Anne Jacoby

Perspective Taking Exercise


A Team Experience

by Anne Jacoby

The why.

This team experience will help you explore different creative strategies for solving a business problem. Each exercise can be performed in rotating cross-functional groups as a method of shifting perspectives and approaches. You may decide to focus on addressing one singular problem-- or several problems in different ways. You may type directly into this document or choose to transfer exercises to flip charts for in-person collaboration.

The outcome of the exercises should reveal multiple, and potentially unconventional, solutions to your business problem. Your proposed solutions can be evaluated, prioritized, and selected to receive clear next actions, owners, and a timeline.

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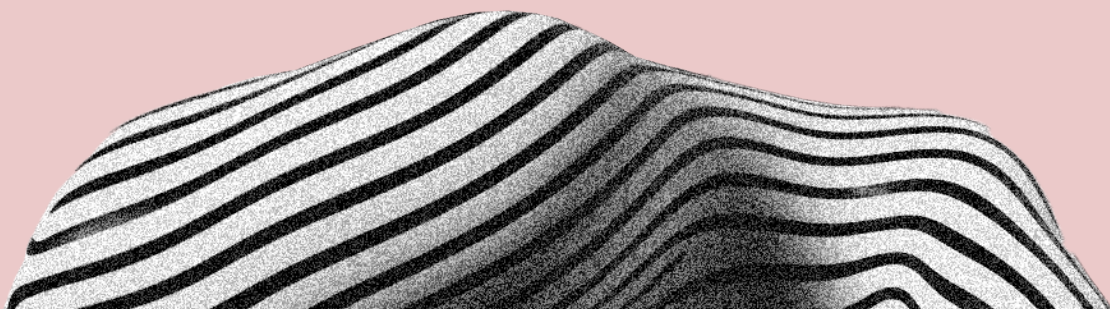
Exercise goals + Set-up.

"We've got to get out of our own heads. What are ***different ways*** of approaching this problem?"

The purpose of this team exercise is to apply different problem-solving techniques to address a shared problem across your work team. Although the exercise is designed for a team of 18-36 people, you can conduct this exercise with a smaller group by reducing the number of problem-solving techniques.

Next, create six different teams of 3-6 people each. Ideally, create groups of people who bring different perspectives or who don't normally work closely together. At each collaboration table, display one of the Problem Solving Techniques on the following pages.
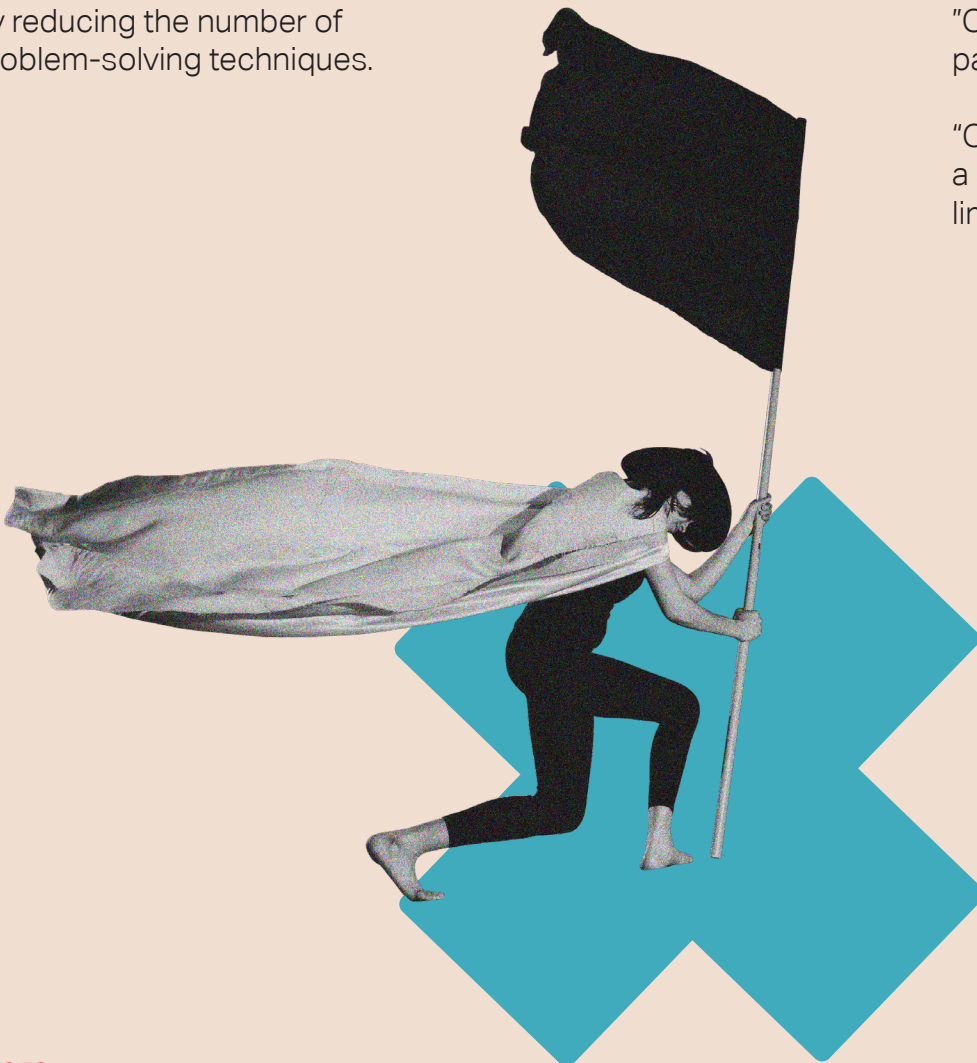
Instructions:
Before kicking off the exercise, agree on a problem statement that you want to address.

