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# Puzzles, Mysteries, and Muddles

## Taming the Wild Things that Keep You Up at Night


A systematic approach to problem solving



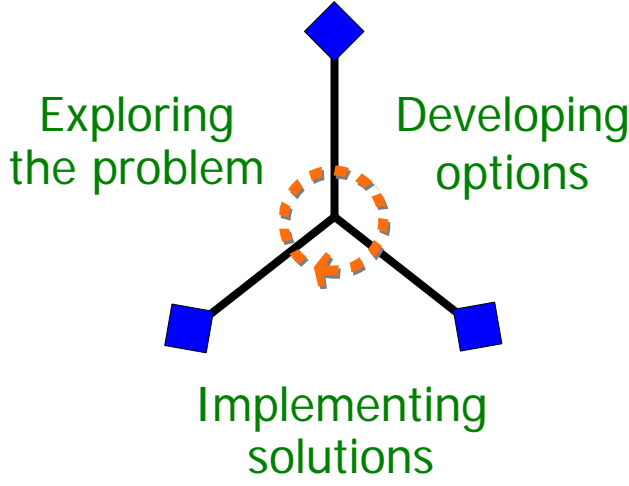
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## Real World Organizational Challenges

- Increasing capability through Mergers & Acquisitions
- Avoiding problems of information access and accuracy by installing enterprise-wide data systems
- Improving work flows by business process re-engineering
- Finding focus by implementing strategic plans
- Pursuing cost savings through downsizing
- Finding synergies through better cross functional coordination
- Anything involving executive egos



### Problem Solving: the Classic Model




Exploring the problem

Developing options

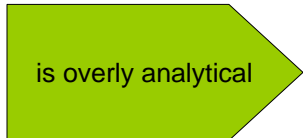
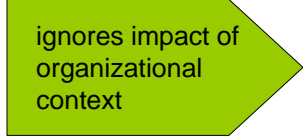
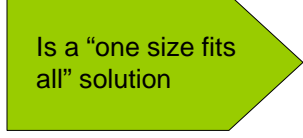
Implementing solutions

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### The PMM Approach

<b>The Classic Model ...</b>		<b>Problems in the World vs. Problems in the Group</b>
		<b>The four phases of problem solving in organizations</b>
		<b>Six problem types</b>

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## A Key Distinction

**Problems in the World** Problems that are creating negative consequences, regardless of our thoughts, awareness or actions

**Problems in the Group** Breakdowns in the dynamics of the problem solving team that limit the quality or speed of problem solving

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## Problem Solving in Organizations

Picking the right problems to solve

Deciding how to think about the problem

Queuing up the organization

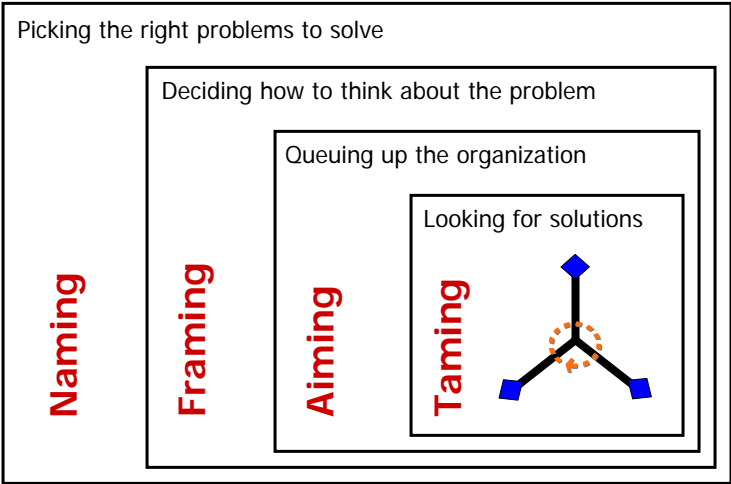
Looking for solutions

**Naming**

**Framing**


**Aiming**

**Taming**



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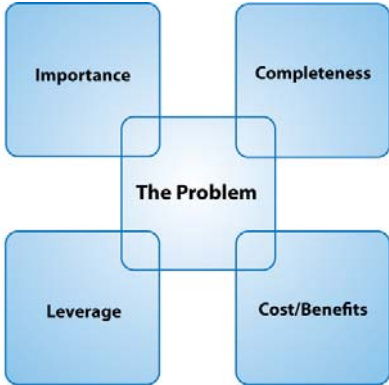
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## Problem Solving in Organizations

