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a MESSAGE from SYLVIA

The First Class Manager Coach

Comprehensive Critical Thinking: The Missing Ingredient From Many Decisions

Several years ago I was involved with an organization undergoing a major internal structure revamp. As the changes unfolded, I observed some nasty fallout. Board members delivered misaligned messages; staff resisted confusing directives, and clients expressed blatant dissatisfaction. Tempers flared. Productivity plummeted. Cooperation collapsed. Nobody seemed to grasp what was happening—or why. They just knew that something was terribly wrong.



The problem? Organizational leadership made an agency altering decision

without clarifying the process and assessing the impact. I'm talking about their failure to conduct a thorough dissection of what the change would look like, how it would be made, and how it would affect all players. I'm also talking about their omission to get buy-in as well as their neglect to determine exactly who would do what by when. Focused exclusively on the potential benefits to a structural change, the Board and CEO jumped to action before asking and exploring some essential, serious questions. In short, they didn't engage in comprehensive critical thinking. Their mistake triggered a breakdown from which they barely recovered.

My feature article below defines critical thinking and its six components. To make wise decisions, you really do need to understand the term and how you can implement its essence in discussions about every aspect of your business. In my opinion, critical thinking is not an option if you truly desire best results.

Sylvia

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FEATURE ARTICLE

The 6 Components of Critical Thinking and How to Use Them

Critical thinking is an intellectual self-guided, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective process that involves high-level reason, rationale, and empathy. It is based upon problem-solving abilities and effective communication. At its best, critical thinking drives responsible action. That said, no one can implement flawless critical thinking because each of us has some blind spots and tendencies toward self-delusion. But a conscious attempt to think critically is far better than no effort at all. Even elementary critical thinking has merits. Not sure how to proceed? Take a look at the six essential components (or steps) below:

1. **Knowledge:** This focuses on recalling or recognizing information, ideas, and principles that you learned. Ask your employees to identify, describe, list, outline, show, view, and tell. For example, "Describe what happens when no one answers the phone." Or, "How would you identify

a dissatisfied customer?”

2. **Comprehension:** This is about understanding what you learn in a way that allows you to interpret and summarize the main idea in your own words. Ask your staff to characterize, clarify, conclude, differentiate, demonstrate, explain, review, and infer. For example: “What conclusion can you draw about the new reporting system we just learned?” Or, “Explain the key benefits to our new reporting system.”

3. **Application:** This means applying an abstract idea in a concrete situation to solve a problem or develop something. Ask your Personnel Committee to adapt, calculate, construct, determine, modify, organize, predict, and produce. For example: “How would you modify the current staff evaluation process?” Or, “How shall we determine questions for the revised evaluation form?”

4. **Analysis:** This component involves breaking down a concept or idea into parts and showing the relationship between those parts. Ask your Board members to compare, contrast, dissect, examine, inquire, outline, survey, and reason. For example: “Let’s examine the pros and cons to giving a 4% general staff raise this year.” Or, “How would you explain the fact that two key employees decided to resign in the same week?”

5. **Synthesis:** This work brings all the parts (concepts) together to form a whole and build something new. Ask your Board to collect, compile, connect, gather, incorporate, reorganize, summarize, and test. For example: “How would you compile the facts related to the recent building break-in?” Or, “Let’s summarize all of the data gathered to date by the CEO Search Committee.”

6. **Evaluation:** This requires people to make informed judgments about the value of ideas, information, or materials. Ask your Board to assess, critique, debate, estimate, interpret, justify, rate, and prove. For example: “What criteria would you use to assess the success of our latest fundraiser?” Or, “How do you justify investing thousands of dollars into a new copy machine?”

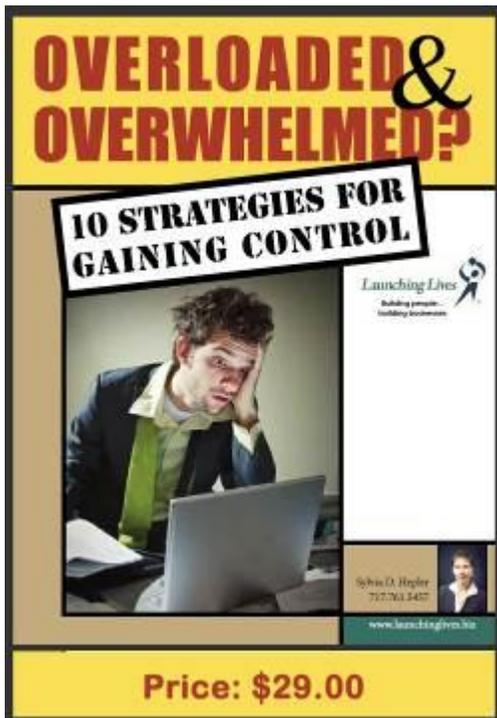
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What Clients Say

