

The Problem IS.....

How often have you heard someone say, “The problem is such and such”. Think about that statement. When faced with a situation that needs resolution, how often do you think that only one problem exists? Saying “THE problem” immediately puts the speaker in a state of allness. He knows it all, or at least he thinks he does. Then with the use of “is”, the speaker couples “problem” to one simplistic factor, which indeed may need resolution.

Let’s set up a scenario.

A vacation island has just sustained damage from a hurricane. One resort, accessible by only one road has been hit particularly hard. Using a cell phone someone calls the island’s emergency coordinator and explains that some trees have fallen upon a number of buildings, trapping some guests. They request immediate assistance, including some heavy lifting equipment.

Emergency coordinator, Laid Back Bill, assembles his crew and relates the request, and then says, “The problem is that some trees have fallen onto the only road into the resort.” Then Bill waits for someone to come up with a miraculous solution.

Emergency coordinator, Detail Dante, assembles his crew and relates the request, and then says, “There are some trees on the road to the resort that need cleared so we can get our equipment to the resort. I want everyone other than the equipment drivers out of here now with chain saws in our four by fours, and start clearing the trees off the road. Keep me posted. Go!”

“Equipment drivers, check your fuel, and if you can, get some extra fuel for the resort’s generator. Also, make sure that you have a good supply of drinking water. I’ll call the restaurant and have them make up sandwiches, and a large urn of coffee. As soon as you have everything, start up the road, with the back-hoe first in case the clearing crew runs into trouble.”

While Bill focused on “The problem” Dante addressed a series of issues, and proposed solutions. Dante also responded with action while Bill pondered.

If you were hiring an emergency response coordinator, who would you hire, Bill or Dante?

Remember this little scenario when you hear someone start off with “The problem is...” Check out the ‘talking head’ experts on TV, and see how often they start out with “The problem is...” Do you really think they have a clue? Does the speaker treat a lot of inferential material as factual? Can the speaker know it all?

Unfortunately, the burden to discern what might be happening 'out there' falls upon your shoulders. You have a choice. Make the effort to compare the map the speaker presents to you to the reality 'out there', or travel the bumpy roads of misinformation.

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