



# HUSTEF

HUNGARIAN SOFTWARE TESTING FORUM

QA stories from the trenches

**You don't know  
what you know  
until you find out**



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Sometimes we think we know what the problem is, but don't know the solution.

Sometimes we can't put a finger on the problem, but we know there's one.

Sometimes we think the solution we have applies to every problem.

**How to find out what is really going on  
and what should be done?**

# Situational awareness

## Understanding your standing...

Situational awareness is the ability to perceive and understand your surroundings and what it consists of.

## ...In order to make decisions

We need this understanding to predict the effects of our actions and to predict how our surroundings might be affected by them.



# Confidence vs Knowledge

## Ready to use solutions?

In our business as consultants, we often hear about our client's quality problems. As QA professionals we are often tempted to think that we already know the answers to those problems.

**BUT:** we might not know enough about the domain or the context to make correct judgements. This might lead to the use of "best practices" ie. copy-pasting previous solutions.

## Dunning-Kruger effect

The Dunning-Kruger effect occurs when a person's lack of knowledge in certain area causes them to overestimate their own competence. But that confidence doesn't equal to understanding.

This is important to us all: **without understanding the context, you cannot deliver value.**



## Systems thinking

### HIDDEN TRAIL

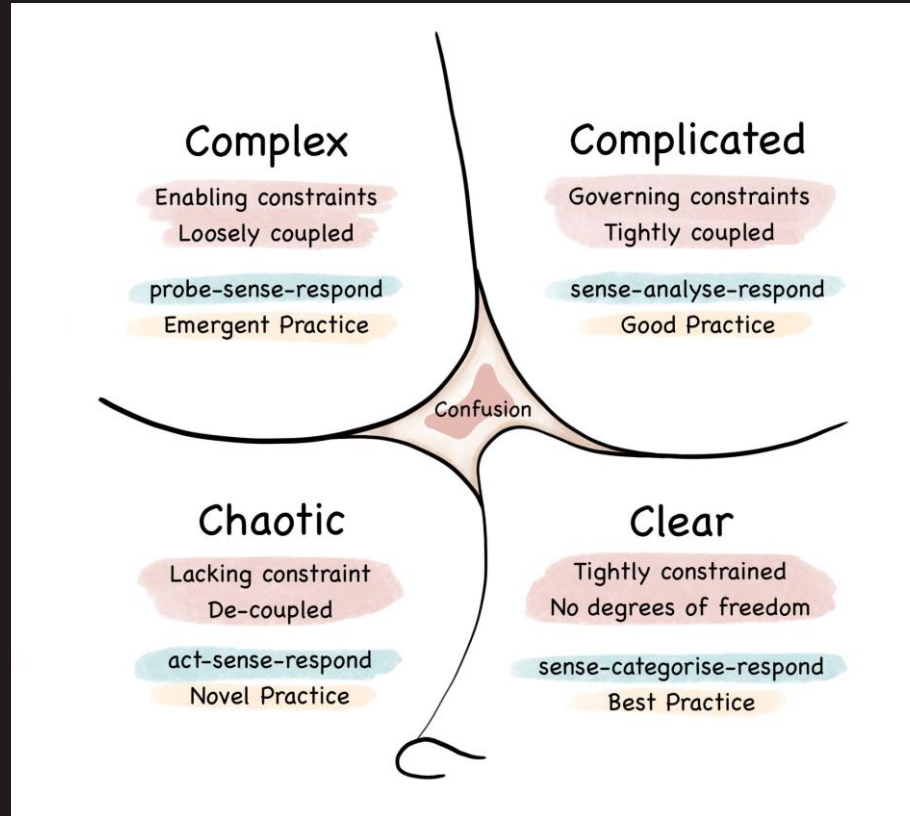
## Cynefin

Systems thinking gives us some tools for gathering knowledge, solutions and understanding our environments even in unknown contexts.

Cynefin framework is one such tool, developed by Dave Snowden in the 90s while he worked for IBM. It's purpose is to help us to choose most appropriate approach to decision making (and problem solving) in various situations. The framework stems from research with military squads, corporate environments and anthropological studies.

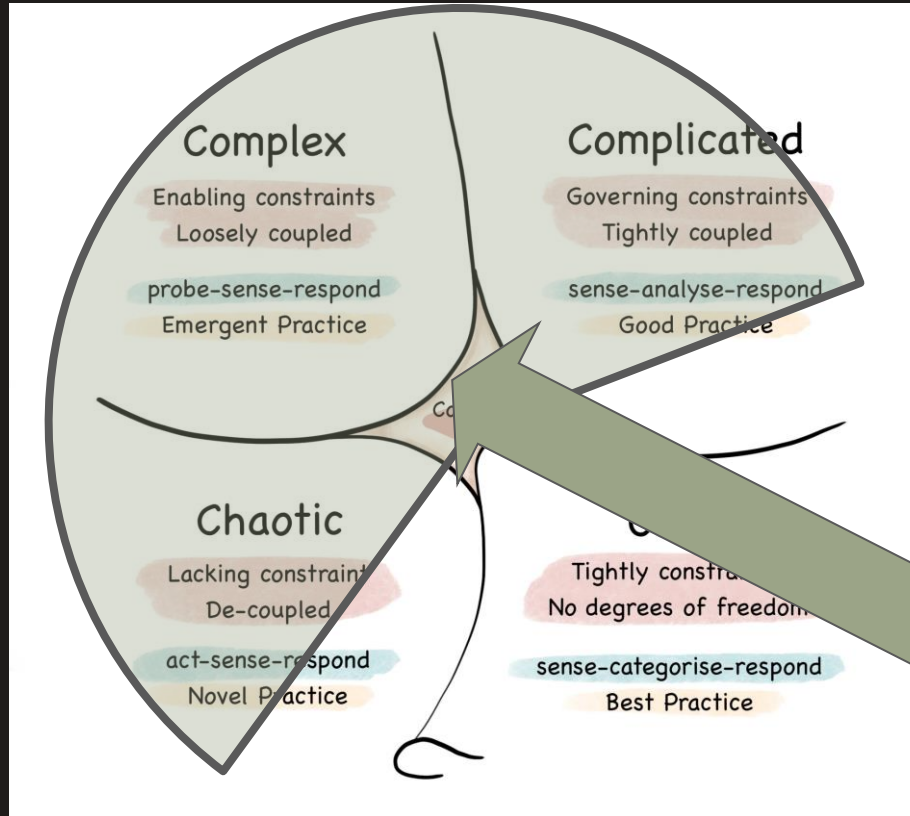
Cynefin describes five domains: clear, complicated, complex, chaotic and confusion.

