



Clear Impact

Simple truths. Consistently applied.

## Developmental Perspectives on Problem-Solving

**“You can never solve a problem on the level on which it was created”**

Albert Einstein

### Pre-Conventional

#### Opportunist

- Wins any way possible
- Short-term horizon, not guided by precedent
- Acts quickly and without deliberation
- Self-oriented
- Focus on concrete things and personal advantage
- May manipulate, deceive and coerce others to manage them
- Distrusts others, assumes they're manipulative too
- Always finds blame outside of self and negatively stereotypes others
- “I win, you lose” mentality
- See rules as loss of freedom
- Treat what they can get away with as “right”
- Punish according to “eye for an eye”
- Focus is on getting needs met
- Feedback is heard as an attack (and tends to then go on the offensive)
- **“Anger dwells only in the bosom of fools”** – Albert Einstein

#### Self-questions

- What do I need to do to get what I want?
- What's in it for me?
- How can I turn this situation to my advantage?
- Who is at fault for my troubles?
- How can I get as much as possible?
- How can I get them back for what they did to me (or those I care about)?

## Conventional

### Conformer

- Avoid inner and outer conflict
- Hyper-aware of feelings and opinions of others
- Observe protocol
- Wants to belong, obey group norms
- Loyal to immediate group rather than the more distant organization or principles
- Rarely rocks the boat
- Rarely questions authority or group norms – takes them as a given
- Rely on group standards
- Particularly doesn't voice disagreement to those more senior in the organization
- Usually nice and pleasant
- Thinks in simple terms and speaks in generalities and clichés
- Focus on membership, status; conform to social norms to belong and get approval
- Avoid negative impressions
- Lack of awareness of inner conflicts
- Avoids situations that call for independent action
- Often highly judgmental of those who don't follow the norms
- Attend to social welfare of own group, however that's defined
- Feedback is heard as personal disapproval
- **“Unthinking respect for authority is the greatest enemy of truth”** – Albert Einstein

### Self-questions

- What can I do to maintain the approval of others (especially those in authority)?
- How can I demonstrate loyalty so I'll be rewarded by those in power?
- How can I avoid conflict?
- How can I conform to whatever is expected?
- How can I avoid having to take independent action?
- How can I save face?
- (If leader) What should I tell people to do?

### Expert

- Want to stand out
- Value correctness based on authority (technical knowledge, what a well-known person says, etc.)
- Decisions should be based on undeniable “facts”
- There's only one valid way of thinking about a situation – there's a right answer
- Strong belief systems
- Win/lose mentality
- Reactive problem-solvers
- Difficult to delegate to or trust others
- Value efficiency (over effectiveness)
- Values decisions made on technical merit alone, often with a blind spot to context and other contingencies

- Difficult to see wider implications of their actions within the whole system
- Accept feedback only from a limited number of people
- Can be dogmatic, particularly in response to ideas outside their own mental framework
- Can get stuck in details
- Critical and competitive with others
- Serial problem-solving
- Difficult to prioritize among competing demands
- Feedback heard as criticism
- **“Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.”** – Albert Einstein
- **“Information is not knowledge”** – Albert Einstein
- **“It is a miracle that curiosity survives formal education”** – Albert Einstein

### Self-questions

- It's simple. Why are they making it so complex?
- Why don't they see that only one answer makes sense here?
- It must be someone's fault. Whose fault is it? Mine? Someone else?
- Since I'm right (and others are wrong), why should I listen to all this other stuff?
- Why should I have someone else do this? I can do it best.
- What should I do first? I'll just take things one at a time.
- Why should I listen to that person?

### Achiever

- Focus on results and effectiveness, rather than just efficiency
- Longer-term goals, future-oriented – strategic perspective
- Sees self as initiator rather than pawn of system
- Seeks proactive ways to address problems
- Team-oriented
- Begins to appreciate unorthodox approaches along with complexity and multiple views, but keeps them separate (difficulty integrating multiple perspectives)
- Doesn't tend to question assumptions of the system as a whole
- Seeks consensus, “agree to disagree,” mutuality and equality
- Self-critical, feels guilt when not meeting own standards or goals
- Believes passionately that rationality and objectivity are vital
- Seeks to be fair and consistent
- Tends to believe s/he knows self and others well, and is in control of own emotions
- Starting to be comfortable with self-reflection
- Behavioral feedback more easily accepted
- **“Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results”** – Albert Einstein
- **“It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer”** - Albert Einstein
- **“Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning.”** – Albert Einstein
- **“Strive not to be a success, but rather to be of value”** – Albert Einstein

