

# PROBLEM SOLVING

Presented to



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## **Problem Solving and Decision Making**

Coping with complexity is central to human decision-making. Our work is largely composed of solving problems and making decisions. It is the work of choosing issues that require attention, setting goals, finding or designing suitable courses of action, evaluating and choosing among alternative actions. The first three of these activities -- setting goals, and designing actions--are usually called *problem solving*; the last, evaluating and choosing, are usually called *decision making*.

### **Problem Solving**

- **Setting goals**
- **Designing action**

### **Decision Making**

- **Evaluating**
- **Choosing**

This manual outlines a number of processes that can aid you in problem solving and decision-making.

## Team Problem Solving Introduction

Understanding is the key to effective communications. Analysis is the key to effective problem solving. When understanding another person, the communication is broken into parts such as Virginia Satir's five levels of communication (*Facts, Opinions, Emotions, Meaning/Importance, Action/Expectation*). In solving problems the problem is also broken into parts. This can be done in many ways, but the simplest approach was defined in the 1960s by Fred Fosmire. He called it the S-T-P Model of Problem Analysis. S-T-P stands for Situation, Target, and Proposal.

In order to effectively solve a problem, one must understand the problem. Fosmire suggested that when one knows enough about a problem, an elegant solution becomes obvious. It could be argued that one's job is defined by resolving one problem after another. Below are three important elements involved in any problem.

### STP Problem Solving Model

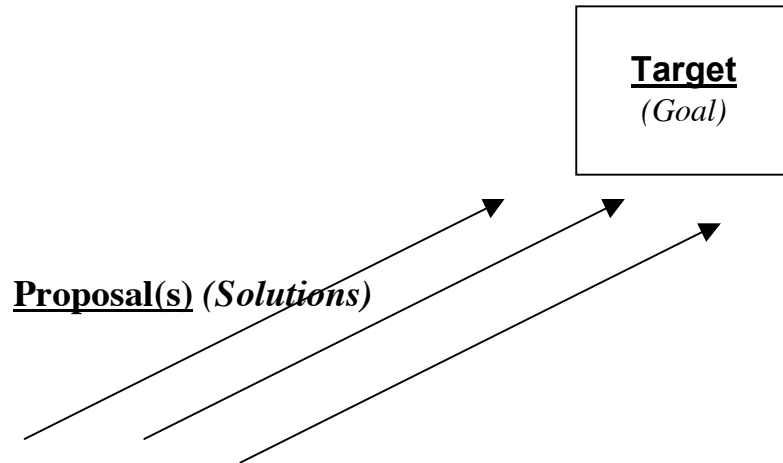
**According to Fred Fosmire, problems and conflicts generally result from differences in three categories:**

- **Facts:**
  - Contributing and Impeding Forces: there are forces at work in the situation that help move toward the goal, and forces at work that impede movement toward the goal.
  - Disagreements about the facts: One person thinks one thing has happened, while another person has a different view of the situation.
  
- **Values/Priorities**
  - Differences in Priorities & Values: One person thinks one thing is important, while someone else thinks something else should be the primary deciding factor.
  
- **Solutions**
  - We may agree on facts and priorities, but have different methods or plans to solve the problem.

On the next page is a diagram that outlines how these three factors relate.

## **STP Problem Solving Model**

**(Situation, Target, Proposals)**



### **Situation (Facts)**

- + **Contributing Factors**
- **Impeding Factors**

## **Problem Solving & The Five Levels of Communication**

The Five Levels of Communication can be used when working with others to clarify misunderstandings and identify disagreements in problem solving.

### **Five Levels of Communication Solving**

### **STP Problem**

Level One	Facts	Situation (Facts)
Level Two	Thoughts, Opinions	Proposals (Solutions)
Level Three	Emotions	Target
Level Four	Meaning/Importance/Priority	Target
Level Five	Action/Expectation	Proposals (Solutions)

## Problem Solving Using Type Preferences

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) suggests that most people tend to have strengths and blind spots in their problem solving abilities. While one person may be skilled at factually identifying the current problem, another person may be better suited to hypothesizing possible solutions that extend beyond the known facts. This is why solving problems in teams can be useful, because team members can combine their strengths to balance one another's blind spots. Below is a problem solving sequence recommended by the MBTI system, and a general list of questions that can help focus discussion in each phase.

