

## NotesOn: First-Aid Kit for IT Management Plans

### ***Introduction (v1.2):***

In “NotesOn: A Quick-Fix IT Repair Plan” I mentioned that there are only three steps necessary to begin to get an IT group’s house in order: 1. Stabilize, 2. Simplify, 3. Standardize. To do these steps you need to generate a plan or plans. But. What happens when a plan goes awry?

If it isn’t working, don’t keep beating your head against a wall. Instead, take one of three actions below, formed into a mnemonic (a memory aid) to keep it on the tip of your thinking:

1. Train It,
2. Tweak It, or
3. Terminate it

1 & 2 are interchangeable as to order, depending on the situation. 3 is the last option when it is clear neither 1 nor 2 are reasonable solutions. You wouldn’t have written let alone implemented the plan if there wasn’t a clear idea, a solid reason for doing so. Right? (As opposed to the latest “whim of the moment”). So don’t give up on it right away. But if it is time to do so, don’t beat it to death or beat around the bush. Pull the plug.

How do you judge? Partly based on experience. But mostly by asking questions (remember: Look, Ask, Listen, Verify). When you do so:

### ***Train It***

1. do you get back blank stares? Or indications of a clear lack of comprehension, such as “Huh?” Then train it.

Just because a plan was issued doesn’t mean it was seen, let alone understood. Of course, it might have gotten buried at the bottom of everyone else’s priority lists. But, in either case, if it is worthwhile, dust it off, make sure everyone reads and understands it and knows their roles and responsibilities. Then you can push it forward with success.

### ***Tweak It***

2. does it seem to be almost working? Maybe it is headed in the general direction but not the exact right direction? Such that the actual results will not match the expected and intended ones? Then tweak it.

Sometimes the law of unintended consequences kicks in, and adjustments have to be made to counter them. Also, a plan can have missing steps, or steps that prove to be unnecessary in the obtaining of the desired results. Clear these up, with a surgeon’s touch, and it will move forward.



## ***Terminate It***

3. do you find your team is doing their best with “it” but they are not only not winning any battles it becomes clear there’s no chance of their winning the war? Then terminate it.

It could be that the originally stated problem wasn’t the *real* problem at all. Even when “Look, Ask, Listen, Verify” is done fully and properly before the plan is generated, the process of executing the plan may uncover another more basic, more fundamental, problem buried underneath. And if you don’t generate a new, truer, plan to correct that more fundamental flaw ...

## ***Summary:***

After a period of time of execution and observation, if it needs to be trained, train it, if it needs to be tweaked, tweak it, if it needs to be terminated, terminate it, and then move on. Of course, if it is working perfectly then leave it the heck alone – don’t fix what isn’t broken.

Do not let pride (such as pride of authorship if it is your plan) stand in the way of this evaluation and mitigation process. Pride that binds a team together is fine. Pride that blinds has no place in the management toolkit.

You would be surprised, and perhaps appalled, at how many managers and executives do not apply, in any way, the actions represented by this simple mnemonic. Too often I’ve seen and heard of, and likely you have as well, plans that were hammered home no matter what, with overtones of: “Over their dead bodies!”. Or a good plan was dropped entirely (due to “lack of interest”, etc.) which can be an equally serious error.

In their fundamentally simple ways, may my mnemonics be of aid to all managers and executives:

**Quick-Fix IT Repair Plan**  
Stabilize, Simplify, Standardize

**First-Aid Kit for IT Management Plans**  
Train it, Tweak it, or Terminate it

Hope this helps,

DP Harshman

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