

Problem Solving

The top 10 questions to ask when something doesn't work.

The Cast

The first thing that you have to do
when something has gone wrong
Is make a list of who to ask
It shouldn't take too long

Number one is called the Asker,
and that is often you.
Then there is the Askee
he/she is number two.

In case you have a problem
which may require three
The stupid question asker
fits that role nic-e-ly

In many situations
it really doesn't hurt
to ask the person we believe
is *THE* domain expert

There is one other person
to avoid more oft'n than not.
And that's the Project Manager
He'll help you. Not a lot!

Problem Solving

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The Process

The question list you follow
depends upon your role.
The questions that you ask
come deep down from your soul.

In no particular order
is the way the questions go.
You keep on digging deeper
'til the answer you do know.

The general process to perform
involves these five, you'll see
first go through the Asker's Q's
then bother the Askee

The Stupid Question Asker's
come in at number three
you'll often find involving them
resolves it quick-er-ly

Next you try the expert
who may actually be thee.
But please avoid the PM;
to maintain your sanity.

Problem Solving

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The Askee's questions

1. So here is your first question.

Don't tell me I'm a jerk.

*"But have you seen this function
ever act-u-ally work?"*

2. Question 2 is good and true
and doesn't cost a dime

*"Do you really think it worked
when you ran it last time?"*

3. Question 3.

A bit of fun.

Ask yourself

"What have I done?"

4. We know you're really busy,
you have a full work load
but please try to remember...

"Are you sure you changed the code?"

5. Now think again more carefully.

Try not to get annoyed

*"The code that you are running,
is that what you deployed?"*

6. Dig deep into the source files
and you may get a fright

*"The code and comments do not match.
So which of them is right?"*

Problem Solving

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There are a few more questions.
Well, slightly more than three.
but let's now shift and look at those
we get from the Askee

The Askee

The Askee knows that nowadays
it doesn't cost that mu(r)ch
to choose some words then type in
your best long tail Google search

So no results, then this technique
can often be your saviour
Reduce the problem to the simplest
showing bad behaviour

The next question will demonstrate
that you are really keen.
Ask them to reproduce the bug
on a-not-her machine

Problem Solving

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The Stupid Question Asker

So still no luck, it's time to call the
Stupid Question Man

Who usually says, "Explain again
the problem if you can"

I know you think I'm stupid
because I'm not a geek
but does the code work on
any other day of the week?

And regarding the data,
you'll think that I'm a chump
"but does it work on Windows
running last Wednesday's dump"?

I know I've suffered this myself
I don't think it's a sin
"I often find I can't do things
until I am logged in"

Problem Solving

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The Expert

And still you have no answer.
Are you feeling strong...
to hear the Expert tell you that
"You're *doing it all wrong*"?

Or "Why then should I help you?
It's really not your place,
to say you've got a problem
but not provide a trace!"

Another of their answers
offered without delay
"When I upgraded to version x
the problem went away"

It only works on Windows,
not Linux nor Unix?
So take a break, it's time to take
time for a bar of Twix.

(should be KitKat - but don't argue with the
Expert!)

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The Project Manager

I'm going to skip the questions
the PM may well raise, like
"When'll you have a fix for it,
are we talking hours or days?"

Or, "If this problem had occurred
not in test but in live,
then how long would our e-business
be able to survive?"

Conclusion

Problem solving is a skill,
you learn more every day.
The bugs are in there somewhere.
They don't just go away.

Post Scriptum

Use these questions in your work;
when hacking in your den.
But never try to number them
in order: 1 to 10.

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For the original script from which this poem was taken see:
rowlandscastlewebdesign.com/phphants/2013/11/01/top-10-questions-to-ask-when-something-doesnt-work

For the true original see:
solongandthanksforallthehoti.blogspot.co.uk/2009/09/top-10-list-of-questions-to-ask-when.html

For the Lightning talk at WordCamp Bournemouth see:
herbmiller.me/2014/07/12/problem-solving-lightning-talk