

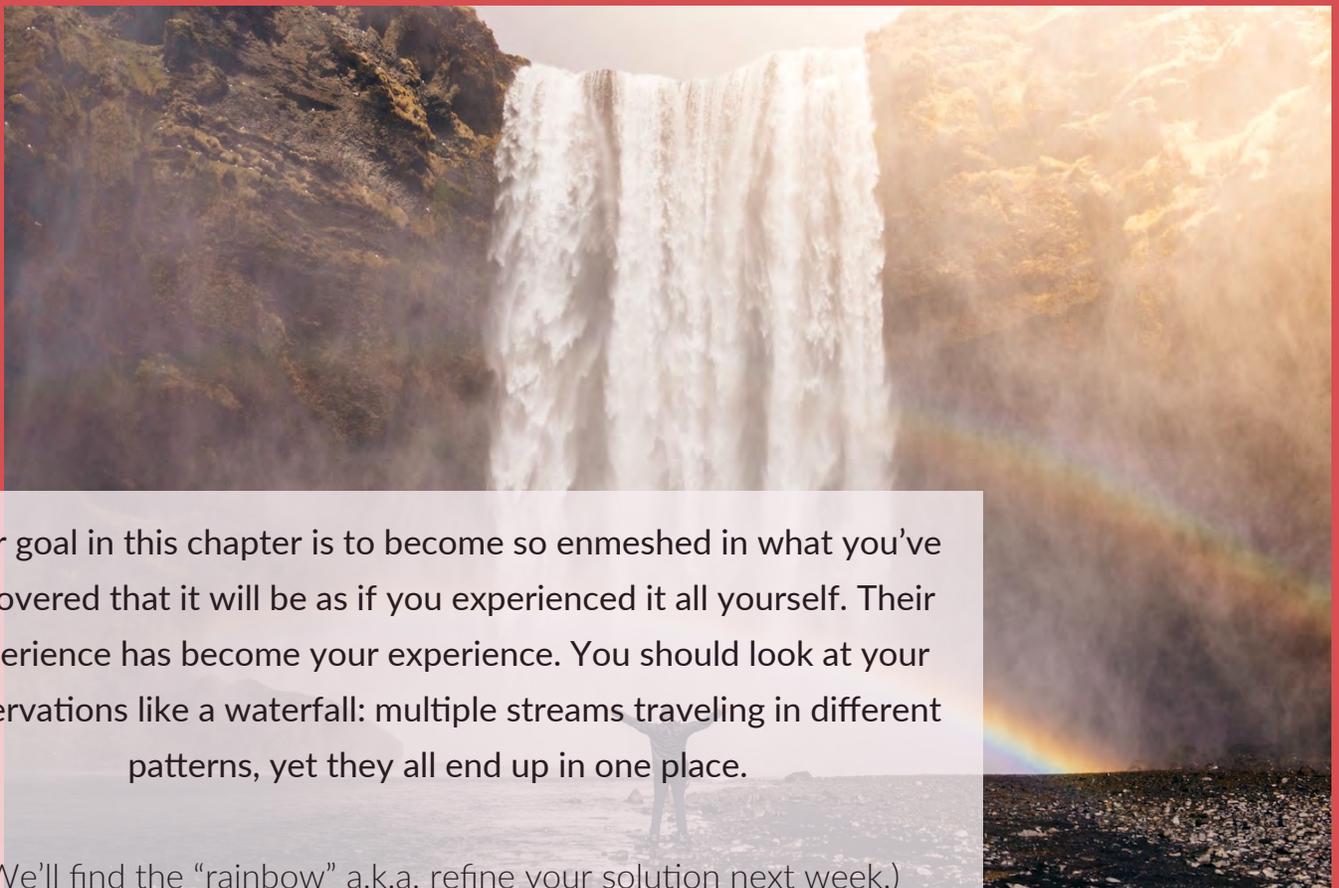


# Avoiding the Silent Killer

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"It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer."

--- ALBERT EINSTEIN



Your goal in this chapter is to become so enmeshed in what you've uncovered that it will be as if you experienced it all yourself. Their experience has become your experience. You should look at your observations like a waterfall: multiple streams traveling in different patterns, yet they all end up in one place.

(We'll find the "rainbow" a.k.a. refine your solution next week.)

# The Silent Killer

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At the beginning of this workbook, I mentioned that going from gathering research to coming up with a winning concept is the silent killer. At first sight of a problem, most people get very excited by jumping to the solution. “Eureka! By George, I’ve got it!.” But remember that Innovation is a Process, and if you want to eliminate guesswork down the road, you have to marinate in the entirety of the problem without getting into the solutions.