# Cynefin domains





# Cynefin domains



A thing common to these domains is the absence of ready made solutions and the need to make sense of the context to come up with solutions.

Scope of digital product contexts



We don't know at  
all what works  
anymore,  
everything is falling  
apart!



We're following all  
best practises and  
doing everything  
right. Why do our  
releases still fail?

# Where to start?

## Assess the situation

Study yourself and your surroundings. Be ready to adjust the perception of your own knowledge. The trail of improving competence starts from gathering information.

You need to assess the context to understand what needs to be learned to know enough - enough to deliver value. We don't need to know everything.

## Remain humble

Acknowledge that you don't know everything.

The more you know about a subject, the better you acknowledge that you don't know everything about the subject

Being humble means also acknowledging that the solution to solve the problem depends on the context



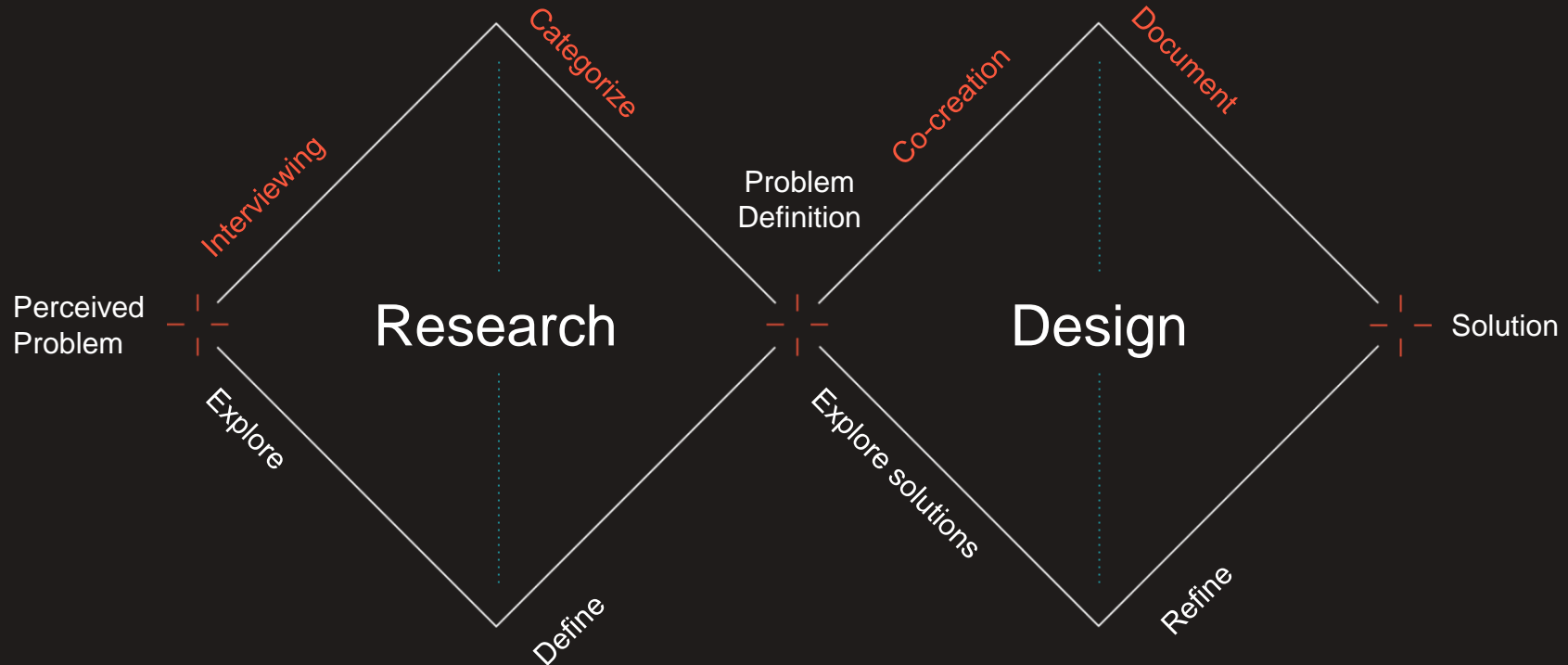
## Knowing enough

You should aim to “know enough” to understand what is important to your audience and to be able to think of solutions to their problems.

To gain enough knowledge you should have a structured approach to your learning.

Next we will walk through a structured way to gain knowledge and how to pass it to the audience. The audience can be your team, your client or other stakeholders that benefit from it.

