WORKSHEET + WORKED EXAMPLE

Define the Problem Before Solving It

A better-framed challenge, several possible approaches, and a small next inquiry.

20 minutes to orient | Double Diamond

Use it in three moves

1. Discover what happens in people's real work before settling on an explanation.

2. Define a challenge from what you learn, then develop more than one possible approach.

3. Deliver through small tests and revision. You can return to an earlier place whenever new evidence changes the question.

What have you been asked to make or change?

Capture the original request without accepting its explanation yet.

What have you heard or observed? What do you still need to learn?

Separate actual evidence from assumptions. Spend time with people affected.

How would you describe the underlying challenge now?

Who needs what, in which situation, and what makes it difficult?

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YOUR WORKING NOTES / CONTINUED

What different approaches could you explore?

Include a change to the process or relationship, not only a new product.

What small test could help you choose or revise an approach?

Name the people involved, a question, and a sign to observe.

What could send you back to an earlier stage?

New evidence is a reason to revisit, not a failure.

What will you do next, with whom and when?

A question for me

What answer was I hoping this process would confirm?

See one way through

FICTIONAL WORKED EXAMPLE / NOT THE ANSWER TO YOUR SITUATION

What have you been asked to make or change?

Build a weekly status dashboard for the service team.

What have you heard or observed? What do you still need to learn?

Three team members check status because they cannot tell which handoff is waiting for them. We have not heard from the late shift.

How would you describe the underlying challenge now?

People taking over a request need to see the next owner and unresolved question without reading the whole message history.

What different approaches could you explore?

A short handoff note. A shared next-owner field. A dashboard. A clearer end-of-shift conversation.

What small test could help you choose or revise an approach?

Try a handoff note for five requests with both shifts. Ask whether the next person can act without reconstructing the history.

What could send you back to an earlier stage?

If the real difficulty is unavailable decision authority, revisit the challenge rather than polishing the note.

What will you do next, with whom and when?

Meet one person from each shift on Wednesday to check the challenge wording.

The thinking behind it

A familiar tool can make a familiar answer feel inevitable. Let the people experiencing the work help change the question before you decide what to build.

Design Council began sharing the Double Diamond in 2004. Discover and Define explore and focus the problem; Develop and Deliver explore and test responses. This independently drawn adaptation keeps the return paths visible. Framework reference: Design Council, CC BY 4.0; our prompts and interface are adapted for everyday leadership.

Design Council: Framework for Innovation

Read The 17-Year Leadership Innovation Drought: Why we're still Waiting for the Next Big Idea by Nic Payne