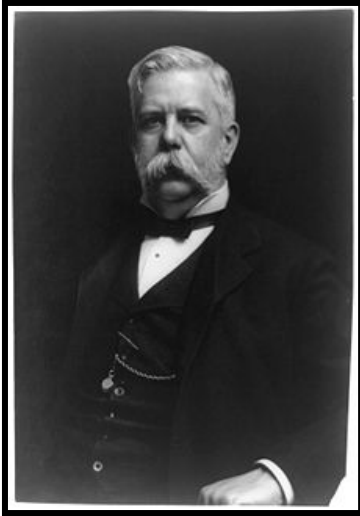


Stopping a Train

Two freight trains collided, and a young man named Westinghouse set to work to prevent a repetition of such an accident. The result was the invention of the air brake and the growth of a great industry.

At first, however, railroad executives had the attitude of Commodore Vanderbilt who, when George Westinghouse explained his invention, exclaimed, "Do you mean to tell me that you expect to stop a train with wind? I have no time to waste on fools."



Westinghouse was aware of the basic problem of the air brake. If the compressed air system failed, there was no way to stop the train. By reversing his approach to the problem, he finally came up with a solution: Heavy springs held the train's brakes on, and the compressed air pushed the brakes away from the wheels. If the air system malfunctioned, the springs clamped the brakes back against the wheels, and the train came to a safe stop.

By looking at his problem from a different angle, Westinghouse was able to perfect the air brake, which was adopted by the entire industry.

Being willing to consider a problem or situation from different perspectives can lead to meaningful conclusions.

--Beecher Hunter