

Operations Training Problem Solving

Purpose: The ability to solve problems and make decisions based on consequences of those decisions.

Preparation: Print off enough Consequence Worksheets to have one for each group you will have in the session (3-4 people per group).

Facilitator: Begin the session by stating the name and purpose of the session. Then, break them up into small groups of 3-4 people.

Read the following story from Larry Linne: As a young business person I was told one of the most common business beliefs, “don’t bring a manager or leader a problem, bring them a solution.” Fortunately, this just didn’t make sense to me. What if the solution was a bad solution? What if I don’t know how to think through solutions effectively? What if I am not trained to bring the right solution? In working as a manager in a few firms I finally figured it out. I didn’t want to ever just come up with solutions, nor did I want any of my people just coming up with solutions. I wanted to teach people how to think about any problem or decision in a way that would help them come up with the “right solution”.

I realized that every decision we make, and every problem we solve, will have consequences. Every non-decision we make will also have consequences. This was the magic formula that was the “solution” to this problem. If people were able to think through all the potential consequences of every decision, they would be able to easily determine the right solution.

So, the Consequence Worksheet was created. The process is relatively simple. Take any problem and determine clarity around that problem and determine the best desired outcome. Then, brainstorm multiple solutions. This can be done individually or in a group (in real life situations). Finally, every decision will have positive and negative consequences. Brainstorm those potential consequences and put (+)(-) signs next to each item. When someone sees the clarity around all of the positive and negative consequences of a decision, they will know exactly what they should do. If not, I am certain a manager will welcome seeing this sheet filled out and someone asking for help on the final decision. I know that as a leader/manager I have always been pleased to help someone when they have thought through a problem to this extent.

Facilitator: Ask each group to come up with one problem or decision they have had to make recently or one they are currently working on. If they can't think of one, either give them one you can think of or give them some of the items listed below:

- Client is falsifying information on applications and you are almost positive that this is true.
- Someone in the workplace is causing you problems.
- The largest client in the agency has a son who has a dog who has bit a neighbor. You have been informed by the carrier that the client is going to be cancelled (Personal lines portion).
- You are sick with something that is contagious. However, you have a huge client renewal that needs to be completed today.
- You shop a client's renewal and the incumbent carrier is 2% higher than a new company.

Have each group fill out a single consequence worksheet.

After completing the worksheet ask a few of the groups to explain the thought process they used and what decision they would make based on the work they did on the worksheet.

Ask people to share what they learned.

Encourage people to use the worksheet in the job during the next few weeks to practice consequence decision making and problem solving.

