Problem Solving

A one day workshop

Delegate Notes

Learning Point

Introduction

Think of all the problems that you have encountered in your life. You found some way to deal with them and, on reflection you may feel that you dealt with some problems in a better way than others.

When tackling a problem we all use some kind of structured approach but we don't always recognise what that approach is.

Our approach is probably automatic and has developed by accident as a result of our work and life experiences. This 'automatic' approach to problem solving saves thinking time but doesn't allow us to really understand why sometimes we are less successful than we would like to be.

Problem Categories

All problems are not the same. Some involve people and some don't, some are short term and some take a long time to resolve.

A useful way of categorising work problems is based upon the work of an American management expert called Igor Ansoff:

- Strategic problems are longer term, wide ranging problems that have significant consequences for the organisation as a whole.

- Operational problems are usually medium to short term and involve the management of resources to achieve particular objectives.

- Administrative problems are usually short term or have a right or wrong answer according to the policies and procedures of the organisation.

Action Point

Test Your Understanding

In the boxes below write down some examples of each of the three different problem categories and then discuss these with a colleague.

Strategic
Operational
Administrative

Action Point

Take a moment:

Circle your answers to the following questions to obtain a fuller identification of your basic approach to solving problems. (There are no right or wrong answers)

1	Sit in a relaxed position as you are reading this. Fold your hands in your lap. Now look at your hands. Which thumb is on the top? (Was neither on top – you found the two thumbs beside each other?)	Left	Right
2	Assuming you could only have a foot patrol or a helicopter to locate a lost child in a park, which would you prefer?	Patrol	Helicopter
3	When learning a new dance. Is it easier for you to read about the steps or watch as others perform the dance?	Read	Watch
4	Are you an organised person?	Yes	No
5	Do you pride yourself on being prompt?	Yes	No
6	When you purchase a new appliance, do you prefer to try to make it work on your own or are you inclined to read the instruction manual first?	Try	Read
7	Do you prefer the status quo or do you prefer change	Status quo	Change
8	When you are driving and pull over to ask for directions do you write down what the person tells you or simply	Write	See

	try to see the route in your head?		
9	In a class, do you take copious notes or listen and digest the information?	Notes	Listen
10	I like to collect 'stuff'	True	False

How many answers did you have in the left column?.....

How many answers did you have in the right column?.....

If you had an even (5-5) split or nearly even split (4-6 or 6-4) congratulations! It suggests that you are lateralised in your approach to problems (and if your thumbs were side by side in question 1 you are quite likely to be tapping into both kinds of problem solving talents)

If the majority of your answers (7 or more) were in column 1, you probably think in a linear fashion and prefer problem solving in a logical, analytical manner.

With 7 or more answers in column 2, you tend to be more creative and probably enjoy problems that require the generation of multiple ideas.

If you are lateralised, continue to develop your abilities in both areas. If you are convergent, gain practice with divergent thinking. And, if you favour divergent thinking, its time for cerebral workouts that call on your reasoning talents.

If you need to develop your convergent or analytical skills:

- Develop your ability to gauge time requirements – before beginning a project, estimate how long it will take for completion. Then, work to complete the project within that time frame. You can estimate how long it will take you to reach the next motorway exit, or how many minutes it will be before the next commercial appears on the tele.

- Learn more about finance – ask questions about budgets and annual reports. Take a course, read a book or meet with an accountant. As you fain understanding of financial concepts, your logical, linear thinking develops

- For two weeks, keep a log of the problems you solve each day and the method (if any that you use to solve them – include a column to show the results of each solution or decision). For problems that you solve haphazardly begin to use the specific problem solving techniques presented in this workshop

- Read a biography of an outstanding scientist to develop an appreciation for analysis

- Clean off your desk and organise your files – having immediate access to the information that you need increases the likelihood of your seeing the task through to completion. One of the problems experienced by many creative people is an unwillingness to follow through

If you need to develop your divergent or imaginative skills:

- Engage in 'what if' thinking – speculate about possibilities that could occur in both your personal and professional life

- Take an art class or a music class – management guru Peter Drucker advises managers seeking excellence to learn how to play the violin

- Whenever you can, imagine the possibilities surrounding a given object – how many different uses for example, can you find for a lettuce leaf?

- Associate with creative people – watch them, listen to them, learn their habits, observe them at work and ask them about their talents. Experiment with applying new insights into your own behaviour

Divergent and convergent thinking

Using the 'divergent' followed by 'convergent' thinking process can help avoid jumping too quickly to conclusions as to the best way to solve the problem.

Convergent means narrowing down or meeting and this is here you start to select practicable options based on some key criteria, such as time or budget available.

Unless the problem is a simple administrative or operational one that requires a yes or no answer then it is likely that you will want to spend some time 'diverging' before you 'converge' and decide what you are going to do.

Seeing the bigger picture

When tackling problems it is often useful not to jump to a conclusion as to how best to solve the problem.