### 1. Facts (STP - Situation) (5 Levels of Communication – Facts)

- \* What are the facts?
- \* What exactly is the situation?
- \* What has been done?
- \* What am I doing; what are others doing?
- \* How would an outsider look at this situation?

### 2. Possibilities (STP – Target, Goal) (5 Levels of Communication – Expectations)

- \* What are the possibilities?
- \* What other ways are there for solving this problem?
- \* What do the data imply?
- \* What are the implications beyond the facts?
- \* What is this problem analogous to?

### 3. Analysis (STP – Proposals) (5 Levels of Communication – Opinions, Emotions)

- \* What are the pros and cons of each possibility?
- \* What are the logical consequences of each possibility?
- \* What is the cost of each?
- \* What are the pleasant and unpleasant outcomes of each?
- \* What are the consequences of not acting?

### 4. Priorities (STP – Proposals) (5 Levels of Communication – Importance)

- \* How much do I care about what I gain or lose in each alternative?
- \* What are the values involved for each possibility?
- \* How will the people concerned react to the outcome?
- \* Who is committed to carry out the solution?
- \* Will the outcome contribute to individual or group harmony?

Finally, it is important in each step to insure openness to all aspects of the problem; to set a timetable for moving on to the next step of the process; to reflect at each step along the way; to discuss each step and to implement the solution.

## **A Step-by-Step Process for Problem Solving**

Your team is going to follow a step-by-step problem solving process that combines the *STP Model of Problem Analysis* with the *MBTI Problem Solving Process*, and concludes with setting *SMART Goals* to identify follow-up steps.

**Step 1: Where are we now? (describe the Situation -- Gather facts)**

**Step 2: Where do we want to go? (define the Target)**

**Step 3: What's possible? (explore possibilities - Proposals)**

**Step 4: What's best? (analyze options - Proposals)**

**Step 5: What's important (clarify priorities - Proposals)**

**Step 6: When, where, who what (Proposals)**

**Step 7: How are we doing? (follow through and evaluate progress)**

# **Team Problem Solving Process**

## **Worksheet**

**Team Issue:**

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### **Step 1: Where are we now?**

(Gather facts - Describe the Situation) Use the following questions to help you describe the challenge as it currently exists.

- **What are the facts?**
- **What exactly is the situation?**
- **What has been done?**
- **Who is involved?**
- **What are the people who are involved doing?**
- **How would an outsider look at this situation?**
- **What factors are currently inhibiting progress?**
- **What factors are currently helping us make progress?**

*Team Problem Solving Process, Worksheet Page 2***Step 2: Where do we want to go? (define the Target)****Goals vs. Objectives**

- **A Goal is a statement that explains what a person or organization wishes to accomplish. A Goal sets the fundamental, long-range direction. This is the Target in the STP model.**
- **An Objective then breaks down the goal into smaller parts as to how the goal can be accomplished. To help you reach your goals, you want objectives that are smart.**

In Step 1 you defined the *problem/challenge* in the current *situation*. This is where you don't want to be. In this step, write a definition of the end result – the final Target that you do want to reach. Then, make a list of statements that describe how you will know when you have achieved this result. In Step 6 we will further develop the specifics on the objectives.

**1.1 TARGET****1.2 HOW WE WILL KNOW WE HAVE REACHED THE TARGET**

**We will know we have reached our target when:**

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*Team Problem Solving Process, Worksheet Page 3***Step 3: What's possible? (brainstorming possibilities)**

There may be many possible steps that could help you achieve your target. Use the following questions to help you brainstorm possible courses of action. But do not yet define specific action steps, or attempt to make judgments about what will and will not work. At this stage, keep an open mind to brainstorm possibilities. Analysis and narrowing options comes later.

- **What are the possibilities?**
- **What does the data imply that is not necessarily obvious?**
- **What are the implications beyond the facts?**
- **What other ways are there for solving this problem and reaching our target?**
- **What is this problem analogous to?**

*Team Problem Solving Process, Worksheet Page 4***Step 4: What's best? (analyze options)**

Narrow down the list of possibilities to a few probable courses of action. Use the following list of questions to help you analyze the probable outcomes of each direction.

