Solving a Workplace Problem

**Instructions:** You must choose any two of the five scenarios to apply the problem-solving process. Complete each step to help you work toward a solution. Be sure to indicate the scenario you are choosing to apply the problem-solving process to.

STEP 1: WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

What are the symptoms of the problem?

What is the root cause of the problem — the real problem?

STEP 2: WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS?

Are there any factors that you need to consider when choosing a solution? (E.g. policies, procedures, etc.)

What are the advantages and disadvantages of each possible solution?

What are the consequences of each possible solution?

STEP 3: WHAT IS THE BEST SOLUTION?

Which solution is the best overall? Why?

Choose a solution and act on it!

STEP 4: DETERMINE HOW TO ACHIEVE THE BEST SOLUTION

Think about what you will have to do to reach your solution. What resources might you need to use?

STEP 5: IS THE PROBLEM SOLVED?

Did the chosen solution solve the problem? If not, return to Step 1 to review the problem again. Try using a different approach.

# Scenarios

**Scenario 1**

A cashier is working the night shift at a 24-hour grocery store. He notices that a customer is acting suspiciously and has a large bulge under her coat. The cashier thinks the customer is shoplifting. The cashier's responsibilities include preventing theft (loss prevention). Pretend that you are the cashier.

*Things to consider:*

Do you approach the customer? If so, how?

What if the customer becomes aggressive?

**Scenario 2**

An early childhood educator is employed at a nursery school. One of the children often becomes upset and aggressive towards the other children when her parents leave the school. This often leads to other children becoming upset as well. School policy states that no child can emotionally or physically harm another child. The educator consults with the parents about the issue. Pretend that you are either the educator or the parent of the child.

*Things to consider:*

How do you ensure that everyone's, the children, parents, and educator, interests are taken into consideration?

**Scenario 3**

A front desk clerk is working at a large hotel. At 10 PM, she receives a complaint from a hotel guest that some of the guests staying on the same floor are having a party and are very loud. He asks that the issue is resolved as soon as possible. Hotel policy states that excessive noise will not be tolerated after 9:30 PM. Pretend that you are the front desk clerk.

*Things to consider:*

Do you approach the guests who are causing noise? If so, how?

How do you ensure that everyone involved is satisfied?

**Scenario 4**

A production clerk is working at a small car manufacturing plant. He is responsible for inspecting parts and deciding if they meet the quality standards. The clerk receives a large batch of parts and sees that the production quality is poor. Ordering new parts could cost the plant time and money, but using poor quality parts could cause problems in the future. Due to the fast-paced production schedule, the clerk must quickly decide what to do with the questionable parts. The company has an excellent reputation for meeting high-quality standards. Pretend that you are the production clerk.

*Things to consider:*

Who should you approach about the issue?

Are the parts made in-house, or are they from a supplier?

**Scenario 5**

A server is working at a busy restaurant. She is serving eight tables and is rushing to keep up. One of the customers calls her over to say he is not happy with the quality of the service and, therefore, refuses to pay the bill. The server is trying to deal with the customer while continuing to serve the other patrons. The restaurant is committed to ensuring that, generally, customers leave satisfied with their experience. Pretend that you are the server.

*Things to consider:*

Who should you approach about the issue?

What if the customer becomes angry? What if other customers become frustrated?