

## Leading

# Problem-Solving

Individuals and teams sometimes need leadership to focus their intelligence and energy into getting good results. The problem-solving model below provides a framework for harnessing brains and effort to move forward and achieve results.

### Problem-Solving Model

1. Define the Problem
2. Generate Alternative Solutions
3. Examine the Pros and Cons of Each Alternative
4. Choose a Solution
5. Plan and Implement
6. Evaluate the Solution

## 1. Define the Problem

Questions to Lead the Process	Helpful Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What's not working?</li> <li>Who is impacted and how?</li> <li>What are the root causes of the problem?</li> <li>Ask Five Whys: "Why does that happen?" x 5</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pull Back the Camera*</li> <li>Be a Fair Witness*</li> </ul>

**Output:** A clear definition of the problem, as well as an understanding of what the "ideal" end-state looks like and the motivation to move towards that ideal.

**Warning Signs:** You have all the details and give direction, you spend more time than appropriate with the problem owner.

## 2. Generate Alternative Solutions

Questions to Lead the Process	Helpful Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are possible ways the problem can be solved?</li> <li>What assumptions are limiting your alternatives?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brainstorming</li> </ul>

**Output:** Many options to address the problem, but not yet "quality checked."

**Warning Signs:** You give solutions.

## 3. Examine the Pros and Cons of Each Alternative

Questions to Lead the Process	Helpful Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the positive and negative consequences?</li> <li>What are the time factors?</li> <li>What are the cost factors?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be a Fair Witness*</li> <li>Sort for Impact*</li> </ul>

**Output:** Options assessed for feasibility, impact, and timeliness.

**Warning Signs:** You're the one talking about/offering all solutions

## 4. Choose a Solution

Questions to Lead the Process	Helpful Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Could more than one choice be made?</li><li>• Why does the choice seem right?</li><li>• Is there a way to “pilot” a choice?</li><li>• What are the consequences of no decision?</li><li>• Is there anyone who cannot support this choice (if a group decision)?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be a Fair Witness*</li></ul>
<b>Output:</b> <i>Solution(s) to implement.</i>	
<b>Warning Signs:</b> <i>You’re taking more ownership, using “I” versus “You” or “They”, you’re suggesting suggestions/solutions.</i>	

## 5. Plan and Implement

Questions to Lead the Process	Helpful Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What actions must be taken?</li><li>• In what order?</li><li>• By whom? By when?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sort for Impact*</li><li>• What-Who-When format</li><li>• Reality Check</li></ul>
<b>Output:</b> <i>A plan with actions (what), responsibilities (who) and timelines (when).</i>	
<b>Warning Signs:</b> <i>You own the workplan, you have too many action items (or at least more that the proper owner should)</i>	

## 6. Evaluate the Solution

Questions to Lead the Process	Helpful Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are simple, effective measures of the solution’s effectiveness?</li><li>• How and by whom will data be collected?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be a Fair Witness*</li><li>• Pull Back the Camera*</li><li>• Sort for Impact*</li></ul>
<b>Output:</b> <i>An approach to assess progress towards achieving the hoped-for results.</i>	
<b>Warning Signs:</b> <i>You’re the one collecting data, you’re conducting the analyses.</i>	

\* Being Strategic Tools. Watch the Being Strategic videos on [proteusleader.com](http://proteusleader.com) to learn more.

TRY IT

# Problem-Solving

## Step

Define the problem

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Generate alternative solutions

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Examine the pros  
and cons of each alternative

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Choose a solution

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Plan and implement

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Evaluate the solution

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