

Leading Others Module 7 • Solving Problems

Character: Wisdom

As leaders it is easy to follow our natural inclinations and instincts in a given situation, but that is not always the wise thing to do. If we only default to handling a challenge according to the well worn grove of our personality type or react from our emotions in the moment, we could make a bad situation worse. Wisdom is always needed when you encounter a problem as a leader! God generously gives wisdom, so we should passionately seek to gain it.

Read Proverbs 3:5-8. What are the warning signs that someone is leaning on their own understanding? How well do you trust the lord and submit to His ways in your life? Think through your personal well being, work, family, community, leisure time, etc. What are the obstacles keeping you from trusting the Lord in these areas? What is a practical change you can make to grow in trusting God in any of these areas?

Competency: Providing Feedback

Pre Assessment

Rate yourself in the following proficiencies.

10 being an expert, 1 being totally unfamiliar

- Have an emotionally and spiritually healthy response to problems _____
- Address problems without passing blame or diminishing people's feelings _____
- Find the root of a problem before trying to solve the problem_____
- Identify a list of options when addressing a problem_____
- Communicate the plan to all those involved and affected by the problem _____

The Types of Problems

- **Relational.** People problems. Not understanding, seeing eye to eye, etc..
- **Resource.** Having a shortage of what you need to be effective.
- **Execution.** Things not going as planned, forced adaptation.
- **Criticism.** People's complaints or criticism, even though it may be unjustified, unfair, or unwarranted.

Which type of problems are you usually most prepared to solve? Which ones are you least prepared for? What are practical steps you can take to solve each type of problem?

Common Mistakes When Dealing with Problems

- **Ignoring the problem.** Ignoring is choosing not to lead. When you don't address a situation, it damages people's trust in your leadership.
- **Acknowledging but not solving.** There's no faster way to lose your credibility than to fail to follow through with any solutions or actions.
- **Passing blame.** You may be blamed for things that you didn't directly contribute to, but your team needs you to ignore that and focus on finding a solution.
- **Diminishing people's feelings.** Sincerity matters. People can tell when you don't really care and are just going through the motions.

What common mistakes have you made in the past? How might those mistakes sabotage your leadership?

Guidelines for Solving Problems

1. **Get to the Root.** It's hard to solve a problem when you haven't declared what it is. It is effective to ask why, even several times to get to the root of a problem.
2. **Consider the Options.** Don't grab the first (or easiest) option, but take time to brainstorm possible solutions.
3. **Seek Counsel.** Invite feedback from your team and leaders. Solve 'our problem' instead of 'my problem' and help your team take ownership.
4. **Make a Decision.** Don't be afraid to commit, problems are exacerbated by our inaction and procrastination.
5. **Communicate.** Make a plan, list your audience, justify the solution, prepare for questions, and detail the impact. The more clearly you communicate, the more your team will buy into your solution.

Take time to identify a small problem, and walk through the guideline to try and solve it. Follow up with what went well, and what needs work.