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## MANY WAYS TO UNCOVER PROBLEMS & NEEDS

Our mission is to overturn what is not working. We use *research* as a way to figure out all of the things that do not work. There are many ways to do research and, through this program, we’ll learn when we can get the best use out of each method.

### Quantitative

#### "WHAT"

Analytics, Data, Statistics, Some types of Surveys, NPS, Polls, A/B Testing

### Qualitative

#### "WHY"

Observations, Interviews, Open-Ended Questions, Diary Accounts

### Primary

#### DIY

The research you do yourself. It can be either Qs.

### Secondary

#### D.DIY

The research you obtain from other people and sources. (Didn't Do it Yourself)

# The Silent Killer: An Example

We all know that credit card companies and banks are trying to make their customers go paperless and use self-service online instead of calling in. The paper is a waste! The calls are expensive! Whole groups of digital teams in-house are tasked with making the website user friendly and encouraging customers towards both paperless & self-service. Their goal is to reduce phone support.

## MARINATE IN THE PROBLEM

Teams have been working for years to make the website more user-friendly with only incremental results for customer service. When I worked with one in-house digital team to process 3 years of research we found something very interesting.

Start: Consider all of the people that want to update their address.

90% of people do not know that they can update their address online.

Of the people who assume they can update their address online, 80% cannot find the page where they can do

Of the people who do find the Change<sup>so</sup> Address page, 25% cannot figure out how to use the interface.

Finally, of the people who can use the interface, 15% have a special case where they still need to call in.

**1000 People**

**100 People Go Online**

**20 People Find What They Need**

**15 People Can Use the Interface**

**12 People Successfully Complete**

**What do you think is wrong with this situation? Where would you tell the team to focus?**

# Example (cont'd)

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**Answer:** The reality is the team could perfect the usability of every self-service feature on the website and that would only get 3 more people through the funnel. Elsewhere, there are 900 people that didn't even know self-servicing online was an option.

## WHAT ABOUT YOU?

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**How has your view of the problem you are solving changed so far?**



**What new information have you learned about your target customer that has changed your view of the problem you are solving?**



**Take an alternative vantage point - Are there other problems they are having that need to be solved first? What are they?**



Meet the **BIG** needs not the small ones.



## Most Valuable Problem

On the pages ahead we're going on an excavation hunt to answer the following questions:

- What's going to move the needle the most?
- What needs, if met, will make many other needs a lot easier to address?
- What is the Most Valuable Problem (MVP)?

We're also working towards having such a clear problem statement, investors get it right away from our pitch deck.

Use all of your research to fill out the following pages.

## IDEA FOLDER

*If you think it, ink it.*  
*As we continue into exploring needs and problems, you're going to have lots of ideas for solutions. Create a folder or a document where you can write these ideas down for later.*

# MOST VALUABLE PROBLEM/PROCESS

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## EXAMPLE // PAYPAL

What is the number one thing that Paypal always has to be able to do for it to be in business? The answer seems complicated now that they have multiple lines of businesses, but think back to its original incarnation. I'll give you a hint: the answer is on this page.

The number one thing Paypal has to be able to do is **let me pay you**. So, if you're a non-profit that wants to embed a donate button on your website, good luck finding the embed code. It's not such an easy thing to figure out how to do. But you know what? We can acknowledge that is a problem Paypal can solve, yet it pales in comparison to the problem it **must** solve which is: **letting me pay you**.

There's a lot of talk in Silicon Valley about your Minimal Viable Product (MVPProduct) but there are so many useless and varied definitions about what an MVP is or should be. Let's put it this way:

Your first prototype (MVPProduct) should be the smallest possible group of features that can solve your Most Valuable Problem (MVPProblem) while demonstrating your unique way of solving it.

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## **EVERYONE MUST ALWAYS BE ABLE TO PAY SOMEONE ELSE**

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Now that you've done an incredible amount of research, let's brainstorm 20 problems on the next page. Big or small, important or not, write the problem down on the next page. These can be problems experienced by your main character or the supporting cast.



## Timed Activity

Set a timer for 10 minutes. In those 10 minutes you must come up with 20 problems that you've observed this week. Force yourself! Each problem only has to be described by a single sentence. Think about each person you spoke to and how they told their story. *What were their challenges? What did they feel was too hard to surmount? What got in the way of getting to their goals?*

### 1 Check With Your Competitive Analysis

Go back to your analysis to review how your competitors talk about your customers' problems. Are there problems they are addressing that you can include in this brainstorm?

### 2 Look for Commonalities and Differences

What were the big takeaways? What were the complete anomalies? Play "what if?" What if the person was older or younger? Had children or didn't? Lived in rural, suburban or urban neighborhoods? Does something change if the weather changes?

