

34. Systematic Problem Solving Worksheets

Systematic Problem Solving Worksheet # 1

Step 1. Name the problem

Identify the problem that needs to be solved. Analyze it in just enough detail to create a common understanding. Use the below space to explore the general nature of the problem.

Now narrow in and select the specific aspect you wish to solve. Write a one- or two- sentence problem statement to define the problem clearly.

Problem statement:

Systematic Problem Solving Worksheet # 2

Step 2. Identify the goal of the problem-solving exercise

Describe the desired outcome.

What would things look like if the problem disappeared? How would things look if this problem were resolved? Use the space below to record the ideas generated.

Now write a one-or two- sentence goal statement.

Goal statement:

Systematic Problem Solving Worksheet # 3

Step 3. Analyze the problem

Dissect the problem thoroughly. Avoid coming up with solutions. Instead concentrate on making sure that everyone is clear about the specific nature of the situation. Don't focus on symptoms, but delve behind each effect to determine the root causes.

Use *Cause and Effect Charting* or a *Fishbone Diagram* if the problem is a complex technical issue that has many contributing factors.

If you decide to use a simple questioning approach, ask:

*How would we describe this problem to an outsider?
What is taking place? What are the signs and symptoms?
How are people affected? What makes this happen?
What are the root causes of each symptom?
What other problems does it cause?
What are the most damaging aspects?
What and who stops us from solving it?
How do we contribute to the problem?*

Systematic Problem Solving Worksheet # 4

Step 4. Identify potential solutions

Use *Brainstorming* or *Anonymous Brainstorming* to generate a list of potential Solutions to the problem.

When brainstorming, remember the rules:

- let the ideas flow, be creative, and don't judge
- all ideas are accepted, even if they are way-out
- build on the good ideas of others

Probing questions to ask once the group has run out of ideas:

- *what if money were no object?*
- *what if I owned this company?*
- *what would the customer suggest?*
- *what's the opposite of something already suggested?*
- *what is the most innovative thing we could do?*

Record brainstorm ideas here:

Systematic Problem Solving Worksheet # 5

Step 5. Evaluate the solutions

Use *Impact/Effort Grid* to sift through the brainstormed ideas to determine which are best for the situation.

EFFORT

<i>IMPACT</i>	Major Improvement	Difficult to Do 3.	Easy to Do 1.
	Minor Improvement	4.	2.

List all of the type 1&2 activities together for quick action	List all of the type 3 activities here for development into action plans

Systematic Problem Solving Worksheet # 6

Step 6. Plan for action

Create detailed action plans for items that need to be implemented. Make sure action plans adhere to a logical sequence of steps. Provide details about what will be done, how, and by whom. Always put in target dates for completion. Identify the performance indicator that answers the question, “*How will we know we did a good job?*”

What will be done & how?	By whom?	When?	Performance Indicator

Systematic Problem Solving Worksheet #7

Step 7. Troubleshoot the action plan

Identify all the things that could get in the way of success in implementing the plan. Create anticipatory strategies to deal with each of the serious blockages.

Use the following questions to help identify trouble spots:

- what are the most difficult, complex or sensitive aspects of our plan?
- what sudden shifts could take place to change priorities or otherwise change the environment?
- what organizational blocks and barriers could we run into?
- what technical or materials-related problems could stop or delay us?
- should we be aware of any human resource issues?
- in which ways might members of this team not fulfill their commitments?

What could go wrong, block us or change suddenly?	What actions do we need to take to overcome each block? (what, how, who, when, measure)

Systematic Problem Solving Worksheet #8

Step 8. Monitor and evaluate

To ensure that action plans are actually implemented identify:

How will progress be reported? Written _____ Verbal _____

When and how often will reports be made? _____

Who needs to be kept advised? _____

How will results be monitored? _____

Will there be a final report? _____

Who will take responsibility for the above actions? _____

Reporting on Results	
What activities have been implemented?	What results have been achieved?
Remaining items	Expected dates for completion