

Brian Tracy Mastermind



EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING & PROBLEM-SOLVING

PRESENTED BY

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Introduction

“Lots of people want to ride with you in the limo, but what you want is someone who will take the bus with you when the limo breaks down.”
(Oprah Winfrey)

Life is a continuous succession of problems. Everything you do, all day long, revolves around your ability to solve problems effectively.

Your entire success as a person and as a manager is determined by your ability to solve problems effectively and well. Instead of reacting to problems with anger or frustration, you should look upon problems as the essential, defining skill area of your work. Your job should be to become extremely good at solving any problem that is brought to you, large or small.

Fortunately, we know more about how to solve problems effectively today than we have ever known before. By practicing the approaches, skills and techniques of other successful managers, you can dramatically increase your ability to solve virtually any problem that comes across your desk.

In this lesson you will learn:

- How to improve the quality of your thinking
- Brainstorming techniques for group creativity
- Three ways to trigger ideas
- The systematic method of problem-solving
- How to solve problems better and more effectively than ever before
- How to take charge of your life

Effective Decision-Making & Problem-Solving

Your job title is “**problem solver**,” whatever is written on your business card.

All day long, in every situation, you solve problems.

Your ability to solve problems effectively determines your success, your income, your position and your entire future.

1 If you improve the *quality* of your thinking, your ability to solve problems, you improve the quality of your life.

- a) You are a **knowledge** worker — you work with your mind.
- b) There is a direct relationship between the **quantity** of new ideas that you come up with and the **quality** of the ideas you eventually settle upon.
- c) One new idea or insight can change your **career**.

2 Creativity is very simply defined as *improvement*.

- a) **LINE OF SIGHT THEORY** — right where you are, is where you will see the most opportunities for improvement. In what way could you improve the way you do your job, right now?
- b) **KAIZAN THEORY** — “continuous betterment” — based on the Law of Incremental Improvement. Continually seek out ways to improve the quality of your products or services.

You should always be looking for ways to increase revenues, improve operations, cut costs and boost profits.

3 There are three major triggers to *stimulate ideas*:

- a) The first is intensely **desired goals**. What do you really want?
- b) The second way to stimulate creativity is with **pressing problems**. What are the biggest problems facing you today?
- c) The third is **focused questions** — which provoke thought.

4 The *systematic method* of problem-solving is used by the most effective executives in every organization.

- a) Start: **Define** the problem clearly in writing.
- b) Ask, “What **else** is the problem?”
- c) **Restate** the problem to make it easier to solve.
- d) Determine all the possible **causes** of the problem.
- e) Determine all the possible **solutions**. Then ask, “What else is the solution?”
- f) **Make a decision!** Any decision is usually better than no decision at all.

1. Assign **responsibility**. Who is going to carry out the decision?
 2. Set a **deadline**. Set a schedule for reporting on progress.
 3. **Get busy**, take action! Go to work, get the problem solved.
- g) Check and review to see if the solution worked. Be prepared to implement “Plan B” if your first solution doesn’t work.

5 *Mindstorming* is one of the most powerful problem-solving methodologies ever developed.

- a) Start by defining your goal or problem as a **question**. Write it down at the top of a blank page.
- b) Discipline yourself to write down 20 **answers** to the question.
- c) Select at least one answer and take action on it **immediately**.
- d) Do this exercise on a regular basis with every problem or goal.

6 *Brainstorming* is another method, which involves group activity.

- a) The ideal number of people in a brainstorming group is between **four** and **seven**.

- b) The ideal length of a brainstorming session is **15 to 45** minutes. Start and stop on time.
- c) Define the problem or goal **clearly**, in a way that demands practical answers.
- d) The key to brainstorming is no **judgment**, no comment, and no **ridicule**.
- e) The goal in brainstorming is the highest **quantity** of ideas in the shortest time period.
 - 1. The **leader** encourages everyone to contribute.
 - 2. The **recorder** is a person who writes down every idea as fast as they are generated.
- f) **Gather** all the ideas and evaluate them at a later time.

7 Another powerful tool for stimulating creativity is *“Zero-Based Thinking.”*

- a) Zero-based thinking frees your mind from unconscious limitations.
- b) Ask, **“Knowing what I now know, is there anything I wouldn’t get into today, if I had to do it over again?”**
- c) Creative abandonment is the key — what should you discontinue, reduce, eliminate altogether?

8 A critical tool for creative thinking is *testing your assumptions*.

- a) Be willing to admit that you could be **wrong**.
- b) Be willing to **change** your mind.
- c) Imagine **starting over** again with no limitations.

9 *Nominal Group Technique* — sentence completion exercise. Think of as many ways to finish the sentence as possible:

- a) “We could double our sales if...”
- b) “We could cut our costs in this area by 50% if only...”
- c) “We could sell more of our products or services if our customers just didn’t say...”
- d) “We could be the best in our business if we...”

10 The Theory of *Constraints* is another mentally liberating technique. Begin by determining your goal or objective:

- a) Determine the **bottleneck** or limiting factor between you and your goal.
- b) Ask, “What is determining the **speed** at which I get from here to my goal. What is holding me back?”

- c) Whatever your answer, once you have determined the bottleneck, concentrate all your energies on solving that one problem, or alleviating that one constraint.
- d) Ask, “Why aren’t I at my goal already?”

11 There are *three qualities of genius* you can develop:

- a) The first quality of genius is the ability to **concentrate** totally on a single goal, a single problem, or a single question without growing tired or bored.
- b) The second quality of genius is mental **flexibility**.
- c) The third quality is that geniuses use a systematic method of solving any problem.

You are a potential genius. You can dramatically increase your creativity by using these methods and techniques on a regular basis, with problems or goals, large or small. The more often you use them, the smarter and more effective at problem-solving you will become.

One of the most important techniques of all in solving problems is for you to listen to your intuition. Listen to your gut feeling. The still small voice within you can be your source of major breakthroughs in life.

Action Exercises

1 What are the three biggest problems you are facing in your work life today?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

2 Restate each of your major problems, from number one, in such a way that they are more amenable to a solution:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

3 What are your **three** most intensely desired goals, in your work or personal life?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4 What specific opportunities do you see for improvement in your current “line of sight?”

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

5 What specific actions could you take immediately to solve your major problems or achieve your major goals?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

6 Write your three major goals in the form of questions, beginning with the word “how:”

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

7 Practice the sentence completion method by writing your three major goals in such a way that you are forced to develop answers (example: “I could double my income over the next twelve months if I would only...):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

8 Apply Zero-Based Thinking to your major problem areas. What three things are you doing today that you wouldn't get into again, if you had to do it over?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

9 Complete the sentence, “We could double our sales if...”

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What **one action** are you going to take immediately as the result of what you have learned in this lesson?
