you can determine who the person is not
- If you use the words "average" or "typical" you are too broad
- The description should include at least 3 characteristics, including something about their environment

IDENTIFY
WHETHER THE
TASK IS
SPECIFIC
ENOUGH

- It needs to be something the customer is doing or trying to do
- It should be precisely one thing, not trying to boil the ocean
- Ask what the outcome is and back your way into the task
- Is there just a repeat of the same statement?
- Find the right altitude (altimeter – have team assess)
- Does it get to the motivation, deeper than the surface action?

EVALUATE IF
THEY HAVE
IDENTIFIED THE
ROOT CAUSE

- Should be an answer to "why" (or 5 of them)
- Surprise or insight that causes customers to say "Wow! I never realized that!"
- Root cause is not a solution
- Act out the scene
- Ask customers to validate
- Does the feeling relate or flow from the root cause?
- If the "because" is blaming, you aren't at root cause

PROBLEM STATEMENT TIPS

HELP TEAMS
RECOGNIZE
WHETHER A
SOLUTION IS
IMPLIED IN
THEIR
PROBLEM
STATEMENT

- Call out “no solutions” and provide “bad” example at the start
- Just ask “is this a solution”?
- “Do not use” word list (e.g., no “tool”, “don’t have”)
- Change “because” to “if I had” and if it makes sense, it’s a solution
- Drive to root cause, ask why, why, why

HOW THE RIGHT
PROBLEM
STATEMENT
CAN LEAD TO
DELIGHT

- It’s the basis for creating solutions to real problems that are so profoundly delightful that customers wouldn’t ever want to return to the old way
- It is the manifestation of the deep customer insight that allows teams to create solutions that delight

Problem Statement

October 26, 2009

Structure

- I am <“who” with 3 characteristics>. I am trying to <outcome/job>, but <problem/barrier> because <root cause>, which makes me feel <emotion>.

Example

- I am *an overweight employee with a full-time job and a toddler at home.*
- I am trying to *get regular exercise,*
but *I can't find the time*
because *I spend all of my free time playing with my daughter ,*
which makes me feel *powerless to control my weight.*

Template

- I am _____.
"Who" with 3 characteristics
- I am trying to _____,
Outcome/Job
but _____,
Problem/Barrier
because _____,
Root Cause
which makes me feel _____.
Emotion