



If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the solution, I would spend the first 55 minutes determining the proper question to ask. For once I know the proper question, I can solve the problem in less than five minutes.

-Albert Einstein

Good solutions start with interesting problems. While it can be tempting to push forward with the first idea you think of, truly successful products stem from a deeper, more creative approach.

Let's take a concrete example: **eCommerce**

Clearly, there are a whole host of challenges the industry faces - from fulfillment infrastructure to warehousing and inventory. But simply plucking one of these problems out of the air is hardly going to help you build a successful business.

Instead, you need to formulate the problem in a way that opens up possibilities. This is often done best using questions:



Why is warehousing so difficult?



What would an ideal inventory system look like?



How will consumer behavior change in the next five years?

By reframing the problem this way, you will begin to see the problem as multiple problems, depending on the perspective you take on it. You will also start to develop a more original take on the problem - and that increases the chances of the solution you produce being original, too.



THE SOLUTION IS ALREADY IN THE PROBLEM

The main reason this discovery stage is so vital is general problems limit your thinking. Most current supply chain problems started life as solutions: JIT manufacturing was conceived as a means of improving efficiency at Toshiba factories in the 1960s. But today, the risk exposure it creates is considered a problem.

According to one survey, **85% of executives believe their organization is bad at problem diagnosis**⁹, and this is exactly where you - the disruptor - can take the lead. By challenging the existing paradigms and assumptions about what's possible from the start, you will set yourself up to produce more disruptive, creative, and exciting products.

⁹ <https://hbr.org/2017/01/are-you-solving-the-right-problems>