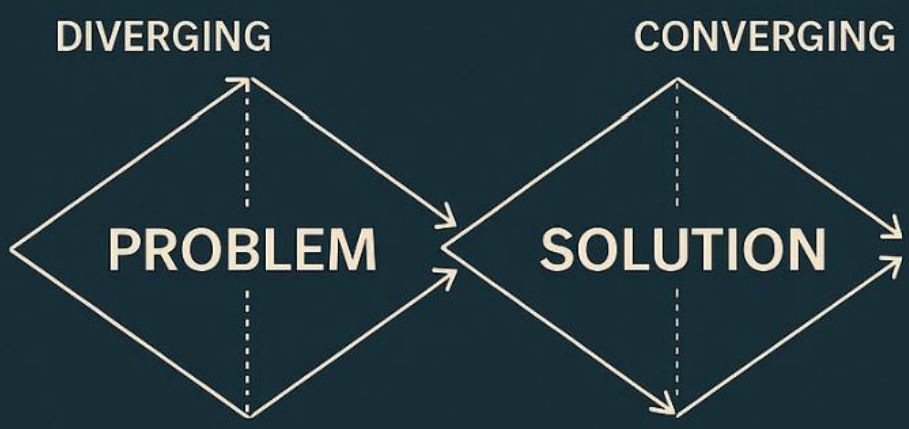
SOLVE THE RIGHT THING

How the Double Diamond Helps Leaders Avoid Fights, Align Fast, and Lead Better Conversations



UNLOCK CLARITY →

JD Meier

Former Head Innovation Coach to Satya Nadella

“Design Thinking isn’t just about design. It’s about creating the conditions for better thinking, together.”
— JD Meier

How I Turned the Double Diamond into a Leadership Superpower

The Double Diamond can be used as a simple **mental model**. And, as a leader, it's **one of the best you can learn**.

Too many leadership conversations turn into fights. Not because people are wrong, but because they don't know **where they are in the process**.

Some leaders jump straight to the **solution** without understanding the **real problem**.

Others stay stuck analyzing the **problem** and never move toward action.

And many get frustrated when they're trying to **narrow down** while someone else is still **exploring**.

They're not misaligned in intent. They're just out of sync in process.

From Visual Frameworks to Simple Conversational Frameworks

As a leader at Microsoft, I started using visual frameworks like the Double Diamond not just as strategy tools but as **conversation tools**.

That's when the breakthrough happened.

I realized I could **dramatically improve alignment, clarity, and collaboration** with just two simple questions:

1. **Are we on the Problem side or the Solution side?**
2. **Are we Diverging or Converging?** (Are we open to exploring, or are we narrowing toward a decision?)

These two checks became my map.

They turned confusion into clarity—and tension into progress.

This guide shares how to use the Double Diamond as a leadership lens to

Think better. Collaborate better. Lead better.

What is the Double Diamond

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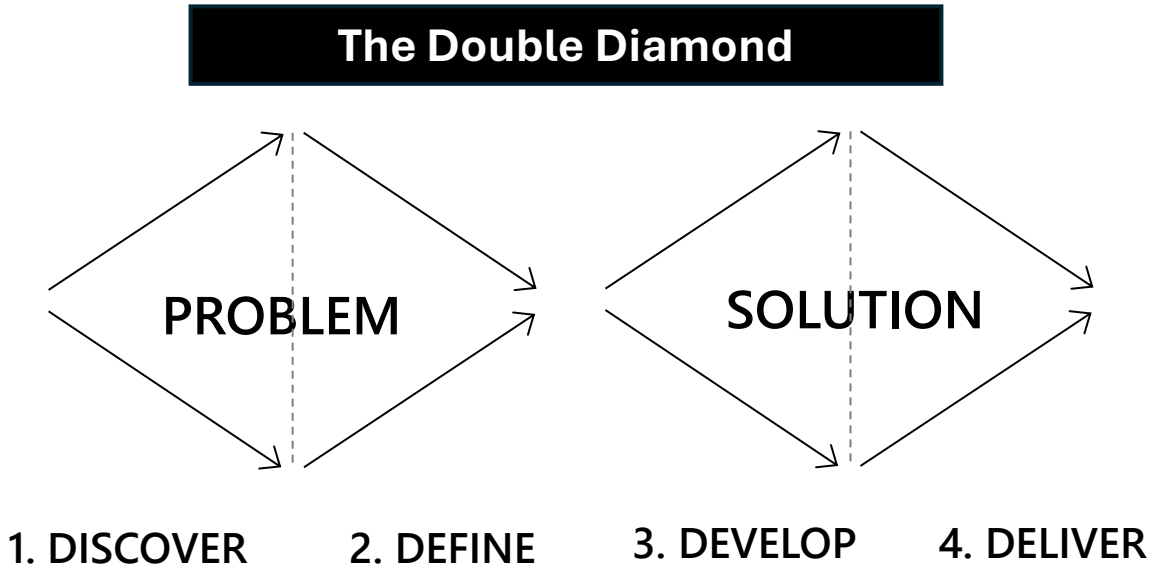


