



**CAREER COMPASS**

Steer Your Career. Accelerate Our Mission.

**Intern Forum #3:  
Problem-Solving**

**Participant Workbook**

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# Introduction

## Objectives

- Define Problem-Solving and explain why it's important
- Understand how to leverage Problem-Solving processes and strategies to determine the best possible solutions.

## Agenda

- What is Problem-Solving?
- Why is it important?
- How to solve problems
  - Processes
  - Strategies
- Problem-Solving practical exercise (PE)



## Chat Question

***What is Problem-Solving?***

***Why is Problem-Solving important (without the ability to problem solve, what does NAVFAC lose?)?***

## Problem-Solving and its Importance

According to the Oxford dictionary, Problem-Solving is the process of finding solutions to difficult or complex issues.

**Why is Problem-Solving important?**

- Ensures progress
- Achieves desired outcomes
- Prompts continuous improvement, communication, and learning



# 5 Steps of the Problem-Solving Process

1. Investigate and Identify the problem
2. Organize and Map the problem
3. Analyze the problem
4. Select solution
5. Check solution



*Use the space provided here to capture your thoughts.*

## 1. Investigate and Identify the problem

The first step of any Problem-Solving process is to investigate and identify the problem.



- Look to solve the root cause, not address symptoms of the problem
- Effective Problem-Solving strategies always begin by allowing a group to articulate what they believe the problem to be and then come to some consensus over which problem they approach first.
- Problem-Solving activities used at this stage often have a focus on creating frank, open discussion so that potential problems can be brought to the surface.:

### Chat Question

***Why do you think identifying the root cause is helpful to the Problem-Solving process?***

## 2. Organize and Map the Problem

In order to organize and map the problem, you have to identify the discrepancy between desired state or outcomes and the current state or what is occurring.

- To assist you with this, employ the help of your teammates to brainstorm these discrepancies.
- You may also want to utilize SWOT Analysis. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunity, and Threat.



SWOT analysis is a framework used to evaluate competitive position and develop strategic planning for a future position. Within problem solving you can use SWOT analysis to assess internal and external factors, as well as current and future potential.

During the Organize and Map the Problem step, there should be a free flow of ideas, with creative thinking, and an open space where all ideas are considered. The best solutions can come from unlikely places, so keep an open mind.

Be sure to collect all the input and document the issues so you can analyze them in the next step. Organizing and mapping the problem will also help when prioritizing your efforts.

***Use the space provided here to capture your thoughts.***

### 3. Analyze the Problem

- During this step, you should look deeper into the problem.
- Remember, Problem-Solving should address the root cause so you can develop long term solutions.
- Whatever your approach, analyzing a problem is crucial in being able to select an appropriate solution.



### 4. Select a Solution

Once your group has reached consensus on the problem, you need to select a solution.

When selecting and implementing a solution you will want to allocate ownership of the project, basically who will do what and when. Failure to properly allocate roles and plan out how a solution will actually be implemented will impact the success of the solution.

- Have clear accountabilities, actions, timeframes, and follow-ups.
- Make these decisions and set clear next steps so everyone is aligned and you can move forward effectively as a group.
- Ensure you plan for the roll-out of a solution.



Without adequate planning or oversight, it may be impossible to measure success. Remember, Problem-Solving should address the root cause so you can develop long term solutions.

## 5. Check the Solution

You and your team developed a great solution to a problem and have a gut feeling its been solved. Work done, right? Not exactly.

All Problem-Solving strategies benefit from evaluation, consideration, and feedback.

You might find that the solution does not work for everyone, might create new problems, or is potentially so successful that you will want to roll it out to larger teams or as part of other initiatives.

Remember, the Problem-Solving process is often iterative and it can be common to not solve complex issues on the first try. It's worth underlining how important record keeping is throughout the Problem-Solving process.

If a solution didn't work or needs to be adjusted, the notes and records from the organize and map step will come in handy.



### Chat Question

***Why is getting feedback critical to the Problem-Solving process?***

### Chat Question

***Which step of the Problem-Solving process is the most challenging for you, and why?***

# Problem-Solving Strategies

Problem-Solving strategies are methods of approaching and facilitating the process of Problem-Solving with a set of actions, approaches, and processes.



Multiple strategies exist, but we will only focus on four:

1. Breaking problems into smaller issues
2. Problem-Solving Workshop
3. Seeking External Advice or Perspective
4. Reframing for Problem-Solving

## 1. Break Problems Down into Smaller Issues

The first strategy we are going to discuss is breaking problems down into smaller issues. Organizational challenges and problems are often complicated and large scale in nature. Sometimes, trying to resolve such an issue in one swoop is simply unachievable or overwhelming.



- Try breaking down such problems into smaller issues that you can work on step by step.
- You may not be able to solve the problem off the bat, but you can work with your team to identify smaller efforts with potential high impact results that should be worked first.
- This Problem-Solving strategy can help a team generate momentum, prioritize and get some easy wins.
- It's also a great strategy to employ with teams who are just beginning to learn how to approach the Problem-Solving process.

