

For Permanent & Positive Change

The Exchange

FEATURED TOPIC: FOCUSING ON SOLUTIONS

Know the Problem

In our nano-second world, we often feel compelled to fix a problem under unforgiving time restraints. How many times have you fixed a problem that ended up not being the culprit? Before jumping into a costly solution, make sure you understand the problem.

If a piece of equipment is not working, it can be seemingly simple to fix the problem. Call for maintenance and now it is their problem. Other troubles, such as a marketing campaign that isn't working or a team that isn't reaching goals, may seem more complex to correct. At least you know you can't call maintenance, or can you?

To find the problem, the maintenance people run several tests to determine what is wrong. Only then do they set about fixing it. You can apply a similar procedure.

One test you can run is the Why-Why. Write down a question, such as, "What is wrong with the marketing campaign?" It's good to use a small group to brainstorm the answers to the question. Spend about ten minutes with each person giving short (9 words) phrases as answers with no interruptions or comments. Make sure the group takes turns with each person responding sequentially. At this point, judgements are not allowed. Follow the brainstorm with a brief discussion and then have the group vote for their top 3. Now you are ready for the Why-Why.

Write down the most popular answer from the brainstorm and ask, "Why?" Whatever answers you get, again ask, "Why?" You keep asking why until there are no more answers or until you circle back to an earlier one. This method can help you to accurately define the problem.

You cannot fix the problem until you fully understand it. So slow down just a bit. Instead of running off and fixing things that may not even need to be repaired, spend some time doing the diagnosis that any mechanic worth his wrench would do. ❖

What Our Clients Are Saying

Again, we thank you for having raised the bar on customer service.

Sharon Winston

Find the Solutions

If you watch cop shows on television, the writers often portray the police as looking for the person "who done it" and stopping their search when they find a likely suspect. Before you get mad at the writers (we don't want another strike!) or blame the police for this stereotypical behavior, realize this is part of human nature. Most people have the tendency to stop looking when they come up with an idea that solves the problem.

To be a successful leader, you need to find the right solutions, not just one solution. That is a more complete approach and can uncover contributing issues that need to be corrected. How do you do this? The answer is within the question. You use the How-How.

As mentioned in the article, Know the Problem, brainstorm a question that is seeking solutions. An example could be, "How do we get this team completing work on time?" After you have gathered your responses, discussed them, and voted, you apply the How-How.

For each popular (voted) answer you ask, "How" as in "How do we do this?" For each answer to that question, you again ask, "How?" The questioning continues until you have the steps necessary to implement the solution. Remember to do this for all of the ideas that received the top 20% of votes.

If you are thinking that this method will take too much time, how much time and money does it take to apply the wrong solution? Putting a small amount of time up-front can save time, resources, and attitudes. How? Use the How-How. need to be repaired, spend some time doing the diagnosis that any mechanic worth his wrench would do. ❖

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Looking Forward

Our next issue will focus on Focusing on Listening.

Looking Back

You might also be interested in our [Asking for Help](#) or read other [previous issues of The Exchange](#).

"When you confront a problem you begin to solve it."

Rudy Giuliani

For Permanent & Positive Change

Salute Solutions

Vincent Phipps

Helen Keller wrote, "It's hard to feel the darkness of the shadows when you keep your face pointed at the sun."

These are inspiring words from a woman who, almost from birth, was deaf and blind yet still managed to travel the world and accomplish more in her life than many of us with full sight and vision. How? She focused on solutions.

Often we exhaust our emotional and intellectual energies on potential problems instead of channeling our passions toward practical solutions. We can learn from Helen and others.

George Washington Carver, born in 1864, was an African-American Agricultural Chemist. He developed over 300 uses for peanuts. After failing a fourteenth time at what was to become peanut butter, he yelled out, "Ah ha!" A lab assistant ran over and asked, "Did you figure it out?" Carver responded, "No. But I just discovered a 15th way it won't work!" Whether peanut oil, peanut brittle, or peanut butter, what many would call failures he turned into successes and solutions for future needs.