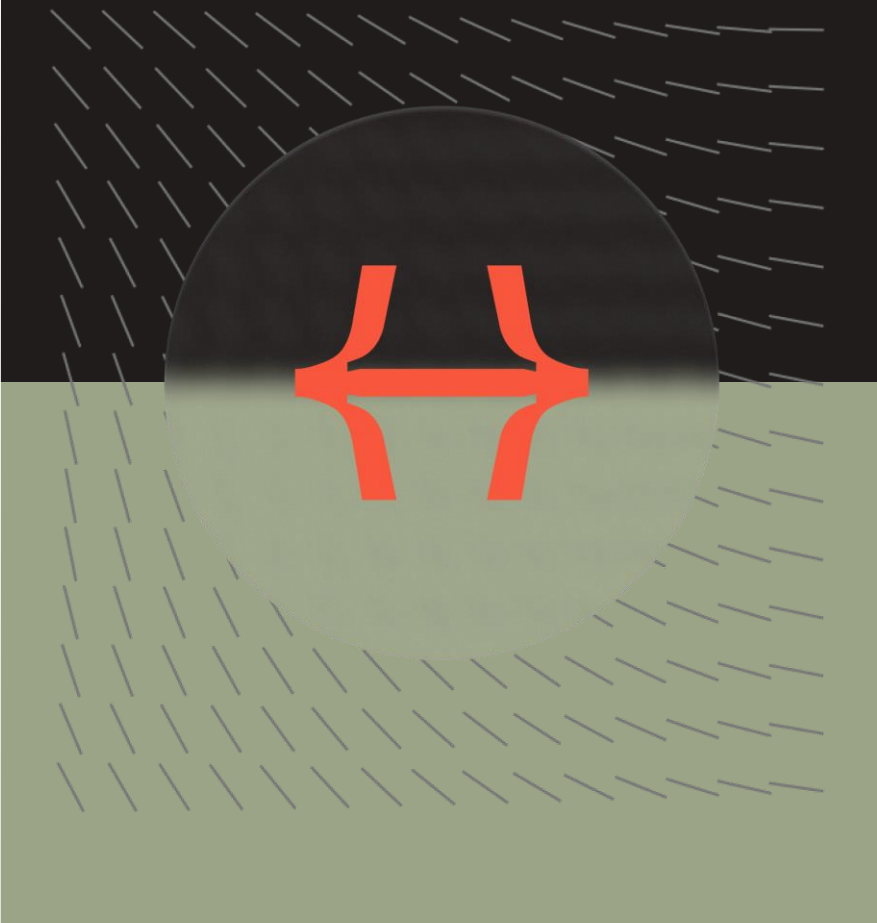
# Double diamond: a diverge - converge model for researching the context and solutions



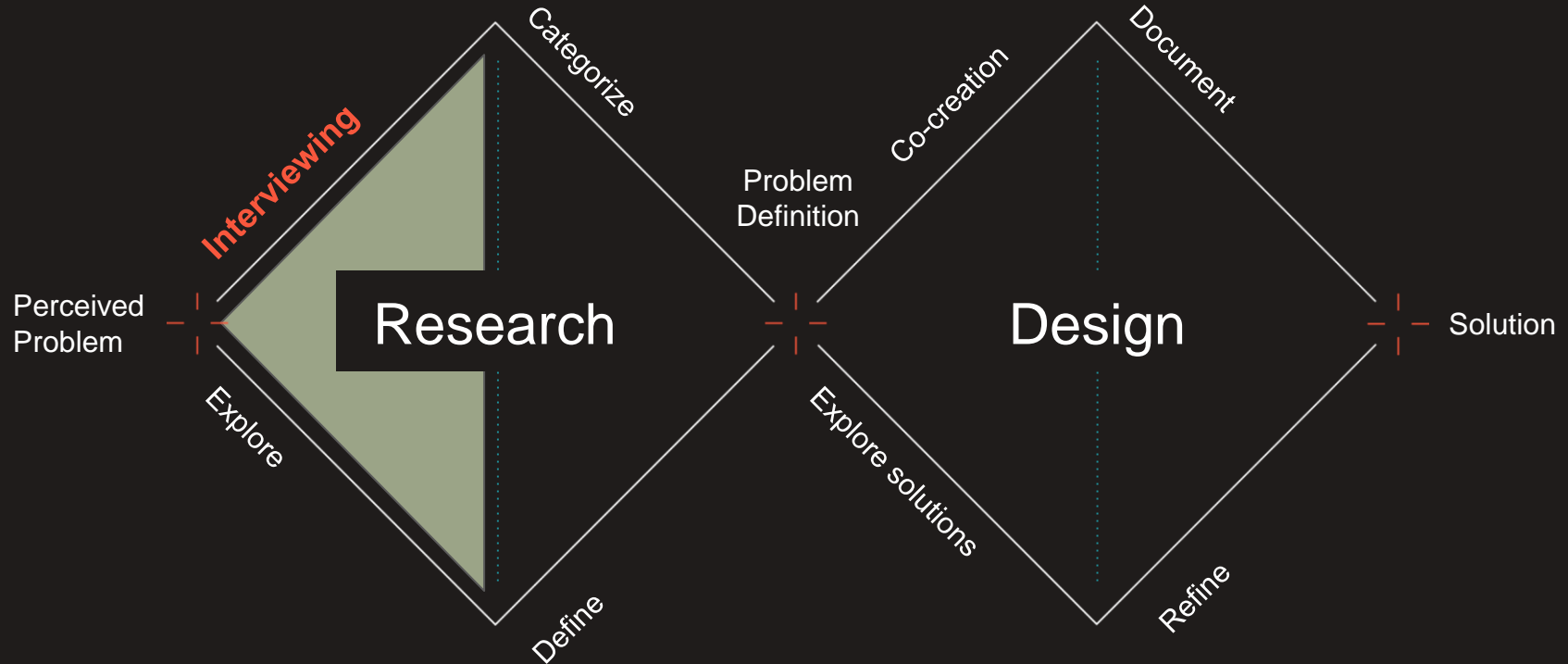


How to get started?

# The interviews



# Research: diverge



# Why?

## Never assume anything

When doing interviews it is important to stay open minded. Just gather as much information about the perceived issue as possible.

Interviews are a part of a design process that leads to solutions that eventually improve working environment and methods.

