The Problem Pyramid™ guides a structured six-step process that helps reliably identify the REAL problem and the REAL requirements which when satisfied reasonably will lead to providing value by reducing or eliminating the problem.

The Problem Pyramid™ is easy to understand but difficult to apply, because people typically are not very good at identifying the REAL problem and are not accustomed to applying disciplined orderly thought processes such as those of the Problem Pyramid™. Guided practice and coaching feedback in following guidelines that help detect common mistakes facilitate learning to effectively apply the Problem Pyramid™.
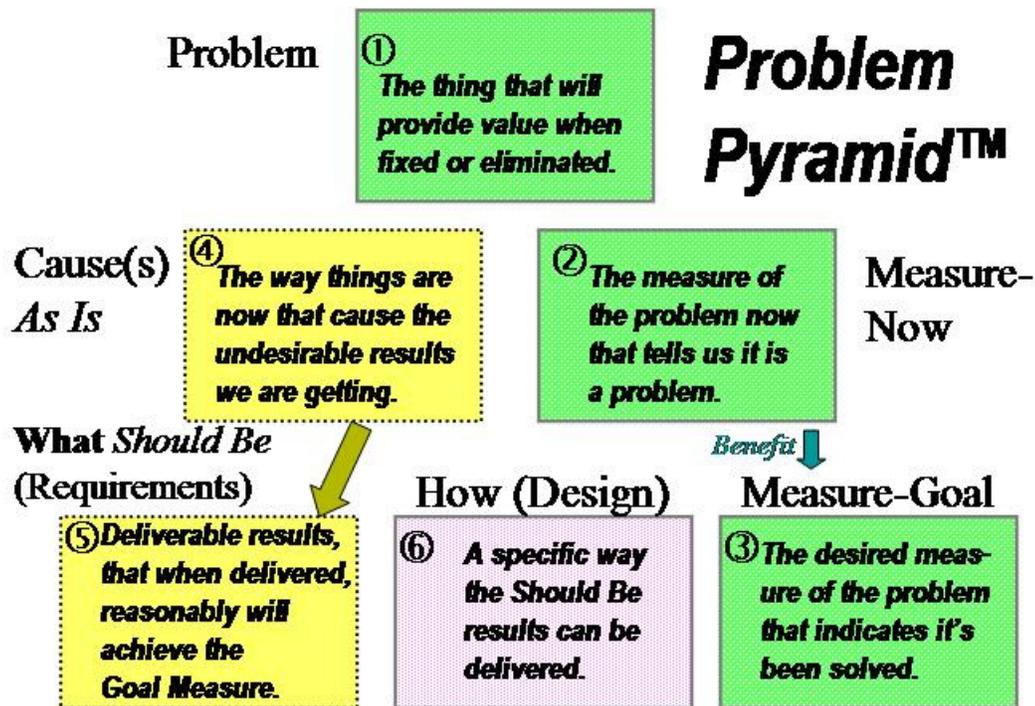
It is essential to follow the six steps in order. Step 1 is to define the REAL problem, the thing that will provide value when fixed or eliminated. Without the disciplined guidance of the Problem Pyramid™, people commonly misunderstand what their REAL problem is and proceed to waste time, resources, and credibility solving the wrong problem or not solving the REAL problem.

Step 2 involves identifying the Current Measure(s) of the problem that tell us it is a problem. Failure to identify appropriate measures is a key reason for failure to identify the REAL problem. Step 3 identifies the Goal Measure(s) that when achieved indicate the problem has been solved. Achieving the Goal Measure(s) provides benefit or value.

If the expected value is not significant or REAL, then there is a mistake in either the problem, Goal Measure(s), or both.

Step 4 identifies the Cause(s) of the problem. A problem is solved by addressing its Causes. Failure to identify fully what is causing the problem, or thinking the causes are the problem, lead to mistaken requirements which in fact fail to provide value.

Step 5 identifies the Should Be process which defines at a top-level the REAL, business requirements that will reduce or eliminate the Causes and reasonably lead to accomplishing the Goal Measure. These top-level business requirement *whats* then need to be decomposed into sufficiently detailed business requirements.

Step 6 describes the high-level design of a system/product *how* that will accomplish (meet or deliver) the business requirements. Note that this step is usually where developers start, which is why so much creep occurs. It's pointless to spend time designing a system/product until after one has identified the business requirements the system/product must accomplish.

Go Pro Management, Inc. provides consulting and training assistance, including:

> ➢ Our two-day ***Defining and Managing User Requirements*** and our one-day version ***Discovering Business Requirements*** seminars teach how to use the powerful Problem Pyramid™ tool and other techniques to discover and document the REAL, business requirements.

> ➢ Our one-day ***21 Ways to Test that Business Requirements Are Right*** (also presented with the title ***Evaluating Business Requirements***) seminar shows a variety of methods which are much more powerful than conventional techniques to review accuracy and completeness of requirements that already have been defined. This content also is presented as the first day of our two-day ***Testing Early in the Life Cycle*** (also presented with the title ***Testing that Requirements and Designs Are Right***) seminar, where the second day presents 15 ways to test that designs are right.

> ➢ Robin Goldsmith's recent book, ***Discovering REAL Business Requirements for Software Project Success***, combines and elaborates upon the above seminars' concepts and techniques for both discovering and testing the adequacy of business requirements. The book contains extensive description and examples of Problem Pyramids™.