What makes people like Helen Keller, George W. Carver, Bill Gates, Oprah Winfrey and so many others seem like they always land on their feet? How is it that some people seem to have a magical touch on everything they encounter so that it turns to gold? The process is hard but the answer is simple: they focus on solutions

Follow this process to ensure you focus on solutions:

1. Greet the Great. Welcome good fortune by expecting your ideas or implementations to be successful. You must believe in your success before anyone else gives you a chance.

Success in life is not about whether your opportunity will come. Success is determined by when your opportunity comes, will you be ready?

2. Explore options. Success can be determined by making a decision based on the best long-term approach. Understand the rewards and repercussions with each decision. Successful people ask for and create options to generate solutions.

If the only tool you have in your box is a hammer, then every problem will look like a nail.

3. Remain flexible. Solution-oriented people have multiple approaches to problems. Problems have no parameters. Therefore your solutions should be adaptable. To complete a project on time, you might have to work longer, sacrifice time from another project, or seek assistance.

Solutions are not discovered always by the smartest. Solutions are often discovered by those who have the ability to adapt.

Since problems will remain consistent, develop a strategy of how you handle them. Blend both your emotional (EQ: Emotional Quotient) and intellectual mechanisms (IQ: Intelligence Quotient) to ensure the solutions you compile are sound.

In the military, soldiers, sailors, and airmen salute their officers. It is a symbol of respect and authority. Apply respect and give authority to change. Salute a new solution to find another method! ❖

Happy Birthday!

TLC wishes a Happy Birthday to clients celebrating in September!

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| » Jennifer Berkhoudt | » Harvey Pearman |
| » Christine Dennis | » Petra Francis |
| » Catherine Vreeland | » Lori Meredith |
| » Tyler Bransfield | » Niecee Andrews |
| » Donald Huffman | » Jed Ravenholt |
| » Sibby Tansill | » Karen Savage |
| » Joe Side | » Brian Blust |
| » Lamar Carver | » Steve Barbour |
| » Gregory Park | » Traci Davenport |
| » Karen Webb | » Carey Ely |
| » Gary Busby | » Patricia Skeete |
| » Jennifer Morgan | » Stephen Rucker |

TLC wishes a Happy Birthday to clients celebrating in October!

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| » Tim Smith | » Wanda Griffin |
| » Vonnie Beck | » Heidi Keasler |
| » Aaron Petticord | » Janet Baker |
| » Kay Tyson | » Kisha Johnson |
| » Richard D' Angelo | » Karen Robert |
| » Jeff Hope | » Lu Ann Brinkley |
| » Satya Mukhopadhyay | » Mary Tegelaar |
| » Marie Perry | » Pirjo Friedman |
| » Sheldon Harrell | » Kathy Schoendorf |
| » Don Weatherly | » Georges Gonzales |
| » Roosevelt Montgomery | » Angela Terrell |
| » Ken Brashear | » Darrell Clarke |
| » Monica Roby | |

Quick Tips

- ✓ Ask questions and avoid assumptions when someone makes a confused facial expression. Keep the questions open and positive.
- ✓ Pause when someone is thinking. Speaking too quickly could break their thought.
- ✓ Relax your posture by uncrossing arms and legs. Take up more physical space. This will increase circulation and make you look more approachable.

"Goals must never be from your ego, but problems that cry for a solution."

Robert H. Schuller

"Sometimes the situation is only a problem because it is looked at in a certain way. Looked at in another way, the right course of action may be so obvious that the problem no longer exists."

Edward de Bono

"If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail."

Abraham Maslow

For Permanent & Positive Change

Featured Service: Meetings that Matter

Learn how to meet less and accomplish more.

How much time do you spend in meetings? How successful are the meetings you attend? How often do you start late, finish late, get off topic, and do more tearing down than building up?

TLC surveys reveal that approximately 60% of time in meetings is wasted. How do your meetings compare?

