
Problem Solving and Decision Making Skills

A two day programme

We attempt to solve problems all the time in our work, but how do we know we have the right solution? In many cases, we have sub-optimal solutions or even worse, we sometimes do not solve the problem, having spent substantial amounts of money on solutions that failed. In this workshop, we will give you a process and methodology to assist you in improving the quality of your solutions. In addition the methods are quick and easy to learn and can be applied to all problems, no matter how complex.

Key elements of problem solving and decision making

What is a decision? A decision is an answer to a problem or situation. Therefore, the first step is to diagnose the true nature of the problem. Then to analyse the problem and identify the cause, only then is it possible to think about making a decision that solves the problem. Problem identification and analysis need careful thought as mistakes often happen at this stage, because the real problem remains hidden and the wrong problem becomes the focus of the solution. On the other hand, the right problem becomes the focus of the solution, but the cause identified is not the true cause.

Decision-making is the process that shapes the future and concerns events leading up to the point where we take a decision and beyond. Whilst a decision is the actual moment of choice, the future is sometimes shaped unintentionally by saying something you do not mean and others taking action on your word. This was the case when Henry II's men heard him say, "Who will rid me of this meddlesome priest". Decisive inaction as a policy can also be used to great effect. The problem in decision-making is that in real life, most decisions become clouded in ambiguity and uncertainties, as no one can accurately predict the future, also the consequences of a decision sometimes produce completely unforeseen outcomes.

The programme enables participants to:

- Assess the predicament by identifying the variations and anxieties
- Diagnose the problem by looking at the causes and identifying the true cause
- Restrict problems by looking at containment or alternative actions
- Develop your decision based on your aims and consider alternatives and risks
- Build a personal problem solving strategy, which will be based on the processes and methods that work for you

Learning outcomes:

After this workshop, you will have a standard approach and method to problem solving and decision making that will enhance and quicken decisions. In addition, you will develop your own personal approach to the techniques taught and be able to mould them in to the process that suits you best.

Programme Agenda

Predicament Assessment

- Identification of performance variations
- Assessment of the anxieties
- Interpret anxieties and worries
- Hexagon analysis techniques
- Where do we go from here?
- Is there a problem to diagnose?
- Is there a decision needs making?
- Is there a potential problem or opportunity?

Problem Containment

- Identify likely problems
- Assess potential causes
- Risk analysis
- Impact assessment
- Likelihood assessment
- Take restraining action
- Plan alternative scenarios
- Instigate alarm systems

Typical delegates are:

Managers and staff involved in crucial decision-making who need a sound method to improve the quality of their decisions and who need to have alternatives and contingencies identified.

Problem diagnosis

- Recapitulate the problem
- Eliminate the obvious
- Outline the problem
- What?
- Where?
- When?
- Boundary
- Map the possible causes, Ishikawa
- Consider possible causes
- Authenticate the true cause

Decision Development

- Develop your aims and goals
- State the end result
- Quantify the goals
- Grade your aims
- Generate possible decisions
- Assess alternative decisions
- Match decisions with aims and goals
- Assessment of the risks
- Make the decision