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Creating Meaningful Problem Statements

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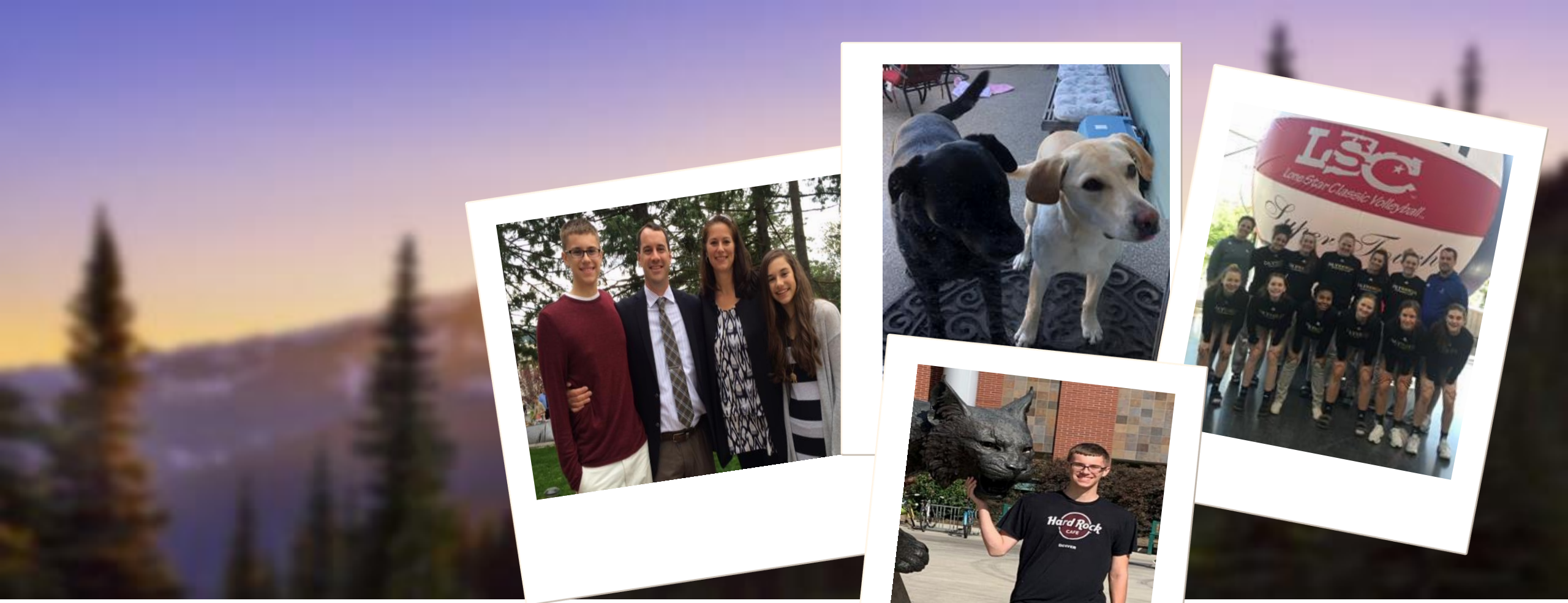

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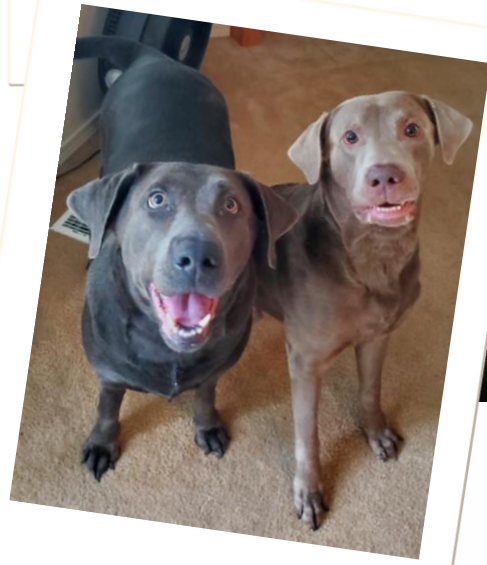

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Why is this important to us?

Lets take a look at a problematic problem statement…

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What is The Problem?

Employees are stressed because there are not enough people to answer the phones, there are too many calls coming in all the time, and customers are constantly complaining their calls are not being answered.

