



Kate Keenan

Solve Problems

Workbook



Sorting the pieces to the jigsaw is the route to finding the solution to the problem.

Solve problems



Using this Workbook

Much of managing is taken up with overcoming problems which are preventing you from accomplishing your goals. **Solve Problems'** examines some of the ways problems can be tackled and shows you how to go about making decisions.

Core Objectives:

When you have completed this workbook:

- You will understand what solving problem involves.
- You will know how to identify the right problem and seek the right solution.
- You will have the right attitude to solving problems and find the process liberating.

This workbook should be used in conjunction with '**Solve Problems'** and is designed to help you put the key messages relating to becoming better at solving problems and making decisions.

The seven worksheets mirror the chapters in the book to help you to:

- a. **Understand the need to tackle problems** – identify what it is about solving problems that may be proving a bit difficult.
- b. **Define the real problem** – make sure that you know how to determine what the real problem is.
- c. **Seek a variety of solutions** – generate a series of options, one or more of which will turn out to be the right solution to the problem.
- d. **Make a decision** – decide what you actually need to do to solve the problem.
- e. **Take action** – work out what you need to do next, once you have resolved the problem and made a decision.
- f. **Evaluate your attitude to solving problems** – have faith in your solution and make it work for you.
- g. **Identify the benefits of solving problems** – work out the benefits to both yourself and your business of solving problems, along with evaluating the main learning points from having completed this module.

I hope that you enjoy working through these exercises and that they make a contribution assisting you in solving your problems by making better decisions so as to run your business with confidence.

Kate Keenan
Pocket Manager Manager

Solve problems



a. Understand the need tackle problems

Problems usually involve questions or issues which contain uncertainty, doubt or difficulty. This is what usually makes problems tough to tackle.

Sometimes, identifying the problem can be the most difficult part, while working out solution may be the stumbling block. On the other hand, making a decision might be the impediment, or it could be that putting the solution into practice seems a bit of a risky business.

Think about your feelings about solving problems and ask yourself if some of the following questions apply to you in relation to tackling problems:

COULD I BE AVOIDING PROBLEMS?	What gets in the way?
1. Do I always recognise there is a problem? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What might give me a hint that there could be a problem lurking?</i>	
2. Do I tend to avoid facing up to problems? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Why might I find it difficult to face up to a problem?</i>	
3. Do I tend to live with my problems? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What sort of problems might I be living with?</i>	
4. Do I tend to rush into action without thinking things through? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What can be the penalties for hasty action?</i>	
5. Do I find the prospect of decision making daunting? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>How easy is it to know what is the real problem?</i>• <i>What possible solutions are there?</i>• <i>Which solution would be best?</i>	

Remember: If you can relax, clear your mind and resolve to tackle the problem, everything will seem much less daunting.

Solve problems



b. Define the real problem

Defining the real problem that you are facing is all-important. What may appear to you to be a niggling small issue may be disguising a huge submerged mine, just waiting to blow up.

To solve a problem, you need to make sure that what you think is the problem actually is the problem. To do this, you need to describe its features in detail and examine its causes in depth.

ANALYSIS OF SITUATION	What are my answers?
1. What is happening? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>How is the problem is affecting my current situation?</i>• <i>What are the relevant facts?</i>	
2. How did this happen? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What are the possible root causes of the problem?</i>• <i>What is the background to this problem?</i>	
3. What am I aiming for? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What sort of solution am I aiming for?</i>• <i>What would I forfeit if I fail to solve this problem?</i>	
4. What is the real problem? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>How do I now see my problem after carrying out this analysis?</i>	

By taking a little time to identify exactly what is happening and recognizing a range of possible causes, you are far better able to specify exactly what the real problem is.

The key message is: **By identifying your problem accurately, you stand a much better chance of finding an appropriate solution.**

Solve problems



c. Seek a variety of solutions

There is usually more than one answer to any problem – the obvious solution is not necessarily the best one. By seeking a range of solutions which could solve the problem, you can see more clearly what different options there may be available to you. It also gives you more confidence when you finally choose your solution.

