



> // THIS CHECKLIST IS PART OF THE INNOVATION EXPEDITION, BY GIJS VAN WULFEN. CHECK IT OUT ON [AMAZON.COM](https://www.amazon.com)



Innovators Look for Problems

One of the main reasons innovation is difficult, is because your potential users need to change their behavior. They will have to find, buy and use your innovation. And why should they? That's the question! You will have to give them a strong reason why! This applies both to consumers and B2B markets.



Ask yourself the question: when was the last time I changed my own behavior? We are all stuck in our habits; doing things in fixed patterns. We as innovators do this as well. For years, we go on reading the same journals, buying the same cars and staying with the same insurance company. The only reason for us to change is if a new, simple and attractive solution comes along that is relevant to our lives. I guess I can make it as simple as that.

Simply put, effective innovation is all about matching relevant problems with simple solutions. You can approach it two different ways. One way is to create the ideas and solutions first and later try to match these to target groups with problems relevant to your solutions. Or you can do it the other way by first identifying the relevant problems of the target groups and then creating ideas and solutions to solve those problems.

I'd like to inspire you with a list of ten practical problems and innovative new products or services solving them.

> **OBSERVE AND LEARN**

Problem	Solution
Consultant: I need new assignments. How do I expand my business network in an efficient way?	<i>LinkedIn</i>
Music lovers: I love listening to music for free, but I hate to be a pirate downloading it illegally.	<i>Spotify</i>
Consumer cleaning: I'm sick and tired of a poorly performing vacuum cleaner.	<i>Dyson Cyclone vacuum cleaner</i>
Consumer: Is this bed clean and free of bugs I can hardly see?	<i>The Bed Bug Detective</i>
Snowboarder: I'd like to go downhill fast, but I am afraid of nasty accidents.	<i>The Katal Landing Pad</i>
Consumer painting: If there is one thing that really annoys me, it's cleaning used brushes and rollers.	<i>Dulux PaintPod</i>
Green consumer: I hate wasting water and money flushing the toilet.	<i>Brondell Perfect Flush</i>
3rd world countries: We lack clean drinking water due to flooding.	<i>Filtrix Filterpen</i>
Full-time mother: Now that the kids are older, I'd like to re-enter the workforce, but who is looking for someone like me?	<i>Work4Women</i>
Green consumer: I love to celebrate Christmas with a real tree, but don't like destroying nature.	<i>Lease a living Christmas tree</i>

But how should you go about finding relevant problems among your target groups? Here are five ways to help you in practice:

- Visit customers at their homes or companies and get acquainted with them.
- Have your customers demonstrate how they use your product and observe how it's used in practice.
- Invite customers to focus groups and listen to their issues.
- Ask customers which products in your domain are their favorites and why.
- Crowdsource customer problems by asking customers to post their input on issues, suggestions, improvements or ideas on relevant places on the web.

*Get out there
and just do it.*

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