

## **Fire Fighter Training - When Bad Things Happen to Good Process**

### **November 16, 2005**

By Beth Schneider  
Process Prodigy

One moment I'm rehearsing and preparing for a teleclass where I was the guest expert.

The next minute, my computer screen goes black. The computer starts making a weird beeping noise and all I've got are blinking lights and characters that don't make any sense.

I frantically push buttons as I realize I'm supposed to "go on" in 10 minutes. Not only have I lost my script, but the call-in number to the teleclass and the contact number for the person running the class are locked in the depths of my now useless computer. AAGGGGHHH.

Sometimes even the best laid plans can unexpectedly blow up in your face and birth a crisis. People make mistakes, technology breaks down, "Stuff" Happens. We've all been there when the panic sets in and all rationale hits the road. Trust me I know from personal experience.

The key to handling a crisis or what we sometimes refer to as a fire, is to become a Fire Fighter. Take a look at the steps I used to extinguish this fire. Then incorporate them into your routine so that you can be a Fire Fighter when bad "stuff" happens to your good process.

#### **Step 1: It's OK to feel**

When I realized that my blinking computer wasn't going to recover I yelled a long list of expletives at it, pounded on it one more time and then got to work.

Don't ignore your emotions. Be mad, sad, frustrated, scared, etc. The key here is to feel these emotions, not dump them on all the people around you. When the problem hits, close your office door and rant all you want, go outside, make a phone call to a sympathetic uninvolved ear, something to let out the feelings so that they can pass and you can focus. Screaming at the people around you or the person who made the mistake is NOT going to help.

#### **Step 2: Focus on a Solution**

I needed a solution, fast! My heart was pounding. I was sweating. I had 8 minutes to recreate my script and somehow get the phone numbers I needed to actually dial in to the teleclass. I took a deep breath, calmed down and started brainstorming. I had a choice. I could focus and create a solution or jump up and down and have a temper tantrum. Former New York Mayor, Rudy Giuliani once said that his father told him the key to problem solving was to be the calmest person in the room. Yes, this is sometimes difficult, but by being calm, you can start to focus on a solution to the problem rather than the problem itself. And isn't the goal to get a solution in place?

#### **Step 3: Form a Plan and Get Going**

With 6 minutes to go, I had a plan. As I phoned my Dad, I prayed he was home sitting in front of his computer. He was! First, I had him pull the phone number of the person facilitating the teleclass from their website. Then I had him register for the class so he would get the auto responder sign-in info. Phone numbers, yeah! While he was surfing, I opened my files and pulled a script from one of my live speaking events. Not quite the same program, but something to improvise from. My blood pressure was starting to return to

normal.

Once you are able to focus, put a general plan of action into place so you know where you are going and not simply running in circles. Even though it may seem like there is "no time", stop and think. Determine what immediate actions you have to take to keep your head above water.

#### **Step 4: Get Help**

I started thinking about who would have immediate access to a computer. My Dad was the first person I thought of. If he hadn't been there, I would have gone to my Brother. Then to anyone else I could think of who I knew had a good chance of being in front of a computer.

Get the right people working with you. Figure out an expert who might be able to help or offer advice. Find a colleague who may have already been there, done that. Pull people off other projects if you need extra hands. See if there is something you can buy that will help. If your house was burning down, would you want a fire fighter or a plumber? Do what it takes to get the resources you need.

#### **Step 5: Recap**

I called in to the teleclass in just the nick of time. It was a huge success and no one was the wiser. Wwwwhhhheeeewwww.

Now I have a paper file of teleclass scripts, just in case. I also have a running log of teleclass call-in numbers, just in case. I have a system in place to ensure this never happens again. When the dust clears, revisit what just happened. Where did the breakdown occur? How could it be prevented in the future? If it might happen again, what should the plan be?

Fires happen all the time. It's how you prepare and deal with those fires that make or break the amount of damage that is done. You can be your own best Fire Fighter.

© 2005 Beth Schneider. Want to reprint this article, feel free as long as you include the following: Beth Schneider, Chief Infopreneur of Process Prodigy, is a business process consultant who helps solo-entrepreneurs, small business owners and network marketers who want to systemize their business to increase profits, increase productivity and grow their business without having to give up the family oriented, flexible, balanced lifestyle they desire. Beth works one-on-one with her clients, offers home study courses, and teleclass boot camps. For more information visit [www.processprodigy.com](http://www.processprodigy.com) and sign up for your FR\*EE 5-Step Process Starter Kit and FR\*EE Process Tips.