



Chemical and Process
Industries Division
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Understanding and Addressing Complexity in Problem Solving

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When attempting to solve different problems, complexity manifests itself in many ways, and different tools are needed to tackle the different dimensions underlying it. Not all complexity is created equal. Both the statistical and quality literature tend to focus narrowly on technical complexity in problem solving. This includes complexity of subject matter knowledge as well as complexity in the data access and analysis of that data. The literature also lacks an understanding of how organizational complexity interferes with good technical solutions when trying to deploy a solution. As a consequence, those trained in statistical problem solving are unprepared for real-world situations. Based on our own experiences, we propose a framework that illustrates different elements of complexity. This framework highlights the need for more holistic problem-solving approaches and a broader view of complexity. Statistical engineering is a great approach for successfully navigating complexity.

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