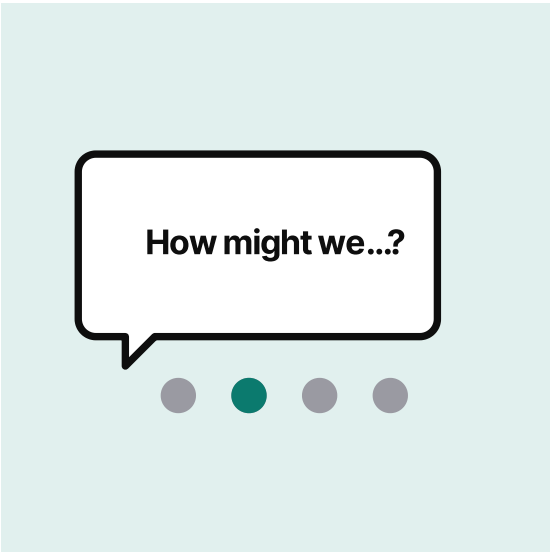
Method

How might we...?

A technique for turning a problem or an insight into an open, optimistic question that invites ideas: “How might we...?”



In Spanish

«¿Cómo podríamos...?»

Origin

Basadur, at Procter & Gamble; popularized by IDEO

Output

Open questions that invite ideas

What it’s for

It helps you move from understanding the problem to generating solutions, without closing off the answer too soon.

Key elements

How

It assumes there is a solution.

Might

It invites you to explore several, without committing to one.

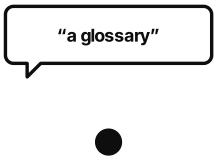
We

It is a question for the team.

An example

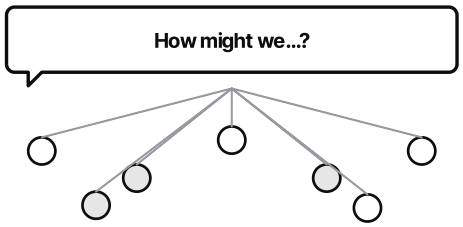
Starting from an insight: people don’t understand their account statement, even though they say they do.

A direct solution



"We need a glossary." **A single idea.**

A "How might we...?" question



"How might we help each person understand in seconds where their money goes?" **Many possible ideas.**

The question keeps the solution space open without losing the focus of the insight.

How it's done

1

You start from an insight or a specific problem.

2

You reframe it as a question neither too broad nor too narrow.

3

You use it as the starting point for ideation.

Applications in design

When to use it

After synthesizing research, when you have an insight and need to turn it into a challenge for ideation.

Avoid

Putting the solution inside the question ("How might we build an app that...?").

Don't fall for it

If nobody has ideas, the question is too broad; if only one fits, it is too narrow.

Connections

Builds on

- Problem–solution co-evolution
- Problem framing
- Insight
- Design synthesis

Used by

- Social design

Related to

- Design thinking
- Double Diamond
- Brainstorming
- SCAMPER

Authors and works

1982	**Min Basadur, George Graen and Stephen Green**	Documented in industry a training for finding problems and framing them as open challenges, a forerunner of the "How might we…?" question.
	Min Basadur (per Berger, 2012)	Used the phrasing at Procter & Gamble to frame problems in a positive way.
2015	**IDEO.org**	Included it among the methods of human-centered design.

Sources

Original sources

- Basadur, M., Graen, G. B., & Green, S. G. (1982). Training in creative problem solving: Effects on ideation and problem finding and solving in an industrial research organization. Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 30(1), 41–70. View source (https://doi.org/10.1016/0030-5073(82)90233-1)

Secondary sources

- Berger, W. (2012, September 17). The secret phrase top innovators use. Harvard Business Review. View source (https://hbr.org/2012/09/the-secret-phrase-top-innovato)
- IDEO.org (2015). The field guide to human-centered design. IDEO.org.

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