The first stage of good problem solving, unless the problem is very straightforward, is to generate a number of possible approaches that might work and then think about which one is best.

'Brainstorming' is the title often given to the process of trying to develop a range of ideas before options are selected.

Brainstorming

Clarify the problem that you wish to address, for example you want to get to London for a meeting next week. The meeting starts at 9.30am.

Brainstorm options – travel by car, by coach, by train, by plane. Travel there and back on the same day, go down the night before or stay on the night of the meeting before you return.

The usual idea with brainstorming is to try to be creative and not automatically dismiss a particular option because it seems difficult or improbable. For example, some people might automatically dismiss flying to London, however for many people this is now a very viable alternative.

Selecting Options

After the brainstorming has taken place you need to start to select options. Think about limiting factors that will help to prioritise the

best options, for example, family commitments, and budget available and timing of the various transport links.

Shortlist two or three likely options and get full details in relation to the key factors that will help you to make the decision. Make the best decision you can given the information available but be prepared to change to 'plan b' if the situation changes.

Reflection

How effective are your team or organisation at solving problems? Do you see evidence that follow a process such as that outlined above? How often do you jump to conclusions?

Creative Thinking

There are several ways you can help yourself to organise information and ideas when you are trying to solve a problem and make a decision.

A couple of them have been 'branded' such as Edward De Bono's Lateral Thinking and Tony Buzan's Mind-Mapping. Most of them involve some way of representing information in a way that possible links can be seen either with circles or lines.

Using such approaches can help to increase your creativity as, just like brainstorming, they encourage you to list a range of information but then go on to help you to organise the information into linked groups.

Imagine that you wanted to ensure that you were to have a pleasant day on the beach, what kind of factors would you need to bear in mind?

By listing such factors we present ourselves with a range of options rather then converging too quickly on one or two. If other people are involved the whole process will get more complex.

Group problem solving and decision-making

Where problem solving involves other people than the whole process can get much more complicated and time-consuming.

If the problem is a strategic one, i.e. broad ranging and possibly affecting the whole or a large part of the organisation, then it is almost inevitable that a political process will need to take place to resolve the problem and make the decision. This process will often

take considerable time and the final decision may not suit everybody.

The reality of this is that any organisation involving contact with different individuals will have a political dimension. Many managers and supervisors get frustrated if they fail to appreciate this fact.

When trying to solve a problem as a group then the same process of divergent and convergent thinking can be used. Group brainstorming can sometimes generate a broader range of ideas. The problem arises when the group tries to agree on options. Different people may have different preferences and this may lead to disagreement and possibly even conflict.

It is often important to gain peoples' commitment to an approach before it is implemented, therefore some type of consultation process may well be required. At the end of the day a decision will be made either by the person with the authority to make that decision, by voting, by group consensus or by some other means such as tossing dice.

Monitoring and Review

As a manager or supervisor you will want to be sure that once you have clarified what the problem is and a suitable decision has been taken about how to tackle it then the action is taken.

Good time management and delegation practices are vital to ensure that actions are implemented and the problems solved. If not, they will return to haunt you and possibly be worse than they were in the first place.

Verbal agreement

Many first line managers prefer to gain verbal agreement with the appropriate people involved and then either get on with the job of let others do it.

This if fine if:

- The set objective is routine, low risk or low impact
- The person you agree with is reliable
- You both have good memories about what you've agreed
- No one needs to know other than the people you discuss the issue with verbally
- There is no requirement to record the objective

Written record

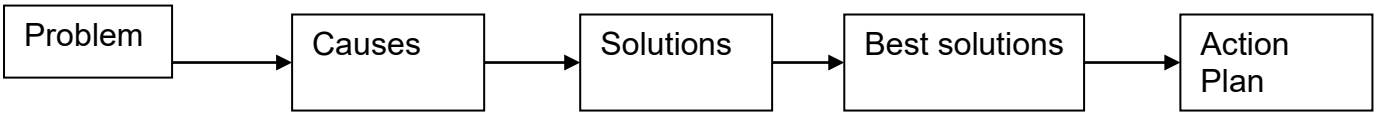
In many cases you will need to or want to record the agreed objectives and actions so that they can be reviewed in future, for example, at a team meeting or at an appraisal discussion. Employees can sometimes get quite sensitive about written records and you also need to ensure that the information you keep accords with organisational policies on for example Data Protection.

The record might be a diary entry, a team-meeting minute, an email, a brief with a copy for your boss, or even a formal report. Remember to follow the SMART objective rule to ensure that the agreed actions are taken.

