

**Business Bullet ~**  
**The Other Side of Problem Solving, Part 1**  
**Contributed by Rich Shefren**

Do you ever struggle trying to solve problems that plague your business? Do you analyze and plan, only to have the same problems keep cropping up over and over? There's an important reason that happens. Too often, entrepreneurs and business managers think they're trying to solve problems when in reality, they're focusing on the wrong things. Then compounding that is the fact that they may not be clear on something even more important...the two things you need to determine if you are going to be able to get to the root of the problem. Any problem.

In this 3 part series, we want to show you how to think your way clear to understanding the root causes of problems. And then, we will share the actions you need to take to overcome them—for good.

You need to make decisions in business. In this first part, let's talk about **problem solving**, which is another name for decision making. The processes for doing both are actually remarkable similar. We're not going to go into the whole process on how to get to core problems and root causes right now because it would take way too much space and too long. What we want to talk about is the 'other side of problem solving.' The other side of actually coming up with effective solutions to problems that you consistently come up against.

What we have noticed over time is that many entrepreneurs have been receiving marketed solutions to symptoms for so long, they tend to believe that the symptoms they are currently experiencing—like enough business interest, not enough conversions—are actually the problems in themselves.

So, therefore, they go about trying to solve the symptoms and never really actually address the deeper problem. Because they continually struggle with one issue after another, sometimes it's the same issue. Sometimes it's slightly different.

### **Two Elements in Problem-Solving Process**

Before you can get past the symptoms and analyze the core and root of any problem, there are two elements that are absolutely necessary to know. Often times, we find these two elements are entirely missing for most entrepreneurs.

The first element is you need to know **what your goal is**. And not in a fuzzy way, but in a precise way. Your goal could be anything. It could be a personal goal like, "I want to write three hours every day." It could be a business goal, "I want my business to do a million dollars next year." But you need to carefully think about and determine exactly what that goal is.

Once you know what that goal is, the next critical element is called establishing or surfacing your "**critical success factors.**"

"Critical success factors" are just what their name implies. They are the necessary elements that must be in place if you want to accomplish your goal, achieve your goal, acquire whatever it is that is your goal. In other words, what absolutely needs to be in place to get you where you want to go?

Most entrepreneurs and business managers are deficient in this area in their business. That they might want their business to do a million dollars in annual sales, but they don't know what is absolutely necessary for their business to get it done. If you can't clearly articulate the exact steps necessary for you to reach your goal, then...well, you'll never achieve it. And this is the critical area where we see most people really off base.

You first have to figure out "the what" before you go and buy a bunch of "how to" information. The "what" are the necessary critical elements—the critical success factors—that you need to have in place to have the business you want.

That's where the whole problem-analysis process has to begin. With the "what". Because, once you understand what needs to be in place, what you must have to get to your goal, then the very next question is, "Why don't I have those elements?" From there, you'll surface a bunch of symptoms that you're currently experiencing that are preventing you from reaching your goal.

And that's where root cause analysis and core problem analysis has to step from—from that point—from surfacing those symptoms that are clocking you from your goal.

### **Why Understanding These is SO Important**

You need to understand why this is so important. In our economy today, your business will only go as far as your ability to think will take it.

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If you're in the information business, it's even more important because essentially you are getting paid to think. You're getting paid to solve problems for your clients and prospects.

If you are NOT in the 'information business' proper, you are still getting paid to solve problems or solve problems accurately. Remember, in a way, we are all in the 'information business', we are in the business of marketing our businesses, communication the benefits of our products/services, informing others—part of every business is the 'information business'.

If you think about your whole educational process, I doubt you ever had a course on thinking or problem solving. This has created great deficit of knowledge. Important knowledge. The single skill-set that's absolutely critical for every successful entrepreneur and business manager.

So, it's time to start, to think about problem-solving as a process, instead of an event where you confront a problem and quickly try to leap to a solution. You must start viewing the solving of problems as a process.

In Part 2, we will share with you how to apply these business building techniques to the art of problem solving.

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Adapted from “**One Step Ahead**”, by Rich Schefren, [www.strategicprofits.com](http://www.strategicprofits.com)

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