Introduction

Every business has challenges.

But far too often, all a team can do is identify a problem – and stop.

They just can't seem to go beyond *identifying the problem.*
And they have an even *harder* time getting to the **root of the problem**
– let alone coming up with a solution.

There's a way out of this tail-chasing conundrum.
It's called *SMACK!* – a simple but lifechanging
business communications tool developed
by Lodestone True North.

SMACK!

Empower your team to lock in, see the
problem – **and solve it!**

Get past the problem to solutions that increase productivity and revenue.

Overview

SMACK!

is a proprietary solution from Lodestone True North created to help teams identify a problem – label it a **symptom** – then **go deep** and do the following:

1. Begin to **differentiate** between problems and symptoms
2. Move **away** from the symptom
3. Identify the **root causes** of the issue
4. **Collaborate on addressing** the root causes
5. Delegate **how to fix** the root issue

These four simple but powerful steps can be the difference between having your business **run you** – or empowering **you to run your business!**

Recognizing the problem is step one. But most businesses can't get past that first step.

Celebrate Accomplishment!

SMACK!

SYMPTOM | **M**OVE BACK | **A**SSEMBLE | **C**HOOSE A SOLUTION | **K**ICK IT

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Pathfinding for Captain & Crew

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Symptom

What's the problem?

What are you dealing with that's keeping you up at night? That is the **symptom.**

For example, what if your problem is customer *retention?*

You may hear things from your team like:

"Our customer retention is too brief."

"We get them in the door. We market to them. They even buy – but we can't build a long term relationship."

That's a problem. But let's call it a symptom.

Takeaway

By labeling it a *symptom* – not a *problem* – you can more easily visualize something deeper about it.

Action Item

Think about your business. What's happening in your day-to-day operations that is causing frustration? Got it? Good. Now rename that problem a *symptom!*

Next

Assemble your team.

> **Think about your business. What's happening in your day-to-day operations that is causing frustration?**

Move Back

Gather your team.

How will you determine who makes up your team? Choose employees from different areas of your business. Select people in positions that are directly affected by the symptom. Also include team members whose work isn't directly related to the symptom.

Be sure to assemble employees on numerous tiers of your organization chart. Avoid gathering people at the same management level.

Make the effort to include representatives of key parts of your organization – financial, traffic and operations, procurement, production, sales and others.

You will want to receive input from various stages of the workflow and customer contact. You will also want them to hear each other's vantage points. It is important to examine the challenge through as many different POVs as possible.

Everybody, back away from the symptom.

Not only do you want diverse points of view from various parts of your organization – you will also want every single participant to see the symptom from a different point of view. It's easy to get lost in the weeds. In fact, that lack of perspective might be why the problem has festered.

So Move Back *mentally.*

Look at the situation from a distance. Think of this as viewing – not a problem – but an opportunity. So how do you get to that vantage point where you can step back and see the big picture?

This *SMACK!* exercise is a great start. Everyone who is selected will know they are part of a team. That will generate enthusiasm for the project. Setting aside time to think the situation through also motivates participants.

Here are a few prompt points to get members of the team thinking:

- **Each Unique Perspective:** Each person must recognize they can address the problem from their own role. It may be different from the others. Acknowledging that difference is a great way to start thinking.

- **Going Beyond the Gut:** Each team member should acknowledge that their first assumptions are just that – and they should leverage this time to go beyond the gut reactions and ask "what if there are other reasons?"

- **What Would Your Heroes/Mentors Say?** Everyone has somebody who is a great influence. Encourage employees to imagine what their heroes and mentors might address this situation.

- **What's Been Tried Already?** Think of previous attempts to address the problem and determine the strengths and weaknesses of those insights.

Move Back Continued

Insist on feedback from everybody.

Is your company culture loose or formal? How do your employees address each other? How open are your team members to communicating with each other – especially to coworkers at different levels on the org chart.

Every company has its own dynamic. So what's important in this step is to make sure that everybody chimes in. Proclaim the fact that regardless of whether one employee reports to another – that dynamic goes away during this session.

It is important that everyone speaks freely in order for this SMACK! step to work.

For example, asking yourselves: *Why do we have a customer retention problem?*

Take Away

Move back. Get a different perspective. Gather a team. Get many perspectives. You'll start to recognize the roots of the problem – even solutions.

Action Item

Assemble your team. Set a timer for 20 minutes. Ask why? How? Why now? Was it always this way? What happened? Your encouragement will make your team honest and insightful.

