



Quick Fixes vs. Permanent Solutions

by Mike Hawkins
mike@alpinelink.com

Work is as much about overcoming obstacles as anything else. Employees and managers must be adept at confronting and overcoming obstacles in order to maintain high performance.

Obstacles and their resolutions vary widely. They are typically associated with products, services, technologies, processes, customers, partners, employees and legalities. Despite their variety, there is a consistent trade-off that must be considered – do you put a quick-fix in place or do you invest the extra resources needed to put a more permanent solution in place?

If, for example, your organization spends significant time on completing progress reports, do you put a quick-fix in place such as a standardized report template or a more permanent standardized online computer application? Or if your work involves a series of process steps that interface with other people or companies, do you pick-up the phone and smooth out any process mishaps informally or do you take the time to analyze the entire process for more effective long term solutions?

How you approach these decisions can be vitally important. If you typically rely on your intuition, be careful. Intuition often includes built in biases that lead to errors in judgment. Here are four objective questions to consider when evaluating solution alternatives and the trade-off between putting a quick-fix in place or investing extra time and money in a more permanent resolution:

- Which solution is best for all parties involved? If one is primarily in your best interest, but not in other's, it probably won't last. Win-lose solutions quickly fall apart and in the end can be much more costly to you. Favor the solution that has the support of all those involved.
- Which solution best supports the organizational vision and values? All too often an organization's vision and values are relegated to generic platitudes when decisions are being made. Consider which solution best meets your organization's values and can be used as a symbol to drive the culture, behavior and results you desire.
- Which solution represents the optimal financial return? Analyze the financial return, especially on solutions that represent significant investments or cost savings. A solution that doesn't cost much can be less preferable compared to a solution that costs much more, yet offers longer term financial rewards. While this is obvious, studies show that financial analysis is often not done and most poor business decisions neglected an accurate return on investment examination.
- Which solution is least risky? Considerations such as length of time of implementation, resource availability, solution complexity, competition's reaction and employee buy-in represent significant risk to any solution implementation. Other matters such as physical safety, contractual obligations, ethics, law and personnel policies can also represent significant risk. Consider which solution best minimizes your risk.

When faced with workplace obstacles, develop several alternative solutions to consider. When evaluating them, don't over rely on your intuition. Think about how each affects other stakeholders, supports organizational values, provides financial return and minimizes risk in determining the trade-off between a quick-fix and a more permanent long term solution.