

High-Performance Problem Solving

How to Rapidly Add
Extraordinary Value



The Importance of Problem Solving...

Many managers and teams solve their problems in an ad-hoc and highly inefficient way. This wastes time and resources, and leads to ineffective solutions and lots of stress.

They never apply the simple principles that are used every day by the top problem solvers in the world, nor do they learn from their experiences from what has worked or not worked before – there is no feedback loop.

In this short presentation you will learn the seven steps that will help you solve any problem that you face – faster and with better results.

The Seven Steps...

1. Start here and find out exactly what it is you are trying to solve

7. Now, make the decisions, appoint the people, provide resources, and start doing stuff - measure what happens and make adjustments as you go!

6. OK, what is the best and most practical way to solve this problem?



5. Right, now what does it all mean, what are the patterns, what are the implications of what you now know?

2. Then create a simple way to structure the problem and your thinking about it

3. Now find out what is most important - the key drivers or root-causes

4. Do the most important research and analyses to give you facts and answers

The Process is Fluid...



There is an order to the 7 steps, but you will bounce between them as you go along – that’s good.

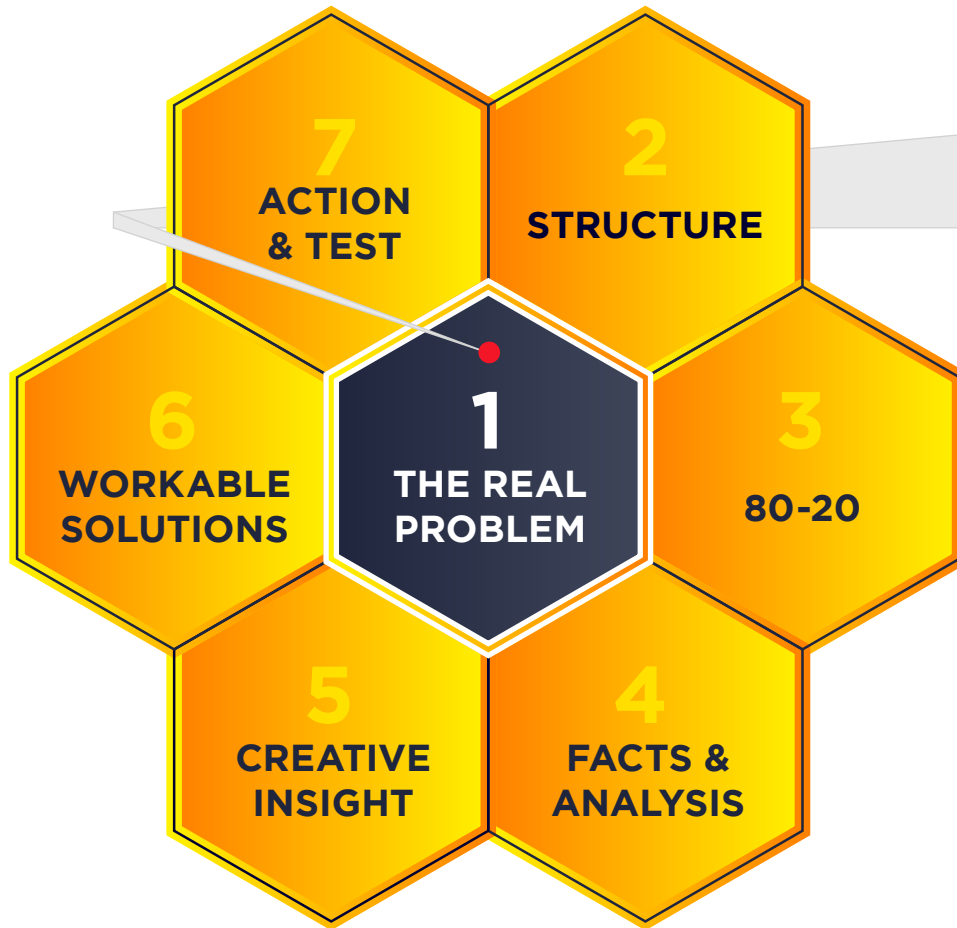
It will feel ambiguous and uncomfortable at times – just trust in the process.

Don’t rush to get to “workable solutions” as fast as you can – allow time for real insight to emerge.

Avoid “boiling the ocean” – always be thinking “What’s most important here?”

Have fun along the way – enjoy the process and learn as you go.

Step 1: Focus on The Real Problem...



- What is the real problem here?
- What is going on here?
- What are we trying to solve / make better here?
- What is our statement of the problem?

- Spend time up-front to ensure you are solving the right problem.
- All the work you do after this stage will be directed/framed/oriented by this.
- If you have not identified the real problem, you risk wasting time and resources.

Step 2: Structure The Problem...



- What is a simple way of thinking about the problem?
- What are the main component parts of this problem?
- What are the 3 big issues within this problem?
- Can we re-frame the problem statement as an hypothesis? And if so, what further three hypotheses would support it?

- Structuring the problem makes it easier to think about
- Starting with your problem statement - divide the problem up into separate chunks - either “issues” or “hypotheses”
- Three chunks is best – each chunk should be different from the others, and all three chunks cover everything

Step 3: Focus on What is Most Important?



- What are the 20% of things that are causing 80% of the problem?
- What are the key drivers of this problem?
- What are the root causes of this problem?
- What is most important to prove/disprove?
- What are the most important analyses we could do here?

- Look for what is most important
- Don't waste time analysing stuff that will not affect our answer to the problem
- Only a small number of things will be driving the current problem/situation

Step 4: Find The Facts and Do The Analyses...



- What information do we need to find?
- Where will we find it?
- What are the relevant facts here?
- What answers are we finding?
- What is our research and analysis saying?
- What do we now know and can prove about this problem?

- Don't ignore the facts
- And don't make the facts fit your hypothesis
- Don't just make assumptions or guesses about the important stuff

Step 5: Creative Insight...



- What are all the facts saying?
- What does this all mean?
- How does it all link together?
- What are the patterns?
- What is this telling us?
- What is the essence of all this?
- What can we learn from elsewhere?
- Is the original problem statement and hypothesis still correct/appropriate?
- What are the implications for a solution?
- What options and alternatives exist?
- What is our story here?

- Go beyond just the analysis
- Look for “so what’s” and “implications”
- Raise the data and facts and information to the level of “intelligence”

Step 6: Workable Solutions...



- What could we do?
- What will definitely not work? And why not?
- What are our constraints?
- Who needs to support a solution?
- Who needs to be part of the solution?
- What will be the main obstacles and challenges?
- How will we overcome those?
- What to do? By when? By who?
- Decisions? Resources? Plans? Objectives?

- A solution needs to be able to work
- Any solution will involve a change of something
- You must consider the implications of that change on the people involved
- And make plans to address the inevitable resistance and consequences that will be present

Step 7: Action and Test...



- Make decisions
- Appoint people / teams
- Provide resources
- Monitor progress
- Review and learn as you go
- Adjust as necessary

- If no action is taken, improvement is highly unlikely
- Do something and see what happens
- Learn from the results and feedback that you get (both good and bad) - and apply those learning's
- [If you are not going to take action, explain to people why not]

High-Performance Problem Solving



Summary...

1. Solving problems in a simple and consistent way will improve you and your team's performance.
2. You will find better and more sustainable solutions to the problems that you face (and prevent yourself from wasting time and resources “recreating the wheel”).
3. The 7-Step process presented here can be applied to any problem or challenge that you face. As you use it, it will just become your new and more effective way of working.