

# Question *and* Reframe

## *Challenging assumptions to open up new possibilities.*

When you're good at your job, people expect you to have all the answers, and we're often rewarded for our knowledge of our industry's conventions. But figuring out new, better ways of doing things requires questioning how things are done today. "Why do I have to go to a counter to rent my car?" "Why can't I subscribe to a cab service?" Questioning the status quo opens up new space for thinking and imagination. Apply this principle in every aspect of your project—when visiting the field, in small conversations, reviews of research, and evaluating ideas. Unlike most questions you get, don't be so quick to answer them. Let the question force exploration and insights.

# Question *and* Reframe

Challenge your existing assumptions to open up new possibilities.

## GET STARTED

- 1** Create a list of specific assumptions—the things you accept as true—that currently guide your point of view and actions.

*Think about standard procedures, comments of “that’s just the way it is...,” trends or issues that are always dismissed.*

- 2** Question or challenge assumptions and write them down.

*Ask: does it have to be this way? what does this represent? what happens if we don’t change?*

- 3** Generate a list of alternative statements that suggest a new possibility.

*Try: Instead of X, we now believe Y... Others do it like...*

- 4** Step back and reflect on which new statements are most interesting and why. Synthesize what those areas reflect and might entail for your work.

## QUESTION AND REFRAME IN A NUTSHELL



Create new value by recognizing old assumptions and challenging the status quo.

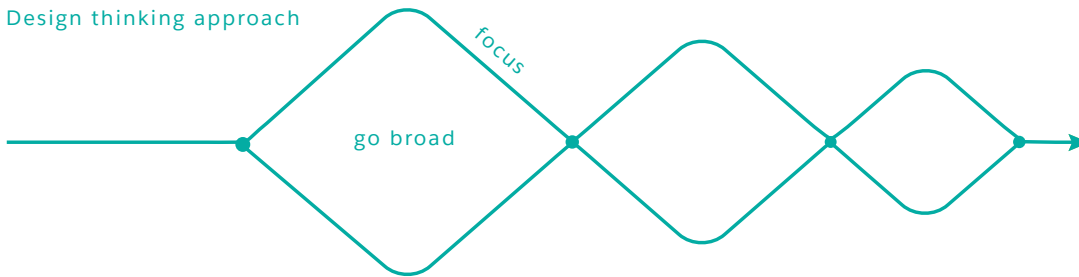
Recognize that individuals and organizations have mental models—a set of assumptions that guide interpretations and actions—which limit the ability to see new opportunity or disruption.

Use a structured approach to surface and challenge your assumptions in order to intentionally change the way you see things.

Synthesize new viewpoints into a 'reframe' statement to socialize new thinking.

### DAY-TO-DAY PRACTICES

Design thinking approach



At the start of a workstream, list potential 'orthodoxies'—the generally accepted practices in your organization or how you work today—that might impact your work. Discuss how these may hinder your success and what you can do to challenge them.

During research, ask questions aimed at uncovering common perceptions or beliefs about your topic that users, co-workers or stakeholders have.

Craft a 'reframe' statement to explain the old and new thinking about the problem space to stakeholders and extended team members in order to socialize learning, get feedback and gain buy-in.

Use a 3-part narrative structure to present opportunity areas in a way that connects to real behavior and needs.

1. Users do \_\_\_\_\_ (observation)
2. Yet \_\_\_\_\_ (tension)
3. How might we \_\_\_\_\_ (opportunity area)

Identify out-of-industry solutions or models that are inspiring or interesting. Discuss how they could apply to your current problem to push your thinking and surface perceived constraints.

# 3-Part Observation



To communicate insights in more evocative ways, wrap your observations about users, situations, or industries in a 3-part structure.

## HOW TO

- 1 Start with an observation. This should be something direct—a fact that seems almost obvious.  
*“People are bored and fidget as they wait in line...”*
- 2 Now add an insightful reflection. It could explain the observation, call out an irony, or question why it has to be that way.  
*“...this is no surprise as there is little in the environment to engage with or warrant attention.”*
- 3 Third, add considerations or ideas that are ways of overcoming the insight.  
*“...consider ways of posting or sharing information that would be beneficial for those people to know.”*

## TIPS + TRICKS

The real insight is in how you see everyday situations—not in seeing or discovering truly surprising behaviors.

