

A Quick Problem-Solving Strategy

One simple and effective technique will help you solve most of the difficulties your team runs into.

Follow these steps:

1. Define the problem. Do some research and include all the details. If a series of tasks were mishandled, include notes on each job and try to pinpoint where each error occurred.

2. Brainstorm possible causes. List the factors that contribute to the problem, including those that seem out of your control—such as a customer who changed his mind or any last-minute mechanical problems—and those you know you can influence, including things such as poor performance and faulty methods.

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First, we need to define the problem?

Effective E-Mail Message Tips

Effective e-mail messages begin at the top. Save time and set a good example for your staff by keeping these tips in mind as you type:

- **Use short, specific, and concise subject lines** to help others identify your e-mail message's purpose and importance. They also motivate recipients to read and reply.

- **Announce routine items without a lot of fluff.** *Example:* Staff meeting on Wednesday, from 8am to 9am.

- **Send Thank You's in person.** The phrase "Thanks for all your help" screams "mass mailing" and makes your message seem completely impersonal. Make it a point to deliver thanks in person. Your staff will appreciate you taking the time and this will go a long way the next time you ask for help.

- **Use Confidential in the subject line.** Protect privacy by including the word Confidential in the subject line. Otherwise, after multiple replies, the confidentiality may be lost or forgotten.

Source: Gary Sorrell, Sorrell Associates

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Motivational Quotes

"After all, the chief business of the American people is business."

- Calvin Coolidge

"Only those who risk going too far will ever know how far they can go."

- Author Unknown

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3. Analyze the data. Try to identify any trends or patterns that could point out underlying problems. Describe how the problem is affecting other departments, your customers or team members' job satisfaction. This information will help you decide if the problem is worth trying to solve. If the consequences are insignificant, it may not be worth your team's effort.

4. Generate possible solutions. Challenge team members to come up with as many solutions as possible. To encourage creative thinking, don't let members judge either the ideas or the team members who present them.

5. Agree on solutions. After you've generated a list of ideas, use consensus to select the most likely solution.

6. Develop an action plan. Discuss and agree upon clearly defined action steps. Assign volunteers to those steps, and then agree on a time frame for each.

Source: *Team Management Briefings*, as adapted from *Managing Quality Through Teams*, Lawrence M. Miller and Jennifer Howard, The Miller Consulting Group

A Little Humor –

Three older men were talking about what their grandchildren would be saying about them fifty years from now.

"I would like my grandchildren to say, He was successful in business," declared the first man.

"Fifty years from now," said the second, "I want them to say, He was a loyal family man." Turning to the third man, he asked, "So what do you want them to say about you in fifty years?"

"Me?" the third man replied. "I want them to say, you sure look good for your age, Grandpa!"



Qualifications Of The Leader

It is by no means enough that a leader should be capable in his or her profession. He or she must be that, of course, but also a great deal more. He or she should be as well a gentleman or gentlewoman of liberal education, refined manners, punctilious courtesy, and the nicest sense of personal honor.



A leader should be the soul of tact, patience, justice, firmness, and charity. No meritorious act of a subordinate should escape his or her attention or be left to pass without its reward, even if the reward is only a word of approval. Conversely, he or she should not be blind to a single fault in any subordinate, though, at the same time, he or she should be quick and unfailing to distinguish error from malice, thoughtlessness from incompetence, and well meant shortcoming from heedless or stupid blunder.

Adapted by Thomas S. Baer, Baer Resources from "*Qualifications of the Naval Officer*" based on letters of John Paul Jones.

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Techniques For Handling An Angry Teammate

Sometimes, even on the best teams, emotions can spin out of control. An error occurs. You're responsible. You apologize. But your teammate flies off the handle. You need to preserve your working relationship with this person. Here's how to do it:

Step 1.

Do little or nothing. Let your teammate vent. It may be difficult to sit still and take abuse from an angry person, but doing so will allow her to vent some pent-up anger. *Remember:* Never tell an irate colleague to "calm down" or behave in a certain way. This will only increase her anger.



Step 2.

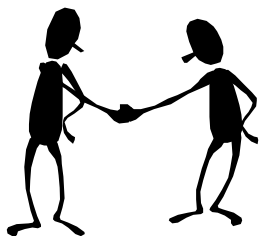
Play back the gist of the angry message – without the anger. *Example:* "If I understand you correctly. . ."

Step 3.

Propose a remedy, if you have one. If you don't, ask your teammate, "How would you like to resolve this?" *Reason:* Anger often goes hand in hand with powerlessness. But if you ask an angry person to tell you what he/she wants you to do or say, you give him/her power. And that will often reduce their anger.

Step 4.

Try to agree on a solution. Then, commit to taking the necessary actions. If you're not sure you can comply with the proposed remedy, ask for some time to consider and investigate. *Caution:* Arrange a specific time and place for a follow-up discussion so your teammate won't think you're trying to avoid the situation.



Tip: If one of your teammates becomes abusive or threatening, get out of his/her area immediately. Tell the person, "This is getting out of hand. I'm going somewhere else for a while, but I'll be back in half an hour. Let's both try to cool down so we can discuss this more productively then."

How To Say It At Work, Jack Griffin. Prentice Hall



ONE MINUTE IDEAS

Save Time

You can save time by going to lunch at an off-hour. Instead of going to lunch from 12pm to 1pm, try going to lunch between 1:30pm and 2:30pm. The crowds will be smaller and quite possibly the service may be better.

Bonus: You may get more done during the regular lunch hour while everyone else is out of the office for lunch and you're at your desk working.

Source: Sorrell Associates.

Success

'Success tends to go not to the person who is error-free, because he also tends to be risk-averse. Rather it goes to the person who recognizes that life is pretty much a percentage business. It isn't making mistakes that's critical, it's correcting them and getting on with the principal task.'

- Donald Rumsfeld, Sec of Defense



Motorola Shows The Power Of Training

Few companies have demonstrated a stronger commitment to training and educating employee than Motorola Inc. The company spends about \$120 million a year on training – most of it conducted at Motorola University, located at its headquarters in Schaumburg, IL.

Training at Motorola isn't optional. Employees must attend at least five days of training each year. The curriculum at Motorola University includes classes that cover topics such as quality, risk-taking, managing change, and teamwork, as well as basic reading and math.



Most of Motorola's courses use multifaceted training techniques. *Example:* When factory workers learn computer-aided design, they attend lectures, read manuals, and create their own plastic models of actual products.

The company estimates that, for every dollar it spends on training, it **reaps a \$30 gain** in productivity, by teaching employees to simplify processes and reduce waste.

The Bottom Line: *Make sure training isn't optional for your staff, whether you provide it internally or use outside trainers.*

-Adapted from Manager's Edge with permission.

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