2. Identify the Problem

A well-crafted problem statement is essential for addressing the right issue. It sets the stage for effective solutions by focusing on the core challenge and its impact. Here's a step-by-step guide to creating a problem statement that's clear, concise, and compelling.

Step 1: Identify Who or What is Affected

Determine the specific person, team, department, or system impacted by the problem.

Ask yourself: Who or what is experiencing this issue?

Examples:

- o   "Our team..."
- o   "The department..."
- o   "Our client satisfaction metrics..."

Tip: Be as specific as possible. Defining the "who" focuses the problem and makes it relatable.

Step 2: Define the Core Problem or Issue

Describe the primary challenge or barrier impacting the group you identified.

Ask yourself: What is the main issue or obstacle they're facing?

Examples:

- o   "...is facing inconsistent project outcomes…"
- o   "…is struggling with high employee turnover…"
- o   "…is experiencing declining customer satisfaction…"

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Pro Tip: Avoid vague language. Focus on one main problem rather than multiple issues.

Step 3: Identify the Root Cause(s)

Determine the underlying reason for the problem.

Ask yourself: Why is this problem happening? What factors contribute to this issue?

Examples:

- o "…due to unclear quality standards…"
- o "…because of inefficient onboarding processes…"
- o "…resulting from outdated technology…"

Pro Tip: This is where the **5 Why's** or **Fishbone Diagram** can help. These tools help you explore deeper causes beyond the symptoms.

Step 4: Describe the Impact

Emphasize the consequences of the problem. This step clarifies why the problem needs solving.

Ask yourself: What negative impact does this problem have? How does it affect goals, productivity, morale, or outcomes?

Examples:

- o "…resulting in missed deadlines and decreased client satisfaction."
- o "…leading to low team morale and high replacement costs."
- o "…causing lost sales and a drop in market share."

Pro Tip: Focus on measurable or observable consequences to strengthen the urgency.

Step 5: Craft the Problem Statement

Combine the elements from each step into a single, concise sentence. Here's a simple formula:

> **"[Who or what is affected] is facing [the main issue or challenge] due to [root cause(s)], which results in [negative impact or consequences]."**

Sample Problem Statements

- **Example 1**: "Our team is facing inconsistent project outcomes due to unclear quality standards, resulting in missed deadlines and decreased client satisfaction."
- **Example 2**: "The customer support department is experiencing high employee turnover because of inefficient onboarding processes, leading to increased training costs and reduced service quality."
- **Example 3**: "Our online sales platform is losing customers due to an outdated user interface, causing a drop in revenue and customer satisfaction."

Final Checklist

- **Clarity**: Is the problem stated simply and clearly?
- **Specificity**: Does it specify who or what is affected and the main issue?
- **Relevance**: Does it focus on the root cause rather than symptoms?
- **Impact**: Does it convey the urgency by showing the consequences.

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