Effective problem solving calls for creative thinking and a logical and disciplined approach

There are six key steps in effective problem solving:

1. identify the problem
2. specify the cause, the reasons and the effects
3. identify possible solutions
4. evaluate and select the most promising solutions
5. plan the action, and
6. action the plan



Identify the problem:

As you will know, this is more difficult than it sounds. We often treat symptoms not causes because time, always in short supply, leads us to skip this first essential step. When you feel you have identified the real problem, try to set it down on paper, in no more than one or two sentences

Specify the causes, reasons and effects:

There may be more than one cause, but set it / them down on paper too. Specify the effects. It is likely that colleagues will be involved. If so, and an atmosphere has been created where defensive attitudes develop, any progress or improvements will be hard to find

Identify possible solutions:

To throw up all the possibilities, you may use brain storming

Evaluate and select the most promising solutions:

Select the most promising possibilities and try to measure their relative value. Timescale may enter here. There could be several promising lines of action; some immediately useful, others may need fuller development for later implementation. Don't lose sight of longer term improvement in short term action

Plan the action:

This plan should include a timescale and a schedule of follow up

<u>Action the plan and follow up!!</u>

Pinpointing problems and solutions:

Hoe many times have you heard the saying 'you can't see the wood for the tress?' There is so much information, sometimes conflicting, that it can be very difficult to identify patterns of behaviour or of events.

If you knew that a child exhibited certain behaviour only after eating a particular sweet containing an E additive, you would be able to eradicate the problem by stopping the child eating the sweet – more effective than punishment.

If you knew that someone was absent only on the third Thursday of a month, every month, you might be able to find out that they were running a market stall – far more useful than simply knowing that there were twelve absences every year.
These two examples show a problem being narrowed down to pinpoint exactly when, where and how a problem occurs. This can be a very successful prelude to finding the root cause.

There are a number of problem solving techniques which can be applied to most problems

Pareto analysis

Purpose

To separate the most important causes of a problem from the trivial. To identify the most important problems for a team to work on.

When to use (Identify the problem)

When a team is analysing data relating to a problem. To decide which the most important factors to be tackled are first, which will have the most impact on the problem?

How to use:

There are six steps involved

1. list the activities or causes in a table and count the number of times each occurs
2. place these into descending order in the table
3. calculate the total for the whole list
4. calculate the percentage of the total that each cause represents
5. draw the Pareto diagram with the vertical scale showing the percentage and the horizontal scale showing the activity or cause
6. interpret the results

Example:

A manager has taken over a failing service centre He commissions research to find out why customers think that service is poor.

He gets the following comments back from the customers:

1. Phones are only answered after many rings.
2. Staff seem distracted and under pressure.
3. Engineers do not appear to be well organised. They need second visits to bring extra parts. This means that customers have to take more holidays to be there a second time.
4. They do not know what time they will arrive. This means that customers may have to be in all day for an engineer to visit.
5. Staff members do not always seem to know what they are doing.
6. Sometimes when staff members arrive, the customer finds that the problem could have been solved over the phone.

The manager groups these problems together. He then scores each group by the number of complaints, and orders the list:

- *Lack of staff training:* items 5 and 6: 51 complaints
- *Too few staff*: items 1, 2 and 4: 21 complaints
- *Poor organisation and preparation:* item 3: 2 complaints

By doing the Pareto analysis above, the manager can better see that the vast majority of problems (69%) can be solved by improving staff skills.

Once this is done, it may be worth looking at increasing the number of staff members. Alternatively, as staff members become more able to solve problems over the phone, maybe the need for new staff members may decline.

It looks as if comments on poor organisation and preparation may be rare, and could be caused by problems beyond the manager's control.

By carrying out a Pareto Analysis, the manager is able to focus on training as an issue, rather than spreading effort over training, taking on new staff members, and possibly installing a new computer system.

Key points:

Pareto Analysis is a simple technique that helps you to identify the most important problem to solve.

To use it:

- List the problems you face, or the options you have available
- Group options where they are facets of the same larger problem
- Apply an appropriate score to each group
- Work on the group with the highest score

Pareto analysis not only shows you the most important problem to solve, it also gives you a score showing how severe the problem is.

The Is / Is Not Matrix

Purpose:

The is / is not matrix is a structured form of stratification that allows you to identify patterns in observed characteristics or behaviours

When to use:

In teams, when trying to identify a problem precisely by organising your knowledge and ideas about the problem,. The is / is not matrix asks a series of questions that aim to pinpoint the problem, so guiding data collection

How to use:

The first step is to identify the problem, situation or idea to be analysed
Having identified the situation, a series of questions are asked as follows:

	Is Where, when, to what extent or to whom does it occur	**Is Not** Where, when etc does it not occur when it could	**Therefore** What night explain the pattern
Where The location where it is noticed			
When The day, hour, month or event The relation to other events			
What kind or how much The type or category, the degree, size			
Who Groups or individuals present or near to the event			

Cause and Effect Analysis:

Purpose:

To examine effect or problems to find out the possible causes and to point out possible areas where data can be collected

When to use:

When a team is trying to find potential solutions to a problem and is looking for the root cause

Benefits:

Often when a problem or effect is being analysed it can be tempting to look for temporary solutions or quick fixes that do not solve the problem at all but simply get round it. Cause and effect analysis shows the problem to be fully understood and all options considered. It also points to possible areas for data collection

The cause & effect diagram is the brainchild of Kaoru Ishikawa, who pioneered quality management processes in the Kawasaki shipyards, and in the process became one of the founding fathers of modern management. The cause and effect diagram is used to explore all the potential or real causes (or inputs) that result in a single effect (or output). Causes are arranged according to their level of importance or detail, resulting in a depiction of relationships and hierarchy of events. This can help you search for root causes, identify areas where there may be problems, and compare the relative importance of different causes.