## Let people speak

A good way to gather information and data is to let the people do the talking. Interviewing is more effective than questionnaires or group situations to get personal opinions. And in general, to hear their feelings regarding their everyday work. These can give valuable clues on what's going on and what to improve.

# What?

## What happens?

A good interview takes about 60 minutes. The number of people to interview is important to get right. Too few people and you might not capture all relevant information. Too many people and the refinement of the information becomes too overwhelming.

Try to interview people from all relevant teams and departments of the organization.

## Who to interview?

- Developers
- Testers
- Customer service
- Project management
- Product management
- etc



# How?

## The interviewing situation

It is important to say to the interviewee that the situation is safe for them to say anything they want and that they won't be blamed for what they say.

The data and information you get is more important than who said it.

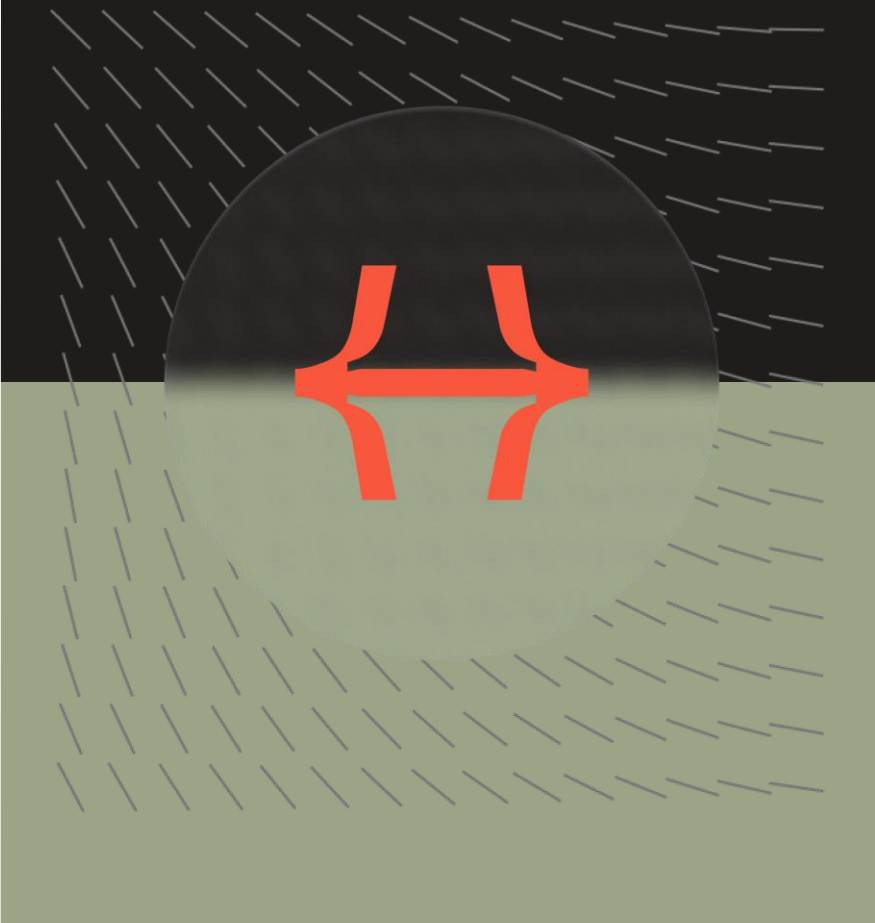
**Important thing is to get  
people talking, not to  
follow any scripts**



