

Solving Problems

Henry Ford once said, "There are no big problems. There are just a lot of little problems." I guess Henry never had to put a barbecue together. But possibly there is some truth to what he said. It's so easy to turn a series of minor headaches into the equivalent of the end of civilization as we know it. This situation is compounded even further if, as leaders, we try to solve our work problems without adding the value of our important assets that we call our employees. This month we draw upon the advice of three famous people who provide us with their perspectives on solving problems.



Problem Solving According to Einstein

By David Colman

I learned a couple of things about Albert Einstein recently. The first was that when he came to the United States, he decided he needed some time to get away from things to work on his theory of relativity. What did he do? He left the US for a while and came north to the province of Saskatchewan. While there, he spent time in a small town called Canwood and, get this, played ice hockey for the local team. Who knew? Well certainly not many people in Saskatchewan either then or now.

The other thing about Einstein that fascinated me was a quote he allegedly made that many of you may have heard. It goes something like this. He defined insanity as doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. It's pretty good, isn't it? It's also the definition for how so many people both in and out of business solve problems.

One of the keys to me is the need for flexibility and the willingness to change. That, unfortunately, is a rare commodity in some organizations these days.

Shifting the sports metaphor from ice hockey to football, the late coach of the Green Bay

Packers, Vince Lombardi, once said something to the effect that practice does not make perfect, but perfect practice makes perfect. In other words he was in Einstein's camp on this one: if you do the same thing over and over, don't expect different (and may I add 'better') results.

I suppose another drum thumper of Einstein's would be good old Dr. Phil. I think it was he who said 'if you want different, you've got to do different'.

So, as leaders, what do we have to do to encourage, cajole, and support our workforces to act and think differently and, as a result, solve problems? Certainly just saying it won't make it happen, will it? If I could get Albert, Vince, and Dr. Phil in a room to talk about this, what would they suggest?

I'd bet you a hot dinner their ideas would include:

- Create a safe environment to allow people to screw things up
- Be flexible
- Provide feedback that is meaningful, specific and timely to our teams

- Recognize that the folks we lead are probably pretty bright and, I would bet, could possibly make better decisions as a group than you could as an individual
- Dumb things down – simple is really good
- Reward creativity and lateral thinking

I believe that if you embrace these ideas, you could come out looking like Einstein. Well, relatively speaking.

TriOpus Group has helped many organizations learn to efficiently and effectively solve problems. Our "Problem Solving That Counts" program guides you through:

- Identifying current problems the team is facing
- Establishing a process to prioritize problems
- Examining methods to spark the team's energy, get un-stuck, sort the known facts, focus efforts, generate solutions, determine obstacles, notice trends and establish action plans
- Building confidence in problem solving
- Getting to the root cause of problems
- Using problem solving tools such as double reversal analysis, interviewing, ranking, force field analysis, and many more



TriOpus Group

Shaping your company's talent

“ You don't drown by falling in the water; you drown by staying there. EDWIN LOUIS COLE

This a monthly publication intended for clients and associates of TriOpus Group. We welcome any comments, suggestions or questions you may have. Please contact us at 1-800-864-2721 or email Tamara Kerr, Partner at tamara@triopusgroup.com