Simple Solutions

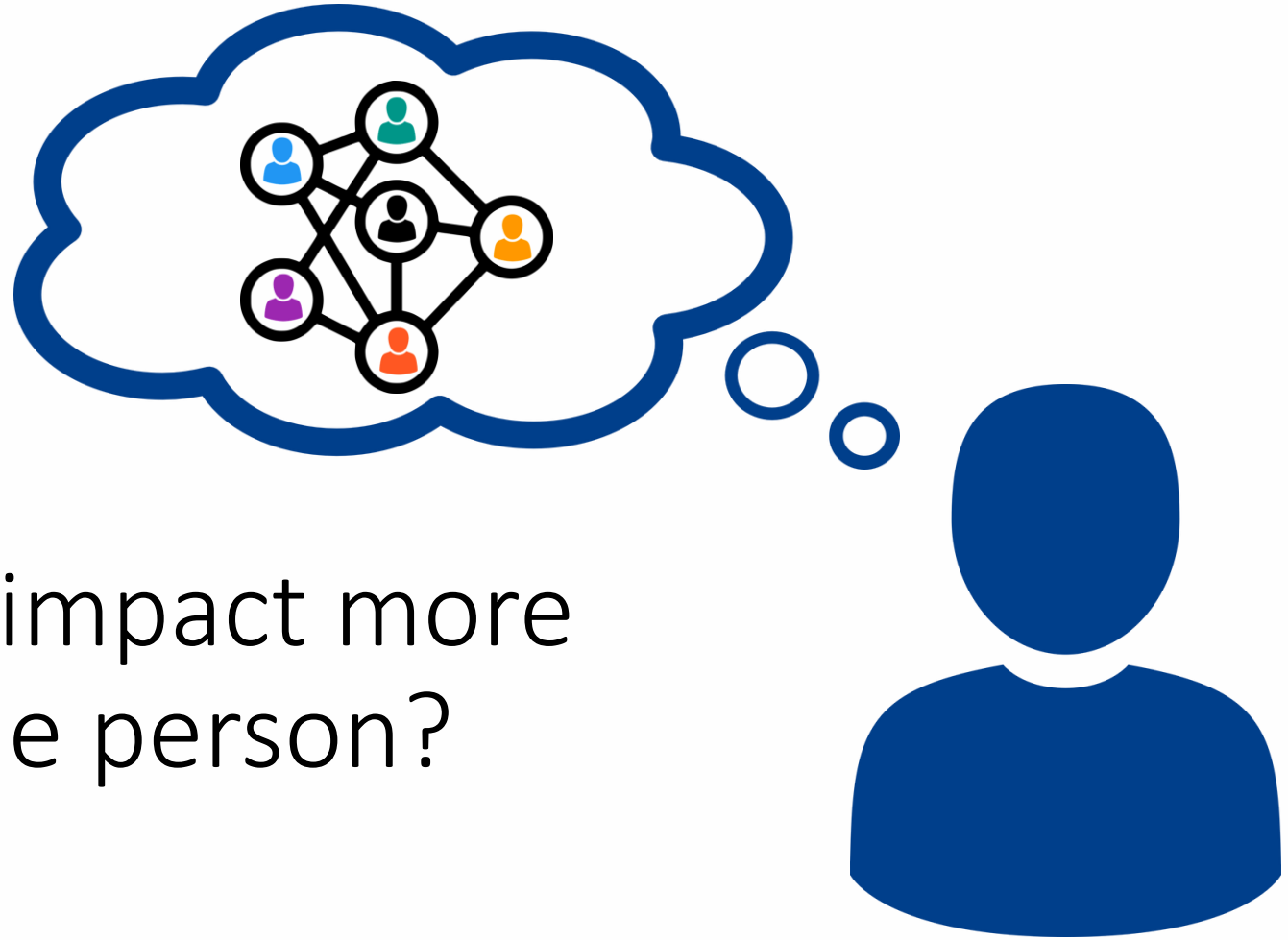
- Add more people to answer the phones
- Create a de-stress zone for employees
- Customer service training for all

