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Back Talk-What's the Problem?

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Ten years ago Michael Lewis published an enormously important book about baseball and life entitled *Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game* and which was later made into a movie starring Brad Pitt. In an early scene Pitt, playing the Oakland A’s general manager Billy Beane, is having a conversation with his management team, e.g., his scouts, coaches, etc. Their team is in the dumps. They have lousy players. They can’t win games. They have lost three key players and the scouts, coaches, etc., are telling him what needs to be done. In the midst of all of this Beane keeps asking them “What’s the problem?” When they say the problem is they need to find the best players working for other teams, he still keeps asking “what’s the problem?” Finally he tells them, the problem is their team doesn’t have the money needed to hire the super players they seem so intent on identifying. Therefore, the problem they set up house at the Memorial. Again, But why do that when there must be easier ways of doing significant damage anyway? (3) But why not do what we have done in the past: threaten the North Koreans with total destruction will cause them to back down. (4) But why not do what we have done in the past: give the North Koreans some food and relax some of our trade restrictions instead since this would be cheaper than taking their threats seriously? Or maybe the President is looking for an opportunity to appease the Pentagon, which is facing serious spending cuts, and the Congressional representatives for the states where less money will be spent by laying out a billion in military expenditures. (5) But why do that when there must be easier ways of buying the Pentagon and these Congressional representatives off? Because the real problem is posed by China which has missiles and nuclear warheads capable of launching a preemptive strike, but we don’t want to be the one to launch a new arms race, this time with the Chinese, and so we can increase our capabilities in the name of dealing with the North Koreans.

Well, perhaps I should stick to library work. And I will let those of you still in the information business use this simple but effective technique to identify the most important problems and their solutions. My wife has just announced that I am supposed to broil skinless chicken breasts and steam zucchini for dinner. But why...?