

# Problem breakdown

<b>Field of application</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>#Problem Analysis.</li><li>#Strategic planning</li><li>#Creativity skills development</li></ul>
<b>Resume / Brief description</b>	<p>Overload is one of the reasons behind some of the creativity blockages. That means that the amount of information a brain can manage is limited. When a person or a team is trying to solve a complex problem can lose perspective and motivation. In this case, a technique as Problem breakdown can be useful.</p> <p>Category: Problem reframing</p>
<b>Target group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Entrepreneurs</li><li>• I&amp;D teams</li><li>• Innovation teams</li><li>• Students</li><li>• Community</li></ul>
<b>Group size</b>	4 to 20 participants
<b>Objectives</b>	To better understand the problem to solve and explore solution paths.
<b>Requirements</b>	<p>Material:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Problem Breakdown format</li></ul> <p>Time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 20 to 90 minutes</li></ul>
<b>Implementation - Overview</b>	<p>The Problem Breakdown tool follows these steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Problem socialization: Everybody must have clarity on the problem to solve</li><li>- Problem breakdown: Teams break the problem into parts</li><li>- Challenges: Teams write challenge questions for each part</li><li>- Presentation: The results are presented and a new version of the problem is set.</li></ul>



<p><b>Implementation - Guidelines</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The first step is to explain the problem to the participants and be sure all agree with the definition</li> <li>2. Then break the group into teams (2 to 5 members each). Each team must write down the problem to solve in the format.</li> <li>3. Now explain that every problem is composed of several parts or can be defined as a set of sub-problems. In this step, each team must break the problem into parts and write each of them in one of the spaces designated in the format. Each problem can have several ways to be broken. Let each team to find and follow its own version.</li> <li>4. Ask each team to view each part as a new but smaller problem and ask them to write a new challenge question for each part of the problem. The challenge question usually starts with "How can we..." or similar forms.</li> <li>5. Let each team to present their new challenge questions and the logic behind</li> <li>6. Direct the group to identify if solving one of the challenge accomplish the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is a lot easier than solving the original problem</li> <li>- Solve the original problem or, at least, reduce it considerably.</li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p>This exercise gives the team a new way to view and understand the problem the organization is trying to solve.</p> <p>The following step is to conduct an ideation activity using the new challenges. This step can be done as part of the Problem breaking session or as an independent session to be carried out later.</p>
<p>Example of application:</p>	<p>Social challenges are complex by nature. To much variables are involved, including those related with communities and human relations. That is why social innovation can gain a lot when using tools to improve the problem understanding and help to explore solution routes.</p> <p>A NPO were working with a community to improve its digital capabilities. The community use to have low access to connectivity and low training in the use of technologies. The team in charge of the project were working in the following question: How to accelerate the internet adoption in the community? This question reflects a very broad and ambitious goal, so they decided to use Problem Breakdown to try to find effective strategies.</p> <p>The 6 members of the team, as well as other collaborator of the organization were invited to the session.</p> <p>The group was divided into 4 teams. Each team received the Problem Breakdown format.</p> <p>After presenting the main objective, the teams started breaking the problem into parts.</p> <p>This was very enlightening as one of the teams broke it in stages (following a time-based logic) while other broke it into "actors" (social groups involved). Even the other teams presented diverse type of divisions.</p> <p>Although the exercise confirmed the complex nature of the problem, the smaller challenge questions opened numerous possibilities to design action plans. Some ideas generated in an informal way were added to the results of the session.</p> <p>Using this output, the team could define its strategy and start to work</p>
<p>Templates, Graphics for download</p>	<p>Problem Breakdown format</p>
<p>Additional format/references</p>	<p><a href="https://forge.medium.com/the-500-year-old-piece-of-advice-that-will-change-your-life-1e580f115731">https://forge.medium.com/the-500-year-old-piece-of-advice-that-will-change-your-life-1e580f115731</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.thwink.org/sustain/articles/000_AnalyticalApproach/index.htm">https://www.thwink.org/sustain/articles/000_AnalyticalApproach/index.htm</a></p>

🔄Revision #5  
★Created 29 March 2021 14:05:59 by Petra Riedinger  
🔧Updated 23 May 2022 12:05:18 by Admin



African Centre for Career Enhancement & Skills Support (Access)

[Terms of Use](#)