

Solve Forever Protocol

Stop Solving the Same Problems Repeatedly

If you're solving the same problem twice, you failed the first time.

The Three-Phase Framework

See It → Solve It → Systematize It

This protocol eliminates “zombie problems”—issues that recur quarter after quarter, consuming resources without ever being truly resolved.

Phase 1: See It Through Transparency, Not Meetings

Traditional Approach (Slow):

1. Someone notices an issue
2. Raises it in the next scheduled meeting
3. Gets discussed by a committee
4. Assigned to a cross-functional task force
5. Analyzed for multiple quarters
6. Report generated with recommendations
7. Implementation planned for next budget cycle

8. Problem continues during entire process

Velocity Operating System Approach (Fast):

1. Problem surfaces automatically in data
 2. Immediately visible to everyone affected
 3. Pattern recognition triggered by AI
 4. Root cause identified through systematic analysis
 5. Solution implemented within 90 days maximum
 6. **Problem eliminated permanently**
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Building Systems That Surface Problems Faster Than Humans

Leading organizations build transparency into operations:

| TRIGGER | AUTOMATIC RESPONSE |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Error rates spike above thresholds | Automatic alerts to relevant teams |
| Performance degrades below standards | Dashboard warnings with root cause analysis |
| Customer impact detected | Immediate escalation to decision-makers |
| Safety signals identified | Instant notification to medical teams |

Key principle: Problems should be impossible to hide, and support should be automatic when they appear.

Phase 2: Solve It By Elimination, Not Management

Hierarchy of Solutions (Best to Worst)

1. Eliminate the Need Entirely ★ BEST

Can we remove the step that creates the problem?

Example: Biotech eliminated protocol amendment delays by making protocols parametric from the start—modification triggers built directly into original protocol.

Result: Amendment problem eliminated, not managed.

2. Automate the Solution

If we can't eliminate the process, can machines handle it better?

Example: Clinical data reconciliation automated with exception-only human review.

Result: Weeks reduced to hours, 85% of manual work eliminated.

3. Delegate with Clear Criteria

If humans must be involved, can we push it to the edge with rules?

Example: Site payments delegated to finance managers with spending limits and vendor approval criteria.

Result: 92% of delays eliminated, decisions made by people closest to the work.

4. Create Systematic Human Process

Last resort for genuine complexity requiring human judgment.

Example: Critical safety decisions with clear escalation paths and defined response times.

Use only when: The decision requires genuine human judgment that can't be codified.

NEVER: Add Oversight Layers

Don't: Add quality review committees to catch data entry errors

Do: Fix the data entry system to prevent errors

Adding layers = admitting systematic failure

Phase 3: Systematize It Into Code and Process

Core Principle

"Every manual fix is a future problem waiting to happen. Every workaround is tomorrow's crisis. Every heroic intervention is an admission of systematic failure that will recur."

When you solve a problem, encode the solution so it can't revert.

Traditional vs. Systematized Examples

Sarah (Data Manager)

- **Traditional:** Manually checks for duplicate patient IDs every morning
- **Systematized:** Database rejects duplicate IDs automatically

Mike (Site Coordinator)

- **Traditional:** Emails sites weekly for enrollment updates, compiles into status reports
- **Systematized:** Sites enter data directly into shared dashboard; stakeholders access real-time updates

Jennifer (Safety Monitor)

- **Traditional:** Reviews every protocol deviation looking for patterns
- **Systematized:** AI identifies deviation patterns automatically and suggests preventive measures

Identifying Zombie Problems

Common Examples:

- "Communication between departments needs improvement"
- "Data quality issues are impacting timelines"
- "Vendor management remains challenging"
- "Resource allocation is suboptimal"
- "Site payment delays are affecting relationships"
- "Protocol amendments are taking too long"

The Defining Characteristic:

If the same problem appears in quarterly reviews repeatedly, you're not solving it—you're managing it.