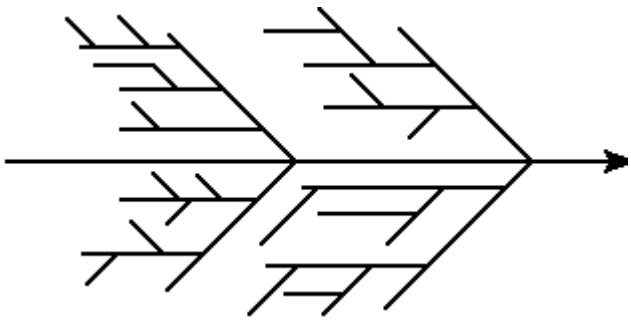
Causes in a cause & effect diagram are frequently arranged into four major categories. While these categories can be anything, you will often see:

- manpower, methods, materials, and machinery (recommended for manufacturing)
- equipment, policies, procedures, and people (recommended for administration and service).

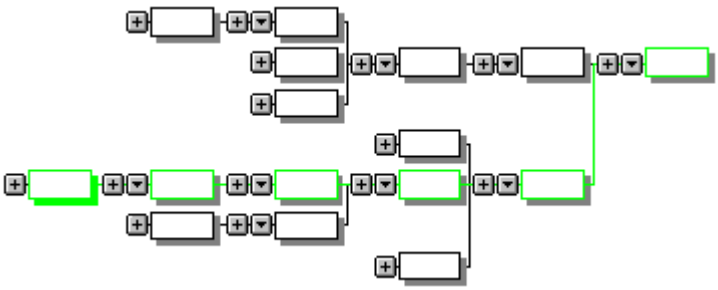
These guidelines can be helpful but should not be used if they limit the diagram or are inappropriate. The categories you use should suit your needs.

The C&E diagram is also known as the fishbone diagram because it was drawn to resemble the skeleton of a fish, with the main causal

categories drawn as "bones" attached to the spine of the fish, as shown below.



Cause & effect diagrams can also be drawn as tree diagrams, resembling a tree turned on its side. From a single outcome or trunk, branches extend that represent major categories of inputs or causes that create that single outcome. These large branches then lead to smaller and smaller branches of causes all the way down to twigs at the ends. The tree structure has an advantage over the fishbone-style diagram. As a fishbone diagram becomes more and more complex, it becomes difficult to find and compare items that are the same distance from the effect because they are dispersed over the diagram. With the tree structure, all items on the same causal level are aligned vertically.



To successfully build a cause and effect diagram:

1. Be sure everyone agrees on the effect or problem statement before beginning.
2. Be succinct.
3. For each node, think what could be its causes. Add them to the tree.
4. Pursue each line of causality back to its root cause.
5. Consider grafting relatively empty branches onto others.
6. Consider splitting up overcrowded branches.
7. Consider which root causes are most likely to merit further investigation.

Brain Storming:

Brainstorming can be done either individually or in a group. In group brainstorming, the participants are encouraged, and often expected, to share their ideas with one another as soon as they are generated.

The key to brainstorming is to not interrupt the thought process. As ideas come to mind, they are captured and stimulate the development of better ideas. Thus a group brainstorm session is best conducted in a moderate-sized room, and participants sit so that they can all look at each-other. A flip chart, blackboard, or overhead projector is placed in a prominent location. The room is free of telephones, clocks, or any other distractions.

In order to enhance creativity a brainstorm session has four basic rules:

Focus on quantity

Aiming to facilitate problem solving through the maxim *quantity breeds quality*. The greater the number of ideas generated, the greater the chance of producing a radical and effective solution. An individual may revisit a brainstorm, done alone, and approach it with a slightly new perspective. This process can be repeated without limit. The result is collaboration with your past, present and future selves.

No criticism

It is often emphasized that in group brainstorming, criticism should be put 'on hold'. Instead of immediately stating what might be wrong with an idea, the participants focus on extending or adding to it, reserving criticism for a later 'critical stage' of the process. By suspending judgment, you create a supportive atmosphere where participants feel free to generate unusual ideas.

Unusual ideas are welcome

To get a good and long list of ideas, unusual ideas are welcomed. They may open new ways of thinking and provide better solutions than regular ideas. They can be generated by looking from another perspective or setting aside assumptions. If an idea is too "wild" to be feasible, it can be tamed down to a more appropriate idea more easily than think up an idea.

Combine and improve ideas

Good ideas can be combined to form a very good idea, as suggested by the slogan "1+1=3". Also, existing ideas should be improved. This approach leads to better and more complete ideas than just generation of new ideas.

