HOW TO CREATE A PROBLEM STATEMENT

A problem statement is an important part of any project and is used throughout the 120-day cycle to maintain focus and scope. The problem statement provides the team with a common goal.

The three components of a problem statement:
1. The problem
2. How it affects the staff
3. How it affects the customer

When writing a problem statement, keep in mind:
1. Focus on the problem, not on solutions
2. Focus on the problem, not the symptoms of the problem
3. Keep the statement to one or two sentences

Difference between a symptom and a problem:
Symptoms are usually a warning that something is wrong; an indication that there is a 'problem'. It is a shadow of the actual problem; a stitch of evidence that indicates which 'problem' touches the staff and makes itself known. A symptom is not the problem, it is the perception or an outcome of the true problem; it is a gap between the existing state and the desired state of the process.

Example: *We do not have enough staff- that is why we cannot finish our shipping.*
> *Symptom: Not enough staff*
> *Problem: The actual problem is that the shipping is not being completed but this is a high level look at the problem. You have to dig deeper to find the root of the problem which is done during the Define, Measure and Analyze phases.*
> *Problem Statement: Our current process of shipping supplies to our customers is not efficient to issues related to the timely processing of orders. This is causing shipping delays, which results in staff feeling frustrated and increased customer complaints.*

Writing the Problem Statement
A problem statement is one or two sentences that identify the condition, problems, or issues that lead to a proposed plan of action.

Once you have completed your Affinity diagram, take the category titles that the team has come up with and place them on a flip chart. Beside the sticky notes, write, "Our current process……" and ask the team to fill in the rest using the categories, they came up with

As a facilitator it is your job to capture the words and sentences on a flip chart that the team are saying as they start to try and put a sentence together.