

WHAT IS PROBLEM SOLVING?

Definition: Problem solving

Problem solving is the act of defining a problem; determining the cause of the problem; identifying, prioritizing, and selecting alternatives for a solution; and implementing a solution.

- The problem-solving process
- Problem solving resources



Problem Solving Chart

THE PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS

Step	Characteristics
1. Define the problem	Differentiate fact from opinion Specify underlying causes Consult each faction involved for information State the problem specifically Identify what standard or expectation is violated Determine in which process the problem lies Avoid trying to solve the problem without data
2. Generate alternative solutions	Postpone evaluating alternatives initially Include all involved individuals in the generating of alternatives

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Specify alternatives consistent with organizational goalsSpecify short- and long-term alternativesBrainstorm on others' ideasSeek alternatives that may solve the problem
3. Evaluate and select an alternative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Evaluate alternatives relative to a target standardEvaluate all alternatives without biasEvaluate alternatives relative to established goalsEvaluate both proven and possible outcomesState the selected alternative explicitly
4. Implement and follow up on the solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Plan and implement a pilot test of the chosen alternativeGather feedback from all affected partiesSeek acceptance or consensus by all those affectedEstablish on going measures and monitoringEvaluate long-term results based on final solution