

The Problem Solving Process

In any job and in every workplace, situations arise where we need to make changes and improvements. When we encounter such a challenge, it is useful to have a process to follow to help us “know what to do when we don’t know what to do.”

When we work to solve a problem, we want it to stay solved. By using a solid process and proven tools, we are more likely to remain objective while identifying the true causes and developing effective solutions. Strong problem solving skills and techniques increase the odds that the undesirable situation does not reoccur.

Overview of the Problem Solving Process

1. Define the problem

Write a concise statement of the existing problem, then briefly summarize where you want to be after the problem has been resolved.

2. Analyze potential causes

Identify the potential causes and determine the most likely root cause(s) of the problem.

3. Identify the solution

Make a list of possible solutions that address the root causes – be creative. Then evaluate possible solutions by rating each against appropriate criteria. Choose the best of the group.

4. Develop an action plan

Write a detailed plan that lists action steps, responsible person(s), start/end dates, estimated hours, and cost.

5. Implement the solution and evaluate progress

Follow up to ensure the action steps are completed. Evaluate if the actual results are matching the desired results. If not, use the relevant problem solving tools to make changes to the plan.