

The SOLVE Framework Cheat Sheet: Your Guide to Effective Problem Framing

Define Problems Clearly for Smarter Solutions with AI

1. The SOLVE Framework

What it is: A five-part framework to help you define problems clearly and concisely, making them easier to solve (with or without AI).

(Visual: Insert a graphic here. A vertical stack, similar to the PROMPT acronym stack, would be ideal. Simple icons can be used for each element.)

Example Image Layout (Replace with a real graphic)

[🔍] **S** - Situation - What's happening? - Example: Sales are down 10% this quarter.

[🚧] **O** - Obstacles - What's in the way? - Example: Competitor launched a new product.

[🔒] **L** - Limitations - What are the constraints? - Example: Limited marketing budget.

[🎯] **V** - Vision - What's the desired outcome? - Example: Increase sales by 15% next quarter.

[✅] **E** - Expectations - Key needs to be addressed? - Example: Identify the cause of sales decline.

- **S - Situation:** Describe the current state and the specific problem. Be factual and concise.
 - *Example:* "Our new product launch isn't generating enough leads." (Not just: "Things aren't going well.")
- **O - Obstacles:** Identify the challenges or difficulties preventing you from reaching your goal. What's standing in the way?
 - *Example:* "Our target audience isn't aware of the product. Our marketing message isn't clear."
- **L - Limitations:** Outline any restrictions or constraints you're working within (time, budget, resources, technology, etc.).
 - *Example:* "We have a limited marketing budget. We need to see results within the next quarter."
- **V - Vision:** Define your desired outcome or goal. What does success look like? Be specific and measurable, if possible.
 - *Example:* "Increase qualified leads by 25% within the next quarter." (Not just: "Improve lead generation.")

- **E - Expectations:** What are the key requirements or expectations of stakeholders (including yourself)? What *must* be addressed to consider the problem solved?
 - *Example:* "We need to identify the *reasons* for low lead generation. We need a cost-effective solution. We need to improve brand awareness among our target audience."

2. Problem Framing Tips & Best Practices

- **Be Specific:** Avoid vague language. The more precise your problem statement, the easier it is to find solutions.
- **Data-Driven:** Use data to support your description of the Situation and to define your Vision (measurable goals).
- **Focus on the Root Cause:** Use techniques like the "5 Whys" to dig deeper than surface-level symptoms.
- **Break Down Complexity:** Use Problem Decomposition to break large problems into smaller, manageable parts.
- **Consider Multiple Perspectives:** Think about the problem from different viewpoints (customer, employee, competitor, etc.).
- **Iterate:** Your problem statement isn't set in stone. Refine it as you gather more information.

3. Example Problem Statements (Using SOLVE)

1. Low Website Traffic:

- **Situation:** "Website traffic has decreased by 20% in the last month."
- **Obstacles:** "We don't know *why* traffic has decreased. Competitor activity might be a factor. Our SEO ranking has dropped."
- **Limitations:** "We have a limited budget for paid advertising. We need to identify the cause quickly."
- **Vision:** "Return to previous traffic levels within two months and identify the cause of the decline."
- **Expectations:** "Identify the cause of the traffic drop. Implement a solution that doesn't require a large budget increase."

2. Poor Customer Service Ratings:

- **Situation:** "Customer service satisfaction ratings have dropped from 4.5 stars to 3.8 stars in the last quarter."

- **Obstacles:** "Customers are complaining about long wait times, unhelpful responses, and difficulty resolving issues."
- **Limitations:** "We have a limited budget for hiring additional staff. We need to improve ratings without major system overhauls."
- **Vision:** "Increase customer service ratings to 4.2 stars within three months."
- **Expectations:** "Reduce customer wait times. Improve the helpfulness of responses. Make it easier for customers to resolve issues."

3. Declining Employee Morale:

- **Situation:** "Employee morale has decreased significantly, as measured by a recent internal survey."
- **Obstacles:** "Employees report feeling overworked, undervalued, and lacking clear communication from management."
- **Limitations:** "We have a limited budget for salary increases. Major organizational changes are not feasible in the short term."
- **Vision:** "Improve employee morale scores by 15% within six months, as measured by a follow-up survey."
- **Expectations:** "Identify the root causes of low morale. Implement changes that address employee concerns without significant financial investment."

4. Prompt Starters (For use with AI after defining the problem with SOLVE)

- "Analyze this problem statement: [Paste SOLVE statement]."
- "Suggest potential solutions for this problem: [Paste SOLVE statement]."
- "What data would be most helpful in further analyzing this problem: [Paste SOLVE statement]?"
- "Act as a [Role] and analyze this problem: [Paste SOLVE statement]."
- "What are likely causes for ...: [Paste SOLVE statement]."

5. SOLVE Framework Builder - Create Your Own!

Use this space to practice defining your own problems using the SOLVE framework.

Element	Description	Your Input
S (Situation)	Describe the current state and the specific problem. Be factual and concise.	

O (Obstacles)	Identify the challenges or difficulties preventing you from reaching your goal.	
L (Limitations)	Outline any restrictions or constraints (time, budget, resources, etc.).	
V (Vision)	Define your desired outcome or goal. Be specific and measurable, if possible.	
E (Expectations)	What <i>must</i> be addressed to consider the problem solved?	

My Complete Problem Statement:

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