The main reasons why brainstorming does not yield the expected results are faulty operation and exaggerated expectations. When the basic rules and best practices are not followed, or when the group expects miracles, the session will not give the optimal result.

A short brainstorm session

Brainstorming is very well suited for ad-hoc problem solving. A short brainstorm session can be applied in many occasions where a quick solution is needed. For example: students working on a project, a support team looking for a quick solution for their customer or a project team who have to deal with the illness of one of its members.

The session contains, as depicted in Figure 1, three phases:

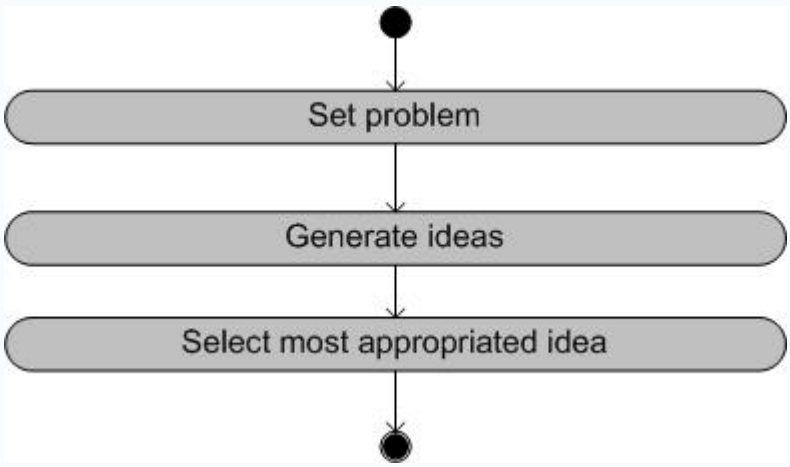


Figure 1: Activities of a short brainstorm session

Set the problem

Determine and specify the problem which needs a solution. Every participant must to know the problem.

Generate ideas

Generate as many ideas as possible. Keep in mind the four basic brainstorm rules and record the good ideas. Continue for five to fifteen minutes.

Select best idea

Select the most appropriated idea from the suggested ideas.

Session conduct

Someone leads the brainstorm session and ensures that the basic brainstorm rules are followed. The activities of a typical session are:

1. A warm-up session, to expose novice participants to the criticism-free environment. A simple problem is brainstormed, for example *"What should be the next corporate Christmas present?"* or *"What can be improved in Microsoft Windows?"*

1. The chairman presents the problem and gives a further explanation if needed.

1. The chairman asks the brainstorm panel for their ideas.

1. If no ideas are coming out, the chairman suggests a lead to encourage creativity.

1. Every participant presents his or her idea, and the idea collector writes down the idea.

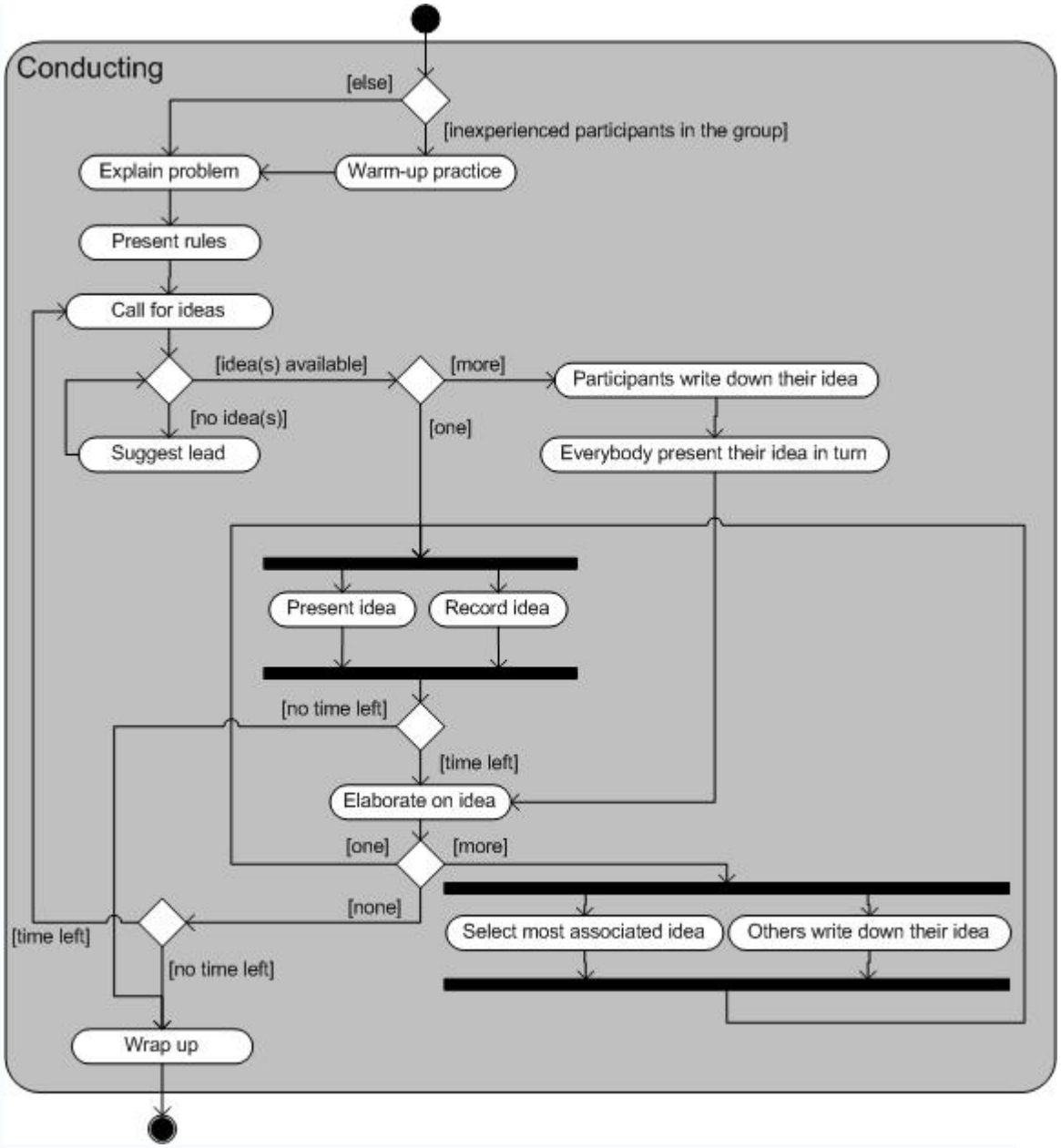
1. If more than one participant has ideas, the chairman lets the most associated idea be presented first. This selection can be done by looking at the body language of the participants, or just by asking for the most associated idea.

