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COMPETENCY CORNER

This month, we look at skills related to **Problem Solving**, such as anticipating, identifying, and defining problems; seeking root causes; and developing and implementing practical and timely solutions.

Review these descriptions to determine your proficiency level:

PROBLEM SOLVING:

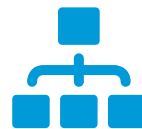
- 1. Awareness:** You ask questions and look for information that helps to identify the symptoms and causes of everyday problems. You suggest remedies that meet the needs of the situation; and either resolve problems or make supervisors aware of potential issues.
- 2. Basic:** You investigate issues with uncertain causes. You ask for information from others to identify the symptoms and causes of problems; and suggest alternative approaches that meet the needs of the organization, the situation, and those involved.
- 3. Intermediate:** You apply problem-solving techniques to diagnose and solve work-related and interpersonal problems. You determine the potential causes of problems and develop ways to validate your conclusions. You regularly consider the alternatives, risks, and benefits for a range of potential solutions.
- 4. Advanced:** You diagnose problems using tools and techniques from multiple angles. You probe underlying issues to generate multiple solutions. You proactively anticipate and prevent problems and identify potential consequences and risk levels.
- 5. Expert:** You anticipate problem areas and associated risk levels. You regularly set standards to define critical issues and solutions to complex problems.

READY TO ADVANCE YOUR PROFICIENCY?

Formal and experiential opportunities include:

Awareness/Basic:

- Break down a problem into smaller parts and solve each of the smaller parts. Once this is done, connect the smaller parts to come up with the full solution.
- Brainstorm solutions with others in a group with a specific problem or opportunity identified.



Intermediate:

- As you consider various solutions to a problem, develop a list of pros and cons for each and how you would mitigate the cons before you make your final decision.
- Review various problem-solving methodologies, become familiar with a few that resonate and then practice using them. For examples and ideas, go to: <https://managementhelp.org/personal/productivity/problem-solving.htm>



Advanced/Expert:

- Read well-reviewed books about non-linear, iterative processes for challenging assumptions, redefining problems, and developing innovative solutions. For example, David Dunne's "Design Thinking at Work."
- Put a specialized team together to analyze and synthesize a difficult problem with recommended solutions and rationale for determination.



CAREER COMPASS SPOTLIGHT

Solve Problems with Root Cause Analysis

Get grounded in key problem-solving skills, including how to identify symptoms of a problem and define viable solutions.

Two Options Available:

- 10:00-11:00 EST on Jan 26th
- 15:00-16:00 EST on Jan 28th
- Ideal for Entry Level employees

CAREER SEGMENTS

The Workforce Development Continuum divides employees into three career segments:

ENTRY LEVEL	JOURNEY LEVEL	EXPERT LEVEL
GS1 – GS10/ equivalent; WT; WG1 – WG7	GS11 – GS12/ equivalent; WG8 – WG10; WD; WL	GS13 – GS15/ equivalent; WG11 – WG16; WS



WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY...

5 Steps to Root Cause Analysis

STEP 1: Investigate and Identify Problem

- Spend the most time on this step, asking big questions: What is going on? And why? Break the problem down into smaller, manageable problems and investigate each one further.

STEP 2: Organize and Map Problem

- Organize the information you collected during Step 1, then map out cause and effect or a timeline of events leading up to the problem.

STEP 3: Analyze

- Analyze all the information from Step 2. Look for patterns, interruptions, location, timing, causal factors, non-causal factors and finally, root causes.

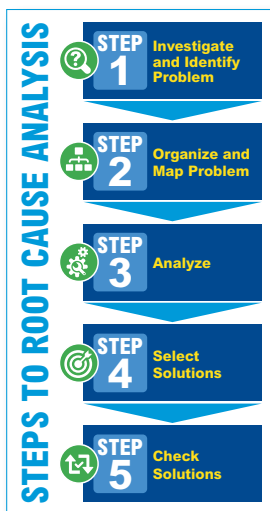
STEP 4: Select Solutions

- There are always many ways to solve problems. In this step, use your findings to guide an appropriate corrective action and determine how you'll measure success.

STEP 5: Check Solutions

- Use your previously established metrics to assess if the solution or correction action made a difference and solved the problem! If it didn't, try another solution.

[Download the infographic to use as a handy reference.](#)



VIDEO SPOTLIGHT

End the “Blame Cycle”

Occasionally, those who struggle to collaborate to solve problems will blame others for challenges and failure. This video describes the predictable negative effects that blame has on relationships, and how it can undermine interpersonal, team, and organizational effectiveness. It also



presents techniques to avoid blame and to foster stronger interpersonal and organizational relationships. (17 minutes)



https://totalforcetraining.navfac.navy.mil/courses.asp?type=community_sponsored

DID YOU KNOW?

The Tip of the Iceberg: A Type 2 Problem!

Often, when we identify a problem, we may only see a portion of it – which can be summed up by the phrase “the tip of the iceberg.” These are considered Type 2 Problems, ones that are more complex and difficult to solve. They require sit-down time and dedicated thinking to uncover all that might be going on under the surface. But there are a variety of skills and methodologies, such as Root Cause Analysis, that you can learn to become a better problem solver.



Here's What Employees Are Saying!

Recently, a group of 25 NAVFAC employees completed a 6-week course titled Developing Others to Lead a Strong Tomorrow. Here's what participants had to say.

And, check out the Independent Study version of this course on the CCRC: https://www.navfac.navy.mil/jobs/workforce-development/ccrc/emp_resources/comp_dev_content/developing_others.html

“I would definitely recommend this course because it makes you think outside the box. This course makes you see other people's perspective.” – Jeremy

“My takeaways from this course are:

It's okay to trust and depend on others when working as a team. When delegating, make sure everyone understands their role and their peer's. You must communicate and keep everyone informed. Listening is just as important as communicating.” – Terrey

“I would love for everyone on my team to take the training for awareness and to build a better understanding of each team member, the team as a whole and what and how we could improve in future project interactions.” – Jennifer