Lets look at that “Problem” again…

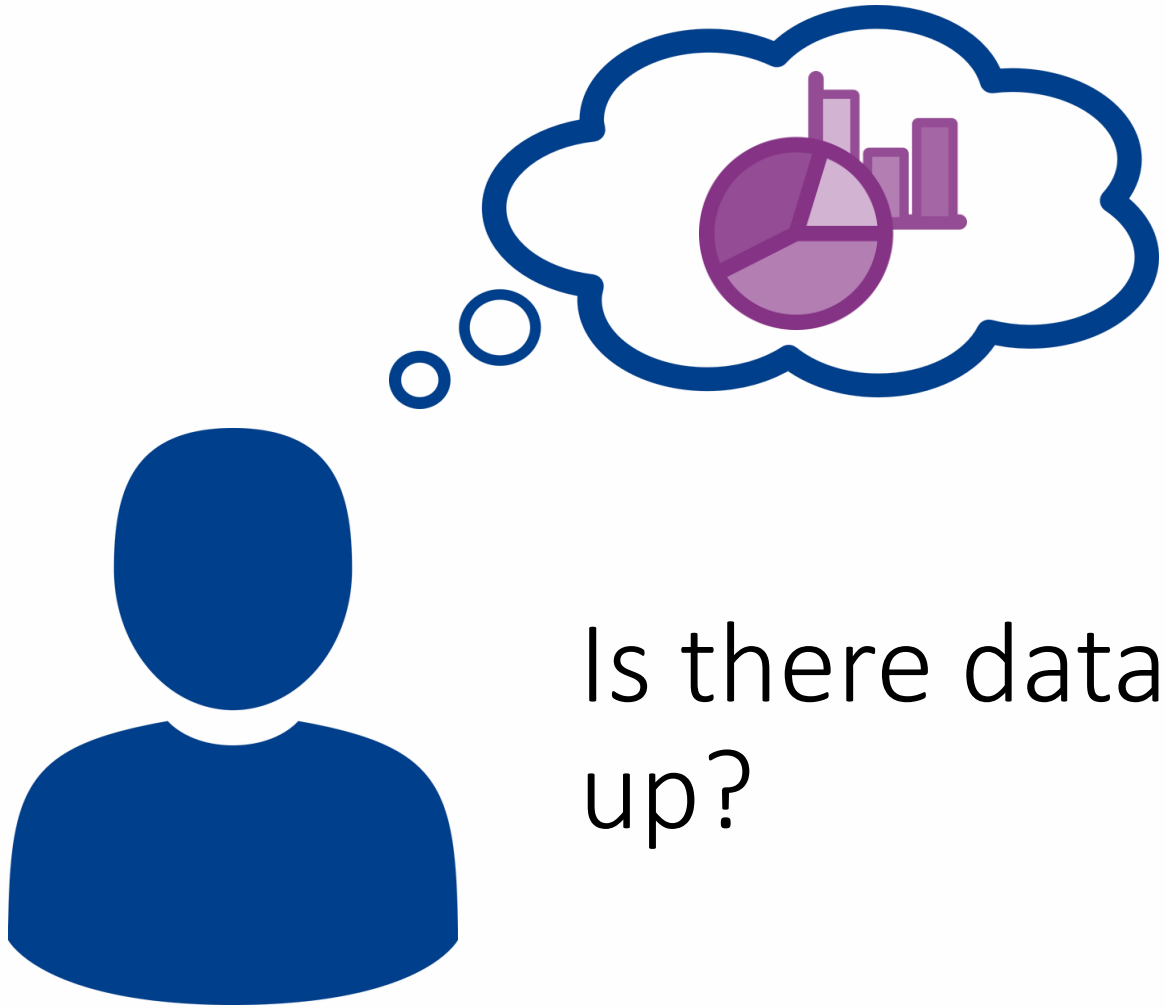
Employees are stressed because there are not enough people to answer the phones, there are too many calls coming in all the time, and customers are constantly complaining their calls are not being answered.

Lets back it up…

How do we know we have a problem?



Does it impact more than one person?



Is there data to back it up?

Is the problem within our realm of influence/sphere of control?

Questions?

How To Write A Problem Statement!

- **Who** is affected?
- **What** is the result of the problem?
- **When/How** often does the problem occur?
- **Where** does the problem occur? (if applicable)
- **What is the business impact?** (or the big **WHY**)

