

16 – How do I solve difficult problems in my department?

Purpose

Help supervisors improve their problem solving skills and techniques.

Preparation

Prayerfully study these scriptures and resources.

- [“Seeking Solutions”](#) by Mary Ellen W. Smoot
- [“Let Us Think Straight”](#) by Elder M. Russell Ballard
- [“Fear Not”](#) by Elder Tad R. Callister

What are the main things you learned from these resources?

How do they help you and those you serve become better leaders in the workplace?

Which messages will you share with those in this department?

Making Connections

These discussions will not only develop employees into stronger disciple leaders but will help them see the relevance of the gospel in their careers. Invite them to write down their impressions. Also, invite them to share pertinent, personal experiences that strengthen the doctrine being taught.

Discussion: How can I prepare myself to successfully solve difficult problems?

- *How was Joseph Smith able to resolve critical problems that occurred within his own life? What kind of preparation was needed to resolve those problems effectively? How do you think Joseph Smith was able to develop the skills necessary to resolve those problems? How can you apply this pattern to your own development?*

In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it? ...While I was laboring under the extreme difficulties caused by the contests of these parties of religionists, I was one day reading the Epistle of James...*I reflected on it again and again...*I came to the conclusion that I must...ask of God. ([Joseph Smith History 1:5-14](#) emphasis added)

- *In [John 21:15-17](#), why did Christ ask the same question to Peter more than once? What problem was Christ trying to help Peter understand? How can we ensure that we fully understand the root of a problem before trying to resolve it?*

If I were given one hour to save the planet, I would spend 59 minutes defining the problem and one minute resolving it. (Albert Einstein, sel. Dwayne Spradlin, [“Are You Solving the Right Problem?”](#), Sep. 2012)

- *What is the purpose of our problems?*

A fundamental purpose of earth life is personal growth and attainment. Consequently, there must be times of trial and quandary to provide opportunity for that development. (Elder Richard G. Scott, “The Sustaining Power of Faith in Time of Uncertainty and Testing”, *Ensign*, April 2003)

- *How are problem solving skills developed? Why does the learning model encourage us to share our knowledge and work with others? How can this concept help develop our department’s ability to solve problems?*

Discussion: What strategies will help me find solutions to my problems?

- *What role does logic play in solving problems? What role does prayer play in solving problems? Is it necessary for us to have both when we're faced with problems?*
- *How does understanding the Lord's timing help us find solutions?*

[Continue in Patience](#) (Mormon Messages, President Uchtdorf, "Continue in Patience", *Ensign*, May 2010)

- *What strategies have you used to solve problems in the past? What have you learned from using these strategies?*
- *What strategies did Nephi and his brother's use in their attempts to get the Brass Plates? What can we learn about problem solving from this experience?*

Let us go up again unto Jerusalem, and let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; for behold he is mightier than all the earth, then why not mightier than Laban and his fifty, yea, or even than his tens of thousands? ([1 Nephi 4:1](#))

- *Think of a time when you've had to deal with a problem that you did not have control to solve. What could you control in this situation? What couldn't you control? What did you learn from this experience?*

You can learn that however unsolvable the problems of life may seem, God always has a solution. (Elder Tad R. Callister, "Fear Not", *Ensign*, Dec. 2010)

Application

Through these activities, employees will be directly or indirectly invited to make a personal inventory of their own work and (through the Spirit) realize the specific things that they must do in order to become a better disciple leader.

- After discussing problem solving strategies, invite them to choose one strategy in which they feel most accomplished and one strategy they would like to develop the most. Then, invite them to roam the room, looking for coworkers who can give them insight into developing their chosen strategy.
- Invite the head of the department to present a difficult, departmental problem to the team. After doing so, invite the team to practice using the principles and strategies discussed earlier on this particular problem.

One on One *(Conducted outside of the training by the head of the department)*

- Discuss the insights and impressions this employee had during and after the training. What did he or she learn? How has he or she applied these insights in the workplace? What needs to be clarified?
- Invite this employee to describe a particular problem they are facing within their work. Help this employee realize what they must do in order to solve this problem.
- Invite this employee to describe a particular problem solving strategy they would like to develop. Help this employee discover a way to meet this goal.