
Extra Activities 3: Problem Solving

Learning Outcomes

- to recognise problem solving, especially communication difficulties, as a task of a team leader.
- to understand and practise solving problems and making decisions through consensus and/or negotiation.
- to identify strategies for conflict resolution.

Reference:

Edwards, R. Workplace Leadership, AMES Consulting, Vic., 1997

Key Words

technical:	mechanical, scientific, practical
resolve:	find a solution/fix a problem
conflict:	fight or argument or disagreement
relevant:	concerned with the matter or issue
maintenance:	keep in repair or good working order
opinions:	what people think
consensus:	general agreement by everyone
modify:	make changes
advantage:	good, benefit
disadvantage:	not so good, not beneficial
prefer:	what you think is best
pressure:	to attempt to persuade someone or make him do something against his will
negotiation:	a way to resolve conflict
prejudice:	bias
acknowledge:	show that you agree
OHS:	Occupational Health & Safety



Team leaders often have to fix problems. Technical problems, such as machinery breakdowns or quality, may be more easily fixed because team leaders have a lot of experience on the job or production line.

It can be more difficult to resolve problems that are due to conflict or communication difficulties.



Activity 1: *Describe and talk about some of the problems you have had at work. What kind of problems were they? Were they technical or communication problems? Complete the following table:*



Problem	Technical	Communication



Activity 2: *Discuss these typical work “problems” with other team leaders*

Problem: Workers want to have Saturdays off if they have completed the production targets before then.

- What issues are important or relevant?
- What would you do?

Problem: The section supervisor is angry and upset when production is 2 days behind schedule. She yells at one of the workers, who makes a complaint.

- What issues are important or relevant?
- What would you do?

Problem: Machine number 4 is still faulty, even though maintenance has checked and serviced it three times in the last week.

- What issues are important or relevant?
- What would you do?

Problem: The night shift often leaves a mess in the work area. You spend much of your time in the mornings tidying up, doing the “housekeeping.” This gives you less time to do your other jobs.

- What issues are important or relevant?
- What would you do?



Problems are actually solved in many different ways. Whichever way you solve a problem, there are some general “rules” which you can follow:

- identify the problem
- get all relevant information
- gather different opinions
- brainstorm any possible solutions
- review each possible solution
 - what is good/bad
 - what works/doesn't work
- make the decision
- develop a plan on how to put the decision into action
- act on the decision and solve the problem