

20

Solutions, No Dump Trucks



Man in Hartford, Ky., found a solution to his challenge of mowing on a hill.

We have a rule in our businesses. If you come with problems, you must come to me with solutions, too. I hate the word problem; I prefer to think of a problem as a challenge or an opportunity to grow a relationship, or help someone, sometimes yourself. We will call it a challenge for this conversation. I'm not sure when we instituted this in our businesses; perhaps, it was at least 12 years ago. As your business or responsibilities grow, more people will come to you with challenges. What I noticed is the relief in the person when they “dumped” a challenge at my feet. Well, when you have multiple businesses and a lot going on you start to get a stack of challenges real quick. The biggest concern with challenge dumping is that the people dumping challenges aren't learning anything by dumping.

Think about this. If you do your kids homework for them and don't teach them how to solve their homework, what have they really learned? Just like doing a child's homework, in business when you allow people to dump challenges at your feet, you can guarantee they will be back to dump more on you. The folks I work with are sharper and smarter than me on tons of issues, but they thought I needed to make the decision to all challenges. If I continued to make all the decisions three things wouldn't grow: their knowledge, my knowledge, and our business! I explained from that point forward, please feel free to come to me with challenges, but you have to bring a few solutions too. Simple as that, you bring challenges but they have to be accompanied with possible solutions. The amazing thing happened; a lot less challenges showed up at my feet and when they did, the challenge was more than half solved, mostly because we went with one of their solutions to solve the challenge. It was great to see the number of challenges diminished, but even better seeing how folks I work with were growing personally.

There's another hidden gem in this thinking. If someone is part of the solution they are really behind that solution. If they weren't involved in the solution there are various levels of acceptance in the solution. Now that it's their solution, they explain it better to the customer; they feel better about the resolution, and we get that challenge turned around much faster.

Just recently with GoLogo, we accidentally shipped some promo gear to the wrong office about 175 miles away from each other in California. Ashlee called and said the customer was asking us what we could do to compensate them for the two-and-a-half-hour drive to retrieve the gear from the wrong office. Ashlee came to me with a solution. We then added another solution so our very good client could pick their resolution to the challenge. Ashlee came to me with “can we compensate their driver \$250 to pick up the gear (its California)?” My concern was they might not order again, and we lose a client. I offered a second solution for Ashlee to offer a \$500 credit. The client took the \$500 credit, which I'm thrilled because that means we had a misunderstanding, but they will be back.

As a business owner, I am happy that the client picked the remedy that best satisfied them. I've often thought that one of the main differentiators between successful people and those who aren't where they want to be in life is the ability to solve more challenges. Finally, problems are only challenges, and when you properly overcome a challenge more times than not great opportunity awaits you.