

Collaborative Problem Solving

System problems are best solved by the people who are experiencing them. A structured approach to problem solving can help a group collaborate to find a workable solution. Having a structure to the process keeps people on track. It also helps move people from complaining into action and accountability. Most problem solving models have similar steps. Try some **ICED T**:

- I Identify the problem**
who does this affect and how? has it happened before?
how is it different this time? why does it happen?
- C Create alternatives through brainstorming**
go for quantity of ideas – no evaluation – all ideas are accepted
- E Evaluate the options**
select ideas with greatest potential –
what are the pros and cons of each
- D Decide on a solution**
choose the best alternative – write out
the specific plan of action
- T Take action**
put the solution into action – check
back to see how it's working



There is almost never one right answer to a problem. Every option will have some desired results and some unintended consequences somewhere in the system. Systems thinkers consider a number of alternatives. Possible solutions are then evaluated by looking at their pros and cons. *What will happen if this is implemented? What are the good and bad points?* Use **filters** – criteria/constraints – to edit out or edit in choices:



- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ cost | ☐ fit (our way of doing things) |
| ☐ time | ☐ customer impact |
| ☐ acceptability | ☐ risks |
| ☐ practicality | ☐ benefits |
| ☐ _____ | ☐ _____ |