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IDENTIFY – DISCUSS – SOLVE (IDS)

The following information regarding the "Issues Solving" component of what successful companies do is extracted from and/or substantially paraphrased from the book *Traction – Get a Grip on Your Business*, by Gino Wickman.

The simple fact is that successful organizations identify, discuss, and solve their issues (IDS) in an open and honest environment.

Issues can be corporate issues, team issues or department issues.

Not deciding often is more harmful than what you decide.

The first discipline then is to have an issues list that can be shared, added to, and serve as the basis for standing IDS meetings.

The second step is to create a workplace or meeting environment where people feel comfortable calling out the issues that stand in the way of achieving the corporate, team or departmental objectives. Trust creates and open culture in which everyone feels comfortable talking about issues as they arise. With an open and honest environment, the Issues List becomes a tool that creates a discipline to keep all your issues out in the open and organized in one place.

The IDS process consists of three steps:

1. Identify
2. Discuss
3. Solve

Do not start at the top of the list and work your way down. Prioritize and execute. Spend the first five minutes of the meeting agreeing on the top three issues and don't move on to another issue in the allotted meeting time until these issued are satisfactorily addressed in that order.

One helpful context when identifying issues is to understand that there are three basic types of issues.

1. A true problem that must be solved.
2. Information that needs to be communicated and agreed upon by the participants or team.
3. An idea or opportunity that needs feedback, brainstorming, insight, and/or a green light from the team.

It is the issues owner's responsibility to make it clear what type of issue it is what is required or needed to address the issue. A problem well stated is a problem half solved. I wanted to make sure everyone is aware of the following and that we agree. Here is the opportunity, idea, etc. that I want to discuss, explore, obtain more data on etc.

Additional information regarding each of the three steps follows:

STEP 1: IDENTIFY

Clearly identify the real issue because the stated problem is rarely the real one. The underlying issue is usually a few layers down and the stated problem may merely be symptom of the real issue.

Most causes of the real issue are either a people issue or a process issue. In fact, this is a great question to ask once you get down to what you feel the real issue is.

The process at times can feel like peeling an onion.

STEP 2: DISCUSSS

In an open and honest environment, everyone must share their thoughts, ideas, concerns, and solutions regarding the issue. In fact, the participants should be encouraged to suggest a solution or weigh in on the merits of previously suggested solutions. Everyone should say what they believe but they should say it only once. Possible solutions should appeal to the greater good and you should not push the solution in a direction that is more favorable to you or your team. If you do, you are not fighting for the greater good of the Company; you are just protecting your turf.

The difficult part is that there will be difficult conversations and the group may need additional training so that they can learn to have and share a healthy conflict of ideas and let the best solution come to light, even if it causes some discomfort along the way.

If the conversation starts to become redundant it's time to move on to step three. However, it is also important that you be on the look-out for tangents developing in the conversation that are causing you to diverge from an original purpose or course. When that happens remember the parking lot technique and team members should be comfortable suggesting or asking if we may be getting off course here.

Upon the completion of the discussion step all of your options, data, ideas, solutions, and concerns regarding the issue at hand will be out in the open. Now it is time to go on to Step 3 – Making the issue go away permanently.

STEP 3: SOLVE

The solve step is a conclusion or solution that usually becomes an action item for someone or a team of people to solve. All actions should have one owner, but they can have additional helpers. When the actions are completed the issue should be solved and disappear from future discussion.

Commit to what the team believes is the best answer as quickly as possible. In most cases, the end result is an action item that should be completed within the next seven to twenty-one days by SPECIFIC team members. Indecision is NOT an option.

Before moving on to the next issue, recap the action items and make sure the owner is clear and committed to completing it within the agreed upon time frame. Put it on an action list Action required, by whom by when. The action item must have only ONE owner. The owner is the person who gets the blame if the action step is not completed.

General, three types of resolutions will emerge from and IDS session.

1. The issue is solved when the agreed upon action(s) is completed.
2. The issue is merely awareness, and everyone concurs with that awareness. E.x. We all agree that the IDS meetings must start and end on time.
3. The issue needs more data, research, or facts. In this case, someone is assigned an action item to do the research, gather the data or facts and bring it to a subsequent meeting. Ex Bill will gather the client data for the last two years and we will make that issue the top priority at our IDS meeting on xx date.