For example:
"Our revenue is declining in our top client industry vertical."

"Our team has low morale with a pattern of complaining."

"Our group is burning out from a series of rapid changes and limited resources."

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Perspective taking

For the next 25 minutes, in your group, discuss the following prompts to *consider different potential perspectives* to your defined problem statement:

It's a sun!

It's a plant!

It's a spur!

Who is currently impacted by the problem?

How might it directly (or indirectly) impact your customers?

What does your executive team think about this problem?

What might an early career employee think about this issue?

Think about a leader you admire from a different industry. How might they approach solving the problem?

How do your colleagues in other functions (i.e., Sales, Marketing, Finance, Legal, HR) think about this problem?

Who else cares about this problem, and how might you seek their experience with the problem?

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SWOT SWOT SWOT SWOT SWOT

Outlining Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

As a group, take 10 minutes to identify a potential solution to your defined problem statement.

Next, spend 10 minutes **evaluating the solution** with a SWOT analysis.

Finally, spend the final 5 minutes together refining your solution based on what you learned in the *SWOT Analysis*.

What are the **strengths** of this solution that are within our control?

What are the **weaknesses** of this solution that are within our control to change or avoid?

What are the **opportunities** associated with this solution? In other words, what's the big payoff to the business if we get this right?

What are the **threats** of this solution? In other words, what could go wrong outside of our immediate span of control?

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Root cause analysis

As a group, take 15 minutes to discuss the following questions:

1.
What data could we gather to better understand what's contributing to the problem?

2.
What are some potential causal factors?

3.
What could be the root cause of this problem?

4.
What contributing factors would need to change to address the root cause?

5.
What stakeholders (people) are involved in the root cause?

6.
Are there additional factors, like processes, technology, or circumstances, contributing to the root cause?

7.
If the problem isn't addressed, what happens? What's the cost of doing nothing?

8.
Is this problem low risk, medium risk, or high risk? How quickly could it impact the business if it's not solved?

Next, take 10 minutes to brainstorm a few solutions.

Discuss: what would be the next steps to implement change? How might you pilot a solution?

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Divergent thinking + Mind mapping

In your group, over the next 25 minutes, mind map ideas by using the following prompts:

What are the emotions and downstream consequences related to this problem?

Who is impacted by the problem?

If the problem was solved, what would be the benefits to the business?

Describe in detail what success looks like if the problem was addressed.

Describe the moment the problem is solved… who realizes it?
What's the impact? How do people feel?

List all of the tiny moments of change leading up to the moment the problem is solved.

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2x2 Prioritization Framework

Quietly, by yourself, spend 10 minutes listing out a number of different possible solutions to your defined problem statement. When you think you have enough ideas listed, keep brainstorming individually until the 10 minutes are up. Keep the ideas flowing. You may think they're far-fetched, wacky, or would never work. Withhold your judgment. Instead, keep brainstorming. Do not discuss your ideas with others until the 10 minutes are up.

At the 10-minute mark, take 5 minutes to share your ideas within the group. Notice the common approaches, but also consider the outlier ideas that may feel unusual. Reserve judgement of the merits of each idea.
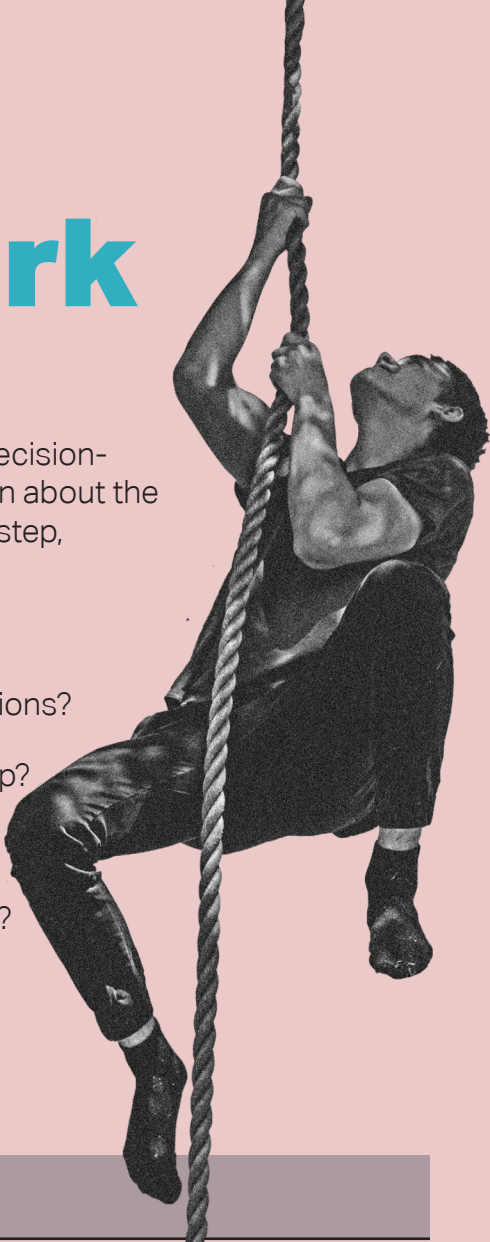
Finally, in your remaining 10 minutes, place each idea into the prioritization framework. Circle the ideas in the upper right quadrant and discuss what's high value and feasible / lower effort to implement.

