

# 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

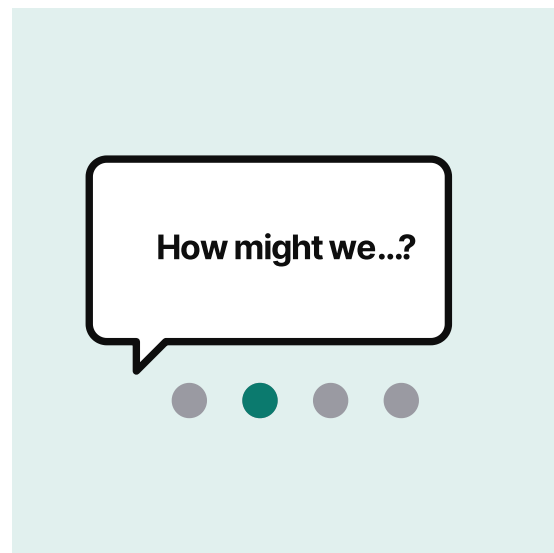
«¿Cómo podríamos...?»

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.

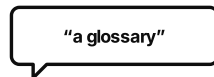
### We

It is a question for the team.

## An example

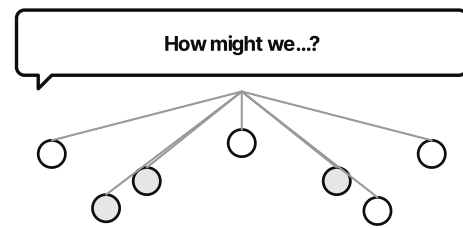
Starting from an insight: people don't understand their account statement, even though they say they do.

## 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



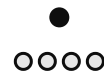
You start from an insight or a specific problem.

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

■ Insight

■ Design synthesis

Related to

■ Design thinking

■ Double Diamond

■ Brainstorming

■ SCAMPER

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## Authors and works

|      |                                                    |                                                                                                                                              |
|------|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1982 | <b>Min Basadur, George Graen and Stephen Green</b> | Documented in industry a training for finding problems and framing them as open challenges, a forerunner of the “How might we...?” question. |
|      | <b>Min Basadur (per Berger, 2012)</b>              | Used the phrasing at Procter & Gamble to frame problems in a positive way.                                                                   |
| 2015 | <b>IDEO.org</b>                                    | 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\)](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 \(https://hbr.org/2012/09/the-secret-phrase-top-innovato\)](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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