

**“Scraping Burnt Toast”\* is a great metaphor for rework and waste in any business operation.**



**The following information is provided to help organizations see the benefits and ways to:**

**Stop Scraping Burnt Toast**

\* (credit to Professor Al Rickmers for coining this concept)

## Problems & Pain ID Worksheet

Let's get a broad sense of your organization's burnt toast ....

Check those types of problems that you feel occur in your work place and indicate the level of severity, as you perceive it. Add to this problem list, as needed.

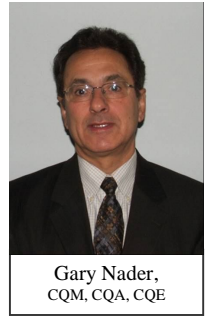


<u>Pain &amp; Problems</u>	<u>Level of Severity</u> <u>Low-Medium-High</u> (Indicate with L, M or H)	<u>Comments</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Stress from "problems"	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Operational Downtime	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Rework	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Stock-outs	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Incorrect Shipment(s)	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Missed Deduction(s)	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Last Minute Panic	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Invoice Errors	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Missed Shipments	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Late Quotes	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Order Editing	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Obsolete Inventory	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Inaccurate Billing	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Supplier Problems	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Product/Service Non-conformance	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Sales and Product Forecasting	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Irrate Customers/Complaints	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communication Failures	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	_____
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## Fundamentals of Problem Solving

(Author – Gary Nader, Principal Consultant)

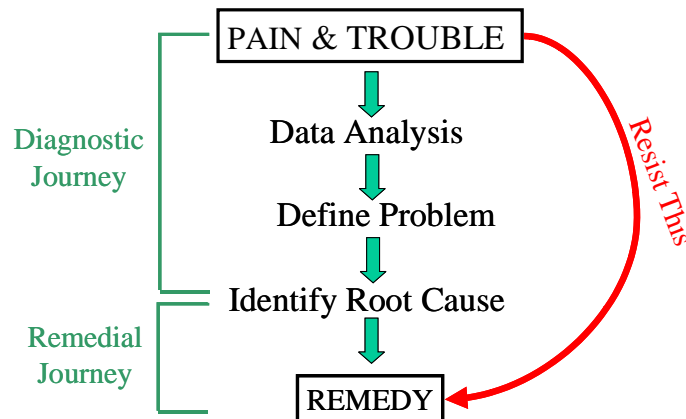
If yours is like most companies, you checked off quite a few boxes and indicated varying degrees of severity. *So now what?* Briefly, we will outline some basic principles of problem-solving and process improvement, including the importance of the diagnostic journey. Finally, we will outline just a few of the tools needed in the “tool box” to become more adept at problem solving.



Let's start with some basic principles:

- ✓ Problems are *not inevitable*.
- ✓ A problem *well defined* is half solved.
- ✓ An ounce of *data* is worth a pound of opinion.
- ✓ Only *root cause* resolution solves problems in a sustainable way.
- ✓ The vast majority of problems are related to *processes* not people.
- ✓ Many problems can only be solved by different departments working together.
- ✓ Problem identification and resolution will only thrive in an “*error friendly*” environment.

Whatever problem is chosen to be eliminated, the diagram below illustrates the most fundamental principle for EFFECTIVE PROBLEM SOLVING. There are **two journeys** – a diagnostic journey and a remedial journey. If the same problem occurs over and over again, chances are great that the diagnostic journey has been skipped and the root cause was not really understood.



Problem solving tools, such as “Why5”, tally sheets and process flow diagrams go a long way in helping the diagnostic journey to be successful.

**“Why5”** - This is a VERY simple method for getting closer to the true problem and its cause(s). More often than not, people tend to act on the symptoms rather than on the underlying issues. It pays to keep asking “why?” By asking “why?” five times or so, it *forces* one to get beneath the surface of the problem.

So when repetitive problems occur, such as: wrong information entered on order forms, jobs installed improperly, mis-deliveries were made or sales quoted inaccurately, DO NOT

automatically assume that someone just “messed up”. By simply asking “why?” enough times, the real causes will often become apparent. Then the *appropriate* solution can be applied.

**Tally Sheets** are simple data collection forms that make it easy to gather data in an organized way. They can be used to determine the extent and nature of problems, understand the level of problems from time period to time period, assess work loads, identify missed opportunities, and to investigate many other items of interest. Some specific applications include frequency and reasons for:

- ✓ Complaints or returns
- ✓ Defects or rework
- ✓ Operational downtime
- ✓ Lost sales
- ✓ Late shipments
- ✓ Information inaccuracies

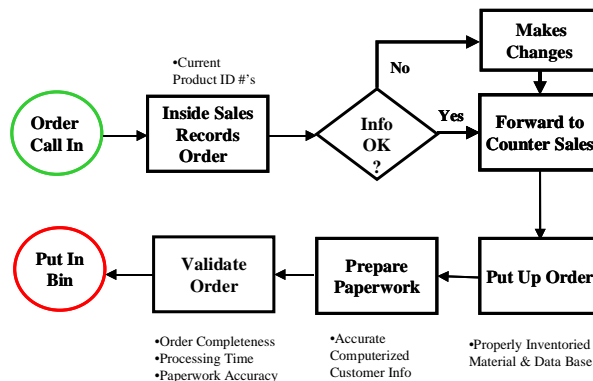
Other dimensions can be added such as time periods, facility locations or manufacturing lines, type of service, products or market categories. The options are numerous and can often help to “slice & dice” the problem until the root issues become apparent. This information also helps separate *incidents* from *patterns*, which is very important in deciding where to allocate the organization’s resources. Most importantly, it helps individuals to “act by fact”, rather than just opinion.

**Flow Diagrams or Process Maps** are simple pictorial means of depicting the sequence of activities, logic and decision points in processes that generate output. This output could be service, information or a product. Remember that the quality of the output is a result of the process that precedes it. Because of this, process flow diagrams are invaluable tools in the effort to control and improve performance.

*Flow Diagrams can be used to:*

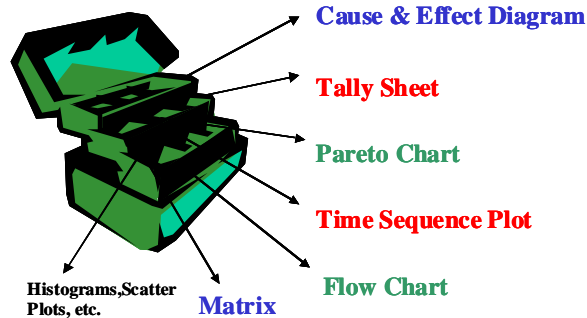
- ✓ **Show what is being done.** Often just trying to get work associates to agree on the process is enlightening!
- ✓ **Troubleshoot the current process.** Where have things gone (or could go) wrong and why?
- ✓ **Develop a new process.** Can we streamline or simplify the process? Can we make it error proof?

Here is an example of a flow diagram. These can be simple, like this one, or quite complex, depending on the need.



One really nice benefit of process mapping is to get people focusing on the process rather than pointing fingers! When there are *repetitive* problems, such as inaccurate quotes or billing, stock outs, medical mistakes or any other business problem, focus on the process by constructing and analyzing a process flow diagram.

There are *many* more tools and ways to apply these tools to solve your organization's operational and business excellence challenges.



If your organization would like problem solving/process improvement training and innovative application's coaching, please contact us. The information is included in the footer below.

***The emphasis is always on RESULTS so the return on investment will be substantial!***