### 3 Review All of Your Notes

Page through all of your notes from this week and find the problems, pains, hurdles, defects and challenges that you noted. Do not worry about the significance of each one. Just write them down on the next page!

*Take the time to do this right.*

# 20 Problems Worksheet

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## 1 Sort

Grab a few different colored pens and markers. Looking at all the problems you listed, which ones are related to each other? Mark the similar ones using the same colors.

Not sure if they are similar? Discuss with someone else, like a teammate. Don't eliminate any problems yet. Resist the urge to propose a solution. (Put it in your ideas folder)

## 2 The Different Cast Members

Mark the problems that belong to your protagonist differently than the problems that belong to the supporting cast.

Who relies on someone else to solve their problem?



Who causes problems for someone else?



Is any one of the actors more important than the other?



In order to solve the most common problems, what has to be true?



### 3 Analyze

Which problems have obvious answers? And, which don't?

Which problem, if solved, will impact the most people? How so?

Which problem, if solved, will impact the least? Why is that?

Is there any ONE problem, that if addressed, will solve other problems? Why?

Which problems do you really care about? Which do you care little about?

Which problems are similar to each other? Group a few similar problems together and give them a broader description:

*Friendly Reminder: Focus on the problems, not the solutions.*

Sometimes people get hung up here because they can't figure out the solution to that problem. Don't do that. We'll work on solutions later.



*State it Clearly*

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# TOO MANY PROBLEMS

Time to pick your **top 5**. Any more than that and you'll get overwhelmed.

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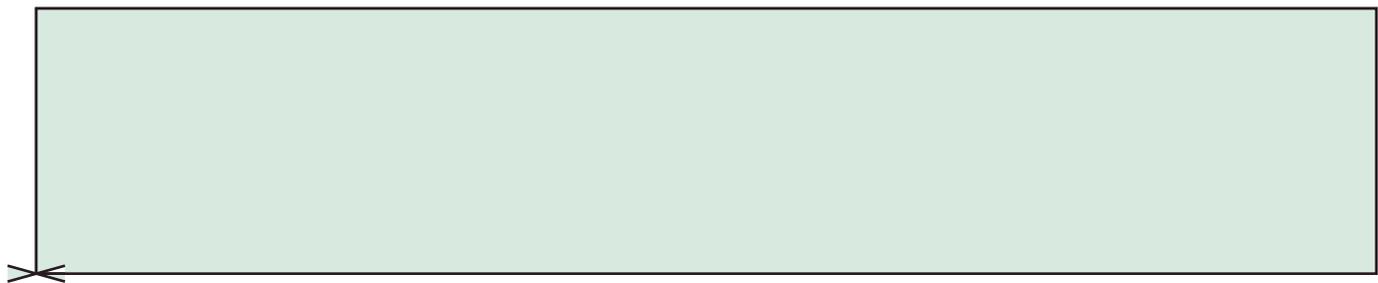
Five horizontal rectangular boxes, each with a light pink background and a black border. Each box is preceded by a small black icon resembling a pair of scissors or a cut line on the left side.

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## DESCRIBING THE PROBLEM

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We often get caught up in the nuances and details of our domain which makes it hard to describe the problem we want to solve to everyday people. Below, take your first shot at describing the relationship between these 5 problems



A large rectangular box with a light green background and a black border. It is preceded by a small black icon resembling a pair of scissors or a cut line on the left side.

Now, let's try writing about the problem with less space. This time, I want you to pretend you are explaining this to either (1) a five year old child, or (2) your 80-year old grandmother.



A smaller rectangular box with a light green background and a black border. It is preceded by a small black icon resembling a pair of scissors or a cut line on the left side.

# I've got 99 problems

But I'll just solve one.

*Example (Outro.com):* Say goodbye to the manual process of making or receiving referrals & introductions for sales & recruiting. You have employees, customers, advisors, partners, family & friends who are all willing to make referrals for you, but never have the time or the ability to do it.

*Catchy & Easy to Understand Quickly*

**Say goodbye to:**

*(the solutions they've tried that have not worked)*

*(write out the fundamental problem)*

*Example (BeeLine Bikes):* No more loading bikes into cars, wasting time on weekends or being without your bike while service is done at a shop.

**No more:**

*(problems they are experiencing)*

**While:**

*(existing solutions)*

*Example (Kurbo Health):* One out of three children in America are obese or overweight and the health cost for employers exceeds \$14 billion annually.

*Example (Safe Flights):* Did you know that 3% of the mechanical parts in airplanes are counterfeit?

**Most compelling statistic:**

*(the statistic that will raise eyebrows)*

*Attention Grabbing!*