GENERATE YOUR OPTIONS	What are my answers?
1. Gather information <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What do I need to know?</i>• <i>How can I collect this information?</i>	
2. Produce ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What creative solutions can I come up with?</i>• <i>Who might be able to help me generate solutions?</i>• <i>What about brainstorming?</i>	
3. List the findings <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>How can I organise my findings?</i>	
4. Evaluate the options <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What constraints are there?</i>• <i>What are the pros and cons?</i>• <i>What are the odds of the chosen solution being successful?</i>	
5. Take a final look <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Do I need to find a permanent solution?</i>• <i>Do I need to solve the problem immediately?</i>• <i>Do I really need to solve the problem?</i>	

Even when you think the answer is quite obvious from the start, it is always worth taking some time to investigate in some depth the various options that you have generated to see what your choices are.

Solve problems



d. Make a decision

Knowing where you are going in overall terms does not tell you how you are going to get there. Most plans seem daunting because of the size and complexity. But if you can break down your plan into separate stages, things will become much easier to tackle. There are four stages to follow:

KEY STEPS...	How do I go about deciding?
1. Decide what to do <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What is my decision?</i>• <i>Will it be logical or intuitive?</i>	
2. Deliberate and consult <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>How will I deliberate and discuss...</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Sleeping on it?</i>• <i>Consulting?</i>• <i>Testing?</i>	
3. Weigh up the risks <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What are the risks?</i>• <i>What could happen as a result of taking this decision?</i>	
4. Review the decision <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Will this decision solve the immediate problem?</i>	

Once you have made a decision, you have effectively resolved the problem – now all you have to do is to implement the solution.

If you then commit your intentions to paper you stand a good chance of making your plan fully operational.

Solve problems



e. Take action

Once you have made your decision, you still have to solve the problem. You need to take action to make sure that what you have decided actually happens. To convert your solution into action, you need to make a plan of what has to happen.

Think about what you will do to ensure you solve the problem.

SOLVE THE PROBLEM	What can I do?
1. Make a plan <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What are the critical dates and activities I need to achieve to make my decision work?</i>	
2. Communicate the decision <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Who do I need to inform?</i>• <i>What flexibility is there in my plan?</i>• <i>How will I cope with emergencies?</i>	
3. Make the solution work <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What might I have to do to change my plan in the light of circumstances?</i>	
4. Plot progress <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>How will I know that things are going according to plan?</i>	

Making a decision requires both effort and determination for your decision to become a solution, along with your positive action.

By taking direct action, you put yourself well on the way to solving your problem.

Solve problems



f. Solve problems successfully

To be good at solving problems, you need to believe that the results of your efforts will make a difference. Evaluating your results helps you identify where things went well and where you could have done better.

HOW WELL DID I DO?	What have I learned about solving problems?
<p>1. My current willingness to tackle problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What is now my frame of mind about solving problems?</i>• <i>How do I now see problems?</i>• <i>How easy do I now feel it is to solve problems?</i>	
<p>2. My level of determination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>How objective was I about assessing the range of the problem?</i>• <i>How single-minded was I in getting problems resolved?</i>• <i>How resolute was I in ensuring problems got solved?</i>	
<p>3. My experience gained</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What have I learned from solving this problem?</i>• <i>How much better do I think I am at solving problems?</i>• <i>How more confident do I feel that I can deal with most problems that come my way?</i>	

Problems can often seem awesome in prospect, but in reality there are very few problems that are too difficult to tackle.

Gear up your mind and tell yourself that you can do it. Solving problems is largely a matter of having the right attitude, seeing each problem as an opportunity which provides you valuable experience and being determined to find a solution.

Solve problems



g. Identify the benefits of solving problems

Think about what benefits you personally will gain from being ready and able to solve problems.

BENEFITS FOR ME


Solving problems makes it easier to manage your business, as you are more capable of tackling difficulties both systematically and creatively.

h. Learning review

Use the box below to note your main learning points from having completed the '**Solve Problems**' module.

MY LEARNING POINTS


By making decisions and solving problems, you keep yourself mentally fit and ready to engage in new experiences. Knowing how to solve problems provides you with know-how and motivation to be able to tackle anything that life and business throws at you.