### Self-questions

- How can we get this problem solved?
- What can I do to be more successful in this situation?
- What are the [medium time frame] implications we need to consider?
- What can I do to move this forward? What can I contribute?
- What could I have done differently in that situation?
- How can I get better results from my people?
- How can I get buy-in to my ideas of how to move forward?
- Who can I delegate some of this to?
- What's most important to deal with first?
- What are the rules of the system within which I'm working?
- What have I learned in other contexts that I can apply here?
- Are there any courses I can take?
- Might there be any negative consequences to this action?
- Where is the win-win here?
- Who might have a different perspective on this?

## Post-Conventional

### Required for dealing effectively with change and transition

#### Catalyst

- Understands the power of a compelling vision to inspire and empower others
- Wants to develop organizational capacity to meet any strategic challenge
- Creates a highly participative, empowered team that leads change together
- Sees the impact of external contexts on behavior, and internal contexts on how problems are perceived
- Intrigued with differences between reality and appearance
- Increased understanding of complexity, systemic connections and unintended effects of actions
- Begins to question own assumptions and those of others
- Realizes subjectivity of beliefs
- Speaks of interpretations rather than truth
- Can play different roles in different contexts
- Uncommon ability to adjust behavior to context
- Systematic problem solving
- Interested in transformative dialogue, moving beyond positions to create something new, moving beyond win-win
- More actively seeks out and values feedback
- **“All that is valuable in human society depends upon the opportunity for development accorded the individual”** – Albert Einstein
- **“Never lose a holy curiosity”** – Albert Einstein
- **“Our task must be to free ourselves by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty.”** – Albert Einstein

### Self-questions

- What are the underlying assumptions and perspectives?
- What are the multiple factors that need to be considered?
- How can we create a unique solution that none of us have yet considered?
- What's "right" about each perspective?
- What motivates each person involved?
- How does this look from other perspectives?
- How can I craft a compelling vision that will engage people?
- How can I develop through this experience?
- This problem is embedded in what larger contextual issues?
- Might this solution inadvertently create more problems?
- How can I help others grow and develop?
- What are the different roles I can take? How can I be more versatile?
- What do I see when I step back from the situation and reflect?
- Why don't they understand how complex this is?

### Co-Creator

- **Generates organizational and personal transformations**
- Understanding the impact of organizational culture, collaborates with other leaders in building high performance cultures with shared vision and a deep sense of purpose
- Creates a highly engaged team where each member takes responsibility for the whole
- Can take much longer-term perspective
- Recognizes the importance of ethical principles and mindful judgment for making valid and good decisions
- Sees social construction of reality, complexity and interrelationships
- Promotes transformative dialogue, collaborative inquiry for higher-level problem-solving and decision-making
- Interested in interplay of roles, theory, and context, not just rules and customs
- Can embrace paradoxes and contradictions in self and systems, and allow something new to emerge
- Exercises the power of mutual inquiry, openness and vulnerability for both the short and long term
- Deep appreciation of others, tolerance of differences
- Can find rapid decision-making difficult as they see many sides of an argument or situation and do not like to act prematurely or for action's sake
- Creates "positive-sum" solutions
- Uses power in service of the whole
- Seeks feedback from others and environment as vital for growth and making sense of the world
- **"Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler" – Albert Einstein**
- **"Intellectuals solve problems, geniuses prevent them" – Albert Einstein**

- **“To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems from a new angle, requires creative imagination and marks real advance in science.” – Albert Einstein**

### **Self-questions**

- What are the interplaying systems impacting the current situation?
- What are the longer time-frame consequences, implications and opportunities?
- What are the multiple factors and dimensions that need to be considered?
- What principles should guide this decision?
- How could this situation be leveraged to help move (or even transform) the organization forward?
- How can I serve the whole?
- What do I deeply understand about what’s driving each person, and what their perspectives are?
- How can I be truly authentic?
- How can I best draw on the collective wisdom?
- What’s my life purpose, and how can my work and my relationships be an expression of that?
- How can I enhance the lives of others? How can I help them develop?
- How can we all move forward with a sense of shared purpose and collaboration?
- How can we go beyond win/win to a truly transformative dialogue?
- What inner conflicts of mine might be impacting this situation?

Adapted from writings of Susanne Cook-Greuter, Bill Joiner & Stephen Josephs, and others v2.4