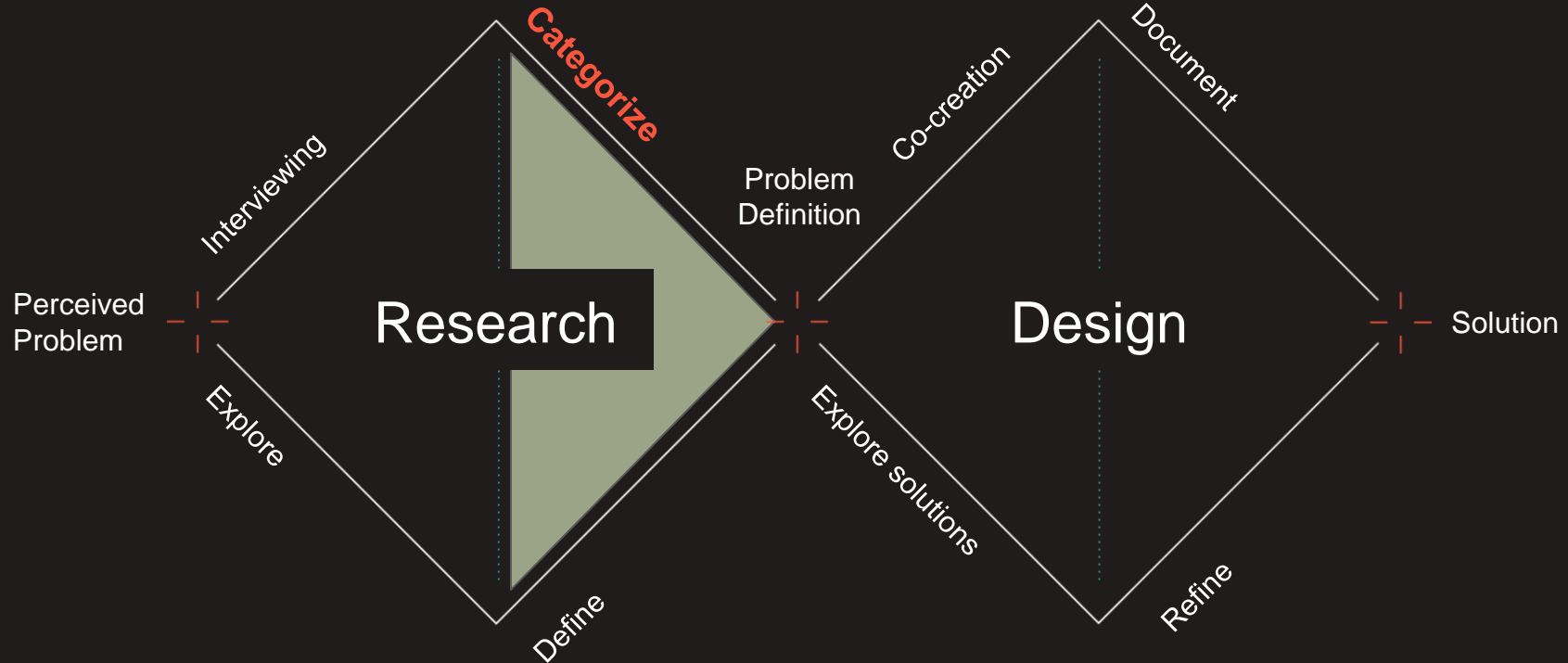


Converge data

**Define and  
categorize**



# Research: converge



# Why?

## Define the problems

You should have an understanding of the probable causes of the problems as a result of this stage. It's a root cause analysis of sorts.

## Find hidden issues

There might be an undercurrent or a unspoken theme over the interviews and these themes are important to understand too. They can be workplace or interpersonal issues that affect the quality of work or other things not directly related to the problems stated in the beginning.



# What?

## Discard irrelevant information

When interviewing people, a lot of the information gathered might be clashing or overlapping. Both of which are actually good findings by themselves. Here you should come up with common denominators and label such information so that it becomes a part of bigger entities.

## Identify important themes

In order to create fruitful workshops, important themes need to be found. They can be found by categorizing and interpreting the interview results. By combining and removing categories, you can figure out a suitable amount of themes for further refinement.



# How?

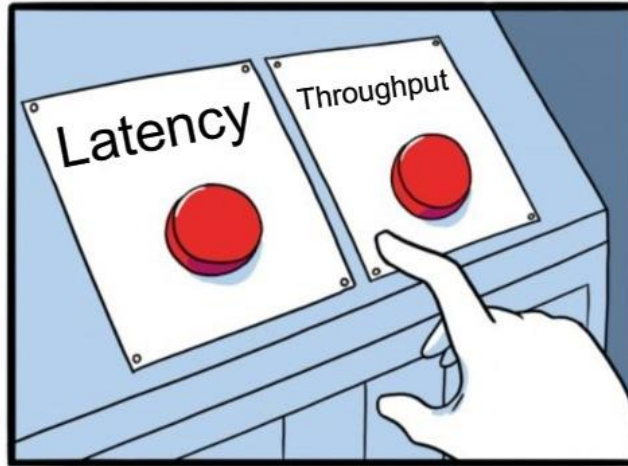


Whiteboards and mindmaps. And Excel!

Set the data up in a place where you can filter and group it as you want.

Iterate and discuss

When patterns start to emerge, they can be already acknowledged by the client. It's important then to discuss about if a workshop should be themed to tackle that particular issue, or try to discover hidden issues with different approach.



