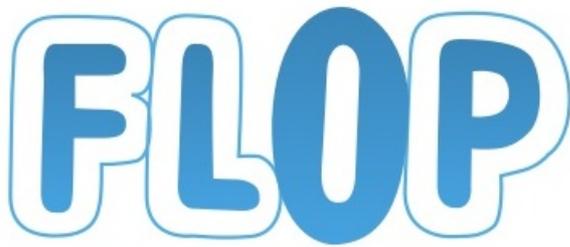

The Beauty of Reframing the Problem to Create Innovative Solutions

We regularly need to solve problems or make decisions to meet challenges in our industries, controlled by market dynamic forces. If we did not identify the right problem, then the solution will fail. We need to question the problem. Due to time constraints, most of us jump soon into the solution. As a result, we often make “satisfying” or “good enough” choices and lose the opportunity to make high impact solutions. As a designer, we are taught to spend a considerable amount of time in diagnosing the right problem.

See the image below



Is it Flip or Flop? How to identify the right one and solve it?

Problem Reframe Example 01

Let me tell you a story which I have heard during my childhood -

Occupants of an OLD Multi-storeyed building were complaining about the old and slow elevator since waiting times during peak hours were excessively long. If the problem stated as “Elevator is slow”, then the solution would be to change any parts like motor, pulley, rope to make it faster or install a new elevator itself. Let us reframe.

Design Thinking — Think from a user’s perspective.

Why is the user getting irritated when waiting for the elevator? Because elevator takes a longer time to arrive.

Similarly, It takes a longer time to reach his floor?

1. One problem would be—The user is idle while waiting, and the unoccupied time feels longer than occupied time. *So, the problem here is How will you engage the User?*

In that story, they installed Mirrors inside the lift. There were no complaints after installation.

To keep the users engaged, we can consider alternate options too— A Small TV with News shown, An FM radio, Couple of newspapers.

2. The second problem could be uncertainty due to unknown waiting time- Uncertainty increases anxiety— Anxiety makes the user perceive longer waiting time. How to solve this? *Can you inform them the exact time the elevator would arrive?*

3. Third problem— Peak Hour Crowd. *Can you stagger the timings of different departments?*

Problem Reframe Example 02

A few years back, IKEA was facing a problem with the shortage of manpower for their stores. Being a low-cost furniture manufacturer, they had their own limitations. Customers were frustrated waiting to get the ordered furniture from the warehouse. IKEA changed the problem from “Scarcity of employees” to “Idle time of Customers”. Customers were frustrated— they were waiting and idle. Can we engage them? How to engage them— Radio, Magazines— or, *Can we ask them to go and pick up the furniture from the warehouse?* And thus, IKEA’s legendary business model “**Customer’s Self Pickup**” is born.

Problem Reframe Example 03

Gordon Murray, working at Brabham is a Formula One Racing Car designer. He had constant pressure to maintain a vital performance edge through design over the ‘Enemy’ in the race. Design budgets at Brabham were relatively small, perhaps one-third of the budgets of bigger teams.

Instead of seeing Financial constraint as a problem, Gordon reframed the problem as an opportunity.

When every other designer is looking at how to increase the speed, Gordon looked at the problem— *How to make the car lighter?* Lighter the car, the faster it can accelerate or decelerate.

- *How can I reduce the parts and also weight?*
- *How can I carry fewer spares?*

- *How can I do less testing and maintain stricter quality?*
- *Can we run the car with only a little over half level of fuel, instead of filling a full tank and a pit stop for refueling?*

Half the fuel? That was a rollicking moment!

At that time, pitstops were only for emergencies. Gordon Murray innovated by introducing a planned pit stop for refuelling during a race.

There was another challenge— When you put new tires during the planned pit stop, the tires were cold, and it takes two laps to get back to the speed, and considerable time lost in the race. How to save time? *Gordon redefined the problem into how to keep the tire hot?* He made a gas-fired heater, which kept tires at 70 degrees and they opened and assembled as soon as the car arrives at the pit stop.

By [Shah Mohammed](#) on [March 18, 2017](#).

[Canonical link](#)

Exported from [Medium](#) on October 28, 2020.