## 2. Problem-Solving Workshop

Often, the first step to solving problems or organizational challenges is bringing a group together effectively.



Most teams have the tools, knowledge, and expertise necessary to solve their challenges – they just need some guidance in how to leverage those skills and a structure and format that allows people to focus their energies.

Facilitated workshops or group meetings are one of the most effective ways of solving problems of any scale. By designing and planning your workshop carefully, you can tailor the approach and scope to best fit the needs of your team and organization.



This strategy is helpful for creating an open dialogue or conversation, tackling problems of any size, and building in-house workshop ability.

Workshops are an effective strategy for solving problems because they:

- Allow for group brainstorming, diversity of thought, and value for all ideas.
- Provides a structure or format to focus thoughts towards a solution.

Although this may not be feasible if there are time constraints or the need for an urgent solution.

***Use the space provided here to capture your thoughts.***

### 3. Seeking External Advice or Perspective

- Looking to peers, experts (like a coach or mentor), and external facilitators can be a great way of approaching the Problem-Solving process.
- Reach out to stakeholders and get their perspective, advice, and guidance.
- Your team may not have the necessary expertise, insights of experience to tackle some issues, or you might simply benefit from a fresh perspective.
- Some problems may require bringing together an entire team, coaching managers, or team members individually to assist you.



Remember that not all problems are best resolved in the same manner.

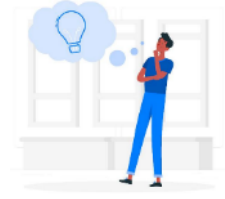
#### Chat Question

***How many of you have a Coach or a Mentor?***

## 4. Reframing for Problem-Solving

Reframing basically involves looking at a problem and finding a new way to see it, or define it, to help discover new possible solutions for it.

It has been applied in every possible Problem-Solving scenario, from individual coaching sessions to working with organizations and teams in solving business problems.



What do I see as the problem?



How else can I see this issue?



How does this look from another perspective?



What do I need to solve to solve this problem?

Reframing is about challenging ourselves to look at a problem from different perspectives and thus find new ways of solving the problem.

***Use the space provided here to capture your thoughts.***

## Problem-Solving Skills

- Active Listening
- Analytical Skills
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Creativity
- Critical Thinking
- Data Analysis
- Decision Making
- Dependability
- Emotional Intelligence
- Flexibility
- Honesty
- Initiative
- Impartiality
- Planning
- Prioritization
- Record keeping
- Research Skills
- Team-Building
- Time Management

### Chat Question

*What skills do you think are most useful in Problem-Solving?*

## Problem-Solving Practical Exercise (PE)

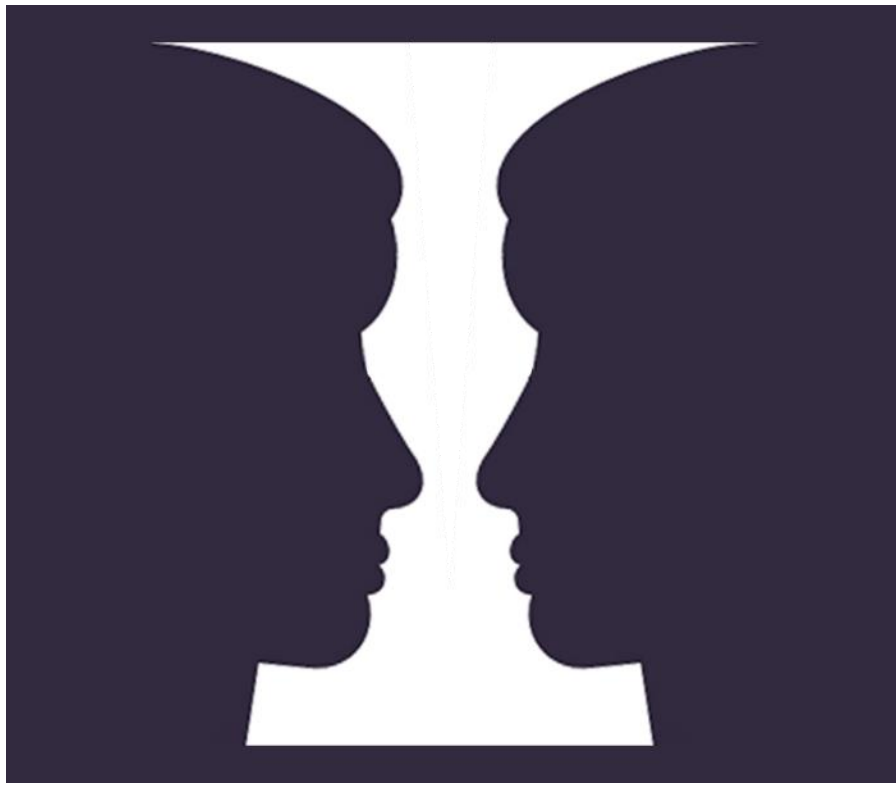
### Team deliverables:

