Solving Problems Through Reframing

Participant Workbook

Table of Contents

Introduction

Objective

- To understand how reframing problems can help to find more complete solutions.

Reframing

Reframing is looking at a problem and finding a new way to see it, or define it, to help discover new possible solutions for it.

It has been applied in every possible problem-solving scenario, from individual coaching sessions to working with organizations and teams in solving business problems.

What is Our Goal?

What is 5 + 5? Use the space provided here to capture your response.

[ ]

What if instead of asking 5+5, we ask X+X=10?

Use the space provided here to capture your response.

[ ]

Both questions deal with addition of two numbers whose sum is 10. The difference is how we frame the question.

When reframing we pause, step back, and ask what is the ultimate goal? From there we can determine what is the best question to ask to solve the problem.

Beware of Goal Fixedness

- How a goal is framed often fixes or locks in people's thinking
- Using general terms can help overcome this and open new possible solutions

Ask the Right Questions

When facing a challenge:

- **Step 1: Clearly define the problem**
- **Step 2: Figure out what the right question is for the problem**

Once we have the right question, we can shift to answering the question to solve the problem.

How You See the Issue Matters

How we look at a problem matters because that is how we will define the problem.

What do I see as the problem?

How else can I see this issue?
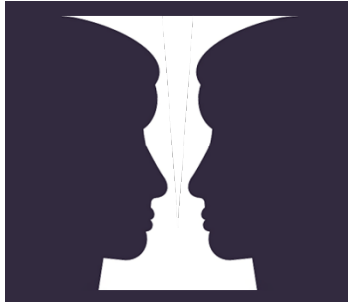
How does this look from another perspective?

What do I need to solve to solve this problem?

Perspective

Understanding Perspective:

- A point of view or attitude about something
- We all have our own perspective based on our experience and knowledge
- There is no one universal TRUTH
- Sometimes we need to change our perspective to see how to solve a problem

Do you see the two faces in silhouette looking at one another, or do you see a vase in the center on a black background?

There is no wrong or right in this exercise. Both images exist in the same picture, just like more than one perspective of a problem can be right, though one may provide a starting point that leads to a solution faster.

Reframing a problem or challenge can yield a new perspective on what needs to be solved or what the answer could be.

What is a problem that you have had to solve more than once? Use the space provided here to capture your response.

What is an example of a problem where the obvious solutions were not feasible to implement, because of cost, time, or a lack of return on investment? Use the space provided here to capture your response.

Case for Reframing

You are the owner of an office building that has no vacancies. However, you have tenants that are complaining the elevators are too old and take too long for people to get into and out of their offices. Several of your tenants are threatening to break their leases over the long waits for elevators.
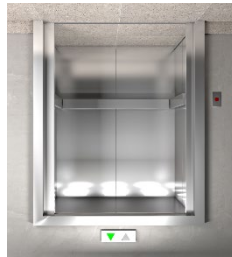
Use the space provided here to capture your thoughts on possible solutions to this issue.

Problem	Solutions
Elevators are old and slow • Frustrated tenants • Threats to break leases	

What is another way of framing this problem? Use the space provided here to capture your thoughts.

Reframed Problem

What are possible solutions to your reframed problem? Use the space provided here to capture your thoughts on how to solve this issue.

Solutions

Why Should We Reframe Problems?

"We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."

- Albert Einstein

Problem Solving is a Team Sport

When taking on a complex problem consider pulling together a team to provide diverse perspectives.

- Gather a team together
- Consider including someone from the outside of the issue owners, but who is familiar with the issue
- Create psychological safety to ensure open sharing of ideas.

Types of Reframing

There are two types of reframing:

- **Diving deeper into your existing frame**.

  - Look for the root cause
  - Identify all elements of the problem
  - Look for patterns and similar situations where the problem does not occur
  - Ask, "What is my role in this?"

- **Changing the frame**.

  - What else is going on that impacts the situation?
  - Look beyond your expertise and experience
  - Identify similar situations that have been solved and look for similarities
  - Find positive differences, look for what is working
  - Reexamine the problem and ask is this the right problem to solve
  - What is another way to see this problem?
  - What is my role in this?

6 Types of Problems

1. **Who/What?** Relates to people, roles and things

2. **How much?** Involves measuring and counting

3. **When?** Focus on scheduling and timing

4. **Where?** Where pieces fit together and work together

5. **How?** How things influence one another

6. **Why?** Relates to seeing the big picture

Functional Fixedness

Functional fixedness is a cognitive bias that limits a person to use an object only in a way it is traditionally used. As Abraham Maslow pointed out, "*When the only tool you have is a hammer you tend to treat everything as if it were a nail*".

You are moving into a new house. You discover that there are 3 lights on the 2nd floor, that are controlled by 3 switches on the 1st floor. None of the switches are labeled. How can you figure out which switch controls which light with the fewest trips up and down the stairs? Use the space provided here to capture your response.

Titanic

Most of us know the story of the RMS Titanic, on her maiden voyage crossing the North Atlantic, struck and iceberg on the evening of April 14, 1912, and eventually sank. Of the 2,200 people on board, 705 survived in 16 lifeboats, even though most had empty seats.

Solving Problems through Reframing

How do you think the Captain and crew framed the problem to solve after striking the iceberg? Use the space provided here to capture your response.

How do you think the Captain and crew could have reframed the problem to be solved after striking the iceberg? Use the space provided here to capture your response.

Reframing

Is not about analyzing a problem or finding its causes.

It is asking, "Is this the right problem to solve?".

How can I see this differently?

A shift in mindset and how we see issues that need to be solved.

How you see and define an issue is important.

Summary: Frame and Reframe

LOOK BEYOND THE FRAME

LOOK BEYOND YOUR EXPERTISE

REEXAMINE THE GOAL

FIND WHAT IS WORKING

LOOK IN THE MIRROR

HOW DO OTHERS SEE THIS

Final Reflection

- How can you apply these reframing techniques at your workplace?
- What is the most important tip you will share with a co-worker?

Use the space provided to capture your response.

Contact Information

BD17 Contact Information: Write to us! We are always seeking to improve our learning and development products and encourage your feedback. Please email us with your suggestions and we will incorporate them into future work. Additionally, we are available to answer any questions about the content you may have and provide additional resources to support your learning endeavors.

- NAVFACHQTotalForceDevelopment@navy.mil

Development Resources

Career Compass Resource Center: An online source of information that provides NAVFAC civilian employees access to professional growth and development opportunities.

- https://www.navfac.navy.mil/ccrc

To access more content specific to the **Problem Solving** competency:

- https://www.navfac.navy.mil/Problem-Solving

Career Compass Catalog: an online tool which provides you with information to help you take ownership of your professional development. It identifies options to assist in planning and creating a successful career path within NAVFAC.

- https://www.navfac.navy.mil/ccc

Course Credit

You will receive credit for participating in this course. Email the address below. Make sure to include all the following information:

Component	Include in Email
Address	W_NAVFAC_PRTH_NITC_NFI_ADMINS_US@navy.mil
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Course Name	Solving Problems through Reframing
Course Completion Code	6FWJ9e

Or, if you have a smart phone, you can simply scan the QR code below to generate the email with all the necessary information:

If you are sending the email from a personal device, be sure to include your Navy email address in the body of your email.