

Problem Solving POWER™

A Report By
Xalles Limited

Introduction to the Methodology

Problem Solving POWER™ is an advanced yet made simple methodology in creative business and technical problem solving. This methodology is designed to:

- ? Reduce the time it takes to solve problems
- ? Improve creativity in individuals and teams
- ? Solve problems that affect company's bottom line
- ? Help individual problem solvers stay in control during crisis situations
- ? Develop better decision-making skills in managers and leaders

Problem	Identify and Define the Problem
Objective	Create Objectives and Goals
Waves	Alternating Waves of Creative and Critical Thinking
Execute	Create and Execute the Plan
Review	Review the Progress and Success

High Level Process and Benefits

1. *Given a situation, identify and define the problem.*

One of the biggest problems people face is determining where the problem came from. Without a clearly defined problem, it is difficult or impossible to create a useful objective. By starting with a well-defined problem, you avoid spending time working on the wrong things. Going through this process you may find that your problem is really many problems. You will need to attempt to identify the cause of the problem to better understand its scope and magnitude. You need to focus your efforts on the causes, not the symptoms. This will lead to good, long-term solutions, not short-term "cover-up" solutions.

2. *Given a defined problem, create objectives and goals.*

You need to have an overall objective to aim for to help focus efforts. Specific goal statements are needed to ensure all components of the problem are handled. This is essential for complex problems. It will also help with work delegation and project management. This phase will give you some assistance in prioritizing problems. This phase will prepare you (and your team) to tackle the problem(s). This phase allows you to identify the motivation for a solution. Many problem solving teams have a good start but somewhere along the way their motivation for solving the problem lags and they do not achieve the desired results. Goals without motivation are just nice ideas.

3. *Given a problem and an objective, create and analyze ideas.*

To obtain the best solution possible to the problem there needs to be an organized effort to develop creative and immovable ideas while staying focused on the objective. In order for creativity as well as a focus on the problem solving objective to be optimized, the creative thinking work needs to be separated from the critical thinking work. If you combine both creative and critical together, you have what is commonly referred to as a “meeting”. A structured approach to decision-making is included in this phase.

4. *Given a solution, create an execution plan.*

Most of the difficult work is completed at the end of the wave phase. In order to ensure that the developed solution will achieve the desired results, an organized execution plan is necessary. This plan will help to organize the events or actions that need to be implemented for the solution to come to fruition.

5. *Given an implementation solution, review and analyze the plan’s execution.*

After completing the execution phase, you may be obliged to (management request, etc.) or have the option of reviewing your solution and its implementation. It is useful to have a simple system in place to be able to objectively measure the success of your solution or if the solution did not reach the objective, to justify your actions. Another important part of this phase is performing a hindsight analysis. This will help you objectively analyze your problem solving strategy and the decision-making process you followed. This can also be used to get other people involved and approving your approach before you execute your plan. The current solution depends on the result. The same solution can be viewed as right or wrong depending on the outcome. Hindsight analysis allows you to identify the “no-win” situations and justify your actions.

Important Concepts

Problem

Is a situation in which a person is trying to reach a goal and must find a means for arriving at it.

Solution

The events or activities that must occur to reach a goal and resolve a problem.

Cause

A factor, that due to its presence, has created a problem or barrier to a solution.

Symptom

The noticeable result of a cause. It often appears as a problem or barrier to a solution.

Opportunity

The difference between the benefits and costs of solving a problem.

Objective

The overall aim of the problem solving effort. It describes the final result in the real terms.

Goal

An intermediate milestone on the way to reaching your objective. A goal is attainable, observable, measurable and results oriented.

Creative Thinking

Positive, inventive thinking, often directed at developing alternatives for problem solving.

Critical Analysis

Action of reducing many ideas or alternatives to a select few that meet the solution's criteria.

Implementation

Process of taking a conceptual solution and creating the necessary actions that will see the solution generate the desired result.

Hindsight Analysis

Post-Implementation analysis to determine which factors were over/under estimated during the problem solving process. This analysis is a tool to help individuals and teams continuously improve their problem solving efforts and results.

The Secrets of Problem Solving

The creative tools that are built into the **Problem Solving POWER™** methodology are the keys to executing against this process. Some of the **POWER TOOLS™** include:

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- ????Root Cause Tool
- ????Pain Without Gain Chart
- ????Tic-Tac-Toe Priority Chart
- ????Creativity Barriers Tool
- ????Questioning Tool
- ????Creative Mental Elements Tool
- ????Storyboard
- ????Magic Trigger Table
- ????Transcendent Connectors
- ????Wave Accelerators
- ????Critical Factor Chart
- ????Implementation Plan Table
- ????Hindsight Analysis Template

These structured tools allow individuals and teams to have a way to approach each detailed step of the process within this methodology.

Strategy Management

Four factors needed to solve difficult problems:

1. Separate creative thinking and critical analysis
2. Mix individual and group effort
3. Mix of commitment and detachment at the right times
4. Mix of intense effort and extended effort

It is a skill in and of itself to be able to use the **Problem Solving POWER™** strategy for different types of problems. It is also a learning process to practice to be skilled in the use of all the **POWER TOOLS™** to the level that you can effectively solve business and technical problems in a short period of time.

Realize that any problem and opportunity you discover could just be the “tip of the iceberg” and often it is.

The Application

Any methodology is only as good as the results it can produce. Take a look inside your organization to determine if you have a uniform approach to attacking problems. Does your approach provide the ability for continuous improvement of business decisions made? Does your approach provide tools that can assist the novice or advanced problem solver follow the steps required for effective problem solving? Does your organization produce the results desired when solving complex problems?

The reader is encouraged to contact Xalles Limited to learn more about how the **Problem Solving POWER™** methodology can be applied to your specific business or technical problem situation.