Seven Steps for Effective Problem Solving in the Workplace

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- *The Business Journal of Sonoma/Marin*

- *Adapted from: https://www.mediate.com/articles/thicks.cfm#*

People tend to do three things when faced with a problem:
1. they get afraid or uncomfortable and wish it would go away;
2. they feel that they have to come up with an answer and it has to be the right answer;
3. and they look for someone to blame.

Being faced with a problem becomes a problem. And that's a problem because, in fact, there **are always going to be problems!**

The goal of a good problem-solving process is to make us and our organization more "conflict-friendly" and "conflict-competent"

1. Identify the issues → be clear about what the problem is. Remember that different people might have different views of what the issues are.

2. Understand everyone's interests → This is a critical step that is usually missing. Interests are the needs that you want satisfied by any given solution. We often ignore our true interests as we become attached to one particular solution.
The best solution is the one that satisfies everyone's interests. This is the time for *active listening*. Put down your differences for awhile and listen to each other with the intention to understand.

3. List the possible solutions → this is the time to do some *brainstorming.*

4. Evaluate the options. → *pluses and minus*

5. Select an option or options → What's the best option, in the *balance?*

6. Document the *agreement(s)*.

7. Agree on contingencies, monitoring, and evaluation → Conditions may change. Make contingency agreements about foreseeable future circumstances (If-then!).
Create opportunities to *evaluate the agreements and their implementation*. ("Let's try it this way for three months and then look at it.")