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Problem Solving in the New Normal

Business success requires sound problem solving skills to effectively overcome challenges and capture opportunities.

In today's business environment, we are faced with a lot more chaos, interconnectedness and complexity than what existed a few decades ago. Many of the problems faced by businesses:

- Are complex and not easily understood
- Are dynamic and interdependent with one another
- Have multiple potential solutions (there is no one right solution)



This makes overcoming issues and driving innovation more challenging than what it has been in the past.

Events such as COVID-19 demonstrate all too clearly the magnitude of disruption that can occur and the need for problem solving skills that enable innovation to overcome such challenges.

Doing nothing or relying on serendipity as your primary means of innovation and threat management, is flawed. While serendipity can undoubtedly result in

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substantial value, its lack of repeatability is insufficient to deliver consistent business growth.

Sustained business success, and survival during major disruptive events, requires sound problem solving skills, yet traditional methods often struggle!

Traditional Methods are Failing

Often the most significant challenge to effective problem solving is working out what problem to solve!

Typically, there is a need to place greater emphasis on problem identification, rather than an almost exclusive focus on solution development.

In business, there are three primary alternative approaches, the:

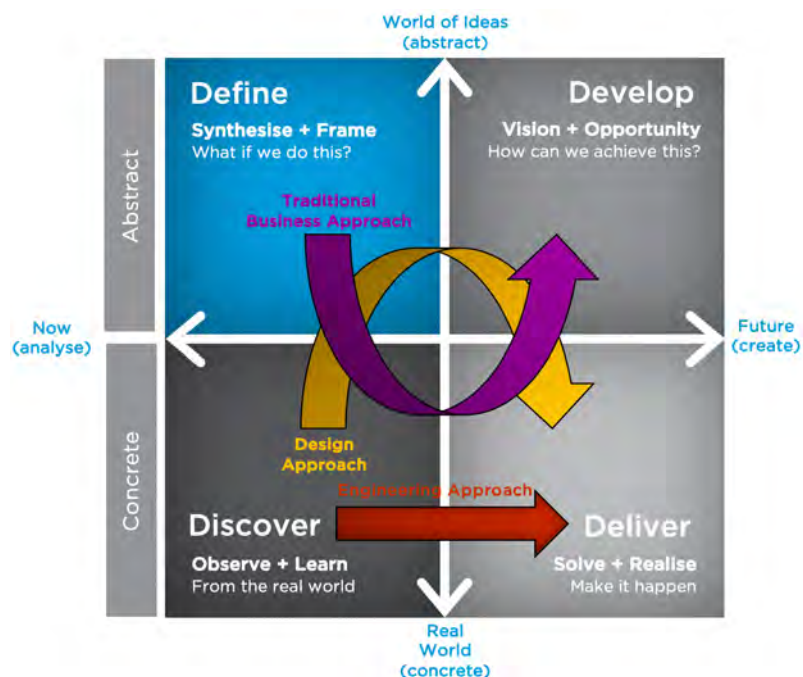
Engineering

approach which involves discovering problems through real world observation and taking a learning approach to solve and deliver a solution.

Business

approach which typically starts with an abstract idea for a solution to a problem. That is, a ‘What if we do this?’ approach where a problem is immediately defined with little or no research and instead, the focus is on ‘How can we achieve this?’

Design approach which uses empathy and first embarks on a process of discovery to make sure the right problem is being identified and is well defined before moving onto developing, prototyping and delivering a solution. It is focused on both solving the right problem and solving it in the right way.



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Solving the Right Problem, the Right Way

The issue with the first two approaches is that there is often insufficient focus on discovering the true nature of the actual underlying problem.

A failure to ensure that the right problem is being solved!

Similarly, a perception that problems only have one 'right' solution leads to insufficient ideation and exploration that would otherwise lead to finding superior solutions.

Ultimately, working on the wrong problem, not developing the depth of knowledge to solve it, or failing to explore the solution space adequately, wastes time, resources and valuable opportunity.

A New Approach to Problem Solving

Instead, problem solving needs to be viewed as an ongoing process that:

- Is managed
- Focuses on continuous learning
- Is agile and flexible as opposed to rigid
- *Explores questions and problems rather than having an immediate focus on solution development*
- *Involves critical thinking and avoids adopting critical assumptions that remain unproven*
- Fosters teams, collaboration and diversity of perspectives (rather than a focus on individuals)
- Focuses on prototyping, experimenting and learning



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Developing Your Problem Solving Capabilities

As you face the need to explore and solve increasingly complex and challenging problems, this will require new practices and tools that will help you:

- Identify and understand meaningful user wants and needs that are to be the target of your innovation efforts
- Ensure that the right problem is being solved
- Accelerate the learning process needed to solve those problems and fuel the innovation process
- Improve your competitive advantage and sustain long-term success



If you would like to learn more about how to develop your problem solving capabilities so that you can get the most from your innovation efforts, give the team at **Fortitude Business Consulting** a call on **1300 551 040**.

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