Next

Add up the observations and ideas.

> So what's important in this step is to make sure that everybody chimes in. Your encouragement will make your team honest and insightful.

Assemble

For example, what might be the roots of poor client retention?

"It's because we often give bad service."

"Our follow up is too slow."

"We have a product quality issue."

"We're not trained to answer the questions they ask."

At this point in the session, every member of the team should have contributed five or six ideas, insights and even **solutions to address these problematic roots.**

Why this number?

Even though team members are analyzing the situation from their own vantage point, **expect some overlap** in their responses. That's okay. Generate a stack of ideas – way more than you need. Then whittle down and combine your assembled insights into about 6-8 **actionable** solutions that represent viewpoints across your organization.

Once you do this – it's time to **choose one.**

Take Away
Assemble the very best of your team's observations. It's amazing how many options you will have from your team's different perspectives.

Action Item
Dig deep. Discover the root issues that are holding your business back.

Next
Take a chance on **one** of those 6-8 solutions.

> At this point in the session, every member of the team should have contributed five or six ideas, insights and even solutions to address these problematic roots.

Choose a Solution

Choose one solution from 6-8 accumulated solutions. Then *act*.

For example, let's take a look at the CHOOSE step of our hypothetical *SMACK!* Session. The team has come up with what they believe to be solutions to the challenge of improving client retention.

Choose one – and just one.

Require weekly onsite service training updates for all employees.

Adopt software that automatically reminds us to follow up.

Redevelop the product.

Create newsletter for customer email signups.

50% off coupons every quarter.

Send reps to offsite training seminars.

How to choose your one solution.

Look at the resources you have to address this problem. Every organization has limits on funding, time and labor that can be dedicated to the fix. There may be an event on the calendar dictating the deadline.

Consider all the factors – then choose which one to try first.

> **At this point – consensus is over. Let the owner of the problem take responsibility to choose and carry out the solutions.**

Remember, if it doesn't work you still have other solutions to reconsider.

Take Away

Focus on only one solution at a time.

Action Item

How does the Team choose? At this point – consensus is over. Let the **owner of the problem take responsibility** to choose and carry out the solutions.

Next

Put that solution into play!

Kick It into motion

Kick it out from where it's been stuck. Kick the solution into play.

For example, the client retention solution will require training and change.

Who is the best expert to lead the training?

How is the training measured (KPI)?

How will we measure customer retention effectiveness?

Because the Team has been involved in the *SMACK!* Process, the owner of the problem will manage the solutions – regardless of that employee's place in the organization chart. In this way, team members at many levels will be providing follow up insight and ongoing support.

Advice to the business leader: Kick the symptom away from yourself even. Delegate it so you can retain your **Move Back** perspective.

Action Item

Delegate – but remain your ship's captain : How will you **hold your team accountable** for following through? Do yourself a favor: stay singularly focused on one specific solution. Encourage ownership and you will be amazed at what your employees will produce.

Next

Results!

> **Advice to the business leader: Kick the symptom away from yourself even. Delegate it so you can retain your Move Back perspective.**

SMACK!

Don't forget the punctuation. **The exclamation point!** It's a last reminder *to follow up. To get it done.*

The exclamation point is the energy of making change and celebration of your progress.

Without this enthusiasm and commitment, you'll be stuck back at the beginning – gawking at the problem without any ideas on how to get to the root of it and fix it.

Don't be stuck –
give your symptom
a good SMACK!

SMACK!

Is just one of many Lodestone original management and organization tools called **Principled Products** that help clients discern what's important – not just for running a business –but for living a full, rewarding life.

We hope you find this e-book a valuable resource for business. Lodestone True North implementers can professionally guide you through sessions using this or any of our Principled Products.

Want more helpful tools from Lodestone?
Ready to take control of your business?

Set up a **FREE** 90-minute consultation. We'll do a deep dive into your business, reveal more of our tools and processes and discover how we can best work together.

Visit LodestoneTrueNorth.com/90-minute-meeting or call us at (330) 822-8187 to learn more.

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About Lodestone True North

In the natural world, the lodestone is a naturally magnetized mineral that seafarers throughout history used to find their way on journeys. In today's business world, Lodestone is a dynamic firm of experienced, accredited implementers who help entrepreneurs and managers get what they want from their business.

We help entrepreneurs and managers get what they want from their business.