1. The participants try to elaborate on the idea, to improve the quality.

1. When time is up, the chairman organises the ideas based on the topic goal and encourages discussion. Additional ideas may be generated.

1. Ideas are categorised.

1. The whole list is reviewed to ensure that everyone understands the ideas. Duplicate ideas and obviously infeasible solutions are removed.



Don't worry about using the term:

A survey in 2005 by the UK charity National Society for Epilepsy found that 93 per cent of people with the condition do not find the word *brainstorm* offensive.

Another UK epilepsy charity, Epilepsy Action, discussed this in their Epilepsy Facts, Figures and Terminology web page. An informal survey by Epilepsy Action in their journal Epilepsy Today (Issue 73, October 2005) confirmed the NSE findings.

My approach to solving people problems:

Ten problems are presented below, each having seven possible solutions. For each problem select the one best solution as you see it

Problem 1

Tom, a member of your staff, is an average performer; he is neither poor nor outstanding – just adequate. A recent problem with Tom is that he is typically late to your Wednesday 11.00am staff meetings. Tom is not that big a contributor to these meetings, but his lateness doesn't seem appropriate.

A. Lay it on the line. Simply remind Tom when he arrives late that these meetings start at 11.00am promptly.
B. Treat it as a team problem. Take it up with the total group when other team problems are being discussed. Others may be as annoyed as you are.
C. Not a big deal. He's probably seeking attention, so why worry about it? In time he'll probably 'come around'.
D. Change the meeting time to 8.30am when the workday starts. Since the organisation is strict about the morning arrival tine, this should force Tom's attendance to the meeting.
E. While talking to Tom on the other business, close the conversation with this statement, "Oh, by the way, Tom, I know you're busy and get wrapped up in things, but could you please try to make our next staff meeting on time? Thanks."
F. Whenever Tom does arrive on time or close to 11:00am, compliment him (after the meeting) for his efforts to attend promptly.
G. Point out to Tom how his lateness hurts group creativity "Tom, we need your good thinking on our problem solving. If you are late, we are deprived of your helpful input".

Problem 2

You have seven section supervisors who report to you. Each is in charge of a group of young women who operate sewing machines. One supervisor, Williams, Has been having considerable with his people – you are not only getting complaints about his lack of tact, but you find that absenteeism, waste, rejects, etc., are all high in his section. Some of these productivity problems exist in other sections, too, but to a relatively minor degree. All sections do the same work and have the same layout, except Williams' area is much more crowded so that he doesn't have a separate office as the other supervisors do.

A. Try to counsel your supervisor – ask him to show more consideration to the young women.
B. Invent a reason for a reassignment and move Williams to a staff job where he won't have as much contact with people.
C. Talk to him about his problem and compliment him whenever you see or learn of him handling a person in the proper way.
D. Tell Williams what you expect in the way of standards. Either he gets his 'indicators' (absenteeism, waste, etc.) up or you will have to take some direct action.
E. Discuss these productivity and human relations problems with all your section chiefs to see if some practical solutions can be arrived at.
F. You decide not to move too precipitously. After all, only one of seven supervisors is a problem, and your outfit is doing ok overall.
G. You decide to reassign some of William's employees to the other section, take some machines out, and build a small office for Williams on the shop floor.

