

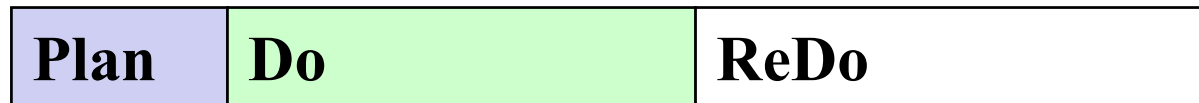
Problem-Solving Success Tips

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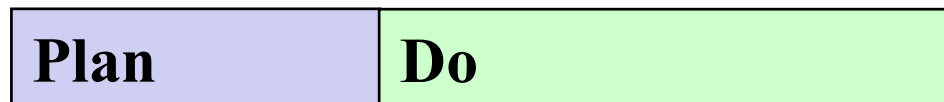
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Use a systematic approach

Using Trouble-shooting



Using SPP



Define the problem first

Describe exactly what the focus of the analysis is.

- ⌘ What went wrong,
- ⌘ What are the symptoms,
- ⌘ What is the impact on your business.
- ⌘ Write it down.
 - Everyone who reads it should understand what the problem is and why it's important.

Caution: describe the problem, not what you will do to fix it.

Only fix important problems

Just because a problem is there doesn't mean you have to solve it.

- ⊕ Is the problem having a significant negative impact on your business?
- ⊕ Will it cost more to fix than the problem is costing?
- ⊕ Are other things a higher priority?

Test your assumptions about everything

Check the facts.

- ⌘ Be sure that you and your team understand the problem the same way
- ⌘ Confirm that the problem is important
- ⌘ Verify possible root causes
- ⌘ Test the assumptions about proposed solutions

Measure

How will you know when the problem is solved?

⌘ Accuracy

- Did you solve the problem correctly?

⌘ Timeliness

- Did you solve the problem quickly enough?

If you don't measure, you won't know for sure. Use measurements to learn and portray the truth—the real truth, not what you wish were true.

Use your project management skills

Solving a complicated problem is a project and should be managed as one.

- ⌘ Get commitment to proceed & establish sponsorship
- ⌘ Set up task list and schedule
- ⌘ Establish measurement, communication and contingency plans

Goal is to assure you do “everything necessary, nothing extraneous”

Whatever you do, do it on purpose

Doing nothing is a wimpy way to make a decision—and is quite likely to leave you making awkward explanations later.

Communicate

Don't leave your key stakeholders guessing.

⚙️ Develop a communications plan

- Who need to know what
- When do they need to know it
- How will you tell them

⚙️ Implement it

Identify and fix the right root causes

Complicated problems have multiple root causes.

- ③ Identify possible root causes
- ③ Verify that they're real
- ③ Set priorities: biggest impact on your success measurements

Don't waste time or money on causes that are either insignificant in impact or only peripheral causes of the problem you're trying to fix.

Have the courage to say “no” when appropriate

Don't let yourself be put in a “no-win” situation.

- ⊕ Don't accept an assignment you think is impossible.
- ⊕ Do choose your strategy for how you handle the situation: gather evidence, explain what it will take to accomplish the desired results, etc.

Meet your commitments

Do what you promise and don't promise what you can't deliver.

- ⊕ Meeting commitments strengthens relationships and builds trust. You need both.
- ⊕ If you can't meet a commitment, notify everyone involved immediately.

Everything necessary, nothing extraneous

Make sure you solve the problem completely, but don't get sidetracked into doing other things that won't make this problem go away.

Everyone necessary, no one extraneous

Make sure everybody who can contribute to the problem solving effort is appropriately involved.

⊕ All the right people

- So you have all the necessary information, skills, etc.

⊕ No extras

- So you don't have distractions, wasted time, etc.

Plan for things to go wrong.

We've heard it before, and it's still true: if something can go wrong, it will.

- ⊕ Figure out what can get in the way of your problem solving effort and develop appropriate contingency plans.

Acknowledge and thank everyone who helps

Solving an important problem deserves recognition.

- 🕒 Celebrate
- 🕒 Make sure management and key stakeholders know what you and your team have achieved.
- 🕒 Remind them of the risks avoided.
- 🕒 Thank everyone who participated in the project.
It's the polite thing to do, and encourages them to help you next time.

Thank you

May all your problem-solving efforts be successful!

Jeanne is a consultant, trainer, and coach who helps clients solve messy problems that disrupt operations or cause customers to take their business elsewhere.

These tips are excerpted from her book: "When Stuff Happens: A Practical Guide to Solving Problems Permanently."

Find out more at <http://www.sawyerpartnership.com>