

What If?

By George Porter

When you were very young did you ever play a game called, “What if?” Three or four little kids find themselves in a group with nothing to do and the game sort of happens. One child comes up with a problem like, Awhat if a monster came into the room, what would you do? Then the other kids, one at a time, will come up with ideas about what they would do. The competition is to better the theories of the last idea given, no two can be the same. It passes the time, exercises the imagination, and most kids have fun doing it. Believe it or not this simple little game is played at some very high levels by grown-ups all over the world these days and you might like to try it too. They call it brainstorming. Sadly, these days the big difference is that the “monster” is real and already in the room! All the more reason to play the game.

Here is how you as a grown-up might think about playing “what if”. Suppose you and your installation crew are on your way to a job somewhere about an hour away and you want something to do while you ride there. Forget about the way back home, there will be too many people sleeping. Someone will ask about a hypothetical (or not) situation like “what would you do if the rear end of the home won’t come down on the blocks because of camber?” Or “suppose the home slipped off the pad under the hitch and buried it’s nose in the ground, how would you jack it up?” Each member of the crew would come up with a problem for the rest of them to think about and come up with a solution. Don’t be afraid to ask about things you already think you have solutions for.

For instance, how can you be sure that when you finish putting in the anchors that the straps will always be at a 45 degree angle going to the I beam?

- Solution 1 Measure straight down to the ground from the top of the I beam. Whatever the measurement is, measure from that point toward the outside of the home the same distance and that is where the stabilizer plate will go. Install the anchor a little farther away than that and pull it up to the plate and you will get 45 degrees if the ground is anywhere close to level.
- Solution 2 Get a plastic speed square and duct tape a laser pointer to the 45 degree edge. Hold the square up to the side and top of the I beam and see where the laser goes on the ground. That would be where the anchor has to go.
- Solution 3 Cut a big 45 degree angle out of a piece of paneling and hold it up to the frame. Lay a longer stick on the 45 degree edge going down to the ground and that is where the anchor goes.
- Solution 4 Cut the same 45 degree piece of paneling about two feet long on the short sides and put a little notch right at the bottom of the 45 angle. Hook a good sized rubber band in the notch and stretch it up the diagonal with the back edge against the frame

touching the top flange. The 45 will be pointing in the direction of where the anchor goes and so will the rubber band gun you have made! Pull the rubber band up the slope of the paneling and then let it go. It will shoot off the end of the paneling and hit the ground where the anchor goes!

That is probably enough solutions because they are starting to get weird, but you get the idea I hope. They can be practical or strange, but it will force you to come up with different ideas and that can be not only fun, but good for business. Every radically new way of doing things always started off as a really off the wall thought that was completely different from what ever was normal at the time.

Think about the order you do things and what you do them with. Talk about safety and what could do to make things better. Figure out how to combine two tasks into one if you can. Think about new tools you could get and how you would use them. Think about a type of tool or some device that would make your work easier or faster. Re-invent everything you work with and see if you can improve on the original. Think about alternative work you could do if things got slow. Actually, I bet you have already done this one, but try it as a group.

It is good to keep your mind active and don't forget the old saying "If you always do what you always did, you will always get what you always got." Playing "what if" really could make some great changes in your working life if you did it right. Of course you don't have to do anything and just keep on grinding away at your job but, many years down the road you may look back and think, "what if."