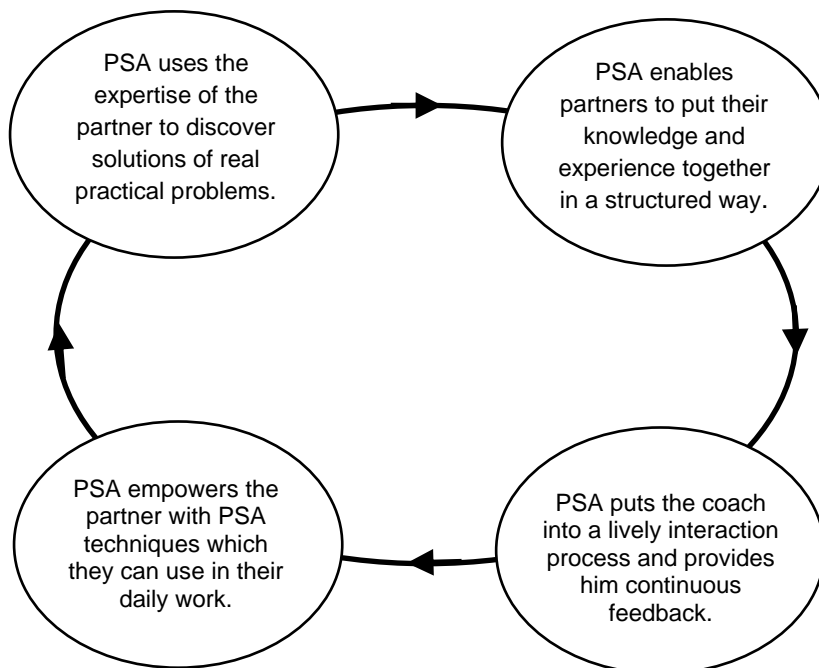

The Problem-Solving-Approach / PSA

Basics

(A) The four Corner Stones of PSA

PSA has its roots in the **experience** and **participation** of the coaching partner. In an **interactive process** of discussion and practical work both the coach and the coaching partner are solving practical real problems they have to cope with.

The **PSA as coaching procedure** is a highly effective and handy tool. It consists of a set of techniques of experience-oriented learning which are used in coaching and management.



(B) What is a problem?

Nobody has no problems. But everybody's problems are a little bit different from the problems of the other, looking at them differently and tackling them in a different way according to his / her experiences. Therefore, PSA needs sound awareness of the variety of perceived experience.

A "problem" is the difference between the way something **is** and the way it could or **should be**. It might be an obstacle to the satisfaction of a need, a lack of resources (funds, tools and machines), knowledge and skills, a poor job performance, the absence of co-ordination and communication, or a weak management of manpower.

What ought to be = desirable situation

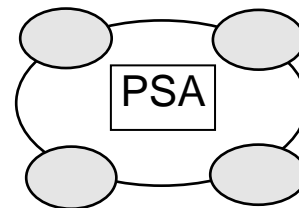


What is: actual situation

💣 problem / bottleneck: where pinches the shoe in my daily work?

👉 ? What do we have to change?

👉 ? How can we find out?



Procedure

Step 1: MINDSETTING and WARMING UP

What is the topic? Sketch the major elements of it. Tell a typical story about an experience or a critical incident. Make pictures of the actual situation and explain them jointly.

Set a YES AND climate

"Yes and" is an interactive communication method of beating premature evaluation and criticism when collecting and screening ideas. As a shorthand we talk about a "yes but" climate, and a "yes and" climate. A "yes but" climate is one in which people are prone to respond to any new idea with a "yes but ...".

This is one of the well-known **killer phrases** which are themselves signals of a negative mind set. The negative mind set is based on unconsciously held beliefs, and we can weaken these by becoming conscious: we begin to reduce the damage caused by excessive "yes butting", by substituting "yes and".

"Yes but" implies: there is something wrong with this idea. I want nothing further to do with this bad idea. "Yes and" implies: there is something that can be improved about this idea. I am willing to work at it to improve it as best I can.

Step 2: POSITIONING and PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE

What have we done? Where are we now? Who is involved? Identify and discuss the final objective of the activities related to the topic / to the problem. Then, describe the major activities undertaken to achieve the objective.

Step 3: COLLECTION AND CLARIFICATION

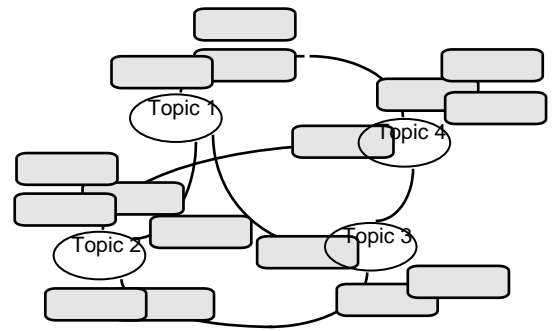
Make sure that the coaching partner understands the meaning of the collected problems. Avoid discussions at this moment. Stick to a positive reception of all sort of contributions.

TOOLS

(1) Card-and-chart: Coaching partners write suggestions and problems on cards and coach collects and pins them up. Note: only one suggestion per card and only three lines per card.

(2) All sorts of Brainstorming / -writing

(3) Mind Mapping: Coach starts with any problem brought up by a coaching partner (on pin-board or flip-chart) and associates it to a topic; subsequently, the problems can be inter-linked if necessary. The patterns of Mind Maps are likely to show how information is linked in the brain.



