

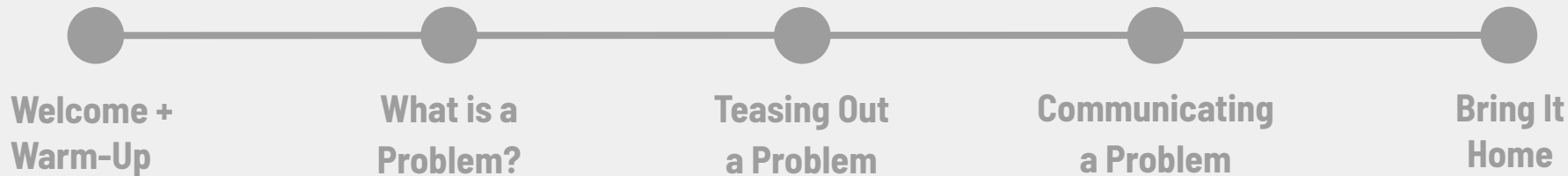
# PRODUCT MANAGEMENT

PDM 5.0

## Problem Identification

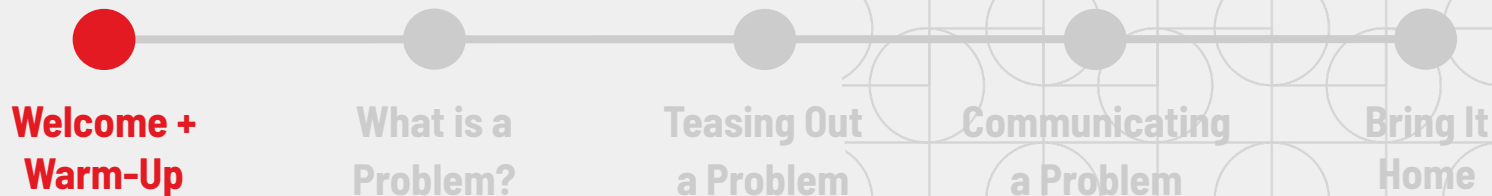
## Problem Identification

# LESSON ROADMAP



# WELCOME + WARM-UP

## Problem Identification



# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1

Describe the difference between a problem and a solution that is rephrased as a problem.

2

Demonstrate how to dig into surface level problems to uncover deeper understanding.

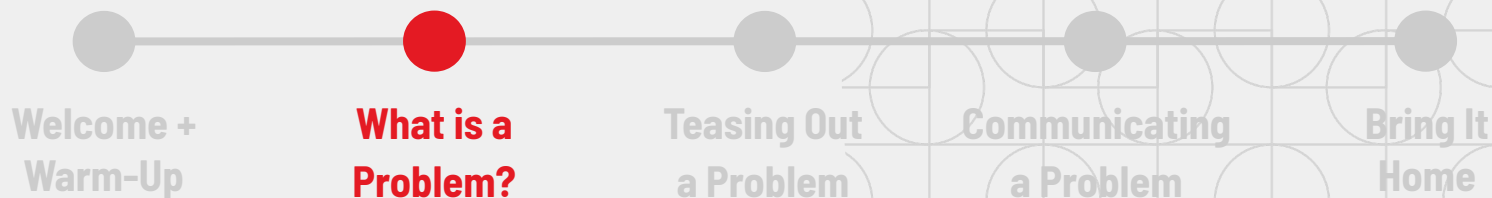
3

Summarize key elements to include when communicating problems.



# WHAT IS A PROBLEM?

## Problem Identification



## REAL CASES: SOLUTIONS WITHOUT SPECIFIC PROBLEMS



# What do people really want?



# It is not about you...





# WHAT IS A PROBLEM?

**A goal or objective that a user would like to achieve, but can't.**

# WHAT IS A SOLUTION?

**A product or process that can help a user achieve that goal or objective.**

# PROBLEMS

**I never remember to start the dishwasher before going to bed**



**Dishwasher starts on a timer**

**I can't get my team aligned on the work we're supposed to do each week**



**My team meets for a weekly planning session**

**I can't stop my network from getting hacked**



**Add security tools to my network**

**Solutions can be masked as problems.**

## SOLUTIONS MASKED AS PROBLEMS

**Mo wants to take a picture**



**Mo wants to map directions**



**Mo wants to write a note**



## PROBLEMS

**Mo wants to keep a record of important moments in their life**

**Mo wants to determine the best way to get to the library**

**Mo wants to remember important information**

If we reactively jump to solutions to symptomatic complaints, we run the risk of building things that **users don't want, users never asked for, and that don't address the real problems people have.**

**Diagnose** before you prescribe.

Identify whether the following are problems or solutions  
**masked** as problems.

- ☐ Shona wants to edit an email
- ☐ Telma wants to communicate with friends
- ☐ Maeve wants to occupy their time while waiting in line
- ☐ Michael wants to do crossword puzzles on his phone
- ☐ Ester wants to find a place to live



# TEASING OUT A PROBLEM

## Problem Identification



**Why should we work to identify and solve problems  
rather than simply **implement solutions?****

# IMAGINE THIS SCENARIO

People like sharing their opinions on social media. Video on social is becoming popular. We should create a product where people can share their opinions in short videos.

