



Develop Managers with Four Simple Questions

By Nancy Quinn Rummel, ACC

This might be the most common executive complaint, “I can’t get anything done because my managers are constantly interrupting me with problems. This department has people problems. That department has a deficit. Etc. I try to get them to solve their own problems, but they all want to know what I think.”

We have a solution for those executives that was published by Dale Carnegie over 60 years ago. It is a four question approach that is so deceptively simple it will amaze you. Train your managers that you will be happy to help them with problem solving when they come to you with written answers to the following four questions.

- What is the problem?
- What are the causes of the problem?
- What are the possible solutions?
- What is the best possible solution?

Managers grow when they are required to get and weigh all the facts before dumping a problem on their boss. When they present the problem, they must recommend their best recommendation for a solution.

Once the manager and boss reach a decision on the best solution, it is important to *ACT* decisively. Often by ignoring problems, we allow them to grow. Resolution should be quick so problems do not become overwhelming.

Here is a recent example of this approach. The director of a department had two good managers who continually feuded. They did not get along at all and made life uncomfortable for all who worked with them. The director dumped this problem on the desk of the CEO with exasperation, “What do you want me to do?”

We coached the CEO to reply firmly, “I want you to go to your office and write your best answers to these four questions. Come back to me with your best recommendation on how to solve the problem.”

That CEO then had time to return to her own work.

Dale Carnegie was a master of good, old-fashioned common sense.