

Solutions, Not Problems

Wisdom and Inspiration · By Simon Townsend · 1 min read

I've run my own publications and my own television programs. That is, I've been the boss. I always lay down a golden rule: my door is open, come and talk to me anytime, but NEVER bring me a problem . . . sure, tell me about the problem - but bring me the solution. That is, come in and tell me about how you solved the problem and what the result has been. I've never been interested in employees who want to hand problems to me to solve. I like employees who tackle problems on their own and see the result, and then come in to tell me about the PROBLEM, the SOLUTION and the RESULT:

DON'T tell me you're ill and that you haven't finished your work.

DO tell me about the PROBLEM, that you were late with your work. Like your article-buying editors I have little interest in why. Now, tell me what your SOLUTION was (how you caught up) and tell me about the RESULT (your fabulously well-done article, or whatever).

DON'T tell me about the expert who wouldn't return your calls.

DO tell me about the PROBLEM of the uncooperative expert, and your SOLUTION of finding other experts, and tell me about the RESULT (probably an even better article).

DON'T tell me about the Public Relations manager who would not cooperate in arranging an interview.

DO tell me an amusing anecdote about this frequent PROBLEM of unhelpful minders. Then tell me your SOLUTION (probably getting to your interviewee via another method) and tell me about the RESULT (probably a really top alternative interview).

Reprinted from The Wonderful World of Journalism. Written in the spirit of Simon Townsend's journalism craft advice. Visit simontownsendjournalist.com for the full archive.