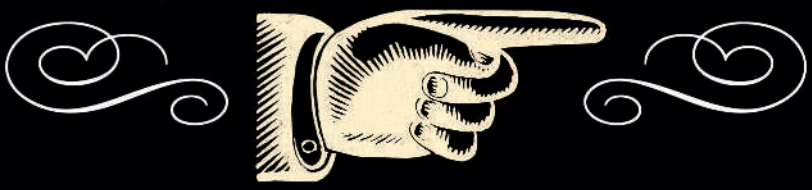
HOW TO SOLVE ALMOST ANY PROBLEM



ALAN BARKER

How to Solve Almost Any Problem

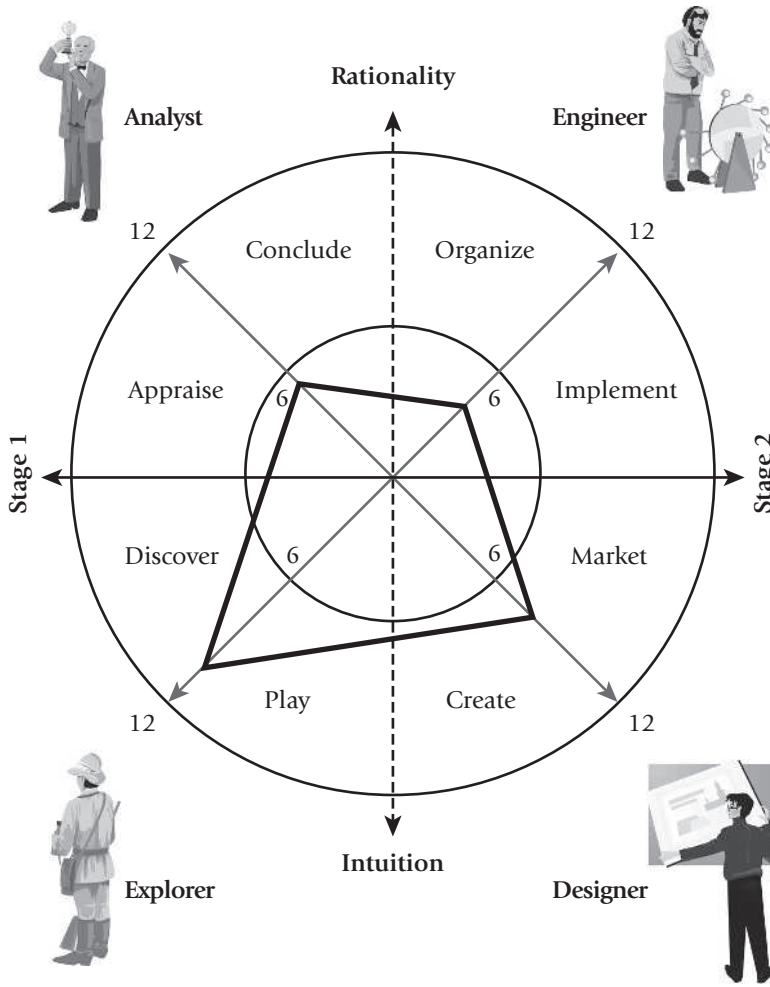


Figure 3.6 Sample profile: weighted towards the intuitive

No one style is naturally more versatile than another. Versatility may mean slowing down, or using more of the Analytical or Designer skills. It may mean moving more quickly into Explorer or Engineer mode. Analyst and Engineer usually benefit from developing interpersonal skills, and building relationships with others. Explorer and Designer often benefit from developing the more systematic skills of Analyst or Engineer.

