October 4th 2025

# From Solution-First to Problem-Led

At the start of the design thinking process, I was heavily solution focused. It was not on figuring out what problems the user had. Instead, identifying the solution I could create to solve the problem I assumed the user had. Through the design thinking process I found that the several steps prior to working on a solution help prevent wasted time working on a solution that no one wanted.

The worksheet “Trends & Knowledge Map” stood out to me as one of the key templates that helped clarify the process. It acted as a clear methodology from which to analyze the problem/challenge from the user’s point of view and the complex set of aspects that may influence a user. This worksheet gave me and my group a shared understanding to identify a user’s needs and kept discussions from ballooning into everything—and therefore nothing. This was useful when my group was trying build an initial idea behind the researchers our project seeks to help. In this case we could organize our different ideas and clearly identify what aspects of the researcher in and out of scope.

Moving forward with my group’s project I think we will rely heavily on the different sections of the double diamond design thinking methodology. Group projects can often suffer from ambiguity about what the current goals are and I think that the schematic provides a straightforward way to clearly express to help the group agree on which aspects to focus on. For example, are we identifying new ideas or are we in the process of narrowing the ideas we already have?

A key challenge for my group will be to avoid moving too quickly. It can be tempting to see problems and associated solutions to those problems and try to take a short cut to start working on the solution. However, based on my experiences in the first test run of the design thinking method this is a premature risk. I think this is particularly the case today where I feel that a common assumption is that each problem requires a new app. By slowing down and working through each stage of the method, a team can grasp the full breadth of problems and solutions and pick the best fit.