Deciding to invest in coaching services with Sylvia is one of the best career decisions I've made recently. I feel much more competent and confident as a new supervisor because Sylvia listens to my concerns and, through role-play situations, actually gives me words to use in my conversations with my direct reports, as well as with my supervisor. Through working with Sylvia I understand that choosing the correct language is vital to my success as a supervisor. I've also learned the technique of asking questions to gain valuable information about employees' motivations and about the workplace environment. I wish I would have hired Sylvia much earlier than this.

--Nancy Adams

Offers and Opportunities



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This downloadable product was created as a result of the highly successful July 25, 2012 teleseminar focusing on the topic of overwhelm and how to deal with it. [Click for more information](#) and to order.

RESOURCES

Check out several critical thinking products at [mentoringminds](http://mentoringminds.com). Once you enter the website, do a search for “critical thinking”. In particular, the wheel provides simple, quick tools and prompts that can assist you as you implement the six components in your workplace.

Another useful resource is Grace McGartland’s book, *Thunderbolt Thinking*. Recommended by Mark Victor Hansen (co-author of *Chicken Soup for the Soul*), this creative, revised 2000 reference provides a host of relevant ideas for jump-starting group thinking and challenging old ways of thinking within your organization. The whole point of this book is to equip readers with effective—and sometimes fun--strategies for getting optimal outcomes. Available in paperback on Amazon.com for \$13.

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TIP

Develop the habit of asking lots of questions that begin with WHAT, HOW, and WHY. Besides being ideal words that prompt people to think more deeply, they are a great way to implement the concept of critical thinking immediately. Try this: Ask your mid level manager what she has decided to do about missing the Wednesday deadline for a particular project. Then ask her how she intends to speed up the process for getting the work finished no later than Friday afternoon. Finally, ask her why she missed the original deadline in the first place.

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Where in the World is SYLVIA?

On October 9, 2012 Sylvia conducted an hour long teleseminar entitled: ***Multiple Generations at Work: How to Integrate, Supervise, and Inspire Millennials to Fully Engage Them.*** As is always the case with teleseminars from Launching Lives, LLC, a recording is available for those who were unable to participate live. Watch for details about the next teleseminar scheduled for November 28, 2012 at noon EST.



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About This Ezine

This Ezine is 1) to provide readers with valuable FREE content which contributes to both personal and professional growth and 2) to invite them to take next steps toward working directly with Sylvia.

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Launching Lives Ezine is dedicated, above all, to “building people ... building businesses.” ©2010, 2011, 2012

About SYLVIA

Sylvia Hepler, Owner and President of Launching Lives, LLC is an executive coach based in South Central PA. Her mission is to support corporate and nonprofit executives and business owners as they solve problems, develop leadership skills, and increase balance in their lives. Her background includes: nonprofit executive management/leadership, public speaking, business and freelance writing, teaching, and retail sales.

A [certified executive coach](#) through The Rescue Institute in Colorado and a participant in extensive continuing education, Sylvia is a platinum level expert author on [ezinearticles.com](#). She has produced an audio CD entitled, “Making Change”, [three special reports](#) for persons in management positions, and an audio product designed for new managers.

More information is available at her

[Launching Lives Website](#)

[Click to contact Sylvia by Email](#)

Reach Sylvia by phone at 717-761-5457

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Launching Lives SERVICES

Launching Lives, LLC is a full service executive coaching company located in South Central PA. Its mission is to support managers and executives to solve their most pressing problems, develop leadership skills, and increase balance in their lives utilizing a holistic approach. Launching Lives focuses on BUILDING PEOPLE through individual private coaching, group coaching, specialized products, workshops, speeches, and retreats. Most coaching takes place by phone.

Often people don't really know HOW they might benefit from coaching. Quite simply, ask yourself these questions: "What can't I seem to resolve on my own? What is keeping me awake at night? What am I missing when I look at a certain situation? How can I get to the next professional level? How can I learn certain skills quickly? How can I narrow my professional gaps? How can I motivate my staff? How can I communicate more effectively so I serve myself and others better? How can I reduce my work-related frustration? How can I develop a viable plan of action for myself and/or my organization? How can I obtain greater job satisfaction? Coaching is the SOLUTION to any of these issues.

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