Low effort

Do Later   Do Now

Low value ←→ High value

Don't Do   Do Next

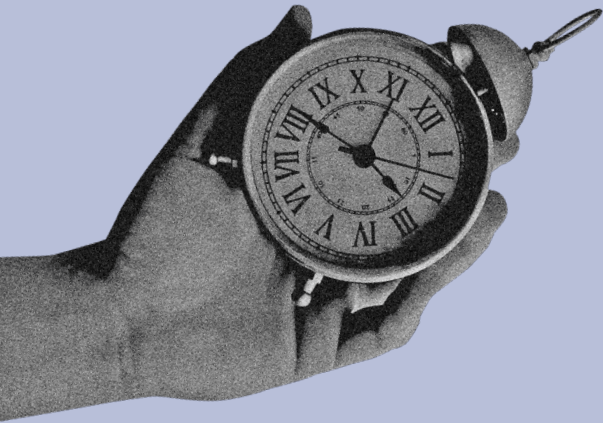High effort

RAPID decision-making framework

Discuss the problem statement together as a group. Using the RAPID Decision-Making Framework, consider who would be involved in making a decision about the solution. By the end of your discussion, determine a possible clear next step, along with a timeline and owner.

1. Recommend: who will create the initial proposals and recommendations?

2. Agree: who must agree to the proposals from the Recommend group?

3. Perform: who will execute the work following the decision?

4. Input: who provides information and facts to the Recommend group?

5. Decide: who's the one person who has the authority to make the final decision?

RAPID Stakeholder Role	Name(s)
Recommend	
Agree	
Perform	
Input	
Decide	

Exercise timing and debrief

Each small group exercise is designed to be approximately 25 minutes long, followed by a 5-minute break. You may choose to only address one problem, break, then debrief for 30 minutes (each team gets 5 mins to share their process and outcomes). In this case, the entire exercise can occur in 60 minutes.

If you have more time, you may wish to address multiple problem statements and rotate the teams to different problem-solving technique working stations. That way, teams get the benefit of trying different ways of addressing problems.

Exercise and Debrief best practices:

Have a time keeper. Ensure each group doesn't share for more than their allotted time. Assign a notetaker (ideally a role that rotates and represents different genders and levels). Ask that person to capture clear next steps, owners, and a timeline.

Keep things fun! Put fidget toys at each of the problem-solving stations. Include table-top flip charts, multi-colored sharpies, Post-It note pads.

Keep the coffee and water flowing and the snacks stocked. Have a deejay play some team tunes during the 5-minute breaks.

Day 1:

Round one: Problem Statement 1
(25 mins + 5 min break)

Round two: Rotate and address Problem Statement 2. (25 mins + 5 min break)

Round three: Rotate and address Problem Statement 3. (25 mins + 5 min break)

Debrief the three problem statements approached six different ways. (45 mins)

Day 2:

Round one: Problem Statement 4
(25 mins + 5 min break)

Round two: Rotate and address Problem Statement 5. (25 mins + 5 min break)

Round three: Rotate and address Problem Statement 6. (25 mins + 5 min break)

Debrief three problem statements approached six different ways. (45 mins)

Anne Jacoby

About me

I'm on a mission to cultivate creativity at work. After an early career in the performing arts, I made a pivot to corporate life, where I spent 15+ years building and scaling high-growth companies.

My a-ha moment was realizing that creativity in business is essential. Accessing creativity leads to more productivity, well-being and belonging. It drives innovation. It strengthens culture and improves organizational mattering. As CEO of Spring Street, I partner with leading organizations to assess their culture and strategy, design and deliver learning experiences, and provide leadership coaching.

My first book, *Born to Create*, helps spark personal creativity, fuel creative leadership skills, and set organizational culture ablaze. Through engaging stories of artists, entrepreneurs, and business leaders, each scene delivers examples to build creative confidence and resilence, lead others in the creative process, and foster a thriving creativity culture.

You deserve to be inspired by your work. I'm thrilled to share creativity tools and insights based on my work with hundreds of companies, as well as my own creative entrepreneurial journey.

Creativity changes the world.

Let's start with you.

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