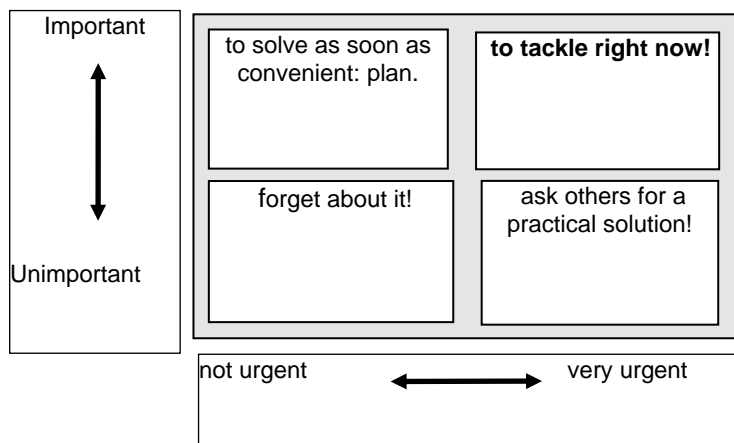
Step 4: STRUCTURING

Sort and stream the collected problems according to relevant aspects of the jobs. This can be done by using different techniques:

TOOLS

(4) Eisenhower-Principle

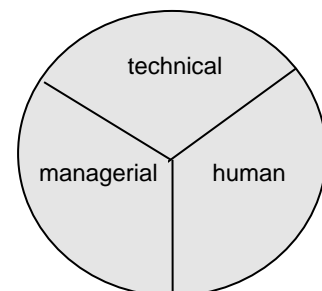
Select key problems by putting them in four boxes applying your own criteria, e.g., by rating with dots. Work only on the ones in the box.



(5) Problem Circle

Select key problems which were written down on cards by putting by applying three types of criteria:

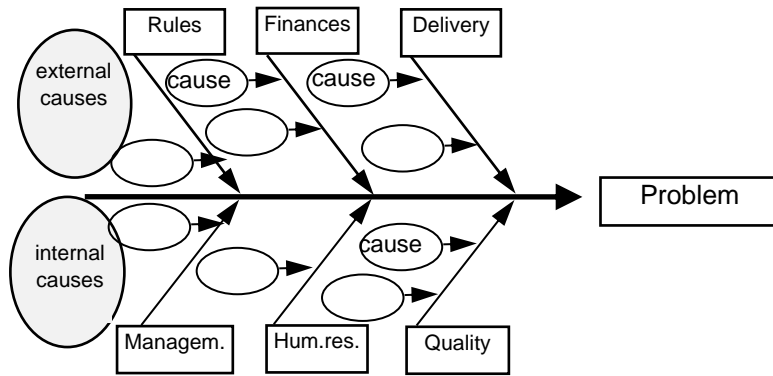
- technical
- management related
- human related



TOOLS

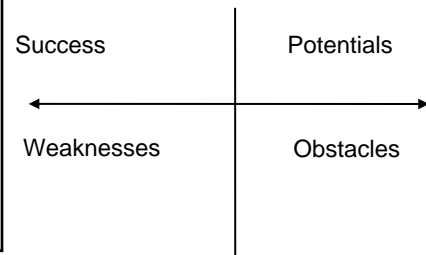
(6) Fishbone (or Pathfinder)

This is a way of sorting, classifying and splitting problems into sub-problems which encourages **WHY-questions** and thus lead to **paths** towards possible solutions if we assume that we can solve problems by removing its causes. This holds true in a lot of cases.



(7) SWPO Window

A more comprehensive approach embarks on a participatory **assessment of experiences** and potentials related to the topic by using the well-known SWPO procedure: the coach divides the pin-board into four equal areas and allocates a question to each.



Step 5: KEY PROBLEM

Select **key problems** by choosing priorities. Concentrate on problems of which the coaching partners think they can be solved by means within the available range of action. Provide further background information out of technical manuals if necessary. Give advice how to use this reference material.

Step 6: OPTIONS, POSSIBLE AND BEST SOLUTIONS

Develop with the coaching partner or in small separate groups possible solutions (Options) and estimate the main resources needed to implement them. Discuss the different alternatives. Screen possible solutions by referring to **advantages / disadvantages** (inherent to the possible solution) and **constraints** (environment, institutional set up). Take decision on the best combination of possible solutions (= best solution).

Step 7: ACTION PLAN

The coaching partner develops (supported by the coach) an **action plan**.

TOOLS				
(8) Action Plan				
Key problem:Solution:				
what?	result?	who?	with whom?	by when?
1 ...				
2 ...				
3 ...				
4 ...				
5 ...				

Discuss the action plan by answering the following questions:

1. Is the AP valid and feasible: "the right way to go!"
2. Is it possible to put the AP into practice: "we have the means to go!"
3. What kind of support and follow up do we need?

Step 8: TEST and IMPLEMENT

If possible test the action plan: make trials on site. Try out and adapt to the real situation towards a sustainable improvement.

Bottom Line

Locus-of-control pattern and resilience: According to their social and cultural background people have different **coping strategies and degree of resilience** (ability to get through difficult situations without suffering long lasting negative consequences). The capacity to work on issues depends highly on the **perception** of the actors and how they perceive opportunities and blockages in the outer world. They may believe that they are shaped by the outer world. On the other side, based on experience and their self-concept people may suppose that they can act freely and exert influence. Or, on the other hand, they tend to think that can't shape their environment and their relations to others.

Exit and voice: Coping strategies are shaped by a dual pattern: When confronted with an obstacle, we can run away (exit), or we can take it as a challenge and try to overcome it. (voice).

The PSA techniques can only enhance the ability of practical problem-solving if the coach is aware of the real **action range** of the coaching partner and should focus on its potential enlargement.