

# The Reframing Matrix

## Generating Different Perspectives

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Things look different when you change perspective.

When you're stuck on a problem, it often helps to look at it from another perspective. This can be all that you need to do to come up with a great solution.

However, it is sometimes difficult to think about what these perspectives might be.

This is when a tool like the Reframing Matrix is useful. In this article, we'll look at how you can use it to look at problems from different perspectives.

### About the Matrix

The Reframing Matrix tool was created by Michael Morgan, and published in his 1993 book, "**Creating Workforce Innovation**." It helps you to look at business problems from various perspectives. Using these, you can come up with more creative solutions.

The approach relies on the fact that different people with different experiences are likely to approach problems in different ways. The technique helps you put yourself into the minds of different people, imagine the way that they would face these problems, and explore the possible solutions that they might suggest.

### How to Use the Tool

The Reframing Matrix is very easy to use. All you'll need is a pen and paper to get started.

#### Step 1: Draw the Grid

Start by drawing a simple four-square grid, like the one pictured in figure 1 below.

Leave a space in the middle of the grid to define your problem, and then write the problem that you want to explore in this space.

Figure 1 – Reframing Matrix Step 1



From 'Creating Workforce Innovation' by Michael Morgan, p.75. © 1993. First published by Allen & Unwin, New South Wales. Reproduced with permission from Allen & Unwin.

**Tip:**

The boxes around the grid are there for your different perspectives. If this four-box approach doesn't suit you, feel free to change it.

**Step 2: Decide on Perspectives**

Now, decide on four different perspectives to use in your matrix. Two useful approaches for doing this are the 4Ps Approach and the Professions Approach.

The 4Ps Approach (not to be confused with the 4Ps of marketing ) helps you look at problems from the following perspectives:

- **Product perspective:** Is there something wrong with the product or service? Is it priced correctly? How well does it serve the market? Is it reliable?
- **Planning perspective:** Are our business plans, marketing plans, or strategy at fault? Could we improve these?
- **Potential perspective:** How would we increase sales? If we were to seriously increase our targets or our production volumes, what would happen with this problem?
- **People perspective:** What are the people impacts and people implications of the problem? What do people involved with the problem think? Why are customers not using or buying the product? (These are just some of the questions that you can ask as you look at your problem using these four perspectives.)

The Professions Approach helps you look at the problem from the viewpoints of different specialists, or stakeholders . For instance, the way a doctor looks at a problem would be different from the approach that a civil engineer or a lawyer would use. Or the way a CEO sees a problem may be different from the way an HR manager would see it.

This approach can be especially useful when you're trying to solve a problem that involves many different types of people, or if you need step away from your usual way of thinking so that you can be more creative.

### Step 3: Brainstorm Factors

Finally, **brainstorm** factors related to your problem from each perspective, and add these in to the appropriate quadrant of the matrix.

Once you've completed the matrix, you'll have a better understanding of your problem, and you'll be able to generate more solutions.

#### Tip 1:

The **Perceptual Positions** technique can be useful when you want to see things from other people's viewpoints.

#### Tip 2:

See our article on **CATWOE** for a similar approach. This asks you to look at a problem from the perspectives of Customers, Actors, the Transformation process, the World view, the Owner, and Environmental constraints.

### Example Reframing Matrix

In the example in figure 2, below, a manager has used the 4Ps approach to explore why a new product is not selling well.

Figure 2 – Example Reframing Matrix



#### Key Points

The Reframing Matrix tool was originally created by Michael Morgan, and published in his book "Creating Workforce Innovation." It helps you to look at a problem from different perspectives.

You use the tool by drawing a simple four-square grid and putting your problem or issue in the middle of the grid.

You then choose four different perspectives that you will use to look at your problem, and brainstorm factors related to your problem, starting with each of those perspectives.