

Reflection: How might education relate to other industries?

“If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses.”

As the story goes, Henry Ford once said this about his role in revolutionizing the transportation industry. This anecdote is sometimes used to refute the importance of customer discovery interviews, but what it illustrates in a more constructive way is Ford's ability to understand the deeper purpose of his customers. Through his curiosity and imagination, he was able to fulfill an unmet, not-yet-articulated need: to get from point A to point B in less time and more comfortably.

In schools, there are certainly a lot of problems to choose from. And they are commonly presented to educators in the form of school and district improvement plans, standardized test scores, and annual yearly progress goals.

While these are all fine starting points for finding problems, in schools these problems are often given a shallow treatment similar to what Ford described - sometimes even compounding the problem by creating more stress for the people most affected: students and teachers. For example, "Students should spend more time in class being drilled on basic skills." Or, "Teachers should spend more time after school supervising their students' homework completion." In short, beating a dead horse versus reimagining the horse.

On the back of this sheet, stop and jot a response to this anecdote and how it might connect to the “way things are done” in schools.