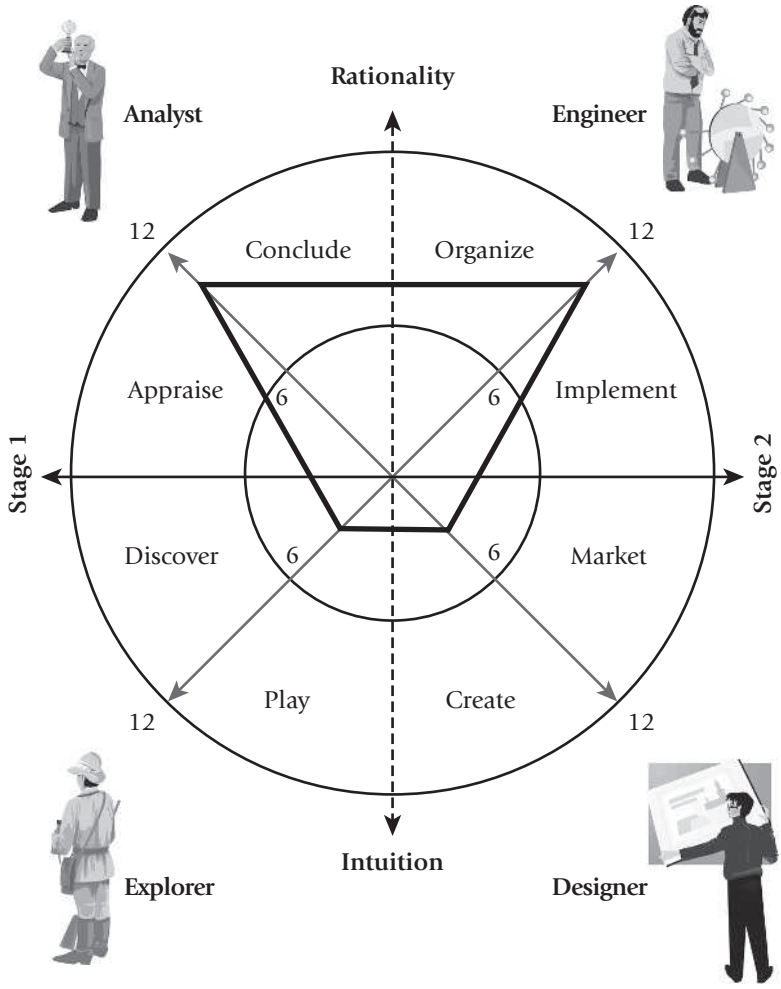


Figure 3.7 Sample profile: weighted towards rationality

It's easier to be versatile in some situations than in others. We often use one style in our professional lives and a different style in our personal or social lives. We may find ourselves less versatile when we're trying to solve problems with people we know well.

We need to decide how versatile we want to be. The temporary stress of using a 'foreign' problem-solving style may be worth it for the sake of improved results. Working a long way outside our comfort zone, however, may actually harm our effectiveness and do us little good. It's worth choosing our experiments in new problem-solving styles with some care.

There's no doubt, though, that by becoming more versatile problem-solvers, we increase our effectiveness generally. We can take more control over the issues that affect us, and increase our power to influence events. We can take fuller ownership of the problems we encounter.

And problem ownership is what we'll explore in the next chapter.

In brief

Becoming a better problem-solver means becoming more versatile.

We can identify four broad problem-solving styles:

- Analyst
- Explorer
- Engineer
- Designer.

Analyst and Explorer are the two styles of Stage 1 problem-solving: defining or describing problems.

Engineer and Designer are the two styles of Stage 2 problem-solving: generating solutions.

Analyst and Engineer are more rational styles, which tend to act *on* a situation.

Explorer and Designer are more intuitive styles, which tend to act *with* a situation.

Explorer's two key activities are discovering and playing.

Analyst's two key activities are appraising and concluding.

Engineer's two key activities are organizing and implementing.

Designer's two key activities are creating and marketing.

We can become more versatile by focusing on the styles that we're least comfortable with. We can explore whether we're more comfortable with intuitive or rational styles, and by understanding whether we favour Stage 1 or Stage 2 thinking. By developing different styles, we can become more versatile and more effective problem-solvers.


Chapter