- **What are the pros and cons of each possibility?**
- **What are the logical consequences of each possibility?**
- **What is the cost of each?**
- **What are the pleasant and unpleasant outcomes of each?**
- **What are the consequences of not acting?**

*Team Problem Solving Process, Worksheet Page 5*

**Step 5: What's important (clarify priorities)**

- **How much do we care about what we gain or lose in each alternative?**
- **What are the values involved for each possibility?**
- **How will the people concerned react to the outcome?**
- **Who is committed to carry out the solution?**
- **Will the outcome contribute to individual or group harmony?**

*Team Problem Solving Process, Worksheet Page 6***Step 6: When, Where, Who, What?**

At this point you need to outline action steps for who does what, when and where. This will include goals and objectives.

**Goals vs. Objectives**

- **A Goal is a statement that explains what a person or organization wishes to accomplish. A Goal sets the fundamental, long-range direction. This is the Target, as defined earlier in Step 2.**
- **An Objective then breaks down the goal into smaller parts as to how the goal can be accomplished. To help you reach your goals, you want objectives that are smart.**

**Why use S.M.A.R.T. Objectives?**

- **Ensures efficient use of resources.**
- **Meets the needs.**
- **Determines if we are successful.**

Consider creating a list of SMART Objectives, both long and short term. Include in this list an assignment for who will do what.

**1.2.1.1 S.M.A.R.T. Objectives**

**Specific**

**Measurable**

**Attainable**

**Results-oriented**

**Time-Bound**

*Team Problem Solving Process, Worksheet Page 6*

**Step 7 How are we doing?**

**(How will we follow through and evaluate progress?)**

## **Problem Solving Scenarios**

### **NEED TO DEVELOP SCENARIOS SPECIFIC TO THE GROUP**

Your team will be assigned one of the following scenarios. Your task will be to take the scenario through the seven steps in the team problem solving process, and be prepared to present your recommendation to the class.

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**Keynote presentations:** With background in one-on-one counseling and executive coaching, RI speakers combine personal and business experience with humor to give meaningful, memorable presentations

**Needs Assessment:** When employees perceive a new system or training as a response to their needs, they have less resistance and more motivation to participate. RI's organizational diagnosis utilizes The Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) which addresses employee concerns for Self, Task, and Impact.

**Training:** RI trainings integrate education and application to change individual attitude and behavior. RI creates a training environment in which employees address real issues and explore practical alternatives. Because they actually get work done, participants consistently rate RI trainings *"The best I have ever taken."*

**Consulting and Coaching:** RI partners and associates have over 50 years of combined experience in organizational development, helping executives be better leaders.

### Resource International Partners

**Robert Pennington, Ph.D.**, is an organizational psychologist, a former faculty member of three major universities, and a four-time recipient of the Mental Health Association's Outstanding Speaker Award. His programs are standard for Fortune 500 companies, government agencies, military organizations, educational institutions, and nonprofit foundations. Dr. Pennington involves his audience directly, making complex issues understandable in a delightfully common-sense manner.

**Stephen Haslam** has a unique background as a martial arts instructor, actor, and business manager, making his presentations lively, hard-hitting, practical and entertaining. Mr. Haslam developed *The Martial Art of Business Communication*, a unique approach to resolving conflicts by reducing resistance, gaining leverage, and increasing cooperation. He has trained and consulted in 20 states and 19 countries.

### Presentations and Trainings

**Enhancing Personal Effectiveness:** Participants examine physical, emotional, and mental ineffectiveness, and learn to turn their automatic stress reactions into the pro-active *Stress Management Response*.™ Step by step processes are followed to transform worries into positive action steps, master emotional reactions, build positive habits, and be clear and calm in difficult situations. Participants complete an action plan to improve personal and professional effectiveness.

**Successful Work Relationships** utilizes *The Martial Art of Communication* to teach how to communicate clearly and effectively, and to inspire trust, confidence, and understanding. Employees learn to appreciate the strengths of different personal styles, to not take differences personally, and to enhance their own blind spots.

**Other Topics Include:** The Martial Art of Business Communication, 21st Century Leadership, Valuing Diversity, Team Building, Successful Presentation Skills, Balancing Work and Home, The Psycho-Social Aspects of Safety.

### What People are Saying

"I see your results in many places. I use your techniques everyday." *Stewart Morris, Jr. Stewart Title Guaranty*

"Your energetic and humorous style made the practical techniques and suggestions you offered immediately applicable, both in our professional and personal lives."

*Barbara Lane, Human Resource Management Association*

"The material was professionally done, on target and delivered with such wit and charm we hated to have it end."

*Neal Show, American Society for Training and Development*

"Your highly interactive programs involve employees to apply models and techniques to real work situations."

*Kathleen Kelley, Reliant Energy*

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