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Problem Solving – 4 Simple Steps

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Quite often we are frustrated at not being able to find a solution to a problem, or rush to implement the first solution we can think of, potentially missing an opportunity for a far better outcome. We all know the expressions “let’s sleep on it” and “let me come back to you after I speak with my team”. They are common because they work in getting better results to a problem. This is because such strategies unlock and expand our thinking.

Think about it. When or where do you most often find yourself saying or thinking “Aha!” or “That’s it!”? It is more than likely in the shower, when first waking, walking, running, cycling, or simply a quiet moment in a new environment. It is less likely that you find the solution by applying more thinking pressure and time at your desk or in a meeting where the answer is just not coming.

If you are presently experiencing a mental block in solving a problem, or think you can benefit from having more options, here are some questions to ask yourself:

1. What other information or data will help me solve this problem?

Making sure you are as fully informed as you can be within the time constraints so that your solutions are based on multiple sources. Have conversations and collaborate with people who you think can add value to solving your problem. This will increase your options.

2. Can I benefit from using a problem-solving model to help structure my thinking?

I like using the [**Herrmann International**](#) Whole Brain Thinking Model as a very easy way to consider: Have I got all the facts and performed robust analysis; have I taken a holistic and long-term view and considered all options; have I considered how people will feel about the solutions to this problem; have I got a good plan and resources to implement the solution? The problem solving circles are another good model as are decision making models like D.E.C.I.D.E.

3. Am I trying too hard to force a solution?

If you feel like you are not making progress, then stop trying so hard. Relax and take a break! Change your state, your environment, go for a walk, focus on another task, go the gym, whatever it takes for you to forget the problem and focus on something else. Then when you are ready, come back to it with a fresh perspective.

4. What is my subconscious or intuition telling me?

No matter what you do, the problem will have been working away in your subconscious leading to a “gut feel” or intuitive solution. Be sure to listen to it and act on it as necessary.

What is a current problem you are trying to solve? Try asking yourself the questions above.



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