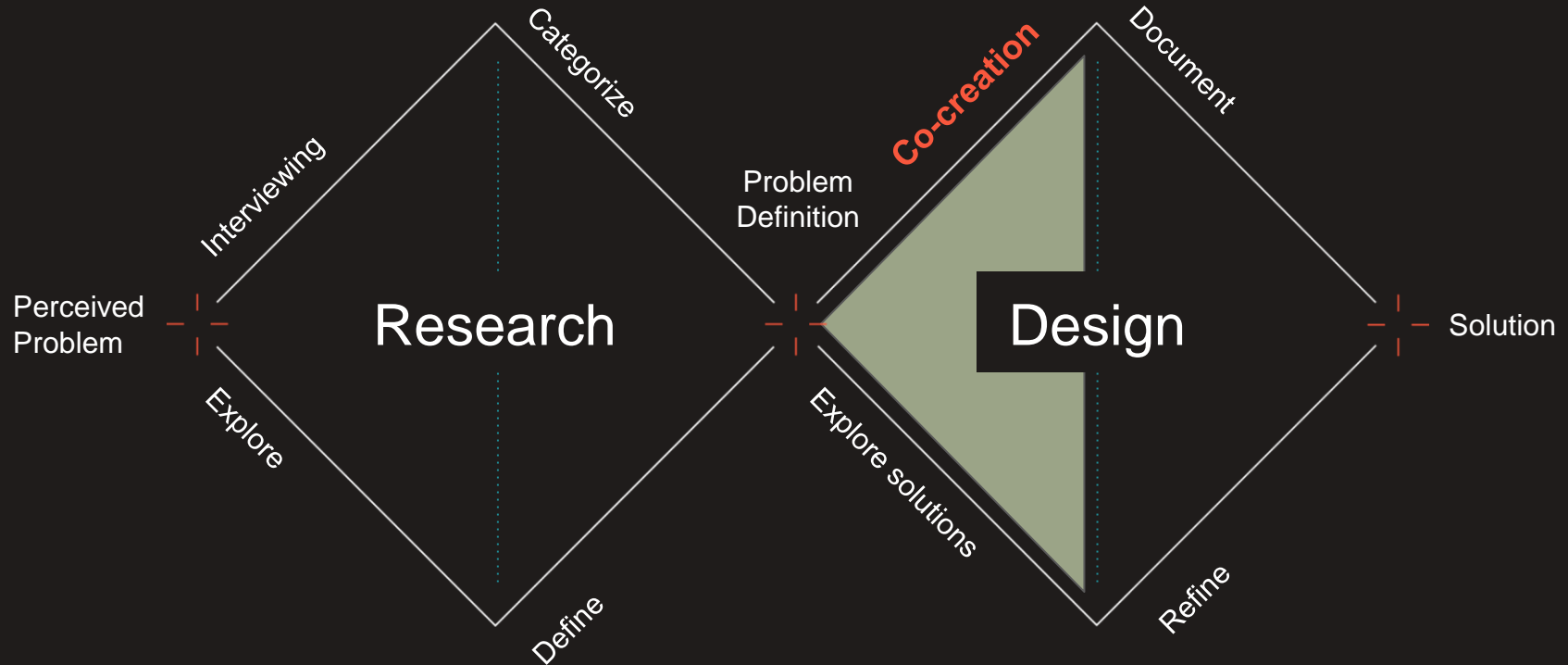
Co-creation

# The workshops

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# Design: diverge



# Why?

## Gather more data

Workshops are usually done after a round of interviews. Where interviews give us personal opinions and deep knowledge, workshops are more co-creation minded. You can learn about the group dynamics in workshops and gain more breadth to your solutions exploration. Workshops are the starting point for creating the solution proposals.

## Start to form ideas

Setting a theme for a workshop is very important. You should set the theme around the things you've seen emerging in the interviews and start guiding the process towards solution proposals. It's many times a unique chance to get people together, so you want to get the most out of it. And remember: it is a workshop, not a hang around or a casual chit-chat. Get people working towards solutions.





# What?

## Sessions and themes

Depending on the situation and the nature of the problem, you might need one or several workshops. The themes you have set will guide the sessions. An ideal workshop is usually about two hours long and it contains 2-4 themes the participants work with. You need to timebox the themes carefully and leave some time for discussion and reflection too.

## Who participates?

Basically you want to have at least the people you interviewed to be present. Additionally you can bring more people to either deepen some area of expertise or to get input from some people you haven't met yet.

# How?

## The situation

During the workshop, we go through each of the themes that were set up beforehand.

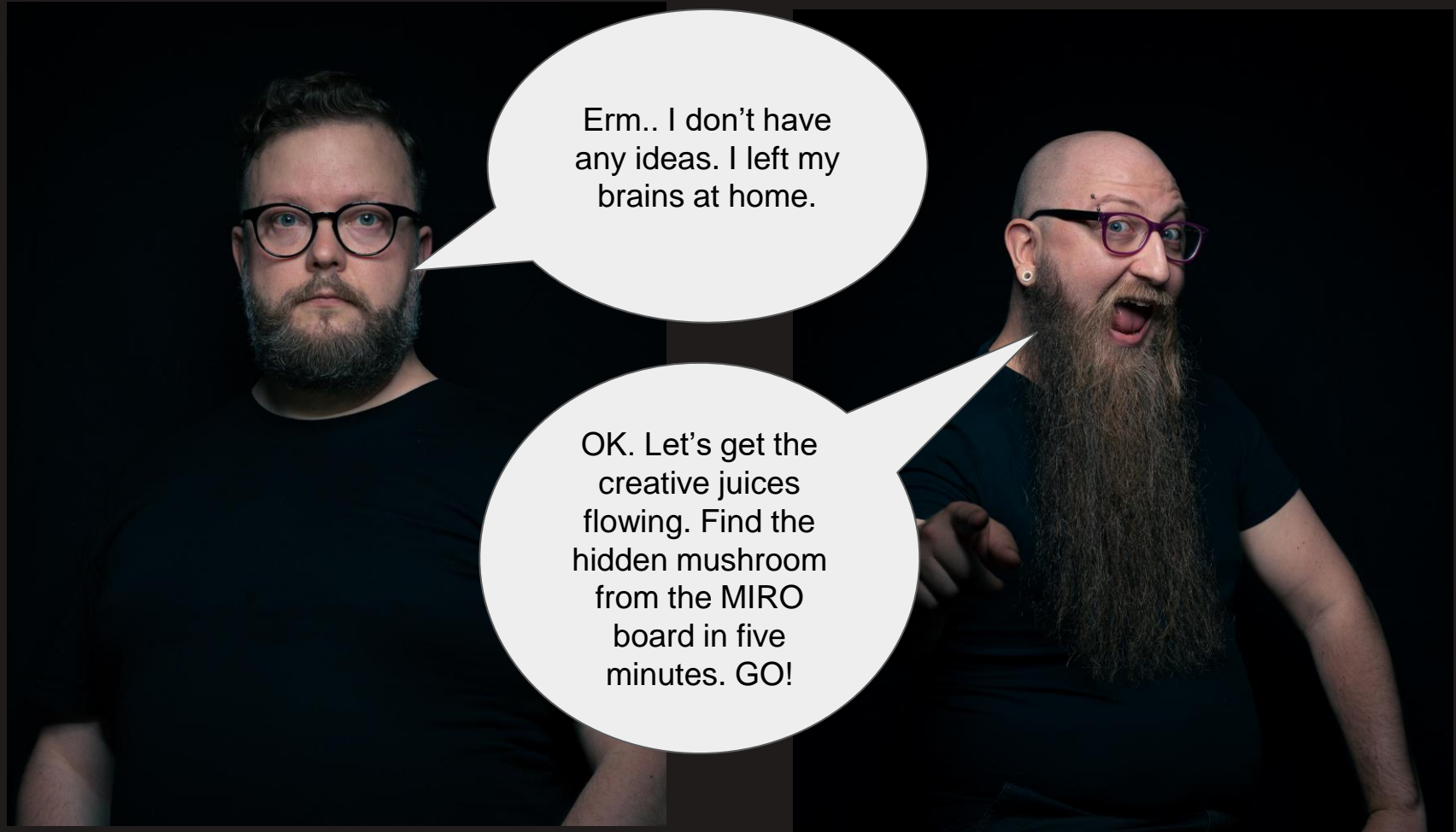
It is important to tell the participants that they can go wild with the ideas - there are no limit for budget, time, or personnel. Sky's the limit. This is done to get their creativity flowing.