The **Double Diamond** is a simple but powerful **design thinking framework** created by the UK Design Council to **guide problem-solving** and **innovation**.

It's **shaped like two diamonds** side by side and it maps how we move **from exploring a challenge to delivering a solution**.

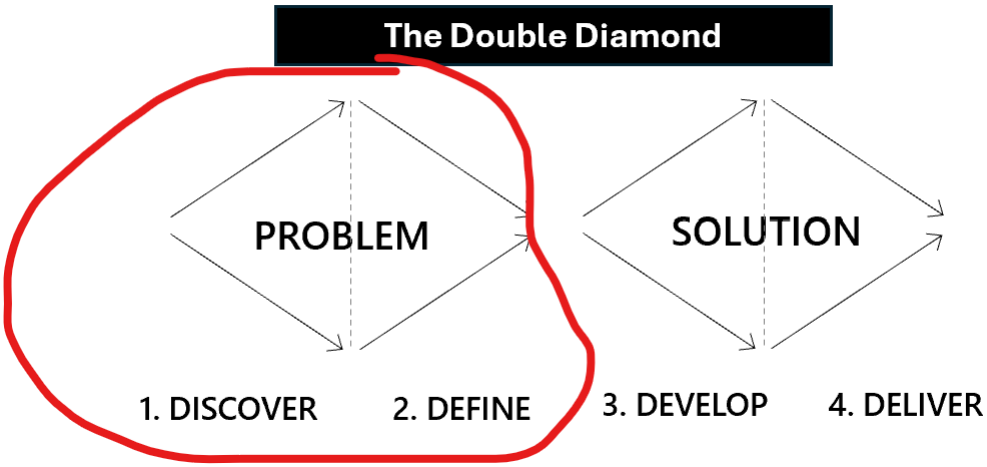
The Power of the Double Diamond as a Leadership Tool

Why It's Useful:

The Double Diamond gives teams **shared clarity** on:

- Where they are in the process (problem vs. solution)
- Whether they should be **diverging** (exploring) or **converging** (focusing)
- It's one of the fastest ways to **elevate leadership conversations** and avoid jumping to solutions before understanding the real challenge.

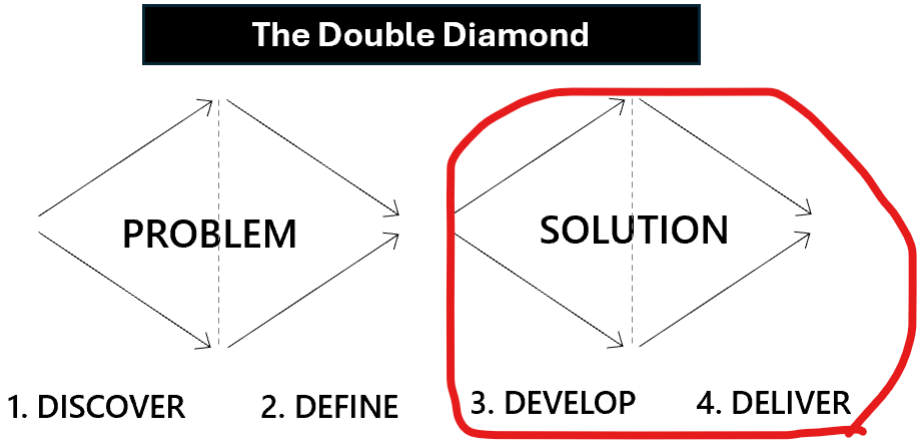
Diamond 1:
The Problem Space



Discover (Diverge):
Explore the problem broadly. Gather insights, research, and perspectives to understand the challenge deeply.

Define (Converge):
Synthesize your findings. Narrow down to the **right problem** to solve.

Diamond 2:
The Solution Space



Develop (Diverge):
Generate many ideas. Brainstorm potential solutions, explore different angles, prototype.