Lean Problem Solving Approach

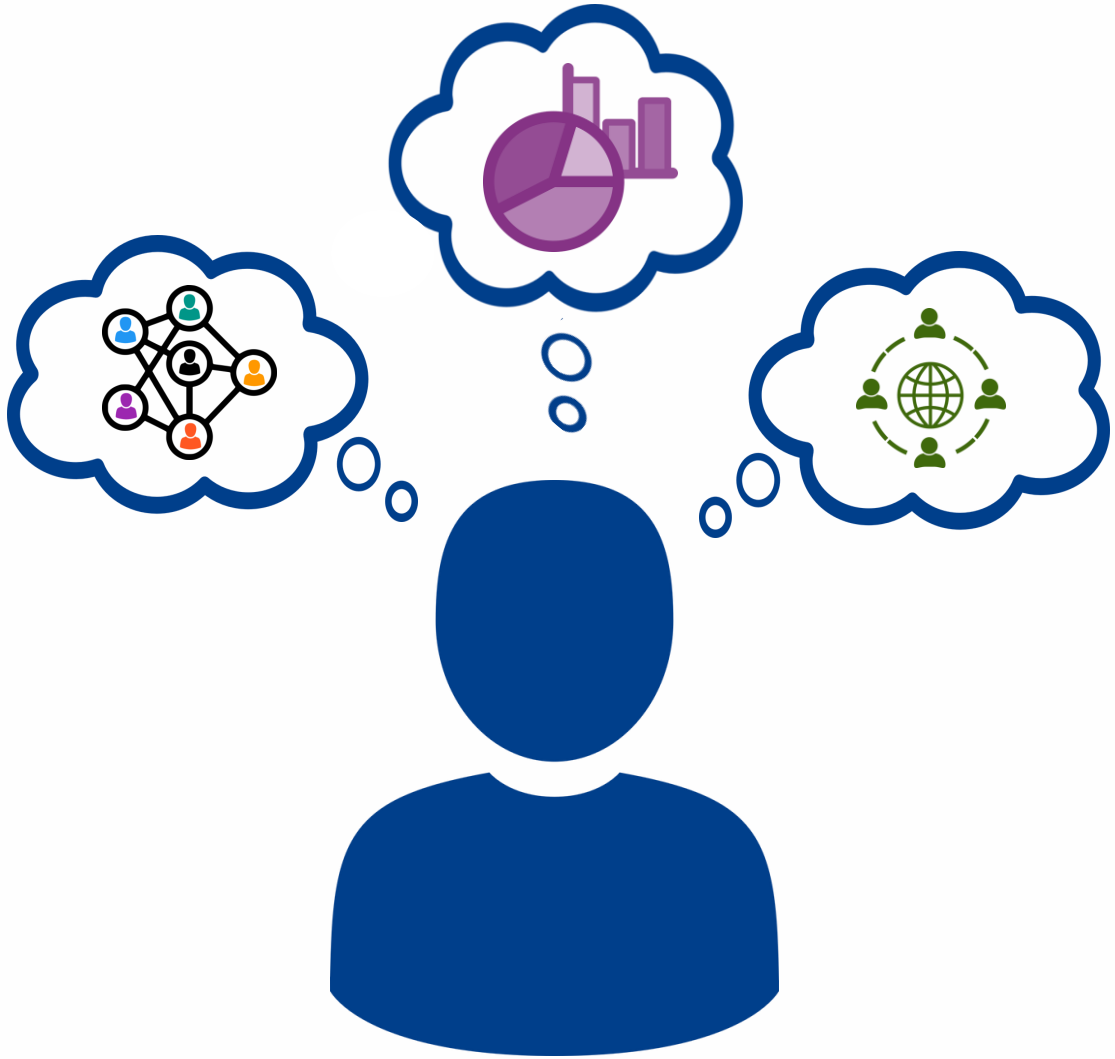
Analyze the situation fully before you come up with factors that contributed to the problem.

- Gemba Walk
- Survey
- Identify measures/available data

Analyze The Situation

Ask yourself…

- Does it impact more than one person?
- Is there data to back it up?
- Is the problem within our realm of influence?



Crafting ***the Real*** Problem Statement

- **Who**: The Office Assistants
- **Where**: Agency HQ
- **When**: 30% of the time
- **What is the result of the problem**: The phones are not being answered
- **What is the business impact (The Big WHY)**: Customers are not being served timely

Problem Statement

The Office Assistants (**Who?**), at Agency HQ (**Where?**), do not answer the phones 30% of the time within 3 rings (**When?**) which causes a delay in serving customers (**What is the result of the problem?**) resulting in a negative customer experience (**What is the business impact? The Big WHY**).

Problem Statements

Original Statement:

Employees are stressed because there are not enough people to answer the phones, there are too many calls coming in all the time, and customers are constantly complaining their calls are not being answered.

Lean Statement:

The Office Assistants, at Agency HQ, do not answer the phones 30% of the time within 3 rings which causes a delay in serving customers resulting in a negative customer experience.

A Few Things To Remember…

Your problem statement should not:

- Include a solution
- Place blame

A Problem well stated is a problem half solved!

Questions?

Scenario

Activity

The agency failed a data integrity audit for the second time and a statewide training plan is needed to make sure people know how to do their work. This training must be done within three months or people will start losing their jobs.

*This is a fictitious scenario

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When you analyze the situation you learn…

This is the second time the Agency has failed the data integrity audit. Three failures will result in a 30% funding cut, which could mean job loss or reduction in service, however it's unknown until a plan is put in place. 98% of the errors happen at HQ and are due to inaccurate reporting.

Activity

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Our Lean Problem Statement

The Agency (**Who?**) has failed the data integrity audit (**What?**) for the second time this year. (**When?**) 98% of the errors are due to inaccurate reporting at the HQ level (**Where?**). A three time failure results in a 30% funding cut. (**What is the Business Impact?**)

Activity

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Questions?

Happy Problem Statement Writing!

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