

THE STATEMENT

The Problem Statement Worksheet

A category is the answer to a problem. Build the problem statement in layers — context, tension, villain, cost — then say who carries it. This is your null hypothesis, ready to pressure-test.

LAYER 1 Context

The backdrop. Why does this matter now? Name the shift, the stakes, the size of the world this lives in.

CONTEXT

LAYER 2 Tension

The “but...”. Despite that potential, what is fraught, fragile, or broken?

TENSION

LAYER 3 Villain

Name the enemy in plain language. The thing you're declaring war on. Problems move people; features don't.

VILLAIN — GIVE IT A NAME

LAYER 4 Cost

The ramifications, quantified where you can. For whom, and how much — churn, wasted time, lost revenue, morale, risk?

COST

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Who has it — and what if it goes unsolved?

A problem with no owner is a fact, not a category. Locate the problem in a person, then assemble the whole statement.

LOCATE Put the problem in a person

WHO CARRIES IT (ROLE, NOT DEMOGRAPHIC)

HOW IT SHOWS UP IN THEIR WEEK

WHAT HAPPENS TO THEM IF IT GOES UNSOLVED

ASSEMBLE The full statement

Write it as one continuous statement: context, tension, villain, cost, owner. Read it out loud. If it doesn't make you want to act, sharpen the villain.

THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

Don't compete. Create the conditions to **win**.

