



Problem Statement Template

How discovery helps you build the right product

A problem statement is not primarily a document — it's a facilitated conversation. The output is shared understanding. The statement is the artifact that captures it.

Use this during project kickoff, when your team seems misaligned, or when scope starts drifting.

The Template

The problem of	<i>Describe the problem. Not the solution or the system.</i>
Affects	<i>Who is experiencing this problem? Be specific about stakeholders.</i>
The impact of which is	<i>What happens as a result of this problem? Make it concrete and quantified where possible.</i>
A successful solution would	<i>What outcomes must any solution achieve? Describe the result, not the technology.</i>

How to Facilitate the Exercise

Step 1	Give everyone four sticky notes. Ask each person to write their version of all four parts independently, without discussion.
Step 2	Have each person read their statements aloud, one part at a time. Place similar responses together.
Step 3	Work through each part as a group. Find the statement that everyone can support, not the one everyone agreed to avoid conflict.
Step 4	Document the agreed statement. Post it where the team sees it throughout the work.



Watch Out For

- The solution sneaking into 'the problem of' — push back: 'Is that a problem or a technology choice?'
- Vague impact statements like 'inefficiency' or 'lack of visibility' — ask 'What specifically happens as a result?'
- The fourth part listing features instead of outcomes — ask 'What would the user be able to do if the solution worked?'
- Fast convergence that feels suspiciously harmonious — probe: 'Is everyone here actually defining the same problem?'

My Problem Statement (DRAFT)

The problem of	
Affects	
The impact of which is	
A successful solution would be	

Example (REFERENCE)

From a conference session submission system:

The problem of	Selecting conference sessions
Affects	Presenters who submit session proposals
The impact of which is	Presenters frequently do not receive actionable feedback on their proposals or understand why they were or were not selected
A successful solution would be	Open and transparent — presenters understand the criteria and receive meaningful feedback regardless of outcome