## Conducting a theme

Basic retrospective techniques usually work well in ideation sessions. Here is one often used one:

1. General 10-20 minutes of writing notes about the chosen theme.
2. Vote for the most important topics
3. Use further 10-15 minutes to think of solutions to the selected issues/notes.

This leads to concrete ideas on solving the chosen issue.

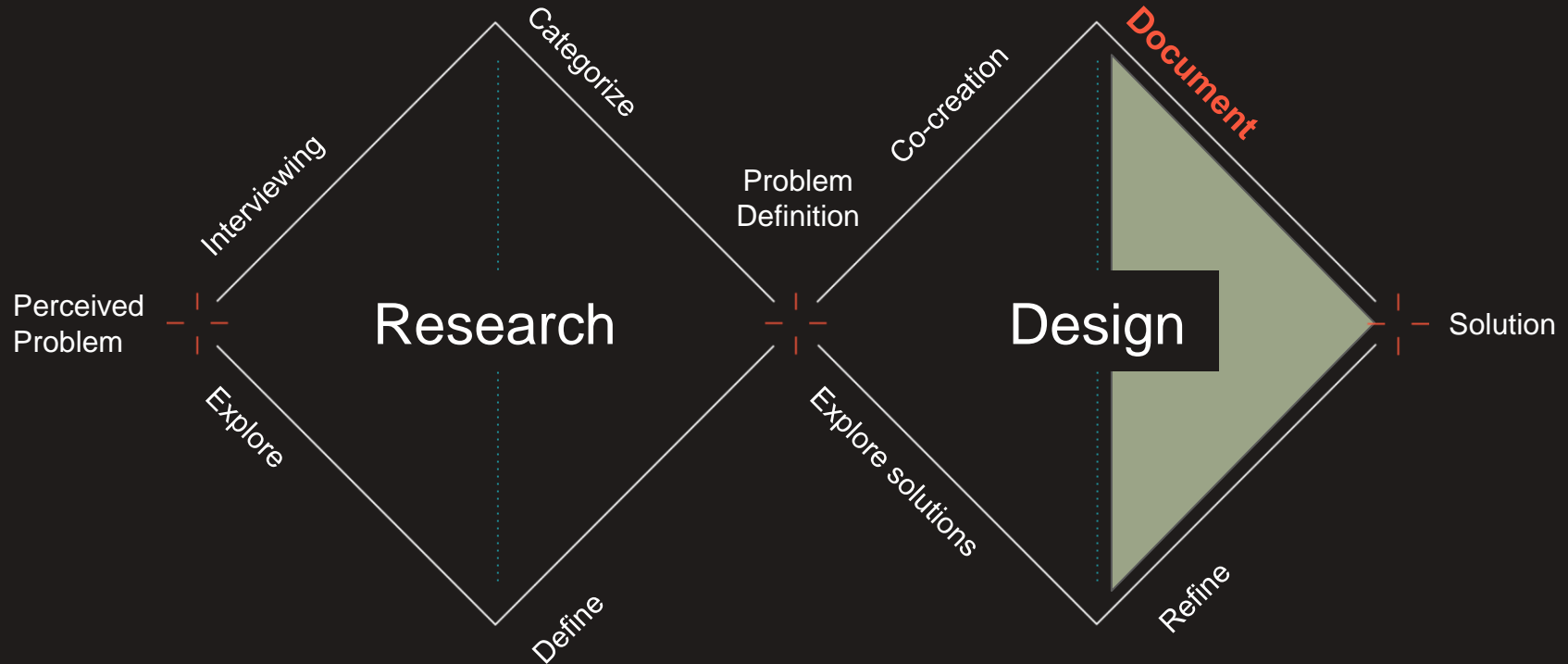


The findings, solutions and recommendations going forward

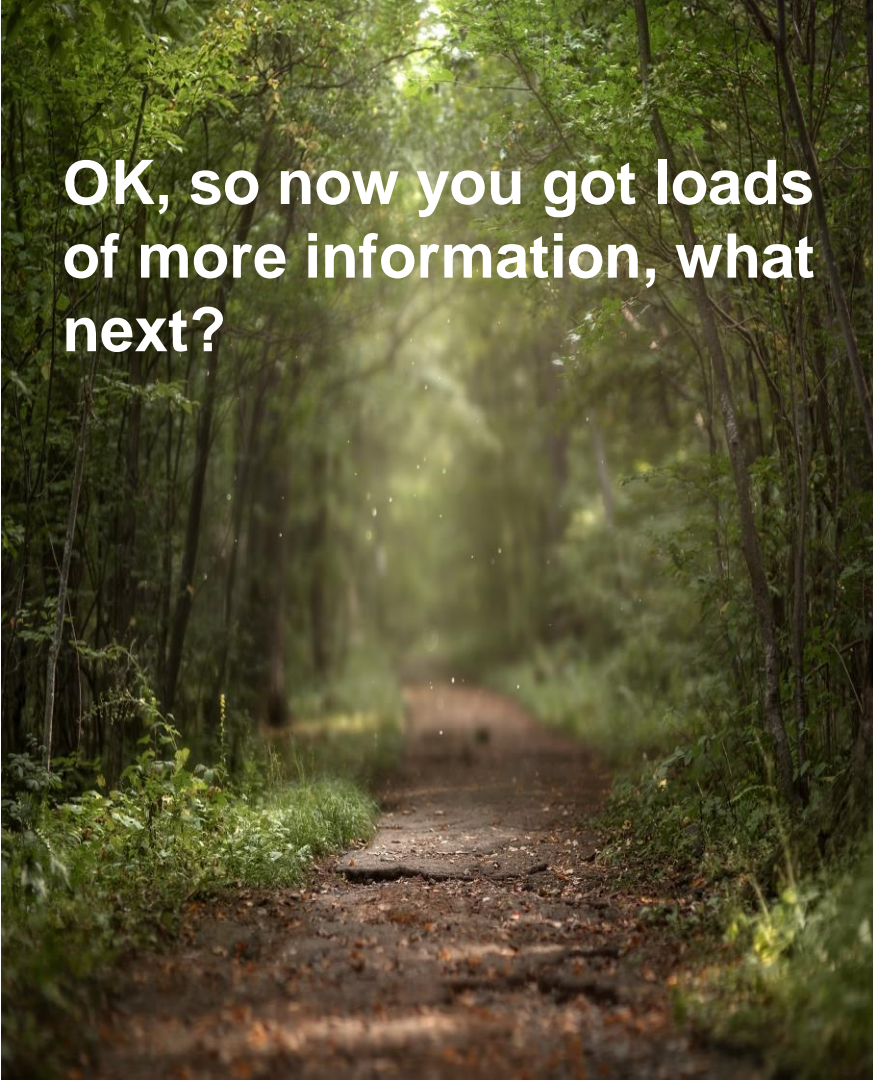
# The Report



# Design: converge







**OK, so now you got loads of more information, what next?**

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Quite simply, you narrow the dataset down once again! You have now a set of possible solutions from the participants of the sessions, and you have your own ideas from the interviews. If the co-created solutions from workshops are good enough on their own, pick them up. For the others, start refining.

Also, and what's important, you can apply your own view of the situation and make your own additions and solutions. Now you probably know enough about the context to apply your experience to it.

