

Unit #1 Decision Making / Lesson #6

Identifying and Defining the Problem

PURPOSE: The purpose of this lesson is to identify, and define the problem, who has the problem and type of problem(s) that exists as the first step in a decision making strategy.

OBJECTIVE: Upon completion of this lesson, the participant will:

1. 100% of the time identify and defining the fundamental problem is the first step in problem solving, using a strategic decision making strategy:
 - A. 100% of the time identify what is the fundamental problem
 - B. 100% of the time identifies that often what we think is the fundamental problem, is actually a secondary or subsequent problem to the fundamental problem.
 - C. 100% of the time identifies who has the fundamental problem
2. 100% of the time identifies the four (4) types of basic problems.
3. 100% of the time accurately determines the type(s) of problem existing in the decisions they have determined they need to make and if there are other problem types as factors.

PROCEDURE:

1. Read and consider the following:

A. The first step in any decision making strategy process is to identify and define the fundamental problem and any other related problems, including who it is who really has the fundamental problem. Sometimes we look at our problems, which may be a long-term problem, but there are usually one or more immediate fundamental problems which must first be identified and defined if they are to be solved.

1. Joe is having financial difficulties, it is then obvious that a more fundamental problem is that Joe doesn't make enough money, or he may have a situation where he was not prepared for an unforeseen event or health problem, or similar unforeseen serious problem.

If it is simply a matter that Joe just doesn't make enough money, or enough money that he would like to make to live comfortably and do the things for himself and/or his family, then this problem has a more fundamental problem that Joe needs a better paying job.

The decision making limits (*capability? environment? willingness?*) which exists would obviously then be that Joe needs more skills and education, to get that better paying job. This is a problem he can solve and he has significant control to change, because it is a problem he created, or Joe permitted to grow, exist and to continue.

2. You have an employee who does a poor or sloppy job. You think that they simply don't care or they are lazy. However, you find that their poor performance is based upon the fact that they thought they were doing a good job and what you wanted them to do and for

them to do their job the way they were doing it. Here, the problem isn't the employee. The problem is YOU!

3. You have given your customer a lot of time and attention, explaining the product or service yet you cannot close the sale. The potential problems are the customer just isn't confident in you, the product/service, or their ability to know they are making a good decision.

B. The second step in any decision making strategy process is to identify who has the fundamental problem or any of these problems. Sometimes what we think are our problems, are the problems others or conditions/events have imposed upon us.

1. As we saw in John's situation, he has very limited options in his decision making, because of something that was imposed upon him, but it was still John's problem

2. As we saw with the employee, the problem was with you. You failed to give them the criteria of your expectations. You also failed by letting this continue, where you only complained about it or started letting resentment bitterness develop, without saying or doing anything about it to make the change and increase the expectations.

This then created more problems, or more correctly another symptom of the primary problem. You failed to establish the standards and encourage the change and improvement in the employee's performance.

3. With the sale you cannot close it is the customer who has the problems, because they are not confident they are making a good decision. Or is the problem with you, because you have failed to assure them and take them through a decision-making process, alleviated all fears, and overcame all of the objections?

C. As we've seen in the examples above, one of the considerations you have to determine in identifying/defining the problem in decision making strategy process is to conclude what type of problem it is and if it may be more than one type of problem.

1. Problems come in four (4) types.
 - a) Those you have created
 - b) Those you didn't create, but you find yourself caught
 - c) Those you can change
 - d) Those which you can't change, because they are truly without solution and out of your control (*usually 2 or more decision-making limits and no decision-making control*)

2. As you can see from the list of these types of problems, one or more of them may be a way to describe the type of problem you have.

- a) If it is a problem you have created for yourself, chances are this is a type of problem, where you also have the power to change the problem, except of course in a situation like you used a gun and shot and killed someone, which is something you cannot undo. However, financial/educational problems (as is true of most problems we create for ourselves) are those we can fix.

D. Sometimes, when we think we know what our fundamental problem is, we find that it isn't our fundamental problem. In Joe's situation even though not making enough money is his fundamental problem it isn't his immediate fundamental problem. His immediate fundamental problem is that he lacks the skills and education to get a better job.

As we will see as you work through the problem you have identified for yourself, you may find in subsequent lessons (*Gathering Information: looking at positive and negative alternatives, predict positive and negative outcomes, examine the risks, and even if you reach the point of making a plan*) you might find (as we all often do) that going through these steps help you to go back and re-define the long-term fundamental problem and or do so in greater detail. This is a good thing! In fact, think about what might have happened had you not correctly identified your immediate fundamental problem and your long term fundamental problem.

2. Complete the following exercises:

A. Think of the five (5) major decisions you listed in lesson #5 and answer the following:

1) Decision #1: _____

a. What is the fundamental problem? _____

b. What are contributing problems? _____

2). Decision #2: _____

a. What is the fundamental problem? _____

b. What are contributing problems? _____

3) Decision #3: _____

a. What is the fundamental problem? _____

b. What are contributing problems? _____

4) Decision #4: _____

a. What is the fundamental problem? _____

b. What are contributing problems? _____

5) Decision #5: _____

a. What is the fundamental problem? _____

b. What are contributing problems? _____