

## Episode 68: How do you solve complex problems?

Complex problems can be given to someone who doesn't know how to solve them. They start by doing all the wrong things first and this can make the project worse.



1. First: stop and plan: Resist the temptation to jump to the answer - complex problems need structure, team work and planning. Take the time now or you will waste a lot along the way.
2. Clarify your end customer: Always be clear to whom and what you need to deliver and on what day. Also consider the key influencers of what that person or people might be.
3. Detail expectations: Work with the influencers and decision makers to detail their expectations not only of the work but the whole project. Include timelines and review cycles. This is the time to ask the key influencers and decision makers who you should work with.
4. Layout the timelines: Use these expectations to layout the times for the project including check points, reviews and final presentations. Now is the time to book people onto calendars.
5. Assemble the team: Create your cross functional team but remember they will probably have other roles too and you need to 'sell them' on the idea of being part of the team not just 'tell them'.
6. Agree the Objectives: As a team, do the work to define and agree objectives. This is a discovery process for the whole team and while it may feel like you know all this, the learning is part of the team bonding.
7. Detail your assumptions: Be careful as a team to detail and test your assumptions with your sponsors and decision makers. You will need to make assumptions - clarity and agreement will help your final output.
8. Understand the Strategy Process: In episode 34 we looked at a simple strategy process – getting this wrong will waste a lot of time on irrelevant details that will slow the team down.
9. Delegate the data collection: Chances are you are going to need data. Quickly assess what is needed and start to divide the workload of collecting it. Share this workload evenly.
10. Be the captain of the team not the commandant: Bringing the team together is just the beginning. Keeping it together is important but if you want success, you need it to work together.

After these 10, the real work starts. Other episodes that might help with this are 8, 11, 32, 34, 56 and 62.

Bottom line: As the old saying goes, "he who fails to plan, plans to fail". Solving your complex problem is as much about the planning and team work as it is about the analysis and final decision making.