Team Problem Solving

Team problem solving includes several distinct steps. Each one is important for helping a team reach its goals. Experienced team leaders have a large toolkit of strategies for dealing with each of these steps.

- ➢ Step 1: Problem definition

    - o Goal: All stakeholders need to agree on what the problem is and how to describe it

    - o Strategies: Talking to stakeholders and gathering data to describe the current situation

- ➢ Step 2: Generating alternatives

    - o Goal: Listing as many options as possible; seeking quantity without evaluating quality

    - o Strategies: Creative idea-generation

- ➢ Step 3: Evaluating alternatives

    - o Goal: Assessing the alternatives for feasibility and potential impact in order to focus the group's energy and achieve its goals

    - o Strategies: Reviewing options from a variety of viewpoints in order to select the ones most likely to lead to team success

There are many online resources for helping project team leaders facilitate each of these steps. One useful source for problem solving is the Mind Tools website at http://www.mindtools.com.

The chart on the following page provides examples drawn from a variety of online resources.

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Examples of Strategies & Tools	Resources
Problem Definition	
5 Whys	• Six Sigma tool introduction: http://www.isixsigma.com/tools-templates/cause-effect/determine-root-cause-5-whys/ • Harvard Business Review blog: http://blogs.hbr.org/video/2012/02/the-5-whys.html
Surveys	• Survey Monkey: http://www.surveymonkey.com/ • Purdue University: Creating good survey questions http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/559/06/
Process Map Flowcharts	• Iowa State University: http://www.fpm.iastate.edu/worldclass/process_mapping.asp
Generating alternatives	
Brainstorming	• http://www.mindtools.com/brainstm.html
'Yes, and…"	• http://jenniferbdavis.blogspot.com/2006/07/yes-and.html
Word Clouds	• http://www.wordle.net/ • http://www.tagxedo.com/
Mind maps	• http://www.thinkbuzan.com/us/articles/view/how-to-create-a-mind-map • http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newISS_01.htm
Creative idea generation	• http://creatingminds.org/tools/tools_ideation.htm • http://creativityisfree.com/2008/05/30/brainstorming-techniques/
Visioning activities	• http://hostedweb.cfaes.ohio-state.edu/bdg/visioning.html • http://www.gdrc.org/ngo/vision-dev.html
Evaluating alternatives	
Decision matrix	• http://asq.org/learn-about-quality/decision-making-tools/overview/decision-matrix.html
Six Thinking Hats	• http://www.debonogroup.com/six_thinking_hats.php • http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_07.htm
Multi-voting	• http://www.doh.state.fl.us/hpi/pdf/MultiVoting2.pdf
Nominal Group Technique	• http://hostedweb.cfaes.ohio-state.edu/bdg/pdf_docs/d/F06.pdf