**What if we did for video what Twitter did for blogging?  
Videos will be six seconds long. Rather than microblogging,  
we'll do **microvlogging**!**

# THE PROBLEM WITH SOLUTIONS

- Solutions often come to us as an idea of one person or a few people.
- People talk about their needs in the context of what's familiar.
- Solutions are often filled with assumptions that need to be validated.
- Starting with a solution hinders our ability to learn.
- Building the wrong thing can be an expensive mistake.

### ❑ **Unvalidated user sample**

Vine's users were not microbloggers. Vine became an entertainment product after launch where most users were passive viewers and a few content creators.

### ❑ **People think in context**

Vine tried to be Twitter for video. That's why Twitter bought them. They had one context in mind for how users would use the product and they went all in on that.

### ❑ **Based on assumptions**

If people like to share their opinion in 240 characters, surely they would like to do the same thing in video?

### ❑ **No opportunity to learn**

If Vine had realized earlier that 6 seconds wasn't enough time for people to share their opinions, and they had been open to learning, they might still be here today.

### ❑ **It can be very expensive if we get it wrong**

Twitter bought Vine for \$30M.

People like sharing their opinions on social media. Video on social is becoming popular. We should create a product where people can share their opinions in short videos.

**What if we did for video what Twitter did for blogging? Videos will be six seconds long. Rather than microblogging, we'll do microvlogging!**



# WHAT IS THE REAL PROBLEM?

**Let's dig into our ideas —  
and those of others — to  
figure this out.**

# FIVE WHYS

**Mo wants a map**

**WHY does Mo want a map?**

**Because Mo needs directions**

**WHY does Mo need directions?**

**Because Mo wants to go to the library**

**WHY does Mo want to go to the library?**

**Because Mo wants to get a book about UX**

**WHY does Mo want a UX book?**

**Because Mo wants to learn how to collaborate better with his design colleagues**

**WHY does Mo....**

## Partner 1:

- Pick your favorite app on your phone or computer.
- Tell your partner the app and one feature you wish it had.

## Partner 2:

- Ask your partner why questions until you get to the core problem they want solved (at least 5 whys, but no more than 3 minutes)

**Then switch!**



**We have to hold onto the customer's needs and the business' needs at the same time.**

# THEY'RE DIFFERENT

## Customer Problems

Things your customers are trying to do but can't.

Customers may come to your company to help solve their problem, or your product is what they have a problem with.

vs.

## Business Problems

Things that your company wants to solve so that it can grow market shares, lower costs, increase sales, create efficiencies, etc.

# ALIGNING TWO TYPES OF PROBLEMS

Sometimes customer problems and business problems are aligned.

## Scenario I

Customers were unable to remember when they had to be at an appointment. Your company builds a reminder system. Customers buy your product. Your company increases revenue, market share, etc. Solving the customer problem also solved a business problem.

## Scenario II

Revenue is low and nobody knows about your company. You build a website to promote your reminder system product. Customers find your website via search engines. They buy your product and can now remember when they have appointments. Solving the business problem also resulted in solving customer problems.

## When customer and business problems are not aligned...

- Your reminder system product has a 2% customer churn rate YoY.
- Customers have been frustrated for over a year that they cannot snooze reminders for a custom time frame.
- You have an automated system that handles those requests and customers seem placated by the responses they receive.
- Based on market research, you know that functionality is not likely to increase your customer base.
- Customer research and evidence shows you your current customers are not likely to leave due to that missing functionality.
- If you fix it, you are solving a customer problem. However, you are likely not solving a business problem.

**SHOULD YOU SOLVE IT?**

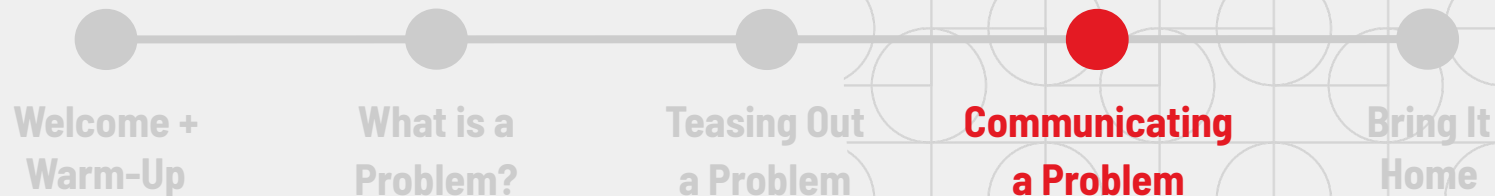
**10:00**

**BREAK TIME**



# COMMUNICATING A PROBLEM

## Problem Identification



Once we understand a problem, we need to **communicate** it.

