Ask the Expert Problem Solving

Squiggly Careers

Problem solving is a skill

In squiggly careers, we solve problems every day. Whether it's a decision like what to prioritise today, or a more significant one like a career dilemma, improving our problem-solving skills will help us to navigate work with more clarity and confidence.

Start with self-awareness and learn about your problem-solver profile

Understanding your strengths as a problem-solver can help you to make better decisions alone or as part of a community. Author Cheryl Strauss Einhorn identifies 5 different ways people solve problems.

Which problem-solving profile are you?

The below profiles aren't prescriptive or fixed. Find out more about each profile on app.areamethod.com

- **1. Thinker** – slow decision-maker, cautious and thorough, possibly influenced by loss aversion

- **2. Detective** – data-driven problem-solver but may fall into confirmation and projection biases

- **3. Adventurer** - fast-moving and efficient but may fall into optimism and planning biases

- **4. Listener** - community-oriented person and supportive, but prone to social-proof bias

- **5. Visionary** - an innovative thinker, eager to build new things, but may fall into scarcity bias.

Strategies for problem solving at work

Learn about the different problem solver profiles

Learning about the different ways people problem-solve helps you to understand what's most important to other people.

This approach can help uncover *new ideas, options and insights* when decision-making together rather than staying stuck.

Use a trusted group of advisors

Problem solving doesn't need to be a solo activity. When we frame problems as a community task we benefit from different people's perspectives.

Sounding out problems with a trusted group of advisors who have different decision-making strengths can help fill in any gaps in your thinking.

Be different, to think differently

Sometimes you may be faced with a problem you have to solve fast, and on your own.

With these types of decisions think about how someone else might approach the problem.

Ask yourself:
"What would I do if I was XX?"

"We are only beginning to realise how decision-making is a discipline unto itself. Different people solve problems differently."

Cheryl Strauss Einhorn, Author and the creator of the AREA Method, a decision-making system to solve complex problems

Problem Solving
Cheryl Strauss Einhorn

What are some of the problems you're working on at the moment?

Recommended resources

PROBLEM SOLVED
A Powerful System for Making Complex Decisions with Confidence and Conviction

Problem Solved: A Powerful System for Making Complex Decisions with Confidence and Conviction
by Cheryl Strauss Einhorn

Episode 225
How to be a better problem solver

How to be a better problem solver
We share 6 different ideas for action to help you become a better problem solver at work on #225 of Squiggly Careers.