- Identify the problem
- Analyze the problem
- Generate possible solutions

### PE instructions:

- Problem introduced in the Main room
- Teams moved to Breakout rooms
- Teams are given 15 minutes to produce the deliverables
- Back in the Main room, Teams will have 5 minutes to present their deliverables
- General comments/responses on that Team's deliverables

## Different Perspectives



***Did you initially see two faces in silhouette looking at one another or do you see a vase in the center on a dark background?***

***Did you change your perspective to see both the two faces and the vase?***

There is no wrong or right in this exercise. Both images exist in the same picture, just like more than one perspective of a problem can be right, though one may provide a starting point that leads to a faster solution.

Reframing a problem can yield a new perspective on what needs to be solved or what the answer could be.

## The Slow Elevator



You are the owner of an office building that has no vacancies. However, you have tenants that are complaining the elevators are too old and take too long for people to get into and out of their offices. Several of your tenants are threatening to break their leases over the long waits for elevators.

### Reframing Process:

Problem (Face value)	Solution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elevators are old and slow                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Frustrated tenants</li> <li>○ Threats to break leases</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install new elevators</li> <li>• Upgrade the motors</li> <li>• Change the algorithms that run the system to speed up the elevators</li> </ul>

Problem (Reframed)	Solution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The wait is too long and boring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install TVs</li> <li>• Play music</li> <li>• Put out newspapers or magazines</li> <li>• Install mirrors</li> </ul>

*Use the space provided here to capture your thoughts.*

## Final Reflection

- What are a few things from today's session that you want to utilize when solving problems?
- What actions can you take now to improve your Problem-Solving?

*Use the space provided to capture your response.*

## Key Takeaways

*What are some of the key takeaways from today's course?*

## Save the Date – Next Intern Forum

- Session #4 – Communicating for Results
- Thursday July 28<sup>th</sup>
- 1pm – 3pm EDT



## Contact Information

**BD17 Contact Information:** Write to us! We are always seeking to improve our learning and development products and encourage your feedback. Please email us with your suggestions and we will incorporate them into future work. Additionally, we are available to answer any questions about the content you may have and provide additional resources to support your learning endeavors.

- Naval Acquisition Development Program (NADP) Interns:  
[NAVFAC\\_NADP.fct@navy.mil](mailto:NAVFAC_NADP.fct@navy.mil)
- Professional Development Center (PDC) Interns:  
[NAVFAC\\_PDC.fct@navy.mil](mailto:NAVFAC_PDC.fct@navy.mil)
- For learning and development questions, contact your local BD17 representative or contact HQ's BD17 at  
[NAVFACHQTotalForceDevelopment@us.navy.mil](mailto:NAVFACHQTotalForceDevelopment@us.navy.mil)

### Command BD17 Contact List:

COMMAND	NAME	EMAIL
EURAFCENT	Peter Arnold	peter.l.arnold2.civ@us.navy.mil
Engineering and Expeditionary Warfare Center (EXWC)	Jill Stein/Jill Haralson	jill.a.stein2.civ@us.navy.mil / jill.v.haralson.civ@us.navy.mil
Far East	Allan Bourbina	allan.m.bourbina.civ@us.navy.mil
Hawaii	Edward Kaimihana	edward.d.kaimihana.civ@us.navy.mil
Headquarters	Kelly Shriner	kelly.r.schriner2.civ@us.navy.mil
Atlantic	Lori Bowen	lori.a.bowen8.civ@us.navy.mil
Marianas	Therese Hocog	salomae.t.hocog.civ@us.navy.mil
Mid-Atlantic	Sharon Reyes / Kent Conley	sharon.l.reyes.civ@us.navy.mil / kent.d.conley.civ@us.navy.mil
Navy Crane Center	Karen Hunt	karen.r.hunt.civ@us.navy.mil
Northwest	Sandy Jones	sandra.a.jones6.civ@us.navy.mil
Pacific	Shirley Goo	shirley.s.goo.civ@us.navy.mil
Southeast	Karey Maschio	karey.l.maschio.civ@us.navy.mil
Southwest	Diane Johnson	diane.i.johnson.civ@us.navy.mil
Washington	Raymond Law	raymond.e.law2.civ@us.navy.mil

## Development Resources

**Career Compass Resource Center:** An online source of information that provides NAVFAC civilian employees access to professional growth and development opportunities.

- <https://www.navfac.navy.mil/ccrc>

To access more content specific to the **Problem Solving** competency:

- <https://www.navfac.navy.mil/ProblemSolving>

**Career Compass Catalog:** an online tool which provides you with information to help you take ownership of your professional development. It identifies options to assist in planning and creating a successful career path within NAVFAC.

- <https://www.navfac.navy.mil/ccr>