



RLC MINISTRIES

PROBLEM SOLVER

FIRST IMPRESSIONS MODULE #4

Focus Competency: Problem Solver - You are able to solve problems and navigate through tense situations while honoring God and others.

Opening Question: Think of a time that you had to deliver some difficult feedback to someone. How did you handle it? How did it make you feel?

ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 1: Read Proverbs 3:5 and answer the questions below.

Assignment 2: Read article and answer questions.

Assignment 3: Choose a difficult person in your life and add them to your daily prayer list for a week (or beyond!).

Assignment 4: Write down the 5 steps in the article on a small piece of paper and carry it with you for a week. What situations come up that you could apply them to? Were they beneficial in how you analyzed the problem?

Assignment 5: Identify a few last minute changes you have had to deal with in your personal, professional or spiritual life during this week. How did you react? What was the outcome?

ASSIGNMENT 1

Proverbs 3:5

Trust the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

QUESTIONS

1. What word or phrase stands out to you about this verse? Why?
2. Describe how you feel this verse helps to guide your decision making? Do you struggle with giving it over to God before you act or decide?
3. When last minute changes are presented to you, how do you respond?
4. On a scale of 1-5, rate yourself on your flexibility. If you are below a 5, how does that make you feel? How can putting your complete trust in God affect your flexibility with last minute changes or bad news?

ASSIGNMENT 2

5 Healthy Ways to Handle a Difficult Volunteer

<https://careynieuwhof.com/5-healthy-ways-to-handle-a-difficult-volunteer/>

It's one of the most paralyzing problems many leaders face. How do you handle a difficult team member? Want to make the problem worse? That's easy. Imagine the difficult team member is a volunteer. Then what do you do? After all, they're volunteering their time. Most people think you can't do anything. And that's dead wrong.

WHY YOU CAN'T IGNORE IT:

If you want a healthy organization, the best ways to handle conflict and unmet expectations are up front and directly. Let's face it—churches, not profits and businesses struggle every day because people are unwilling to have difficult conversations up front or take meaningful action.

The consequences are huge and costly:

- Factions
- Dissent
- Gossip
- Resentment
- Lost potential
- Frustration
- Low morale

In addition to all these, unresolved conflict and poor performance will also scare off your most capable, healthy leaders. They'll just step back or go elsewhere.

5 WAYS TO HANDLE A DIFFICULT VOLUNTEER

While each situation is different, there are principles that apply in almost every situation. Here are 5 I've found to work well, whether you're dealing with a difficult person or a difficult situation or fit. When I've followed them, things have gone far better than when I haven't:

1. DEFINE THE ISSUE.

Before you deal with a situation, you need to understand it accurately. Do this before you meet with the individual involved. If you need to, pull in someone who is also familiar with the situation to get another perspective (don't gossip, but occasionally you might need to confidentially pull in someone with great judgment and wisdom).

Take some time to figure out what the problem might be. Is it:

A character issue—he or she lacks moral judgment, a strong work ethic or can't be trusted?

A competency issue—he or she lacks the skill set required to do the job?

A chemistry issue—he or she is a good and competent person, but the fit just isn't right?

It's way too easy just to say 'he's the problem' or 'she's the problem' but you never really win. Defining the problem helps you solve the problem. Also, own everything you can. It's almost never 100% them. Find out what you've done wrong and be right up front about that. Once in a while you'll even realize it's not them. It's you.

2. SEPARATE THE PERSON FROM THE PROBLEM

This is just so huge. First, an example. When my kids were small and did something that needed punishment my default position was to say "You've been a bad boy" and then assign the punishment. My much smarter wife Toni always corrected me and said, "No, he's a good boy who did a bad thing." While that might not be fully accurate theology, it's great parenting and it's a great conflict management strategy.

Affirm the person. Deal with the problem. Even if it's a character issue, remember that God loves people with poor character (he loves you and me, right?). When you affirm the person and deal with the problem you are in a much stronger position. How do you do that? Read on.

3. GO DIRECT.

Have the conversation face to face. And yes, a conversation. Not an email. Not a policy that says "all people must stop doing X" when everybody knows you're really targeting one person and just don't have the guts to talk to them.

Have the conversation over coffee, or in your office. So how do you have the conversation? Try an affirmation sandwich. Begin with praise. Deal with the issue (the meat). Then end with affirmation.

Here's a short example:

Begin. John I love how you've grown in your faith. I've seen X Y Z over the last year and it's so encouraging.

Deal with the Issue. I need to talk to you today about the way your gruff demeanour is rubbing people the wrong way. You might not even be aware of it so I want to give you a chance to talk about it. But it needs to change and I hope we can get there.

End. So let's work on this plan together and I'm sure we can see you continue to make progress. I really hope we can work this through and am confident there's a way if we work hard enough.

Or, let's say you're terminating someone:

Begin. John I love how you've grown in your faith. I've seen X Y Z over the last year and it's so encouraging.

Deal with the Issue. I need to talk to you today about the way your gruff demeanour is rubbing people the wrong way. I know this has been an ongoing issue and we've talked about it before. I'm afraid we're going to have to ask you not to serve in X anymore.

End. I know this is hard, but I'm going to track with you. We want to see you continue to grow and that can happen whether you're on the team or not. We want to help you win.

4. FOLLOW UP

Don't finish the relationship when you finish the conversation. So many leaders make that mistake.

Remember, you separated the person from the problem. So you're dealing with the problem and caring for the person. Book a coffee a month down the road. Send a note. Check in. Pray for them. See how they're doing. Care.

5. EVALUATE

As you help them take a break, and in a new place or reform their attitude, evaluate their progress. This is hard, but their long term health and the health of your organization are impacted by honest evaluation.

Don't sacrifice them or your organization because you're trying to be nice. Speak the truth in love. Your commitment to them as a person will pay off in the long run. Even if they never see it, you will have done the best thing you could in the moment and given them a chance to grow.

I'm sure there are many questions that are unanswered, but when we've followed these 5 steps, people often do get better and our organization stays far healthier. Best yet? Everyone is better served, including the volunteer.

QUESTIONS

1. What are some characteristics you think define a "difficult volunteer?"
2. Returning back to the opening question of this module, do you feel that the steps in this article would have helped you feel more confident about that conversation?
3. Which of the 5 steps Carey outlines do you feel would be the most difficult? Which do you feel is the most important? Why?

Further Discussion:

Discuss some stressful situation or last minute changes that can happen during the Sunday service? Choose one of those situations and role play within the group how that would play out. Demonstrate the wrong way to handle that situation and the correct way to handle it. Discuss with the group what you learned from the demonstration.

Assignment 3:

Choose a difficult person in your life and add them to your daily prayer list for a week (or beyond!).

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