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## PAIRS WELL WITH

- Ways of Statements
- Observation
- Concept Sheets

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## TIME

2-3 minutes each

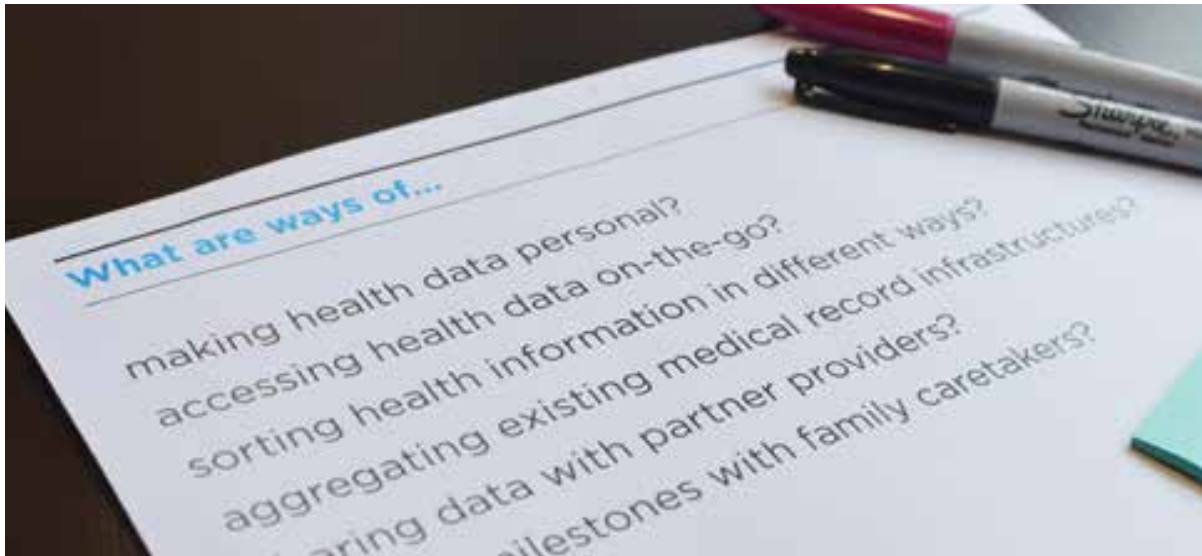
## TEAM SIZES

1-2 people

## MATERIALS

Pen, paper, a questioning mind

# Ways of Statements



*Don't jump to a solution when presented with a problem. Improve your team's ability to explore many varied ideas by writing Ways of Statements.*

## HOW TO

- 1 After spending time with users and the problem context, you will have identified both challenges and opportunity areas.
- 2 For each challenge, write a Ways of Statement.  
*"We need ways of reducing wait times for urgent cases."*
- 3 Sort the Ways of Statements into groups that might share similar types of solutions.
- 4 A group of similar Ways of Statements might suggest an overall approach to a solution.
- 5 Reflect and discuss which Ways of groupings seem the most promising.
- 6 Seed your brainstorm sessions with these Ways of Statements to generate many possible ideas.

## TIPS + TRICKS

Focus on a user-centered mindset—"users need ways of..."  
If you find yourself with too many, edit ruthlessly. Just a few Ways of Statements should generate hundreds of ideas.

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## PAIRS WELL WITH

- Concept Sheets
- Service Prototype
- Collaborative Cycle

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## TIME

30-120 minutes for multiples

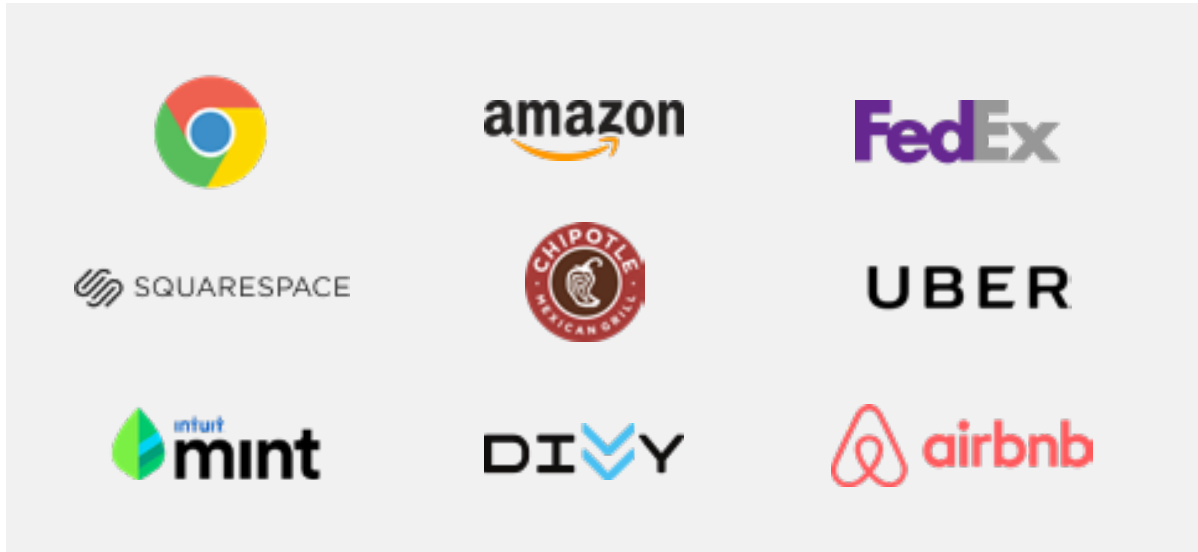
## TEAM SIZES

1-2 people

## MATERIALS

Sharpies, sticky notes

# Analogous Examples



*A great way to break conventional thinking is to look at others who've already broken convention. Study how game-changers outside your industry have done it.*

## HOW TO

- 1 Look for people, products, or services that are new, unique, or extreme in their approach.
- 2 Reflect and identify unique attributes of what they do and any conventions they break.
- 3 Identify some of the obstacles they face and how they overcame them.
- 4 Ask how their specific model or characteristics of what they do might be helpful to your own team's thinking.
- 5 Use a Collaborative Cycle to have small teams research and discuss the analogy and how it might apply.
- 6 Use analogies in pitches to help others see the possibility of defying convention.

## TIPS + TRICKS

Try to find examples from related worlds that have structural or characteristic similarities to your own industry or situation. They are often the most powerful.

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## PAIRS WELL WITH

- Collaborative Cycle
- Elevator Pitch
- Pitch Deck

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## TIME

*5-10 minutes each*

## TEAM SIZES

*1-2 people or a group*

## MATERIALS

*Internet, trend sites, what's new, classic disruptors*