# Discover the Five Skills to Address Uncertainty

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# Discover the Five Skills to Address Uncertainty

The organizations and changemakers I support have superpowers. They've moved beyond status quo and they use new problem-solving skills to address uncertainty using a fraction of the time and money.

The **PAUSE Framework** is comprised of five essential, yet simple skills that create immediate clarity, authentic relationships, and impactful codesigned solutions. These skills help nonprofits, local governments, and foundations protect their resource investments, elevate their missions and goals, and create impact most efficiently and effectively.

## STATUS QUO PROBLEM-SOLVING

### VS.

## PAUSE SKILLS

**MOST SOCIAL IMPACT ORGANIZATIONS HAVE WASTEFUL AND RISKY HABITS FOR HOW THEY ADDRESS UNCERTAINTY**

| WHAT IF...INSTEAD OF USING *STATUS QUO* PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS THAT RELY ON: | ...YOU USE THE *PAUSE* SKILLS THAT RELY ON: |
|---|---|
| Good intentions | Knowing what will work (or won't) and knowing why (or why not) |
| What you *think* should work | Getting aligned before you jump to solutions |
| Designing solutions in a bubble or in silos | Identifying blockers to your learning and calling out what you need to learn first |
| Copying "best practices" | Listening to the current needs of stakeholders |
| Waiting six months or a year to see results | Prioritizing and testing potential solutions before you build |
| Investing in pilot studies/programs | Communicating your decision-making effectively |

# **P**ackage the Challenge

In the busyness of our work, we often fail to notice the cues and challenges nudging us to pause and prioritize opportunities for learning.

When we do identify a challenge, uncertainty makes us uncomfortable and we often jump to action. Before working on any solution, you first need to pause and intentionally build a strong foundation of shared information, clarity, alignment, access to power, and mutual value which includes providing opportunities for feedback and questions.

When possible, forming small cross-functional teams that are diverse in roles and perspectives, and that break through silos and hierarchies to address challenges *together* is extremely powerful.

The process of getting aligned also includes identifying and prioritizing all stakeholders (internal and external) who are impacted by the challenge. You have many stakeholders who all have different needs, pain, assets, and abilities.

It is so tempting to fall into one-size-fits-all solutions but it is essential to prioritize who has the greatest need and get uncomfortably specific.

# ❷ Assess Uncertainty

While you are surrounded by uncertainty, you also must be specific about what you are seeing and need to better understand. What do you think you already know? What about your challenge is most fuzzy? What about the stakeholder is the least clear?

Often we lack clarity due to our positionalities and biases so pausing to accept that our experiences shape our perspectives and that we don't have all the answers, is a freeing next step for learning. By documenting what you need to learn most, you reduce the risk of missing critical information and you are primed to humbly codesign with stakeholders.

# ❸ Understand Stakeholders

We can not continue the status quo practice of designing solutions "behind-the-scenes", and then waiting for a grand reveal, to include stakeholders. You must codesign from the very beginning to understand stakeholders' greatest needs, abilities, and how they are currently solving their problems.

It is also very important to avoid survey and focus group traps and connect one-on-one with stakeholders to gain unexpected insights and identify key themes to guide your next steps.

# **4** **S**olution Testing

We tend to immediately brainstorm solutions when we face a challenge, but instead you need to brainstorm boldly, inclusively, and abundantly, based on what you learn *from your stakeholders*.

Once you have a prioritized many potential solutions, you don't regress to status quo and jump to implementation. Instead, you pause to name and prioritize the many assumptions embedded within your potential solutions.

You can then test these prioritized assumptions in just hours and weeks (vs. waiting months and years) to determine their potential impact. You need to consider questions like how might my stakeholders engage with my solution to experience benefit? What are the behaviors I hope to see for the solution to help? What works, what doesn't, and why?

# **5** **E**vidence-Informed Decision-Making

We often leave decision-making to be guided by the opinions of leaders or choose solutions that adhere to "best practices."  When you PAUSE, you choose next steps based on all forms of data and evidence. Every test of your solution helps you decide whether to persevere, iterate, or pivot and generates clarity and confidence for which solutions will create the most impact.

If you want to add the PAUSE skills to your superpowers, visit **PauseForChange.com** and contact Heather@PauseForChange.com