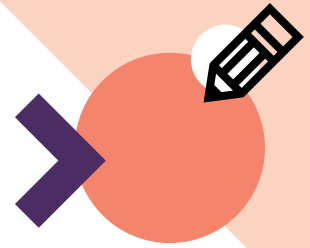


Frame Creation and Exploration



About this method

Frame Creation and Exploration is a design method for challenging assumptions and discovering new angles when tackling complex and often “wicked problems.” Based on the work of design theorist Kees Dorst in his book *Frame Innovation*, this method reframes situations to explore competing pressures (paradoxes) instead of jumping to conclusions. OXD adapted part of this method and presents the following six steps.



Step 1: Archaeology

Map out any attempts to solve the problem to date. Create an exhaustive list that provides background on the problem to help understand the past history.



Step 2: Paradox

List the oppositional forces (paradox) to understand what might be keeping us from moving forward in solving the problem.



Step 3: Actors

Identify the people who are involved in the problem situation and those who may be involved in the future solution. Widen the view beyond one's individual or organizational lens.



Step 4: Values

List what the actors identified in Step 3 value or are interested in. What is important to these actors?



Step 5: Themes

Cluster similar values identified in Step 4 and label each cluster with a theme name. Afterwards, share personal experiences related to the themes to help better understand them.



Step 6: Frames

Pick a theme and identify possible frames to explore. A frame is a way of looking at a problem from a different perspective. Think of other disciplines, contexts, or situations where the theme is also present.

Tips for creating frames

Contemplate metaphors or analogies related to the theme. Ask yourself:

- Is there a discipline or profession that is especially known for creating these values?
- Is there another context or situation where these values are keenly expressed?

Answers to these questions become the “frames” you use to re-examine the problem situation.

Note: Frame creation is one of many techniques situated within Kees Dorst's robust frame innovation process. For further reading, see Kees Dorst and Lucy Kaldor, *Designing for the Common Good* (Amsterdam: BIS Publishers, 2016); and Kees Dorst, *Frame Innovation* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015).



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Example: Workplace Burnout

Themes

The OXD team did a qualitative review of articles about **workplace burnout** and identified 10 themes. We derived these by observing patterns in the findings, grouping them into categories, and labelling each based on its underlying meaning.

Balance

Having the right amount and type of work and access to resources to be successful versus feeling overloaded.

Inclusion and social support

Having a meaningful voice among colleagues and being treated respectfully. Being a part of conversations and decision making in the workplace.

Sacrifice

Giving up personal time, activities and relationships to keep up with work performance. The demands of work interfere with home and family life.

Costs (monetary and personal)

Companies without systems to support the well-being of their employees have higher turnover, lower productivity, and higher healthcare costs.

Recognition

Receiving recognition for achievements, personal satisfaction, acknowledgement from peers/industry. If recognition doesn't match the time and effort someone puts in, they're likely to feel the investment is not worth the payoff.

* Control

Not being micromanaged, having influence, having the needed power that goes with accountability. Feeling a lack of autonomy, access to resources or having a say in decision that impacts one's personal life.

Environmental conditions

Factors such as ergonomic comfort, noise levels, and air quality. People have reported experiencing pain or discomfort at the end of the work day.

Extremes of activity

When a job is monotonous or chaotic, constant energy to remain focused is required, which can lead to fatigue and job burnout.

Values mismatch

If an individual highly values something that their employer does not, then their motivation to work hard and persevere can drop significantly.

Focusing on the individual

Employees feel they are not receiving enough support from their employer and that there's a lack of commitment to looking at how to create a low-stress environment.

Tips for creating frames

Contemplate metaphors or analogies related to the theme. Ask yourself:

- Is there a discipline or profession that is especially known for creating these values?
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Answers to these questions become the "frames" you use to re-examine the problem situation.

Example: Frame Creation and Exploration

Part 1: Explore possible frames

Complete the following problem statement.

If the problem situation of workplace burnout

* is approached as if it is a problem of control (see Themes example page)

then the situation should be approached as if it were

Frame 1: moving out to live by yourself

Frame 2: a parent raising a toddler

Frame 3: a chef

Example:

If the problem situation of **leaders being resistant to new ways of working** is approached as if it is a problem of **agility**, then the situation should be approached as if it were **a group of musicians coming together for the first time to play improvised jazz**.

Part 2: Frame attributes

Choose one frame from Part 1. What similar elements (e.g., people, processes, places, rules) exist between this frame and the problem situation?

Good sleep hygiene

Variety of activities, toys, locations to engage with

Online parent groups

Part 3: Opportunities

What possible solutions does each frame attribute inspire for the problem situation?

Tools to weave breaks into the work day, count break time as part of work time (just as naps are a part of growth), quiet spaces

Opportunity to take on or be exposed to different roles/jobs in an organization

Communities formed by colleagues at work who can share their challenges and stories in a safe environment

Having a hard time with attributes and opportunities?

Test the frame and see if it leads to viable solutions. If not, try another. Don't get too attached to one frame.

Frame Creation and Exploration Worksheet

Part 1: Explore possible frames

Complete the following problem statement.

If the problem situation of (problem)

is approached as if it is a problem of (theme)

then the situation should be approached as if it were

Frame 1: _____

Frame 2: _____

Frame 3: _____

Example:

If the problem situation of **leaders being resistant to new ways of working** is approached as if it is a problem of **agility**, then the situation should be approached as if it were **a group of musicians coming together for the first time to play improvised jazz**.

Part 2: Frame attributes

Choose one frame from Part 1. What similar elements (e.g., people, processes, places, rules) exist between this frame and the problem situation?

Part 3: Opportunities

What possible solutions does each frame attribute inspire for the problem situation?

Having a hard time with attributes and opportunities?

Test a frame and see if it leads to viable solutions. If not, try another. Don't get too attached to one frame.