



66: PROBLEM SOLVING LIKE A BOSS - PART 1

OUTLINE

Every leader and every organization faces problems, but not every leader or organization is equipped to solve them. These three images will help you see yourself and your problems in a different way.

1. **Expand your title to include “Chief Problem Solver.”**
2. **Don’t be an ostrich.**
3. **Kill the roots, don’t just pick the leaves.**

SUMMARY

Thank you for joining the *Craig Groeschel Leadership Podcast!* There is one thing that’s true about every leader and every organization—there are always problems to be solved. You may be overstaffed or understaffed, you may be facing a lawsuit, fighting to get a permit, or watching your church attendance decline. There are always problems to be solved.

Any search about “problem solving” on the Internet will reveal dozens of solid principles to follow, but we’re going to take a different approach and look at three images that will change how we see ourselves and our problems.

1. **Expand your title to include “CPS.”**

You probably have a job title. Maybe you’re a marketing manager, sales associate, youth pastor, or perhaps you’re even the CEO. Whatever it is, expand your title to include “CPS.” You are the CPS, the **Chief Problem Solver**. Solving problems isn’t something you dread; it’s what you do.

“Anyone can point out a problem. A leader does something about it!” -
@craiggroeschel

To be fair, no one gets excited about problems. When a problem first arises, your blood pressure may rise or your heart rate may increase. That’s natural. It’s up to you to adjust your mindset and retrain your response to problems. **Problems are just opportunities in disguise.**

Think about any business, think about *your* business—it’s likely a solution to a problem. If you sell something, you’re meeting a need. If you’re in insurance, you’re providing security. If you’re a church, you’re providing love and hope for hurting people. No matter what you do, you’re providing support, meeting needs, and answering questions. So, when new problems arise, see them as opportunities to keep doing what you do. Don’t run from problems or deny they exist.

In fact, the more problems you solve and the better you solve, the more valuable you become. **The value you bring to your organization is a reflection of the problems you solve.** If you want to make a bigger difference, solve bigger problems.

2. Don't be an ostrich.

An ostrich hides from reality by putting its head in the sand. Don't be an ostrich! We have to take our heads out of the sand and acknowledge the problems we have. In order to solve problems, we need to admit they exist.

"The first step to solving a problem is to recognize that it exists."—Zig Ziglar

It may seem scary to acknowledge reality or confront all the issues. In Jim Collins' classic book *Good to Great*, he gives us a tool he calls the **Stockdale Paradox**. The paradox says, *"Retain absolute faith that you can and will survive, and, at the same time, confront the most brutal facts of your current reality."* It's named after James Stockdale, a Naval officer and prisoner of war during the Vietnam War. Stockdale endured unthinkable horrors for nearly eight years and survived.

So, how do we confront the brutal facts?

One of the most important tools is a strong pipeline of consistent and honest upward communication. Think about gravity. An apple falls down easily on its own, but it requires much more force to go up. In most organizations, downward communication happens naturally, but upward communication must be intentional.

Be intentional about asking for feedback and listening. Keep a pulse on what's happening not just in the corner office, but also at the reception desk. Your team members are likely thinking of solutions to problems you don't even know exist—especially the small ones. It's easy to encounter a small problem and think it's not a huge issue. You may even completely ignore it. Don't do that! Instead, work hard to see problems early and handle them quickly.

"Small problems are big problems that haven't matured yet." -
@craiggroeschel

3. Kill the roots, don't just pick the leaves.

As leaders faced with problems, it can be easy to misdiagnose the root issue. We often end up treating the symptom rather than solving the problem. The key to getting to the root issue is to lead by asking questions. You may be just a few questions away from finding the root of the problem—stick with it. As a leader—the CPS—it's your job to dig below the surface, asking questions until you reach the root cause of the problem.

When People Are the Problem

Sometimes, we dig down and find that the problems stem from one person or one team. Underperformance, grumpiness, drama—these are people-issues. The people who serve your organization are more than problems to be solved, they are people to be loved.

Often, the problems people display at work are the symptoms of bigger issues, like a parent with failing health, a marriage that's deteriorating, or a child who's struggling. Approach those issues with kindness, dig down to the root, and love the people you lead.

“The people who serve your organization are more than problems to be solved. They are people to be loved.” -@craiggroeschel

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Here's an exercise you can do to grow as a leader—ask yourself and your team these questions:

1. Clearly define the problem you're trying to solve. Are you certain you're addressing the root cause and not treating the symptom?
2. On a scale of 1-10, what's the quality of upward communication you're receiving from your team? Then, ask your team a similar question—on a scale of 1-10, how open and available is senior management to hearing my ideas?

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