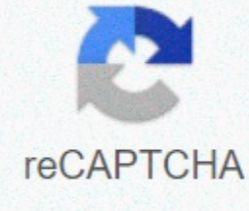




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Life is full of problems and challenges. Most people become adept at working through small problems or at least bypassing them. But those who are extremely good at solving problems have a distinct advantage on the road to success. They often become leaders among their peers. The bigger the problems they can solve, the more they achieve and the more respect they earn. It is true that some people are natural problem solvers, but most everyone can sharpen their problem-solving skills with little effort. Here are eight skills that are regularly used in training problems. Problems often arise because people are unaware of what is actually happening to the process. They focus on a particular method or goal and then unintentionally ignore what may be obvious warning signs. Big problem solvers approach each new problem as if it were brand new. In this way, they can apply a specific solution to the problem instead of a fix that can only go partially.<sup>2</sup> List all the obstacles. Rarely are problems isolated. Certain repairs can cause unwanted chain reactions in other processes or departments. Big problem solvers take a high view of the issues involved and write down a list of all the potential factors that could get in the way of a solution. Then I can approach the issue in a comprehensive way with a higher degree of success.<sup>3</sup> Identify the opportunity. So many times great possibilities are wrapped up within simple problems. The problem can be symptomatic of bigger problems with your systems or perhaps your industry. Big problem solvers are also great opportunists. Before trying to solve the problem, evaluate external factors and think about a future that does not require these choking points. Maybe you'll discover an exciting new business model. You don't have to be in a big company to suffer from poor communication. Even just two people in a department or company can be personally productive, but completely unaware of the other's activities. Big problem solvers are also great facilitators. They use their communication skills to help others share information to keep all bases covered. They then encourage people to work together outside their roles so that the sum is greater than the parts.<sup>5</sup> Translate research into creative action. In this data-driven world, people sometimes get lost in numbers and anecdotes. Data and precedent are important, but at some point you simply have to take action. Big problem solvers understand that if solutions always existed in the past, then problems wouldn't have any need to start. Get enough research to understand the problem, then engage your creativity to find new ways to better solve old problems. Many problems can not be solved in a linear way. Big problem solvers have the vision to imagine the ideal working scenario, and then construct a methodology that will achieve the desired effect. Of course, they must also effectively articulate this vision to those who understand how implement the solution.<sup>7</sup> Type people with an open mind. When solving a big problem many people just grab anyone available with two hands and a brain. Unfortunately, closed team members can not only delay the solution, but they can also trigger a bigger problem than the one you're trying to solve. Big problem solvers know that the best results come from groups of open people. Your problem-solving team must be willing to step out of the box and uncomfortable. Ultimately, this approach will reveal creative new solutions and processes. Often large solutions to problems are ignored because the leader wants the solution to be his or her idea. Big problem solvers get joy from solving problems. They are happy to give credit to anyone who solves the problem and moves everything forward. They are not worried about getting credit because there is no shortage of new problems to solve in business. It's the fish pilot's first job after college, and the company he works for just hired a new vice president of sales and marketing from a major computer supplier. To motivate us and make a big splash, he had T-shirts on the front that said '5280+1' and 'Go the Extra Mile!' in the back, according to the fish. We all got it at the meeting. There, in front of 130 of my peers and managers, I pointed out: '5,280 is the number of feet in a mile, so really, this shirt says 'Go extra foot!' Dead silence from my peers, after a collective breath at my tenacity to show the obvious. The new vice president laughed: 'I'm out of marketing! We can't do math!' Luckily, everyone else was laughing with him. Do the calculations with Sharky. Send me your real story about it life sharky@computerworld.com. One story equals one conspicuous shark shirt if I use it. Comment on today's story in Sharky's Google+ community and read thousands of great old stories in Sharkives. Get your daily dose of out-takes from the IT Theater of the Absurd delivered directly to your Inbox. Subscribe now to the Daily Shark Newsletter. Image copyright © IDG Communications, Inc. There are several free puzzle solver and puzzle websites online, including riddles.com, riddles-online.com, and iRiddler.com. Most puzzle-solving sites also contain puzzles to solve. Puzzles cannot be entered directly into a computer solving network like the Sudoku puzzle; however, a number of websites provide help in solving puzzles or giving solutions to puzzles on their site. iRiddler has a wide range of puzzles and other puzzles on its site. Breaks down puzzles into puzzles based on words or mathematics. Riddles.com has puzzles for both adults and children. There is a button of each puzzle that needs to be pressed to show the solution to the puzzle. Riddles-online.com has answers for its puzzles, which are divided into parts for simple and hard puzzles, as well as other categories such as logical puzzles and animal puzzles. Skip to Add fun and games