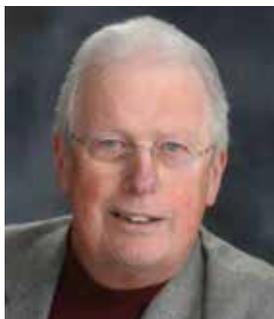


The Dysfunction in Assumptions

Ditch your assumptions for a more analytical approach before acting



By Patrick T. Malone

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I recently attended an advanced seminar designed to show distribution reps how to build value with their customers by helping them market their practices better. Multiple ideas were explored, ranging from protecting their flea and tick business to dental care to logos and facility appearance. The following week I rode with a rep that had attended, and he was very excited about sharing these ideas with his clinics. The first call started with:

“Doctor, I have some exciting new ideas to help you grow your business. I would like to share a couple with you so you can decide if they can be implemented in your practice.”

Unfortunately, the air quickly left the enthusiasm balloon when the clinic owner’s response was, “That’s

not my priority right now,” and the conversation quickly moved to the one or two products that were on promotion this month.

The rep made the assumption that every practice was interested in growing. He acted on that assumption without first checking that it was correct and then was unable to recover when that wasn’t the case.

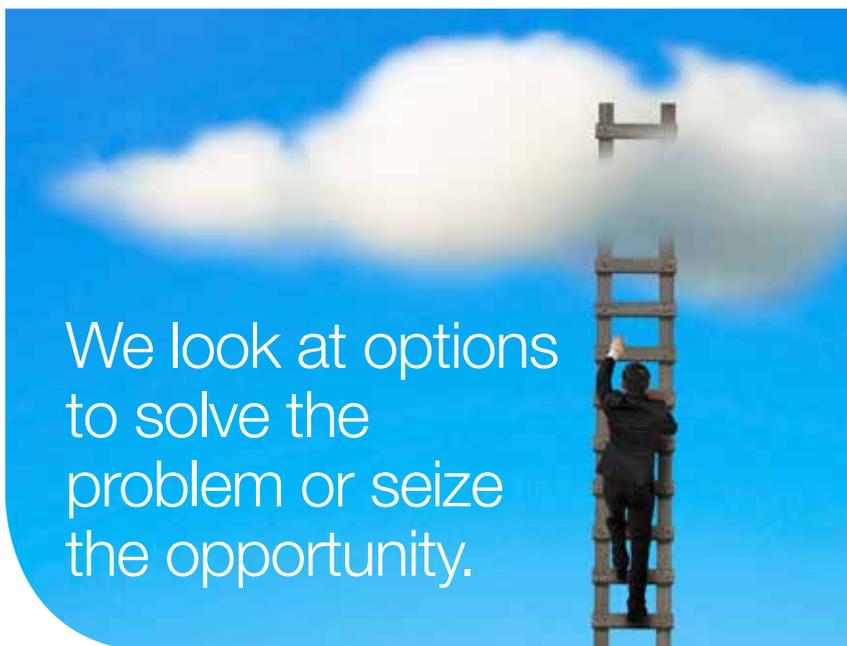
A couple of good rules for every distributor rep are:

1. Check that your assumptions are correct before acting on them
2. Have a recovery strategy when encountering negative responses.

How we make our decisions

To implement these rules in your territory, let’s start with examining a natural decision-making process when trying to reach an important decision.

No. 1: We seldom consider changing things or spending significant sums of money unless we



We look at options to solve the problem or seize the opportunity.

Warning: Never use NIQCL questions to try to convince others that they really have a problem, that it is important, etc.



first become aware of a problem or opportunity. Otherwise, why bother?

No. 2: As soon as we become aware, we make a judgment whether or not it is worth doing something about the problem or opportunity.

No. 3: We will try to quantify the issue to determine what it might cost in terms of money, time, effort, etc.

No. 4: Often we stop at that point, because the costs seem too high and ask ourselves “Can I live without it?” Then if we don’t like the consequences of doing nothing we move ahead.

No. 5: We look at options to solve the problem or seize the opportunity.

Use a NIQCL approach

Our own decision-making process creates a natural process that we can use either to check our assumptions or uncover the reasons behind negative responses, so we can build a recovery strategy to stay on course. To make that process easy to remember think of NIQCL.

- **Need?** Problem/Opportunity?
- **Important?** Is it serious, a priority, critical?
- **Quantify?** How much? How many? Size? Scope?
- **Consequences?** What if not solved/captured?
- **Look/Listen?** Open to ideas/suggestions/options?

These questions are helpful in business interactions to diagnose problems standing in the way of implementing

change. In the same manner, NIQCL statements will allow you to check your assumptions before proceeding, or allow you to describe your perception of the situation at hand.

Consider the following points:

- You have used NIQCL before in successful moments of your own decision-making process.
- Following NIQCL in the exact sequence is not always necessary. For example, you may go from Need to Quantifying and then back to Importance. The exact sequence is less important than getting all the critical information.
- **Warning:** Never use NIQCL questions to try to convince others that they really have a problem, that it is important, etc. That will come across as manipulative, and if they disagree it could be seen as argumentative.
- You may also find NIQCL helpful in testing your solutions to insure you are not creating bigger problems than the one you are trying to solve.

This simple analytical problem-solving process will help you diagnose the complex issues standing in the way of your advancing to the trusted advisor status with your clinics. The distributor rep who sends me the most unique application of NIQCL before July 15, 2014 will receive an autographed copy of our book *Cracking the Code to Leadership*.

Try it, find out for yourself. ■