

Lightning Workshop: Problem Framing

Facilitation Script

2 hours

5 min Introduction

Present the problem as it's currently understood. Acknowledge that the framing might be wrong or incomplete.

OPENING

"We're here because we have a problem. Right now, it's framed as: *[current problem statement]*. But here's the thing: I'm not sure we're framing it right. If we solve the wrong problem perfectly, we've still failed. So today, we're going to question this framing, dig deeper, and make sure we're pointing ourselves at the right target."

10 min Individual Problem Statements

Give each participant time to write their own version of the problem statement. No discussion yet.

PROMPT

"Without talking to each other, take 10 minutes to write your version of the problem we're trying to solve. Complete this sentence: 'The problem we're trying to solve is...' Be as specific as you can. Include who's affected, what's happening, and why it matters."

15 min Share Out

Have each person read their problem statement aloud. Listen for differences in scope, audience, root cause, or emphasis.

PROCESS

"Let's go around. Read your problem statement exactly as written. No explaining or defending yet. We're just listening for how differently we might be seeing this."

OBSERVATIONS

"What differences did we hear? Some of you focused on *[X]*, others on *[Y]*. Some framed it as a *[user]* problem, others as a *[process]* problem. These differences are information."

20 min 5 Whys

Take one or two problem framings and dig deeper using the 5 Whys technique. Ask "Why does this happen?" repeatedly to uncover root causes.

SETUP

"Let's take *[problem framing]* and dig deeper. I'm going to keep asking 'Why does this happen?' We're looking for the root cause, not the surface symptom."

PROCESS

"Why does *[problem]* happen? *[Response]* And why does that happen? *[Response]* Keep going. We often find the real problem is 3-4 levels down from where we started."

WRAP

"Look at where we ended up. Is this closer to something we can actually address? Sometimes the root cause reveals we've been treating symptoms."

10 min Flip It

Reframe the problem as an opportunity or aspiration. Instead of "Customers are frustrated," try "How do we delight customers?"

TECHNIQUE

"Let's flip this. Instead of stating what's wrong, let's state what we want to be true. If the problem is *[X]*, the flip might be *[Y]*. Framing as opportunity opens up more creative possibilities than framing as deficit."

15 min How Might We Generation

Using insights from the 5 Whys and the flipped frame, generate "How Might We" questions. HMWs are optimistic, specific, and solvable.

SETUP

"How Might We questions are a bridge between problem and solution. They start with 'How might we...!' and suggest an opportunity without dictating a solution. Good HMWs are narrow enough to be actionable but broad enough to allow creative solutions."

PROMPT

"Based on what we've learned, write HMW questions. Each one should feel like an exciting challenge, not a chore. 'How might we make [user] feel [desired state]?' 'How might we eliminate [root cause]?' Write as many as you can in 15 minutes."

15 min Cluster & Select

Group similar HMWs together. Then vote on which HMW questions are most energizing and most likely to lead to meaningful solutions.

CLUSTERING

"Post your HMWs. Let's group similar ones together. What themes do we see?"

VOTING

"You have 3 dots. Vote on the HMW questions that feel most energizing, not easiest, but most exciting. Which ones, if we answered them well, would really solve this?"

10 min Craft Final Statement

Using the top HMWs and insights from the session, collaboratively craft a final problem statement that the team can align around.

PROCESS

"Let's craft our final problem statement. It should incorporate what we learned in the 5 Whys, the opportunity framing, and the energy from our top HMWs. I'll start drafting on the board. Let's wordsmith it together."

TEST

"Read it back. Does this feel right? Is it specific enough to guide our work? Broad enough to allow creativity? If we solve this, have we actually addressed the real problem?"

10 min Wrap-up

Read the final problem statement aloud. Check for alignment. Discuss how it will be used going forward.

ALIGNMENT CHECK

"Let's do a fist-to-five. Hold up fingers for how aligned you feel with this problem statement. Five is fully aligned, one is major concerns."

CLOSE

"This problem statement will guide our solution development. We'll reference it in every meeting. If we start to drift, we come back to this. I'll document this and share it with the team by [date]."