Problem Statement Checklist

WHAT TO DO	☞	You are to rewrite the statement below as your project develops. For each rewrite, avoid looking at any prior problem descriptions written by you or your peers.	**Efforts:** 10 minutes **Page limit:** about ½ page

☐ **Problem Statement**
~300 characters

☐ Recognizable? — *Assume the problem is solved, what then becomes possible? Describe what becomes possible. What will a community be able to accomplish but can't today?*

☐ Verifiable? — *How could you tell something solves the problem? Tip: you may find it easier to use numbers.*

☐ **Space of Candidate Solutions**
~300 characters

☐ 3 "Destination" Guesses? — *Please list three **distinct** "destinations". Phrase them as opportunities to create an organization. i.e. outline technology, business model, community, advantage, comparables, as appropriate.*

☐ Scale? — *What attribute, feature, "truth", or other consideration is shared by more than one destination? By all three destinations?*

☐ **Sanity Check**
~300 characters

☐ Being wrong? — *Which one fact (if proven) would "kill" the entire opportunity?*

☐ Your Tech Space? — *Is it needed? Why? How? What's missing? Can the above "killer fact" be fixed, anticipated or overcome??*

Note: A problem is an obstacle to progress. It is hard to grasp at the outset, trivially "described" by a solution once solved. Unfortunately, while you are trying to solve a problem, both solution and the problem itself are elusive. This is very different from how you typically encounter "problems" in an educational environment; there you "pretend-play" to solve a problem that you (unconsciously) know someone has already solved and you expect the faculty to have an answer. That's great. It is also role playing, not problem-solving.

Innovating requires that you become skilled at general problem-solving: The problem has not been solved and it isn't even well defined yet. Role playing doesn't help. Defining the problem is part of solving it. The checklist above helps you make sure your definition, no matter how crude, is at least complete. The way to progress is to update your understanding of the problem (or problems) you think you are solving continually. You do that by assuming progress has been made (e.g., imagine there's no longer an obstacle) and working backwards from that imagined state.

Value emerges from doing this anew, individually, about weekly. The skill develops from making it a habit to look at the complete problem rather than glossing over it. This checklist comes in handy.

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