Although meetings are expensive, time-consuming, and can drag on, some are necessary. For those that are important, there are ways to make them better. Rarely do we evaluate the effectiveness of our meetings. If meeting times could be cut in half, and your meeting efficiency could be doubled, how much would it be worth to you to learn how to make meetings that matter?

In TLC's seminar, Meetings that Matter, you will learn how to:

- » Set and distribute an agenda.
- » Identify the different roles required for an effective meeting.
- » Understand the responsibilities essential for meeting effectiveness.
- » Recognize the three major parts of a meeting.
- » Set and remain within the timeline of a meeting.
- » Handle dysfunctional meeting participants.
- » Have the right people at the meetings.
- » Find meeting alternatives.

If you are looking for solutions to ineffective meetings, call TLC today to discuss bringing this seminar to your team. You can reach us at 888-BECAUSE (888-232-2873) or send an email with your contact information to TLC@talklisten.com. ❖

CEO Corner

Beverly Inman-Ebel

"OPPORTUNITIES, MY ASK"

I don't like problems. I especially don't like it when people are so politically correct that they dub a problem as an opportunity. I just want to snort and roll my eyes. Wait! I actually do that sometimes.

My husband, Ken Ebel, started buying small houses last November, fixing them up, and then renting (2) or offering rent-to-own (10). As I write this, he has 13 houses I believe. When you buy a house at auction, you cannot get in to inspect it. Houses purchased from owners are frequently covered, literally. owners

are frequently covered, literally. They cover the problem with siding, carpet, the list goes on.

Then there are the people who rent or contract to eventually own the houses. Many do not do what they say they will do. They have dogs and claim they don't. Have you ever tried to hide a forty pound dog? They don't pay their monthly installment and then move out with the appliances.

The insurance company will only insure the house for theft – not the appliances or the air conditioners. Is it possible to steal a house? It is possible and quite easy to steal air conditioning units. Ken knows. Two were lifted by criminals before tenants moved in. He now fences them in.

I could fill several pages with the problems he has encountered, yet he keeps moving forward. He just bought another house yesterday. Amazing. Watching this process I have observed how he handles problems. When someone calls, he asks a lot of questions. He has created a team of people to help him restore and maintain the properties. I hear him asking them questions. I know they feel a part of the team. He has a realtor who knows the type of houses that he buys and is a resource for him. Ken has developed another person to bid at auctions for him if he is out of town as a consultant in the automotive industry.

Most impressively, he gets to know his tenants. When they call at various times during the day or night, he answers the phone by calling them by name and saying, "Hi Dorothy. What can I do for you?" I think he has to be the best landlord in the country.

Sometimes I see his fatigue, but it seldom lasts for long. Usually it is caused by his life in the corporate world rather than his work to restore people into homes that they can afford. People give him problems and he gives back opportunities.

I am changing my mind about problems. They do set us up for lessons to learn, solve, grow, and change. They can become opportunities if we ask, seek help from others, and genuinely care about solving them.

One thing is sure: problems or opportunities are headed our way. If you fully live your life, you will encounter them. And you definitely want to fully live. So, face them. Ask. Get help. Solve. Grow. Live your dreams!! ❖

"There is a certain degree of satisfaction in having the courage to admit one's errors. It not only clears up the air of guilt and defensiveness, but often helps solve the problem created by the error."

Dale Carnegie

"Every problem has in it the seeds of its own solution. If you don't have any problems, you don't get any seeds."

Norman Vincent Peale

"The only difference between a problem and a solution is that people understand the solution."

Dorothea Brande

TLC establishes long-term relationships with our clients. If we have helped you or if you believe our approach to change would work for someone you know, please communicate with us by e-mail tlc@talklisten.com or phone 1-888-232-2873. We work with individuals and groups on the following subject areas: attitude, listening, body language, voice, leadership, compliments and corrections, behavioral style, teamwork, effective meetings, public speaking, accent reduction and much more!