**The Five-Step Problem-Solving Process**

Sometimes when you’re faced with a complex problem, it’s best to pause and take a step back. A break from routine will help you think creatively and objectively. Doing too much at the same time increases the chances of burnout.

Solving problems is easier when you align your thoughts with your actions. If you’re in multiple places at once mentally, you’re more likely to get overwhelmed under pressure. So, a problem-solving process follows specific steps to make it approachable and straightforward. This includes breaking down complex problems, understanding what you want to achieve, and allocating responsibilities to different people to ease some of the pressure.

The problem-solving process will help you measure your progress against factors like budget, timelines and deliverables. The point is to get the key stakeholders on the same page about the ‘what’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ of the process. Let’s discuss the five-step problem-solving process that you can adopt.

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Problems at a workplace need not necessarily be situations that have a negative impact, such as a product failure or a change in government policy. Making a decision to alter the way your team works may also be a problem. Launching new products, technological upgrades, customer feedback collection exercises—all of these are also “problems” that need to be “solved”.

Here are the steps of a problem-solving process:

**1. Defining the Problem**

The first step in the process is often overlooked. To define the problem is to understand what it is that you’re solving for. This is also where you outline and write down your purpose—what you want to achieve and why. Making sure you know what the problem is can make it easier to follow up with the remaining steps. This will also help you identify which part of the problem needs more attention than others.

**2. Analyzing the Problem**

Analyze why the problem occurred and go deeper to understand the existing situation.  If it’s a product that has malfunctioned, assess factors like raw material, assembly line, and people involved to identify the problem areas. This will help you figure out if the problem will persist or recur. You can measure the solution against existing factors to assess its future viability.

**3. Weighing the Options**

Once you’ve figured out what the problem is and why it occurred, you can move on to generating multiple options as solutions. You can combine your existing knowledge with research and data to come up with viable and effective solutions. Thinking objectively and getting inputs from those involved in the process will broaden your perspective of the problem. You’ll be able to come up with better options if you’re open to ideas other than your own.

**4. Implementing The Best Solution**

Implementation will depend on the type of data at hand and other variables. Consider the big picture when you’re selecting the best option. Look at factors like how the solution will impact your budget, how soon you can implement it, and whether it can withstand setbacks or failures. If you need to make any tweaks or upgrades, make them happen in this stage.

**5. Monitoring Progress**

The problem-solving process doesn’t end at implementation. It requires constant monitoring to watch out for recurrences and relapses. It’s possible that something doesn’t work out as expected on implementation. To ensure the process functions smoothly, you can make changes as soon as you catch a miscalculation. Always stay on top of things by monitoring how far you’ve come and how much farther you have to go.

**Conclusion**

You can learn to solve any problem—big or small—with experience and patience. Adopt an impartial and analytical approach that has room for multiple perspectives. In the workplace, you’re often faced with situations like an unexpected system failure or a key employee quitting in the middle of a crucial project.

Problem-solving skills will help you face these situations head-on. Harappa Education’s [Structuring Problems](https://harappa.education/courses/structuring-problems) course will show you how to classify and categorize problems to discover effective solutions. Equipping yourself with the right knowledge will help you navigate work-related problems in a calm and competent manner.

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