# Why?



## Present the findings

The documentation is for communicating the result for the customer. It is often used to rationalize and sell needs for changes inside the customer organization too. A good documentation helps the customer to see their situation more clearly and bring previously hidden pieces of information to the surface.

## Propose actions

You should always propose further actions to improve the situation. The actions are the key to continue the relationship with the customer and they should offer actionable things that would improve the QA and related ways of working in the company.





# What? How?

## Format?

You should present the findings and proposed actions in a structured way and end the report with a roadmap, call to action or similar part to convey a proactive attitude in the report.

## Contents

Contents may vary, but it is important to include three things:

1. Selected findings from Research phase
2. Proposed actions from the Design phase
3. Call to action

# Conclusion



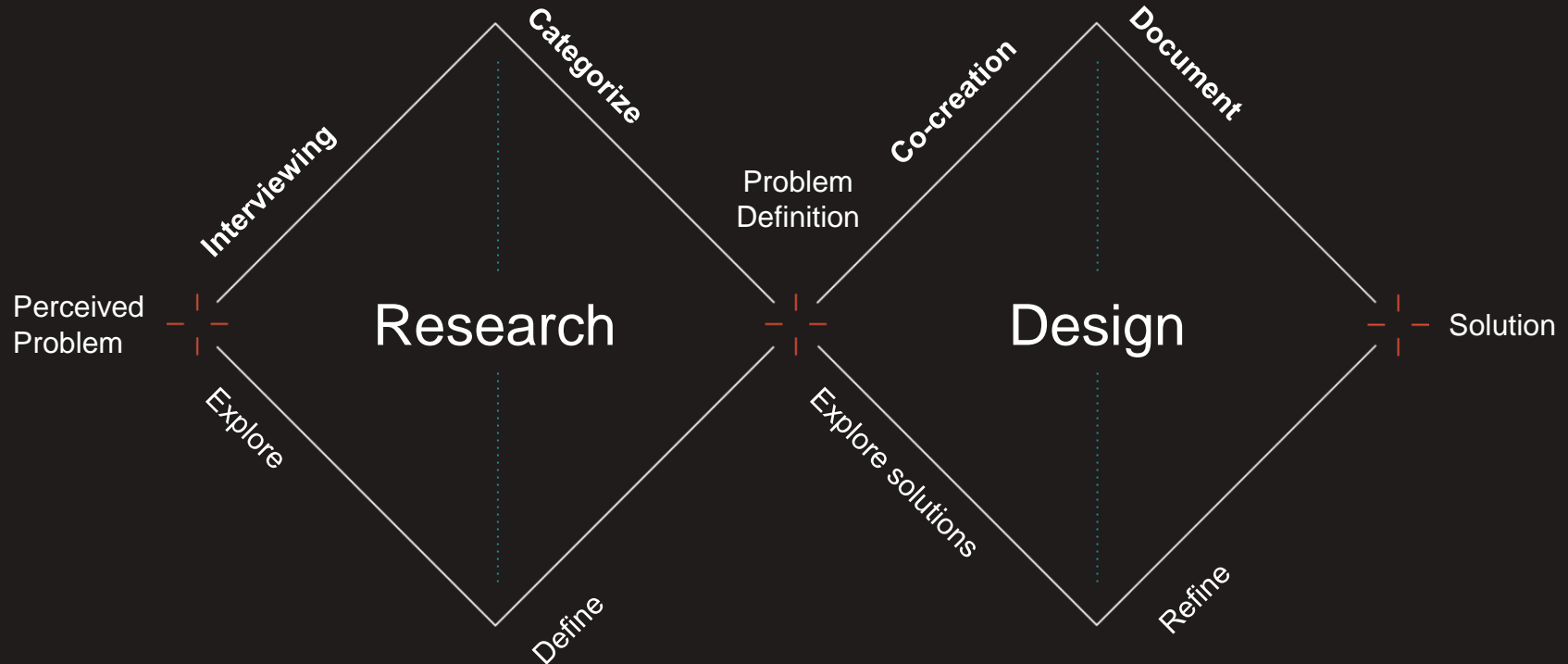
You don't know what you know until you find out.

There is a structured way to find things out and to present that information to those it brings value.

This is the way to do it in real life - in the trenches

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# Double diamond: a diverge - converge model





## Contact and network with us!



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