

Problem Statement

Phase 1 - Vision + Scope

Before starting to plan and organize a Kick-Off-Sprint, the project team (including the client) should think deeply about the problem statement. A problem statement ensures that the **project team is focused on the «why» of a particular problem or need, and thus on the key problems to be solved.** It is important to not already think of potential solutions. A clearly articulated problem statement helps set the project on the right tracks and ensures in the sprint that solution **approaches are generated that actually zoom in on the problem presented.**

What is a Problem Statement?

A Problem Statement succinctly describes the obstacle that is **the current problem** between a working process and/or product and the current (problematic) state. This statement **focuses only on the facts of the problem** and is therefore completely objective.

The three main elements of a problem statement are:

1. **The problem:** Details of the problem you are presenting and why it's a problem that should be solved.
2. **The proposed solution:** Details of your proposed solution.
3. **Why the solution fixes the problem and how it will be implemented:** Details of why your solution fixes the problem and how you will implement the solution.

How to Write a Problem Statement

Forming the structure of the problem description according to the questions of **who, what, when, where and why makes it easier to create, read and makes the problem more understandable and therefore solvable.** The problem description not only defines an urgent problem, but also leads to a proposal for a timely and effective solution. Also problem statement is a tool that helps **gain support and approval for the project from management and stakeholders.**

A good problem statement includes the five Ws:

What

Clear, brief statement of the problem. In one to three sentences, describe what the problem is and how it affects your company.

Where

In what area of the company does the problem occur and has it led to related problems?

Who

Description of the stakeholders, whose goals are affected by the problem at hand.

When

Define the time frame in which the problem occurs.

Why

Explanation of why the existing problem is important and why it is preventing the organization from achieving its goals. This point can include anything from financial costs to damaged morale to literal physical objects blocking a path.

A standard formulation of a problem statement should look like this:

Stakeholder (describe person using empathetic language) **NEEDS A WAY TO** Need (needs are verbs) **BECAUSE** Insight (describe what you've learned about the stakeholder and his need)

Example:

Sandra from The Frying Pan Co. who likes using our data platform wants to be able to see the sales figures of her business for the previous three years, so that she can do accurate stock planning for the coming year.

A well-formulated problem statement...

... **provides focus and framework** for the problem

... inspires the team

... **provides criteria for evaluating** competing ideas

... empowers the team to **make independent decisions**

... prevents creating concepts that are **all things to all people**

... should be **discrete** and not broad

Other sources

- <https://maa1.medium.com/my-product-management-toolkit-4-problem-statements-27e7ebe8804d>
- <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/how-to-write-a-problem-statement>
- <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/problem-statement#1YKKu5ox2GaURoWrkS-SA6M>