Picking the right problems to solve

**Naming**



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## Problem Solving in Organizations

Picking the right problems to solve


**Naming**

**Framing**







Deciding how to think about the problem



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## Six Types of Problems

	<b>Puzzle</b>		<b>Dispute</b>
	<b>Challenge</b>		<b>Dilemma</b>
	<b>Mystery</b>		<b>Complexity</b>


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## Puzzles


**Engineering problems with objective criteria and approved methods; requires expertise**



- Well bounded problems
- Variables mostly knowable ... and known
- Tested methods for finding solutions
- Reusing a known solution is desirable
- Validity of solution is obvious once found
- Clear relationship of parts to the whole allows you to break up the problem into smaller parts


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## Challenge


Overwhelming options with only subjective criteria for solutions; requires vision, courage and artistry



- Vast number of options
- Non-objective criteria
- Reusing a known solution would be unacceptable
- There is an audience that has to believe in it, implement it, invest in it, or buy it ... but can't see it


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## Mystery

Present decisions depend on unknown future events; need to define and track multiple scenarios



- Major variables have unknown values ... often unknowable by their nature
- The future has numerous probable branches
- Problem requires constant attention

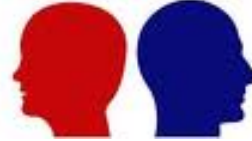
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## Dispute

Conflicting interests of different parties; requires safe forum for negotiated settlement



- Not enough common interest to find agreement on their own
- Often represent enduring differences of perspective
- Political maneuvering of players can obscure critical information
- Need norms of reasonableness and fair play

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## Dilemma


Simultaneous commitment to competing but essential goals; requires shift in mindset and radical collaboration



- An enduring tension, never fully resolved
- If one side loses, everyone loses
- Sometimes oscillate between extremes
- Often shows up as conflict between two departments
- Process is more valuable than the solution found


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## Complexity


Large number of actors simultaneously reacting to each other; unclear boundaries, unusual causality



- Unpredictable and uncontrollable; unintended consequences dominate
- Causal links are circular, reciprocal, or delayed
- System has properties unpredictable from the inputs
- Any change is permanent and may alter system
- Small, symbolic events can be very powerful

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## Problem Types: a summary

- The problem type encapsulates
  - A road map for *resolution*
  - The most useful skills, attitudes and *roles* for the problem solving team
  - What a *solution* would look like
- Initial assumptions about the problem type can guide the executive in framing the problem and even identifying the problem at all.

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## Problem Solving in Organizations

Picking the right problems to solve

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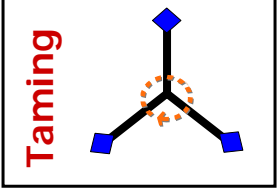
Looking for solutions

**Naming**

**Framing**


**Aiming**

**Taming**









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## Problem Types: paths to solutions

<b>Puzzle</b>		<b>Dispute</b>	
<b>Challenge</b>		<b>Dilemma</b>	
<b>Mystery</b>		<b>Complexity</b>	


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## Taming a Mystery




Scenario #1      Scenario #2      Scenario #3, or more




- Level of uncertainty?
- Likelihood?
- Risk?
- How to track?
- Neutral strategies?

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## Taming a Dispute



A safe forum


POSITIONS

Needs



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## Taming a Dilemma



From...

