



## Problem Solving Discussions

Perhaps the most important thing you do in business is to solve problems and make decisions, both by yourself and with other people.

"Don't ever be afraid to admit you were wrong. It's like saying you're wiser today than you were yesterday."

*-Robert Newell-*

## Problem Solving Discussions

Your ability to communicate is the most important skill you can develop to get on to the fast track in your career. **Perhaps the most important thing you do in business is to solve problems and make decisions, both by yourself and with other people.** A major reason for meetings in a business organization is problem solving and decision making. The key to effective problem solving and decision making discussions, is for you (and the group) to go through the process systematically.

### Clarify the Problem - **A problem well defined is a problem half solved.**

Right at the beginning, ask the question, **"What exactly is the problem?"** Clarity in "problem definition" will resolve 50% of the **"symptom" issues** before they devour time and energy.

### Think About the Future

When discussing a problem, be sure to **focus on the future over the past.** Ask the question, **"Where do we go from here?" "What do we do from here?" "What are our options for the future?"** Too many problem-solving discussions end up focusing all of the attention of all the people present on what happened in the past and who is to blame. The effective executive uses this type of communication to focus on where the company and the individuals are going, and what can happen in the future - the only part of the equation over which anyone has any control.

## Focus On the Solution

A second element in effective problem solving communications, is for you to **talk about the solutions** instead of talking about the problems. **It is for you to keep the attention of the individuals in the meeting focused on the possible solutions and what can be done rather than what has already happened.**

**The discussion of solutions is inherently positive, uplifting and has a tendency to release creativity within the group.** A discussion of problems is inherently negative, de-motivating and tends to inhibit creativity. **You can become a positive thinker simply by becoming a solution-oriented person rather than a problem-oriented person.** If you get everyone in your organization thinking and talking in terms of solutions, you will be astonished at the quality and quantity of ideas that will emerge.

## Action Idea Exercises:

**First, take the time to be absolutely clear about the problem** that is under discussion. Give some thought to **what an ideal decision or solution would accomplish.** Instead of focusing on the situation as it is, **talk about the situation as you would like it to be.**

**Second, keep the conversation focused on solutions,** on what can be done in the future. The more you think and talk about solutions, **the more positive and creative everyone will be and the better ideas the group will come up with.**