# COMMUNICATING PROBLEMS

## Development Teams

- Your team of designers, engineers, QA, project management
- Other development teams that are impacted by your work

## Partner Business Functions

- Marketing
- Sales
- Customer Success
- Support

## Executives

- Product leaders
- Engineering leaders
- Partner team leaders



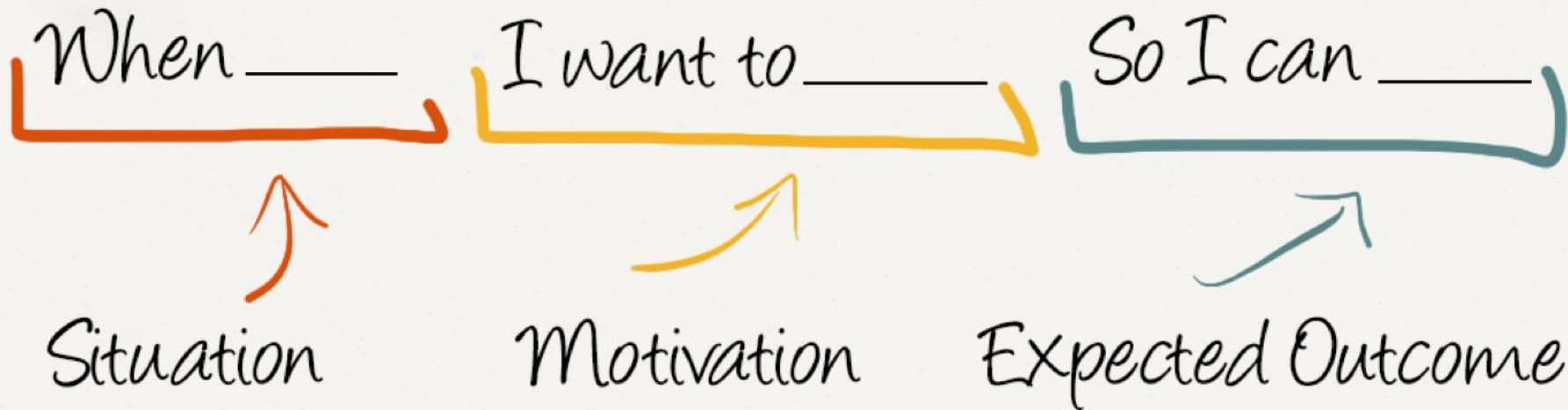
# WHAT TO COMMUNICATE

Who is affected by the problem? (Be specific)

What goal are they trying to achieve?

What is the impact to both themselves and to the business of them not being able to achieve that goal?

# JOB STORY FORMAT



# JOB STORY EXAMPLE

*As a*

**(Training Supervisor in a large ski school)**

*When*

**(I am reviewing the performance of my training programs)**

*I want to*

**(Have up to date, detailed attendance and performance metrics for all of my programs)**

*so that I can*

**(Make sure I am maximising the use of my Trainers for the programs, topics, clinics and timeframes that are most valuable.)**

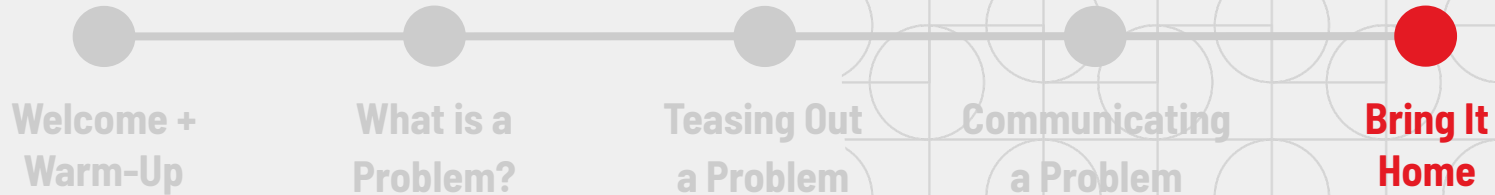
# Assessing Product Opportunities (Marty Cagan)

1. Exactly what problem will this solve? (value proposition)
2. For whom do we solve that problem? (target market)
3. How big is the opportunity? (market size)
4. What alternatives are out there? (competitive landscape)
5. Why are we best suited to pursue this? (our differentiator)
6. Why now? (market window)
7. How will we get this product to market? (go-to-market strategy)
8. How will we measure success/make money from this product? (metrics/revenue strategy)
9. What factors are critical to success? (solution requirements)
10. Given the above, what's the recommendation? (go or no-go)



# BRING IT HOME

## Problem Identification



# KEY TAKEAWAYS



## PROBLEM

A goal or objective that a user would like to achieve, but can't.



## SOLUTIONS MASKED AS PROBLEMS

It's your job to tease out the problem



## COMMUNICATING A PROBLEM

Meet your audience where they are and determine the best way to communicate the problems you working through

# Additional Resources

## Practice Again

### Problem Statement Fundamentals

- [My Product Management Toolkit \(4\) — Problem Statements](#)
- [How to Write a Real Customer Problem Statement](#)

## Digging Deeper

### Differentiate Real Problems

- [Are You Solving the Right Problem?](#)
- [PMs: Clarify the problem, Not the Solution. Here's How.](#)