Problem 3

You are in charge of a factory that assembles electrical appliances for the kitchen. In the last three months there has been a noticeable drop in the quality and productivity.

A. Since this is the first bad quarter in the last seven, you decide to take a 'wait and see' approach to this.
B. You decide to visit more often with people on the floor and ask them about things they like to be asked about – the kids, the garden, their bowling scores. The friendly touch never hurt anyone.
C. You decide to work on some changes in the system – better lighting new soldering guns, and giving each worker full responsibility for assembling a given unit of equipment.
D. You decide to set up several quality circles – these are special units of employees to identify productivity and quality problems and to make recommendations to management about them
E. You meeting with your foreman to find out what people-type problems they might be having and what can be done about them. You are afraid that indifferent or overly demanding supervision might not be getting the employee cooperation you need.
F. You tell your foreman very clearly that production and quality are his responsibility and you expect results – and 'no' if's or but's about it.
G. You give praise very clearly and fully to your supervisors and to employees whenever a job is well done, a quota is met, etc.

Problem 4

You are the supervisor of a large warehouse that has a pipe protruding up from the floor. It's a pretty obvious pipe, although occasionally someone does trip over it. They do this absent-mindedly or when they are in a hurry.

A. You give people praise when you see them walk carefully over the pipe.
B. You regularly issue reminders to all concerned about the pipe. The reminders are especially strong after a tripping incident, and you always have several warning signs on the walls nearby.
C. Occasionally someone does complain about the pipe, but you always point out that it is a really big pipe, it is painted bright yellow, and mishaps are minor, few, and far between – really not a big deal.
D. You decide to have the building engineer build a platform, ramp style, over the pipe.
E. You call you foremen together to discuss what might be done to be sure no serious accidents occur because of the big pipe.
F. You embark on an employee safety program including frequent changes of posters, reminder notices in pay envelopes, movies, etc. The programme emphasises safety in general and the pipe problem is mentioned quite often.
G. You decide to hold an employee safety slogan contest with a really big ceremony and cash prize for the 'best' slogan as decided by the Safety Committee.

Problem 5

Your people leave lights on in the storage room, tool room, etc., at close of business, despite repeated requests to help save energy.

A. You call everyone together and ask for ideas on saving energy.
B. You give your people strong statements on saving energy. This is done via a 'pep talk' at a special group meeting, a memo, and a notice on the bulletin board.
C. You turn the lights out yourself as necessary; no point in hassling people about everything all the time.
D. You give employees feedback regularly, in chart form, on energy use, costs, etc. You also compliment them on any improvement in costs.
E. You install automatic controls that shut off the lights in the rooms in question, five or ten minutes after finishing work.
F. You follow this procedure that you heard worked in another plant: You have your assistant turn out the unwanted lights and then send out 'Thank You' memos from time to time, praising your people for their cooperation.
G. You politely request cooperation whenever you come across a 'guilty' party.

Problem 6

You are the superintendent of the warehouse. Employees from time to time lift improperly and end up with various back and groin injuries. You can't understand why these injuries occur, since all employees were trained in the proper lifting procedure six to eight months ago. You have six foremen who report to you.

A. Train you foremen in positive reinforcement procedures – that is, have them praise a worker any time he, she lifts properly. But they are not to criticise poor lifting technique at all.
B. Get an increase in budget for some new equipment to help out in lifting heavy items.
C. Have Personnel put a reminder notice about lifting in everyone's pay envelope every to often.
D. Have your foreman tell their employees in no uncertain terms to lift properly whenever they see a failure to do it right. You also follow this course of action.
E. Call all your foremen together to discuss the problem and to come up with practical ways of dealing with it.
F. Instruct your foremen to request the cooperation of their employees in lifting properly and to remind workers that they could inure themselves.
G. Show a film on lifting that has some really 'gruesome' scenes in it, showing the result of failure to follow proper lifting procedures.

Problem 7

One of your subordinate supervisors has expressed concern about lax attention to proper dress standards. This is a large customer service office with regular personal contact by employees with the public.

A. You decide to call everyone concerned to a meeting to get full employee input concerning dress – What are the current standards? Do they best meet the needs of employees and customers? Can we draft a code that everyone will be willing to live with?
B. You believe all standards should be observed; on the other hand there seem to be only a few of the younger employees who take advantage of the situation now and then. You will probably talk to them when you can get around to it.
C. You ask your assistant to write a memo to all employees on the problem. You ask him to cite a couple of complaints from the public that he presumable received over the phone. The complaints are not real, but they certainly could have occurred and, in any case, will make the offices concern clear.
D. You ask your supervisors to compliment employees whenever they dress properly.
E. You call all your supervisors together and make it very clear what the dress standards are and what their responsibility is in this regard. You advise them that you expect to make sport inspections on this matter starting Monday.
F. You call a low-key meeting of all employees, give them a gentle reminder of dress standards and the vital reasons for them, and request their cooperation.
G. You decide to inaugurate a programme of company-supplied outfits (four in all), all in good taste and interchangeable so that considerable variety in dress is possible each day and for each person.

