

Customer Needs and Solutions (CNS)

UNSOLVED PROBLEMS AND CALL FOR SOLUTIONS

Papers in this section are peer-reviewed. Our purpose is to

- Create a core set of important problems that can take the guesswork out of research (“Am I working on a problem that our discipline thinks is important?”). Unlike research priorities set by various entities (e.g., research centers and institutes), the parameters of these problems are precisely defined to allow unambiguous solutions to be created (see examples below). Also, unlike existing outsourcing R&D sites where participants may compete to solve problems posted by a firm, the unsolved problems published by *CNS* should be fundamentally interesting to the discipline, and solutions should be valuable to a broad audience.
- Encourage scholars to work on these problems by promising publication of best solutions to these problems.
- Increase our impact by providing “free consulting” to firms that want to solve their problems (as long as they are valuable to a broader audience).
- Make more datasets available for academics.
- Broadly, guide the research agenda in marketing.

Submission (author, format, data availability)

- Anyone (faculty, doctoral students, companies, NGOs, consultants, etc.) can submit any important problems that have not been solved (or those where existing solutions need improvement). The author of a problem may also pledge to provide a cash reward to whomever creates a solution (i.e., when the author represents a firm).
- Problems must be well-defined (not vague).
- The author of a submitted problem should either make appropriate data available for anyone who is interested in solving it, or the data should be publicly available and/or relatively easy to collect. Authors should notify the EIC how they will make data available and how academics can access the data (e.g., Will data be public? Will certain forms need to be signed in order to access the data? Can academics use the data for other purposes?)

Examples

- Netflix forecasting challenge (if one is willing to make such data available).
- A better metric than Net Promoter Score (NPS), or customer satisfaction index.
- More generally, for example, one could provide data along with the best available model in the discipline, and ask others to come up with a new estimation model that increases the prediction rate to a certain level.

- Or, one could state that it is thought that A, B, or C is causing X and ask others to come up with a clever way to identify the real causal relationship (which may even be D).

Review Process

- Submitted problems will be reviewed for importance and data availability.
- The EIC will handle the review, with the help of one or more editorial team members as needed (the SE, AE or a reviewer).

Call for Solutions

- Anyone who is interested in identifying solutions to an unsolved problem published in the journal should consult with the EIC before starting their work.
- The EIC will appoint one SE to handle all submissions of solutions for a given unsolved problem published in the journal.
- Satisfactory solutions will be published as Research Papers in the journal, possibly jointly (re)written by all scholars who have independently provided good solutions.

Why Should You Submit an Unsolved Problem to *CNS* (and Make Your Data Available)?

- It is a scholarly contribution to our field to identify an important and unsolved problem. Problems are peer reviewed, and a person who identifies a problem will be forever associated with the solution. Any future award given to a paper that is based on an unsolved problem may be shared between the author of the problem and the author of the solution if appropriate.
- We expect that authors either do not know how or do not have time to solve the problems they submit.
- For firms, this presents an opportunity to obtain free consulting from the best minds in the academic world. It also provides promotional opportunities for firms.
- For NGOs and policy makers, this is an opportunity to solve urgent problems without spending grant money.



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