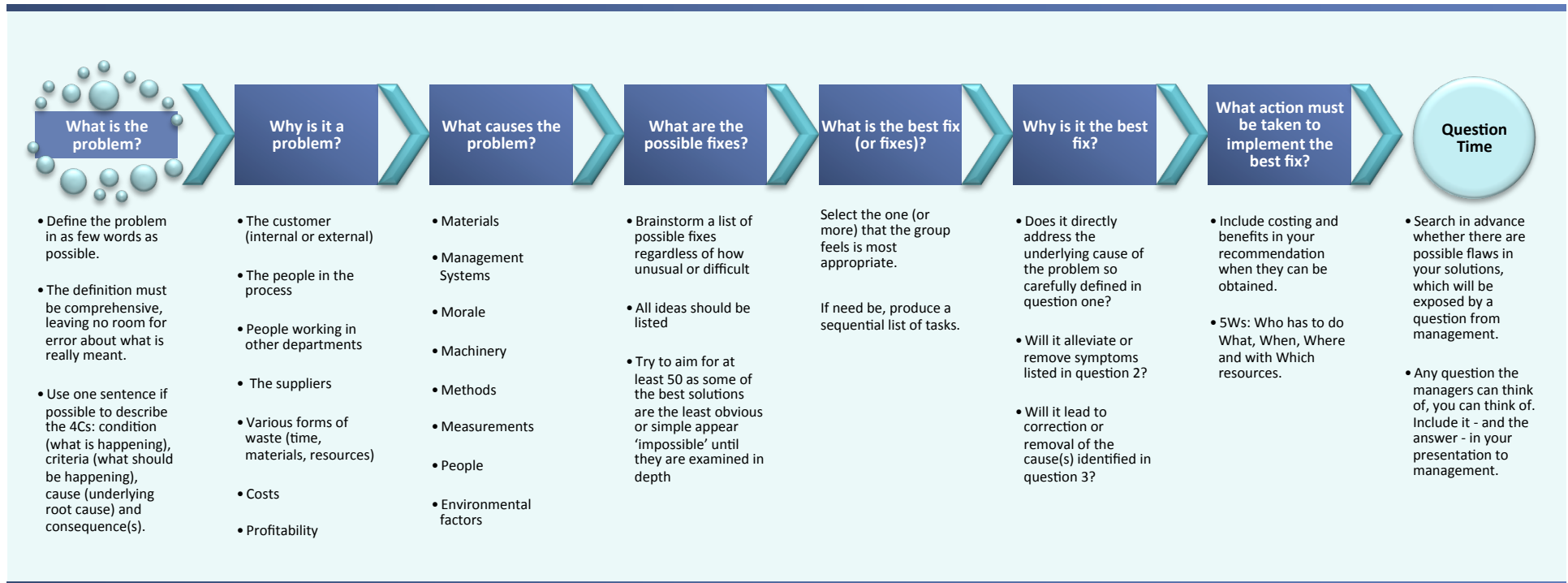


# 8 Step Problem Solving Methodology

This process will work on any problem in any situation, for both individuals and organizations.



## HOW TO USE THIS PROCESS

You can use this as an individual exercise, in which case you can download a template from [www.juliantalbot.com](http://www.juliantalbot.com) but it also works extremely well as a group brainstorming session or creative workshop processes to help a team resolve a particularly challenging problem.

The First Step is the most important one (and the one that sometimes takes the longest the most time). The reason most intractable problems appear intractable, is that they haven't been clearly defined and agreed. Define it in as few words as possible, but ensure that it is comprehensive, leaving no room for error about what is really meant. You might for example (as one of our clients did) identify an issue related to ongoing operational losses associated with cost overruns. This unfortunately isn't a problem than can be addressed because it hasn't been defined. From this initial 'issue' however, you might with the help of a workshop or three, establish that the cost overruns occur because managers don't receive timely or accurate financial reports. This could be due to a number of issues and would almost certainly take volumes to fully describe, but it might for example come back to something like *"Failure to deliver organizational objectives within budget due to cost overruns, as a result of inadequate financial reporting"*. You might still need lengthy descriptions, graphs or data to define the exact issues and solutions, but at least everyone can now see the underlying issue and describe it in a single sentence. So how do we do this consistently? The 4 C's are a handy guide to clarify our understanding:

- Criteria - What should be going on? What are the organizational objectives? Are we compliant with internal or external standards and guidelines?
- Consequence - What might happen if we do not fix it?
- Condition - What is going on?
- Cause - Why is this happening? What is the root cause?

Once you've worked through the full process, the results can be implemented immediately in many cases. In more complex situations or where the solution is expensive, this process forms the basis of a report or business case. Just change the headings and you're report is written. Eg: Change "What is the problem?" to "Background" and "What are the possible fixes?" to "Options considered", etc and you've got your action plan documented.