Real Example: The Clinical Issues War Room

A pharmaceutical company operated a "Clinical Issues War Room" for **four years**:

- **Cost:** \$3.2 million annually
- **Result:** Problems persisted
- **Reality:** \$400,000 in automation and process redesign would have eliminated problems permanently

Lesson: "If you're optimizing problem management instead of eliminating problems, you've built an organization designed to fail systematically."

The Second-Time Test

Simple Rule:

If you're solving the same problem twice, you failed the first time.

Statistics from a Clinical Research Organization:

- 67% of problems were repeats from previous quarters
- 45% had been "solved" three or more times
- 23% had been recurring issues for over two years
- 12% had permanent staff dedicated to managing them

Diagnosis: "They weren't solving problems. They were performing problem theater for stakeholders while accepting systematic dysfunction."

The 90-Day Maximum

Core Principle:

Any problem existing for more than 90 days isn't a problem—it's a feature. You've built your organization around it instead of eliminating it.

What You Can Accomplish in 90 Days:

- Understand root causes
- Design permanent solutions
- Build systematic fixes
- Implement across the organization
- Verify elimination

If you can't solve it in 90 days, you're not trying to solve it—you're managing it because management is easier than elimination.

Solve Forever Worksheet

Step 1: Identify Recurring Problems

List problems that have appeared in the last 3 quarterly reviews:

| PROBLEM | TIMES APPEARED | RESOURCES SPENT | STILL RECURRING? |
|---------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| | | | Yes / No |
| | | | Yes / No |
| | | | Yes / No |
| | | | Yes / No |
| | | | Yes / No |

Any "Yes" = Management failure, not operational issue

Step 2: Apply the Solution Hierarchy

For each recurring problem:

Problem: _____

Can we eliminate the need entirely?

- ☐ Yes → Action: _____
- ☐ No → Continue to next question

Can we automate the solution?

- ☐ Yes → Action: _____
- ☐ No → Continue to next question

Can we delegate with clear criteria?

- ☐ Yes → Action: _____
- ☐ No → Continue to next question

Does it require systematic human process?

- ☐ Yes → Define process: _____
- ☐ No → Why does this problem exist?

Step 3: Systematize the Solution

Solution identified: _____

How will this be encoded into systems/processes so it can't recur?

- ☐ Database constraint
- ☐ Automated workflow
- ☐ Decision criteria codified
- ☐ AI pattern detection
- ☐ Platform feature
- ☐ Policy with enforcement mechanism
- ☐ Other: _____

Owner: ____ **Completion date:** __

How will we verify elimination? _____

Step 4: Track Zero Recurrence

30-day check: Has this problem resurfaced?

- ☐ No → Solution working, mark complete
- ☐ Yes → Solution failed, return to Step 2

90-day check: Has this problem resurfaced?

- ☐ No → Solution successful, share approach
 - ☐ Yes → Systematic failure, escalate for deeper intervention
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Real-World Implementation Results

Week 1: See It

- 147 problems identified
- **89 were repeats from previous quarters** (management failure)
- **34 had existed over one year** (organizational features, not problems)

Week 4: Solve It

- 67 eliminated entirely by removing unnecessary steps
- 43 automated with no human involvement required
- 31 delegated with clear criteria to edge decision-makers
- 6 required new human processes for genuine complexity

Results:

- **73% reduction in operational issues**
 - **91% of solutions never required re-solving**
 - **Cultural shift from problem managers to problem eliminators**
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Success Criteria

Problems solved twice drops to zero

Common pitfall: Adding management instead of elimination

90-Day target: All recurring problems eliminated or systematized

Getting Started

1. **This week:** List all problems from last 3 quarterly reviews
2. **Next week:** Identify which are management failures (recurring)
3. **Week 3-4:** Apply solution hierarchy to top 5 recurring problems
4. **Week 5-12:** Implement systematized solutions with zero-recurrence tracking

Remember: If you're solving it again, you didn't solve it the first time. Fix the system, not the symptom.

From The Velocity Framework: Breakthrough Biotechs @ Breakthrough Speed