Problem 8

Your boss expects you to deal with a perennial employee relations problem – too much lateness.

A. You call everyone together and tell them what the problem is, what the rules are, and what disciplinary action you intend to take for offenders.
B. You call everyone together, point out quietly that your boss has called this problem to your attention, and say that you would like everyone to please cooperate so that no one will have to be put on the spot about this.
C. You issue the usual annual memo about tardiness, absenteeism, use of company telephone for private business and the like.
D. You decide to 'work' on the late-comers by complementing them when they are early, on time, or even a minute or two late. You tell them you appreciate their efforts to get here on time. To those who are late five or ten minutes you express your appreciation for their efforts to get here because 'all hands are really needed aboard'.
E. You decide to recommend a system of 'flexi-time' to your boss.
F. You call everyone together to talk about the problem. Your aim is to see if the group can develop standards concerning arrival time that everyone – employees and management – can live with.
G. You decide to rearrange the location of your desk to near the windows so that you will be in a position to see who is coming into the parking lot, and when, of course.

Problem 9

You are head of an office that has the constant need to protect various documents your employees work with. However, of late there are indications that a worrisome number of people are lax about security matters.

A. You feel breaches of security are too important a matter to be ignored, so call call everyone together and give them a warning – lax security will be a basis for dismissal, with no exceptions and no further warnings.
B. You ask the guard to double check all security safes and file cabinets every night.
C. You adopt a procedure of complimenting who put classified documents into a safe during lunch and at night as opposed to leaving them on their desks.
D. You decide to call all employees together to discuss current security procedures as to their adequacy and to develop such plans for tighter security as may be indicated.
E. You beef up security by increasing lights outside and inside the building, tightening up procedures on the entry of non-employees into the building, improving the system for the registration of classified documents, etc.
F. You call a meeting of all employees, compliment them generously on their adherence to all standards and procedures, thank them for their past cooperation on everything, and in the middle of the meeting give everyone a gentle nudge about the importance of security.
G. You call an employee meeting expressly for the purpose of reminding people about security procedures. There is no complaining, no finger-pointing, and no threats, just an appeal to everyone's mature and adult side of themselves. A short, friendly and frank question and answer period is held, too.

Problem 10

You are head of the Operations Branch. You and various members of your staff are having difficulty getting the cooperation you require from the people in Finance. The Finance Branch is located in another building across town.

A. You take the head of the Finance Branch out to lunch with some frequency to really “butter her up”.
B. You get the help of the Training Department to hold a ‘confrontation’ session to help clear the air about difficulties – past and present.
C. Since your boss, a V.P., also supervises Finance, you go to him to get help in getting Finance in line.
D. You call up the head of Finance whenever they do something cooperatively and compliment her staff on it.
E. You let the matter ride, since these things generally right themselves in time.
F. You work out a move, which is quite possible, to their building because a lot of misunderstandings and mix ups are a result of direct contact and communication.
G. You start to work on actively improving interpersonal relations with the Finance people and request your staff to do the same.

Self Scoring Sheet:
For each of the ten items circle the letter that represents your choice as to the best course of action. Then add up the number of responses in each column

Problem	T	BM	SS	HR	DD	M	TLF
1	B	F	D	E	A	G	C
2	E	C	G	A	D	B	F
3	D	G	C	E	F	B	A
4	E	A	D	F	B	G	C
5	A	D	E	G	B	F	C
6	E	A	B	F	D	G	C
7	A	D	G	F	E	C	B
8	F	D	E	B	A	G	C
9	D	C	E	G	A	F	B
10	B	D	F	G	C	A	E
Total							

T	**Your tendency to operate as team leader – you involve your staff in efforts at group problem solving and group decision making when problems seem to involve the whole team**
BM	**Behaviour modification – you provide sincere praise for proper performance, you generally do not comment on below standard performance. Wherever possible you use a data collection approach to give people objective feedback on performance. Talking with people about the problem may precede giving praise**
SS	**Situation / structural context – you try to change the situation or system as opposed to attempting to influence peoples behaviour directly**
HR	**Human Relations approach – you try to elicit cooperation by talking things over, being firm and fair, creating an adult atmosphere of mutual respect. Your concern for people may exceed your concern for production at times**
DD	**Direct / directive – no nonsense, no timidity, and no hesitation is your philosophy and way of facing problems. Firmness gets nothing but respect and results**
M	**Manipulation – less than direct and at times, less than honest. By out manoeuvring people you get the result you want and avoid a lot of confrontation , complaints etc**
TLF	**Tolerant – laissez Faire – don't want to confront people, you believe in letting sleeping dogs lie, since situations often work themselves out**