Problem Solving

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Whether it is a personal problem or a group emergency we all use some sort of problem solving skills. Ineffective or inefficient problem solving skills can lead to personal stress, group drama, and unfortunate outcomes. Effective Leadership requires problem solving skills just like taught to corpgov managers and military officers, but with more heart. Amerika and the world have many problems so our work is cut out for us.

Use a Team

Establish a team of people with product/process knowledge. If possible some stages of problem solving should have input from anyone who wants to participate, but a recognized leadership or chain of command is important to streamline and prevent over-thinking solutions.

Define the Problem

Specify the problem by identifying in quantifiable terms the who, what, where, when, why, how and how many (5W2H) for the problem. There needs to be a clear goal, this is best established by writing the problem and definition on a large board. Problem solving can easily go off task if the problem is not clearly defined. When defining the problem understand everyone's interests. Interests are the needs that you want satisfied by any given solution. We often ignore our true interests as we become attached to one particular solution. This is the time for active listening. Put down your differences for awhile and listen to each other with the intention to understand. Separate the naming of interests from the listing of solutions.

Choose and Implement Interim Options

Define and implement containment actions to isolate the problem. For example banning use of mobile telephones if this is a suspected way the police are tracking activist groups at an event.

- This is the time to do some brainstorming. There may be lots of room for creativity.

- Separate the listing of options from the evaluation of the options.

- What's the best option, in the balance?

- Is there a way to "bundle" a number of options together for a more satisfactory solution?

Identify and Verify Root Causes

Identify all potential causes that could explain why the problem occurred. Also identify why the problem has not been noticed at the time it occurred. All causes shall be verified or proved if time and information permit, preferably not determined by fuzzy brainstorming.

Choose and verify Permanent Corrective Actions (PCAs)

Through using the new plan in the field confirm that the selected corrective actions will resolve the problem for the organization.

- Don't rely on memory.
- Writing it down will help you think through all the details and implications.

Implement and validate PCAs

Define and Implement the best corrective actions.

- Conditions may change. Make contingency agreements about foreseeable future circumstances (If-then!).
- How will you monitor compliance and follow-through?

Prevent recurrence

Modify the management systems, operation systems, practices and procedures to prevent recurrence of this and all similar problems.

- Create opportunities to evaluate the agreements and their implementation. ("Let's try it this way for three months and then look at it.")
- For any but the most simple processes consider a checklist, it is anal but a good way to prevent stupid oversights when working with groups.

Congratulate your Team

Recognize the collective efforts of the team. The team needs to be formally thanked by the organization.

Fight

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