to this important topic and you'll soon hear I Love Math. Toddler children I like counting, sorting, doing puzzles and discovering patterns. But once these activities are labeled maths, with daily doses of addition, multiplication, fractions and long divisions, many children lose both confidence and interest. Standardized math tests starting in the fourth grade only add to the challenge, experts say. To make sure they are ready, schools tend to introduce students to complex problems before mastering the basics. No wonder many find the topic frustrating -- or that math scores among children in the United States have declined compared to those of students in other countries. It's important for young children to be mathematically smart, so they don't get intimidated when the curriculum accelerates and becomes more challenging, says Patricia Clark Kenschaft, PhD, author of Math Power: How to Help Your Child Love Math, Even If You Don't. To make sure this happens, do not schedule daily half-hour exercises, which will only exclude your child. Instead, find ways to make it fun. To boost her 8-year-old son Jake's math skills, Beth Brody, a mom from Stockton, New Jersey, has it in the circle of things he'd like to buy in catalogues. When he's done, he asks him to add up the total cost. Jake's challenge? To figure out which items he has to remove from his wish list to be under \$100. Try! You can even allow your child to use the calculator - although I am not doing the supplement, you are still promoting numeracy. To strengthen your child's skills with money, create a fake store that sells some of her favorite things. Give it a budget and some real money to spend (you also want it to learn the relative value of coins and banknotes). Set prices, and if you want it to be even more interesting throw some coupons in the mix. Challenge her to stay within budget while she buys. When she's done, switch places and let her be a cashier. Kitchen tools provide a great opportunity to teach your child about fractions. Ask your junior chef for help with dinner, but instead of taking out a cup of rice, show him that three-one-thirds of a cup is equal to one cup. Use a measuring cup to explain that three-eighths are less than one half, even if it sounds higher. Showing how to follow recipes will also help with numeracy -- and feeling comfortable with numbers will help make abstract concepts more concrete. Explaining time gives your child more than life skills. This also includes it in addition, subtraction and fractions. Make sure you have at least one hour in the house that is not digital. Turn practice into a game: Call time - asking your child to move their hands in the correct position, then add or take away minutes and hours. To raise the stakes, switch places and let him call time, warning him that you would deliberately make the mistake of having to catch it. Adding for five and ten to 100 helps your to develop a sense of numerical relationships and multiplication. Take advantage of setbacks, such as car rides. Maybe you should start things up and ask for help when you get stuck. Look for math options wherever you are: In the supermarket, count cans of soup per group of four people and when waiting in a restaurant add and take away packets of sugar for tying. And don't forget the samples either. Look for things like geometric wallpapers, tiles - even bricks. They are all food for discovering interesting repetitions. If you sigh every time you have to add a check, you may be sending a negative message. So when your classmate complains that he hates math, don't thank me by saying, Yes, so do I. Instead, find out why your child feels that way. Maybe he was embarrassed because he didn't know the answer when the teacher called him. He could be intimidated by multiplier tables, or vice versa, maybe he's bored because the class is moving too slowly. To change your child's attitude, remind them of all the important things math is used for. He determines the winners in board games and baseball batting average. Math measurements ensure that his favorite cookies turn out delicious every time. They also highlight some people with cool careers -- astronauts, video game developers, scientists, race car drivers -- who use mathematical formulas every day. While boys once far outnumbered girls in math tests, this is no longer the case. In fact, girls actually get higher math grades than boys during early school years. Yet gender stereotypes persist, partly because men outdo women in the fields of mathematics and science. Parents are partly to blame for this discrepancy. Since then, boys are more able to be given toys that promote mathematical skills and spatial thinking (such as building blocks, Tinkertoys and Lincoln Logs) than girls. Once their children are in school, moms and dads (and often school counselors and teachers) tend to discourage their daughters from taking higher-level math courses while pushing their sons to do so. This leads to girls losing confidence in their math abilities and shying away from the subject, a survey by the American Association of University Women found. We need to encourage girls to enjoy and excel in math, says Megan Franke, PhD, associate professor of education at the University of California, Los Angeles. Game: Mancala (6+ years, \$13; cardinalgames.com)What learns: Counting, Strategy Game: Dino Math Tracks (6+ years, \$22; toys4minds.com)What learns: Place value, multi-digit addition and subtraction Game: Uno (7+ years, \$7; mattel.com)What learns: Number recognition, smaller and larger than, supplement Game: Pass the Pigs (7+ years, \$14; fantasytoyland.com)What learns: Counting, adding, subtracting Game: Blokus (6+ years, \$30; educationalpredictions.com)What learns: Geometry, spatial skills, logic © Copyright . All rights reserved. Printed from this link is external site that may or may not meet accessibility guidelines. Guidelines.

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