

Critical Thinking: *Solving Problems with Ease*
PART I: *Script*

SLIDE 1:

Welcome to our Critical Thinking presentation! Without a doubt, any government, political campaign or organization will need to solve problems in order to reach their goals. However, like any operation that involves people with differing opinions, this can be challenging. Understanding what you should think about when facing a problem will help you find solutions with ease. #

SLIDE 2:

This topic is rich in resources so we'll divide the presentation into three parts:

SLIDE 3:

Part I is designed to help you understand a simple step-by-step problem solving cycle, as well as the skills needed to solve problems with ease. #

SLIDE 4:

In Part II, we'll look into how critical thinking skills help to generate better solutions;

SLIDE 5:

And we will explore all of these things using a case-study, where you'll get to put your mind to the test!

Let's continue with Part II! #

SLIDE 6:

Problem solving is the mental process you follow when you have a goal but don't immediately know how to achieve it. #

SLIDE 7:

It's a process that depends on you – how you perceive or think about a problem...#

SLIDE 8:

What you know about it... #

SLIDE 9:

...and the end-state you want to reach. #

SLIDE 10:

Yet problems vary widely, and so do their solutions. Sometimes a problem and its solution are clear, but you don't know how to get from point A to point B. #

SLIDE 11:

At other times, you may find it hard to define what's wrong or how to fix it. #

SLIDE 12:

Regardless of what the problem is, you can use a six-step problem-solving cycle to address it. This cycle is highly flexible and adaptable to suit various types of problems. It also comes with a flexible set of tools to use at each step. #

SLIDE 13:

While this cycle is portrayed sequentially, people rarely follow a rigid series of steps to find a solution. Instead, we often skip steps or even go back through steps multiple times until the desired solution is reached.

Let's go through each step to understand them better. #

SLIDE 14:

Step 1: DEFINE THE PROBLEM

This is a crucial step that involves digging deeper to identify the root of what really needs to be solved. The more clearly a problem is defined, the easier you'll find it to go through the subsequent steps and find a solution. #

SLIDE 15:

To define a problem, you can use gap analysis, which involves comparing your current state to the future state you want to be in, in order to identify the gaps preventing you from getting to where you want to be. #

SLIDE 16:

One additional piece of information: a symptom is a phenomenon or circumstance that results from a deeper, underlying condition. It's common to mistake symptoms for actual problems, which wastes a lot of time and effort on addressing the CONSEQUENCES instead of the root CAUSES of problems. #

SLIDE 17:

Make sure you take the time to identify the problem correctly so that you don't waste time. #

SLIDE 18:

Step 2: ANALYZE THE PROBLEM

Decide what type of problem you are facing. There could be a clear barrier or circumstance you need to overcome, or you may discover that that the path to reach your goal is unclear. #

SLIDE 19:

Then dig to the root causes of the problem, and detail the nature of the gap between where you are and where you want to be. #

SLIDE 20:

The "five-why analysis" is a tool that will help you get to the heart of the problem. #

SLIDE 21:

Ask "Why?" a number of times to dig through each layer of symptoms in order to arrive at the problem's root cause. #

SLIDE 22:

You can get to the root of a more complicated problem by using a cause-and-effect diagram. A cause is something that produces an effect, result, or consequence – or what contributed to the current state of affairs. Fill in these boxes to help determine the root of your problem. Categories of causes could include people, time, and the environment. #

SLIDE 24:

Brainstorm creatively – ask lots of questions about the who, what, where, when, and how of the causes to point to various possibilities. Don't limit yourself by considering practicalities at this stage; simply record all of your ideas. #

SLIDE 25:

Step 4: CHOOSE THE BEST SOLUTION

Now it's time to pick the best option to solve the problem. #

SLIDE 26:

One way to evaluate your ideas is by rating each possible solution you came up with in step 3 according to criteria, such as how effective it will be, how much time or effort it will take, how much it will cost, and how likely it is to satisfy people of both sides of the problem. #

SLIDE 27:

Step 5: PLAN OF ACTION

Once you pick your best solution, it's time to put it into action! During this stage, you determine what steps must be taken and which tasks should be accomplished in order to work towards the solution. #

SLIDE 28:

You should consider deadlines for completing the actions and the potentials costs for implementation. This will help narrow the possible ways to implement the solution based on any constraints that you discover. #

SLIDE 29:

All of these considerations should be written into an action plan which should include the who, what, and when of your proposed solution. #

SLIDE 30:

A good plan will also include a contingency plan so in case any unforeseen circumstances arise, you have a "Plan B" in place. #

SLIDE 31:

Step 6: IMPLEMENT THE SOLUTION

Implementation of your solution is an ongoing endeavor. Monitoring progress and making sure enough resources remain available is critical to the solution's success. #

SLIDE 32:

Remember that this model is highly adaptable. Although you shouldn't skip any of the six steps, you can tailor the order or the amount of time you spend on each stage based on the demands of your unique situation. #

SLIDE 33:

The six-step problem-solving model, and the tools it provides, is an effective, systematic approach to problem solving. #

By following each step consciously, you can ensure that generating solutions is a fact-driven, objective, and reliable process. It encourages you to dig deeper to the root cause, allows you to get input from others, to be creative when finding solutions, and to monitor your solutions to make sure they're working. By following this model you're more likely to come up with good, original, lasting solutions.

SLIDE 35:

Effective problem solving is made easier with sharp critical thinking skills. These skills can be developed and improved upon, and Part II of this presentation will help you do just that. Join us! #