**Define Problem**:

**Specify The Business Problem:**

## What is problem definition?

Problem-solving is a key skill that individuals carry out across a wide range of jobs and careers. Employers tend to prefer to hire individuals who can demonstrate a strong capability to solve problems, as it can help greatly in several aspects of their organisation. A key aspect of problem-solving, that some argue is more important than the actual solving, is defining the problem itself. By accurately defining the problem that requires solving, you may be able to understand why the issue has arisen and hence be able to solve it more efficiently.

For example, a retailer may notice they aren't selling as many coffee machines as in previous months. This may be due to several reasons: competitor stores may be selling them at a cheaper price, the manufacturer could have identified a fault with them or the time of year could have had an impact. By identifying the direct cause of the problem, you or your team can gain a better understanding of it and work to solve the problem more efficient

# How to define problems

Across many industries, your role may include carrying out problem-solving tasks to resolve issues that your organisation has. A key part of the problem-solving process is to define what the problem is, whereby you gain a thorough understanding of the issue before you proceed to resolve it. By thoroughly defining what your problem is, you can carry out the problem-solving process in a more streamlined way. In this article, we expand on what problem defining is, discuss how to define problems, explore the importance of problem definition and offer some tips for defining What is problem definition?

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Read the following steps to gain a better understanding of how to define problems:

### 1. Ask 'why'

A key approach that you can take when defining your problem is to ask 'why' questions to identify and gain an in-depth understanding of the issue. You could ask a series of 'why' questions that follow on from each other. This may be beneficial in a team environment where you can gather different perceptions and a range of questions. For example, if a podcast is losing listeners, you could ask 'why are we losing listeners?'. If the answer is because listeners pay a subscription, you could then ask 'why are people not willing to subscribe?' and so forth.

### 2. Identify what you already know

When defining exactly what your problem is, you may wish to gather as much information on the topic as you can. Doing this can help you to attain a detailed understanding of the area of your organisation. You can take notes or create detailed sentences and if working in a team, you may wish to ensure that all members are aware of and have access to the information. For example, the podcast presenters may collaborate to detail that they charge £5 per month, produce two 45 minute shows per week and have taken out social media advertising.

### 3. Discuss other information

After gathering all the information that you can on the problematic area, you can also gather additional, external information. You can discuss the information that you do not know about the area of concern and conduct research either independently or within your team. This can help to both provide further detail into the issue and offer potential solutions. For example, the podcast team may not know if listeners stay for the whole podcast and may research the optimal length of podcasts and average durations that listeners spend listening to podcasts.

### 4. Write down the problem in words

Once you have gathered as much information and detail as possible and identified the cause of your problem, you can begin to define your problem in words. It's common to write the problem in a detailed manner in full sentences, as opposed to note form. You may also wish to be precise where possible so team members can understand them clearly. In our podcast example, they may write 'we are losing listeners because our research shows that people typically prefer to listen to longer, in-depth podcasts and are reluctant to pay subscription prices'.

### 5. Expand with further details

After you have defined and written the key element of your problem statement, you can add additional details that may be of benefit. You can provide information based on the research you conducted or identify budgets, schedules and other constraints on the problem. You may even add preliminary conditions that might help when you come to solve the problem. For example, the podcast producers may determine that individuals aren't willing to pay £5 per month for one-and-a-half hours worth of content. They may also suggest making longer podcasts if they want to keep earning revenue from subscriptions.

### 6. Discuss the statement with team members

Another element of defining a problem is to ensure that, if the problem concerns several team members, everyone understands exactly what the problem is. If you have worked on defining the problem with your team, then you may have asked for their input and suggestions consistently. Afterwards, all members may wish to have a copy of the problem statement so that they can refer to it frequently. For example, the presenters of the podcast may share their problem statement with any producers or editors that they work with, so they understand the areas of improvement.

### 7. Define any key terms

Finally, you may wish to ensure that you write all information clearly and precisely. You may have used a variety of technical jargon or complex sentences that are difficult to understand. Additionally, if you're working alongside members of different departments, you may wish to provide further explanation on certain areas that they typically don't work on and may not comprehend. By defining these terms, you can ensure that you have defined your problem in a detailed way that all necessary parties can understand.