Deliver (Converge):
Test and refine the best ideas. Choose the most viable solution and implement it.

How The Double Diamond Helps Teams & Leaders Think Better and Design Better

Why Teams Fight

The Hidden Cost of Skipping the Double Diamond

Without Shared Awareness:

People talk past each other.
Because they're not in the *same diamond* or *same mode*.

Fights Happen When:

- People are **in different sides** (problem vs. solution)
- People are in **different modes** (diverge/converge)
- Nobody knows **where they are** in the process

What the Double Diamond Does:

What the Double Diamond Does:

- Creates a **shared map**
- Builds **process empathy**
- Helps teams **move together**, not against each other

Without a Process, Things Get Personal

Clarity Defuses Conflict. Process Elevates People

What Happens Without a Shared Process:

- People feel attacked instead of heard
- Ideas become **personal turf**
- Challenges feel like **criticism**, not contribution
- Emotions rise, **collaboration drops**

The Antidote: A Simple Process + Two Powerful Checks

When someone brings you a hammer...

Before asking what to build, check where you are:

Two Checks That Defuse Tension:

1. **Are we on the Problem side or the Solution side?**
   Are we solving the right thing?

2. **Are we Diverging or Converging?**
   Are we exploring possibilities or making a decision?

Why It Works:

Puts everyone on the **same map**

Creates **psychological safety** to challenge ideas

Turns misalignment into **curiosity** instead of conflict

Shifts the focus from *who's right* to *what's right*

Final Thoughts

Better Questions. Better Conversations. Better Outcomes.

In a world moving fast, leaders are expected to **think clearly, decide quickly**, and **align people instantly**. That's a tall order, especially when there's **no shared process**.

The Double Diamond is more than a design tool. It's **a leadership lens**. It gives you a shared map to guide complex conversations. It helps you **diagnose disconnects before they become drama**.

And with just two questions, it turns chaos into clarity:

1. Are we on the Problem side or the Solution side?
2. Are we Diverging or Converging?

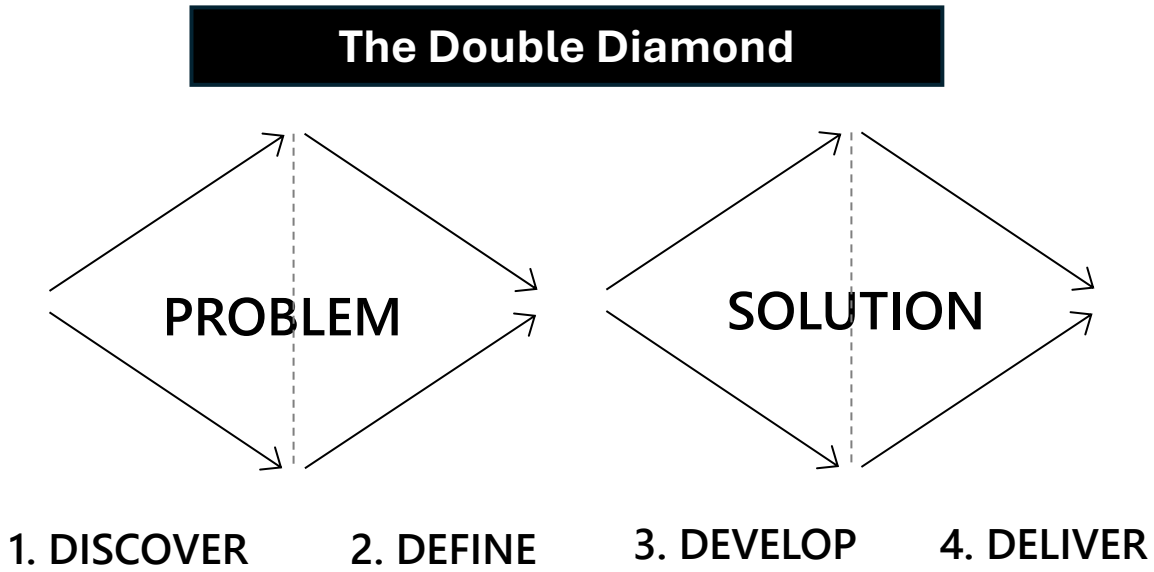
The more I used this **simple mental model**, the more I saw teams **work with each other,** not against each other.

Because when you map the moment, you lead the moment.

Use this. Share it. Live it.

You'll be surprised how often the right question is all it takes to change everything.

Burn This Mental Model in Your Mind



Become a Better Leader, Innovate Better, Make Greater Impact

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