

## 2. Vision Activity: Problem Not Job, aka The Personal Compass

Entrepreneur Derek Sivers argues that to have a single, specific goal in mind can be limiting – because if obstacles keep cropping up to stop us, we eventually abandon this single, specific goal. Instead of a specific goal, he argues that we should spend our lives *pursuing the answer to a problem*. That's our purpose in life. This is a better way to goal set because even when obstacles block our way, we find another route towards solving our chosen problem – of pursuing our purpose.

For example, here are two pretty similar pupils:

Pupil 1 has a super-specific goal: I want to study medicine at Manchester University and become a doctor.

Pupil 2 has a problem that fascinates them: how can we improve healthcare in the UK?

Of course, each pupil will encounter obstacles along their way. But if pupil 1 doesn't get the grades to study medicine at Manchester, the route to their goal is blocked. If the same thing happens to pupil 2, they will find a different route to solving the problem that fascinates them; they may do voluntary work, start a nursing course, choose a degree that covers public healthcare systems or research the politics of healthcare.

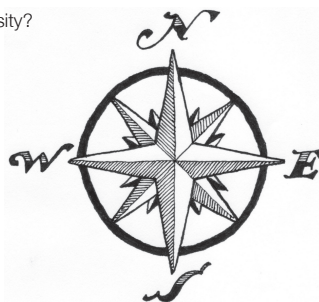
Sivers says that if we can express our goals as *problems we're trying to solve*, we always know when we're heading in the right direction and we tend not to be put off by obstacles.

Let's build a compass. Your true north is the problem that most fascinates you – the one you should always be heading towards. Let's call this your *lead problem*. Around true north (north-east, north-west) are other problems that are close to your lead problem – perhaps different versions of your lead problem. If you're heading in this direction you're still doing OK. Around the other compass points (east, south and west) are distractions – things you shouldn't be pursuing, *even if other people think you should*. If you're going in these directions, you'll need to turn back.

Cover the compass points with notes. Problems that interest or fascinate you go at or near your true north. Distractions go elsewhere, with the biggest at the south – the opposite direction to your true north.

Example problems to consider, discuss or discard include: **Tick any questions that particularly resonate with you**

- » How do we make the distribution of wealth in the UK fairer?
- » How can we save larger numbers of species from extinction?
- » How might we design buildings that increase people's happiness and well-being?
- » What are the elements necessary for a superb movie?
- » How can we improve pupils' experience of school, college or university?
- » How can the design of \_\_\_\_\_ be improved?
- » How can we accelerate our progress towards curing \_\_\_\_\_?
- » How can art be used to improve people's lives?
- » What qualities are necessary for huge success in \_\_\_\_\_?
- » How can I create popular, immersive, interactive computer games?
- » How can we reduce crime by working with young offenders?
- » What qualities make some \_\_\_\_\_ better than others?
- » How can we help people cope with difficult, stressful or traumatic times in their lives?



# September Activities

- » What does outstanding parenting/teaching look like?
- » How can we discover more about the workings of the universe?
- » How do we solve global warming?
- » What does augmented/virtual reality mean for media/entertainment/gaming?
- » How can we work more efficiently using artificial intelligence?

Once you think you have some interesting problems you'd like to explore further, use the space below to sketch out some next steps. Is there a documentary you could watch, a book you can read, someone you could talk to or ask for advice, or a piece of research you can do to get more information?

### Possible problems:

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### Possible next steps:

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### Final Thoughts

Purpose goals tend to be more magnetic and motivating than status goals. Have a look at these examples to see the difference:

- » **Purpose:** I see a lot of inequality in the way we are educated and prepared for work, and I want to help tackle that issue
- » **Status:** I want to earn a lot, take long holidays and have a big house

You might want both of these things. And when times get tough (as they do for everyone at some point!) you'd be forgiven for thinking it would be the status goal that gets you through. But our experience shows it will most likely be the sense of purpose that keeps you moving forwards.

So make sure you're working on developing your sense of purpose. It's going to come in useful!