TTI DNA®

Problem Solving

A session from

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Problem Solving

Defining, analyzing and diagnosing key components of a problem to formulate a solution.

Why is this skill important?

Effective Problem Solving requires that you look at each problem situation as an interrelated series of events or activities; a system in which one or more components has negatively affected the whole. Problem Solving involves identifying the system component that is causing an error, as well as developing options that are available for solving the problem and completing the task.

A person with a good score in this capacity is able to collectively utilize multiple capacities and talents to analyze all aspects of a problem from identification to resolution. This person will recognize that there are manifest causes of problems. The obvious, on-the-surface causes, and latent causes of problems, such as what's under the surface, in the background or part of the past history.

A person with a poor score in this capacity has an inability to isolate the process in which the error occurs and to then identify the components of the process that need changing in order to correct the problem. This inability can occur because the person is unable to properly subdivide a process into sub-component processes.

Problem Solving can be hampered by placing too much focus on one method of problem solving. A person may try to place all of the pieces of the problem into a predefined structure. In this situation, if the components aren't classified correctly, the pieces won't fit into the predefined structure and an effective solution won't be identifiable.

Of course, if you can anticipate potential problems before they arise, you may be able to lessen the effect they have. In the worst unanticipated problem scenarios, you can at least save yourself time and effort by clearly defining your problem first. If you are not sure what the root of your problem really is, or if you do a poor job of defining the problem, you will have a difficult time planning effective action steps to resolve the problem.

Good Problem Solving involves identifying a particular problem, isolating the components, then isolating what part of the problem needs to be solved. In most cases, there are key components of any problem, and there are very specific solutions to each component.

What skills are associated with Problem Solving?

Someone who has mastered skills associated with Problem Solving:

- Anticipates, identifies and resolves problems or obstacles.
- Utilizes logic and systematic processes to analyze and solve problems.
- Defines the causes, effects, impact and scope of problems.
- Identifies the multiple components of problems and their relationships.
- Prioritizes steps to solutions.
- Develops criteria for optimum solutions.
- Evaluates the potential impact of possible solutions and selects the best one.

How do you develop your own skills in Problem Solving?

- Don't jump too quickly to a conclusion about the best solution to each problem.
- List all possible solutions to the problem before you choose the best option.
- Gather information about the problem from any resources you have at your disposal. Re-read relevant memos, ask your managers and co-workers for their perceptions of the problem, and/or get expert information from people outside your organization.
- Look at each problem from different perspectives. If you ask others for input or try to see the problem from another angle, you may find that the problem isn't as bad as you feared or requires a different solution than you initially thought.
- When you discover a problem, recognize that you must solve the problem within an organizational system. Effects of solving the problem may be felt across your department or across the entire organization.
- When you feel you have gathered all relevant information, make sure the conclusion you draw really follows from the facts. Are there any other conclusions that would fit just as well? How would alternate conclusions affect the solution you choose?
- Prioritize action steps toward solving the problem. Break the solution into manageable tasks and delegate them to relevant individuals or complete them in order yourself.

Problem Solving

Activities

Activity 1: Problem Solving on the Job

Think about a problem you currently face in the workplace. Try to answer the questions below to help you begin analyzing the problem.

What is the problem?

Whose opinion/knowledge is important to this problem?

1.
2.
3.
4.

List three potential Solutions to the problem:

1.
2.
3.

After researching missing information, answer the following questions:

What has the information taught you that you didn't already know about the problem?

_____

_____

_____

_____

List the pros and cons of the solution you feel is the best one.

Pros	Cons
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.

Who will be affected by the solution you have chosen?   _____

_____

_____

_____

Whose cooperation do you need to make the solution happen?   _____

_____

_____

_____

What goal(s) will motivate those whose cooperation you need?   _____

_____

_____

What steps need to be taken to resolve the problem, and who will complete each one?

1. _____ **Assigned to:** _____

2. _____ **Assigned to:** _____

3. _____ **Assigned to:** _____

4. _____ **Assigned to:** _____

5. _____ **Assigned to:** _____

Activity 2: Manifest and Latent Causes

Think of a recent problem situation you observed or were part of.

Problem Situation: _____

1. What were the manifest causes of the problem? What did the problem seem to be about on the surface?

_____

_____

_____

2. What were the latent causes of the problem? What was under the surface? Was there a past history that led to this problem? Was personality part of the problem?

_____

_____

_____

3. Now that you are looking back on the problem, what would you do to solve it? Be sure to recognize and address both manifest and latent causes of the problem.

_____

_____

_____

_____