

Understand

What may seem like a problem may just be a symptom. To solve a problem properly, try delving a little deeper to understand the problem and its context.

The Five Whys

Start with the problem you're presented with. Now ask yourself why this problem may have arisen. Then ask yourself "Why?" again. With each interrogation, you should get a step closer to the root problem.

Reframe the Problem

By reframing the problem, you can approach it from a different angle, making it easier to understand.

Try putting a positive spin on it with "How may we?" questions. Or look at the problem back to front for a fresh perspective.

Look at People

Observe the people nearest the problem. How do they work around it? What are their thoughts about it? Do they know why it's happening?

Define

Once you understand a problem and its content, you can start to define it by bringing together all your research and understanding.

Bring Everything Together

Bring all your research and understanding together in a document or your notebook. Group similar concepts and look for patterns or clues to possible solutions.

Talk to Others

Be open to ideas and opinions from others on your team. They may have insights you don't. Insights which are important in helping frame and define the problem.

Write It Big

Once you've identified the problem, it's important to keep it in focus. By writing it big and putting it on the wall, the problem you're looking to solve is always front of mind.

Ideate

Your goal is to create as many ideas around solving the problem as possible. The more ideas the merrier, as you'll test them out and narrow them down later.

Sketch It Out

Sketch out your ideas as they come to you. A sketch doesn't have to be a drawing, it could be a series of notes or a model. Record every sketch and don't self censor.

Set a Time Limit

Crazy Eights is an activity where you have eight minutes to sketch out eight ideas. All you need is a piece of paper, a pencil and a timer.

Shake Things Up

Going for a walk is a great way to overcome a mental block. The fresh air and change of scenery give way to a flood of new ideas.

Reading a book takes you to a whole new world. One filled with new ideas. Reading is a great way to get the creative juices flowing.

Prototype

Once you've recorded all your ideas, it's time to choose the ones you think are best. You can then create lo-fi prototypes to test out your ideas and find out what works.

Simpler Is Better

Start as lo-fi as you can. The quicker you can make, iterate and remake a prototype, the better. For example, you could prototype a voice-based app just by using people and a script.

Fake It 'Til You Make It

Build a realistic façade. Something that works just well enough that you can put in front of customers or colleagues to get their first impressions.

You're Looking To Learn

The whole purpose of creating prototypes is to learn what works and what doesn't. If you're not learning, then rethink your prototype.

Validate

It's important to validate your prototypes against the problem you're looking to solve. This way, you can choose the idea that's best suited to solving your problem.

Remember the Problem(s)

It's important to remember the problem you're trying to solve and validate your prototypes against that problem.

Ask and Observe Others

Diverse minds lead to diverse opinions. Ask others to use your prototypes and observe them as they do so. Write down notes about how they behave and ask questions to learn about what they're thinking.

Be Honest

If something isn't working, throw it out. If your least favourite prototype is the one getting the results, be honest about it. This is about solving your business problems, not being right from the off.

Reflect

At the end of every project comes the opportunity to reflect. This is the time to look back at what you've made, what you've learned, understand what could have gone better and celebrate successes.

Write Down Your Learnings

Write down everything you've learned. Think of the things you'll continue to do, the things you won't, the things you want to try out, and the things that were irrelevant.

Keep a Growth Mindset

This process is about solving problems and learning new things. Keep your mind open to new ideas and take note of all the things you learn, so you can remember them later.

Start the Cycle Again

What's the next problem on your list? Once you've reflected on this cycle, start it again. Understand. Define. Ideate. Prototype. Validate. Reflect.

That's how you move forward with impactful improvements to strengthen your organisation.