

Agoge Day 8: Problem Solving 2/5

Identify problem

- Yesterday I got written up for not meeting metrics set by my company. As much as it set me back emotionally, it was useful for my plan. I missed the hardest metrics so I'm not worried about my performance overall, but it does add fuel to the problems I can solve with my copy. I'm a top 10% employee, and if I can fail then the masses are suffering even worse.

Walk the assembly line

- Contributing Factors
 - Self
 - I knew the metrics and the way they wanted it done. The main one I failed is rescheduling payments. I struggle to find the balance, in conversation with customers, to push for payment versus having empathy for their struggle. The program is meant to relieve their financial struggle but many customers lack commitment. While trying to be empathetic I end up being too soft on this metric.
 - The second one is difficult to trace directly, other than to say I cannot slack off at any point or my survey score will be bad. Each interaction has to be as perfect as I can make it; one bad survey can fail you.
 - Team leader
 - This is where my plan can really use this failure to win. Coaching skills are massively inadequate in the leaders. They are knowledgeable on the product and procedure, but fail to teach this knowledge to their agents.
 - There is no consistent accountability. The agents go from thinking they're fine to a write up (my entire team failed at least 1 metric yesterday) and they didn't come away understanding how to fix their problem.
 - Resources (material/agents)
 - The material they give you is vague. It only focuses on the bones of the problems and doesn't give any sort of support for knowing how to apply the metric in live calls.
 - The information is disorganized and many agents don't know how to navigate tracking their metrics, or how to access the relevant information they need.
 - Agents are flustered from days like yesterday, and many of their metrics will get worse.
 - Customers/agents
 - They play a role because agents have to know how to direct the call to be effective.
 - Agents are so focused on meeting certain word-for-word metrics that they fail other metrics related to customer service.

- The customers do not know what is best for them. They are in the program from mismanaging their finances. Their knowledge needs to be bolstered to have an increase in customer retention.
- Why?
 - Why do agents not know how to find useful information?
 - Why do agents not know how to do better?
 - Why do team leaders not know how to coach?
 - Why aren't campaign leaders holding TLs accountable?
 - Why hasn't the company fixed the problem?
 - Why hasn't the campaign corrected the problems?

Focus and plan adjustments:

-Getting the write up showed me gaps in the company structure that I can fix with my copy.

Agents are not incapable, the information is not clear and concise, and they are not being coached properly.

-Team leaders can memorize metric information, they can learn how to coach correctly, which is also another piece of copy I am writing.

-Customers need enough information to make the right choices on the calls. Agents need to be taught HOW to control the calls/conversation.

Day 9: Problem solving: Revision and Review

Problem:

I'm having a problem when it comes to outreach. I watched the PUC today and I know I need to bite the bullet, but I'm at a loss for the correct approach. I've figured out, based on my market research/avatar, that the company I work for is much larger than I had originally thought.

If this large of a company is struggling to maintain accountability within a campaign, how have they not crumbled yet?

I think it's potentially a high turnover rate that keeps them afloat. The frustrating part is that they have everything they need to be extremely effective, but it's as if they don't know how to put it all together.

All the different levels within the campaign are somewhat cut off from shared responsibility, yet they are supposed to somehow reign in accountability.

I say all of this to say, I have figured out that they are a global company with a small business feel. This is my current problem. Each category requires a different approach, and if I strike either the wrong way, not only could I lose the opportunity for my plan to succeed, but I could lose my job in the process.

I'm not a big fan of office politics, but using the job I already have to get the job I want is perfect for my situation. I will bite the bullet and keep pushing forward with the plan, despite all the fear that is looming.