A ← or → B  
Conflict


...to

A ↑  
↓ B  
Cooperation

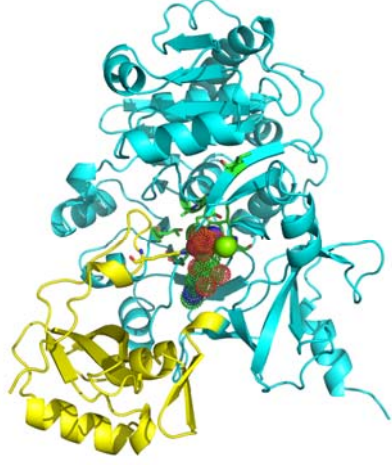
A and B




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## Taming a Complexity



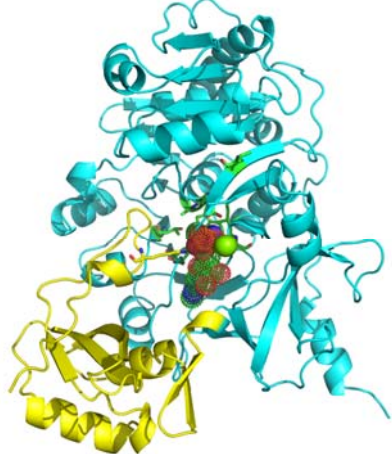
- Patterns?
- Missing events?
- Unique events?
- Leverage points?



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## Leading a Complexity: Company Building



- Formal structure
- Informal networks
- Culture
- Processes
- Technology trends**
- Interpersonal and organizational skills
- Individual agendas
- Open boundaries  
(Customer interfaces, turnover, data flows)

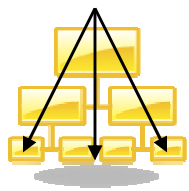
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## Two Views of Visioning

### Run the Company



- Publish
- Train
- Expand
- Track behavior

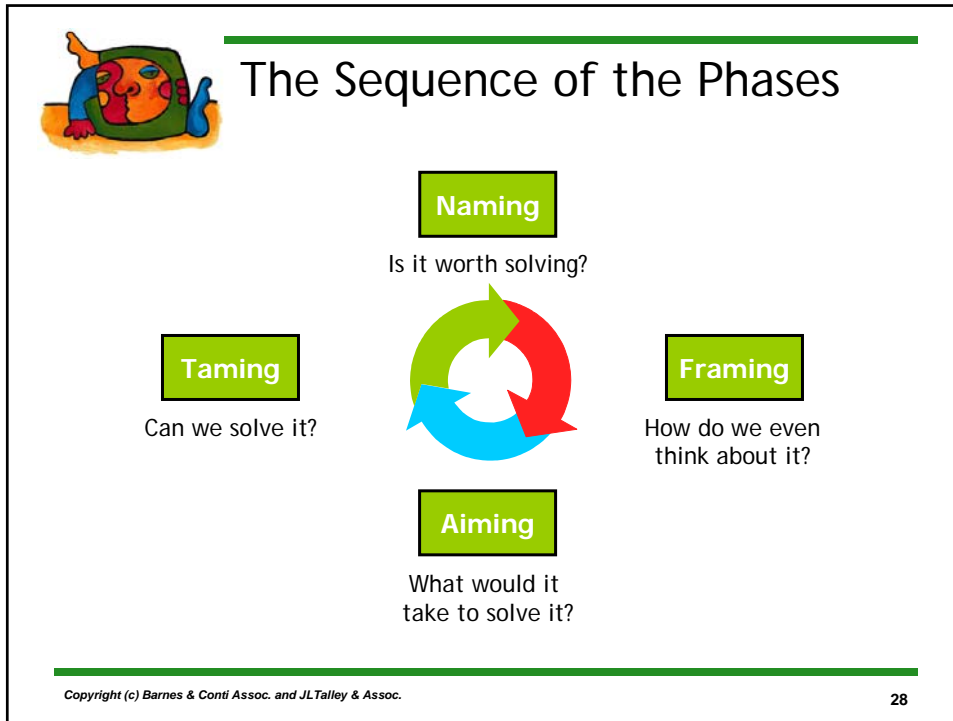
### Ride the Company



- Publish
- Engage
- Test
- Track thinking

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"The most serious mistakes are not made as a result of wrong answers. The truly dangerous thing is asking the wrong questions."

— Peter Drucker

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