

Solving Business Problems Knowledge Course

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Chapter One: Problem Identification

The Laws of Problem Solving

These "laws" serve as guidelines and some of them may make people feel uncomfortable



- Don't look for only one right answer — usually, the more options you have to choose from, the better the ultimate solution will be
- Be logical — a methodical approach will ensure you don't miss important information
- Be outrageous — engage in "blue sky" thinking to develop creative solutions

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Chapter Two: Gathering Information

Differentiating Cause and Effect

A cause is something that makes something else happen (it's the event that happens first). To determine the cause, ask, "Why did it happen?"

An effect is what happens as a result of the cause (it's the event that happens second, or last). To determine the effect, ask, "What happened?"

Example:

Cause: The project was in danger of missing its deadline. ("Why?")

Effect: Extra staff was added and the project went over budget. ("What?")



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Chapter One: Problem Identification

Questions to Uncover Problems

Many problems are obvious, but others are uncovered with probing questions.

Questions to ask your staff:

- How has your work been going?
- What ideas and suggestions do you have regarding this project?
- In what areas do you feel a lack of confidence?
- What is your evaluation of the situation?
- Have you run into any conflicts or misunderstandings?



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Chapter Four: Evaluating Ideas

Objective Evaluation

Once you have generated some possible solutions to your problem, you need to evaluate them to determine which one will work best.



Evaluation is the systematic determination of merit or worth

- Systematic — use a thorough, logical approach; don't merely rely on your "gut" or personal preference for a solution
- Merit or worth — choose criteria that measure the value or usefulness of the solution

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