Walk the assembly line

- Self
 - I've been very tired the last three days, yet my focus has been on point. I think knowing I'm tired, and that a nap is not an option (even if I liked them), has helped me keep my mind busy so I don't make stupid mistakes.
 - I have felt discouraged the last few days. I'm assuming that's normal for such a big project. The way I'm looking at it is, no one likes the pain until they get the reward from it.
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- Resources
 - They recently updated the participant guide and it's been the perfect opportunity to take notes and critique. So far, it's flat, to say the least. They do great with the visual aspect of the training, but a lot of the material is vague. Occasionally they have examples, but most of the copy directions are short, meant only for vague notes for trainers to expand on. The problem is most agents don't go back to this portion, and even if they stumble on it, three-word-sentences are not enough to remember what they need.
 - I'm assuming they are updating the knowledge tool as well, as it has been unavailable, but no complaints; hopefully it will be up by next week, just in time for week 2 of my plan.
 - I've spent the majority of my free time during work, summarizing the training material. Sunday I will review what I've taken notes over and start creating my product at home to use in my test during week 3, and later in my pitch, as evidence.
- Agents
 - The agents are distracted easily. They don't know how to effectively tell the customer what they NEED to know versus what the customer needs to FEEL. Half of customer service is building rapport. The agents are so focused on trying to get their metrics that they end up with angry and confused customers, pushing agents to avoid work in attempts to check out of the moment
 - One of the largest complaints from QA is note-taking. The agents aren't given much time to take effective notes. Agents could copy and paste from the guidelines, but most of them have given up even trying to use the material. It isn't navigable or relevant to them. The knowledge tool is better but they end up spending their free time talking rather than learning, so it is a wasted resource.
 - Most of them have sub-par typing skills. It would be great if part of the training could include general office skills.
- Team leader
 - I expect mediocrity from these agents, because they've not been held to any other standard, but it irritates me to be around leaders who don't do their job. I'm gauging my personal feelings so drama does not ensue, but I need to find the right approach to make actual change. If I go above them, I'm sure to become

enemy number one, but they have dumb social games that I've never had much patience for, that ultimately get in the way of getting the job done.

- Why?
- Focus and plan adjustments:
 - Inquire about becoming “floor support.” This is a position that would potentially free up my time to coach agents. I’m not in too big of a hurry to move up because I’m still doing a deep dive on the material, but this is certainly the next big step. This can help me coach the coaches and create real change and value.
 - I don’t if it’s being tired, or the tiny bitch voice talking, but I was doubting myself over the last few days. As problems kept coming up, it was way too easy to tell myself to quit. Yet the shame of failing won’t let me. I’ve realized, though fear has tried to keep me down, this plan is exactly what I need.

Agoge Day 10: Perspicacity walk

I went for my morning walk, this morning at 4am.

I was so tired when I came back to the house that I sat down to work on my question and I fell asleep. Ironically it was exactly what I needed. I got up and started my burpees at 6:30 and jumped right into notating what I’d figured out, and to figure out the rest.

Question: Is starting my journey with my 9-5 a waste of my time? Should I focus more on easy wins or should I jump in full force and make my plan happen?

Identify the problem:

- The plan I’ve chosen is slow moving and will take time to implement/get rewards. It feels like a losing battle because there are a lot of smaller problems to solve before I can reach my larger goal.

Factors I considered on my walk...

1. I am not in a financial place, right now, to be able to quit my full time job.
2. It isn’t what I really want to do, it feels like something I have to do.
3. I don’t know if I have time to commit fully to copywriting clients.
4. I struggle with outreach.
5. I worry about my ability to follow through because of my lack of knowledge/experience/time.

I came back and wrote the following about my problem.

- We are supposed to go through a local source, for free, to gain testimonials. The problem I had had was putting my name on the line for something I have no experience with or worse the business of a friend having a negative impact from my potential shortcomings.

- I brainstormed idea after idea, since starting TRW, yet my real problem was staring me in the face (inspired by the Agoge Program).
- I can't afford to quit my job to begin an at home venture on my own.
- I was trying to run away from my problem instead of using that problem to get what I want.
- I landed on this plan because this company already pays me to be present. I might as well help the company I already work for; resulting in boosting my experience while still maintaining the income I need to take care of my family.

Then Professor Andrew posted the new/final challenge.

It felt as though my entire walk was a waste.

I realized my entire plan was still created out of fear.

I know that the purpose of the final challenge was to defeat that fear, but it seemed like I would have to completely throw out the plan that I've been building for the last two weeks.

Yet, perhaps it was absolutely perfect.

I finished watching Day 11 Creativity Video, and completed my creativity challenge.

I watched the Q/A and got inspired.

I let the creativity flow, and what I got would be perfect for what I want to do, but it still doesn't complete the challenge.

I feel stuck, maybe it's time for another walk...

Question for tomorrow morning's walk:

How do I overcome fear, when fear is the thing that has helped me survive?

Is this just my character defect/genetic disposition that I should accept and work around?

Is there a way to do what I want and still succeed?