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a MESSAGE from SYLVIA

Strategic Thinking: An Under-utilized Skill

For years now the concept of strategic thinking has intrigued me. Why? Because despite its ranking as an essential skill in the professional arena, I don't see much of it being used. What I do see is a lot of shallow thinking that isn't going to take anybody very far.

Recently I asked a private client why she's doing the kind of work she's doing for the organization that employs her. In a quiet voice she told me she was



not really sure. When I asked her how she's making a difference by being there, she didn't know.

When I probed about

liking her job, she said she hadn't decided if she likes it yet — after an excruciatingly long pause. “How will you know if you like it?” I pressed. “I have no idea,” she replied. Ummmm...I drew the conclusion that this person,

despite her education, skills, and experience, simply floats on the surface of life and hopes for the best. As do many of us.

Strategic thinking is clear, rational, objective thinking that involves both analysis and evaluation of the facts related to an issue or situation in order to form a judgment. Pause right here. Honestly, how often during the day do you engage in this type of process? Too often we fly by on auto pilot and then wonder why things don't work out.

I chose this theme for the December ezine with full knowledge that we are about to enter a brand new year filled with fresh possibilities. I also realize that you and I can only bring these possibilities into our reality if we choose to think differently, more comprehensively, more deeply. Check out my feature article below for practical ideas around how to do that—as an individual or with a team.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

7 Questions That Invite You and Others to Think More Critically

As you wrap up this calendar year and start to think about 2018, you may want to ask yourself (and the folks on your team) the following questions as they relate to your work life and/or career trajectory. Each question bids you to go beneath the surface and think on a much deeper level.

- ***What if we do A instead of B?*** What if we sell this product instead of that one? What if we add a full time employee instead of resigning ourselves to a treadmill existence? What if we move to bi-monthly staff meetings instead of weekly meetings?
- ***What am I not seeing?*** A certain set of facts? A different interpretation of a challenging conversation? Underlying issues? An employee's character defects? A way to cover certain costs? The truth?
- ***Is X really true?*** How do you know for sure that your receptionist isn't motivated to do her job? How do you know that so-and-so doesn't have any good ideas? How do you know that something can't ever happen?
- ***Am I making this decision from my brain, my gut, or both?*** How did I arrive at this conclusion about a person or situation? What observations, hard evidence, and feelings support my conclusion? What might I be

missing as I consider X?

- ***What if the opposite of what you believe is true?*** What if your boss does respect you? What if the process experiment actually works? What if the ambitious business plan can be achieved? What if you actually move into another career?
- ***What is the real value in X?*** How is this project supporting the organizational mission? How will our new product idea help to achieve desired company growth? How does the proposed change in service delivery serve our clients more effectively?
- ***What are the risks involved with this action?*** What are the financial risks? What are the risks to staff morale? What are the productivity risks? What are the internal and/or community-wide political risks? How about risks to my own job future and overall career?

* * *

Strategic thinking involves logic and instinct. Doing your best work means you've got to do a dance with both of them every single day. Believe me, it takes a lot of practice. Whatever investment you make is totally worth it!

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What Clients Say

Back in the spring I contacted Sylvia because I needed to stand taller in leadership at my company and I didn't know how to do this on my own. Later in the coaching engagement I decided to tell her about my ongoing, embarrassing problems with a key colleague. Sylvia taught me how to use strategic thinking skills (previously unfamiliar to me) to work towards resolving this issue that had plagued me for months. Today I am pleased to say that, although the situation is not totally "fixed", things are certainly much better than they were a year ago. I give Sylvia the credit for teaching me some very necessary skills.

- Caroline M., Information Technology, Camp Hill, PA

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Offers and Opportunities

Your LAST Chance

In 2018 Sylvia will not be offering any brief free coaching sessions as she has done in the past through her ezine. This means that, if you know deep inside you could benefit from her insights, instruction, and guidance around strategic thinking issues in your workplace, December is the time for you to have that free call. To schedule, simply send your request to sylvia@launchinglives.biz. **The first person to take action receives this final gift.**

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RESOURCES

Need to Uncover the Root Cause of a Problem?

Try the **5 Whys** technique (used in the analyze phase of the Six Sigma methodology) to peel away layers of symptoms associated with any defect or problem. It is a simple critical thinking process, yet very powerful if you want to get to the root the issue. Here is an example of what this may sound like in a team meeting:

Problem: The product sales quota was not met for the last three months.

Why not? Fewer potential customers came through the door.

Why was that? Maybe because we changed our advertising strategies.

Why did we do that? Because we wanted to switch things up.

Why? We just assumed that a change might spark more interest.

Why did we assume that? Because we didn't want to invest the time in doing research to find out what could really be effective.

Root cause of problem: Failure to invest time in research (not the surface response of fewer customers walking through the door).

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TIP

Identify a work-related decision you must make over the next few days or weeks. Take a piece of paper and list all of the specific factors you need to consider. Such factors, in general, may include people, situations, approaches, requirements, preferences, work styles, organizational priorities, money,

communication methods, time, effort, value, consequences, and outcomes. Getting clear about all of these things positions you to make a wise decision rather than a surface decision which can have a negative impact upon individuals and business.

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Where in the World is SYLVIA?

On the morning of November 28, 2017 Sylvia presented a one hour overview of the Harrisburg Chamber's new 2018 Mentorship Program based upon the Lean-In Circle concept created by Sheryl Sandburg. More than twenty business women attended this gathering to learn more about the program and its personal/professional growth potential. Deeply involved with the Chamber's mentorship initiatives since their inception seven years ago, Sylvia will serve as one of two moderators/facilitators for the pilot Lean In Circle beginning in January.

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About This Ezine

The purpose of this Ezine is to: 1) Provide readers with valuable FREE content which contributes to personal and professional growth as well as overall career development; and 2) Invite readers to take next steps toward working directly with Sylvia.

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About SYLVIA

Sylvia Hepler, Owner and President of Launching Lives, LLC, specializes in career development for both corporate and nonprofit executives and managers. Based in South Central PA, she specifically supports clients as they upgrade their current job performance, seek a promotion, or plan/navigate a career transition. What makes her services unique is that Sylvia helps people to cope with change, loss, and grief as they work on developing their careers. Her professional background includes: nonprofit executive management/leadership, nonprofit community health program start-up, program evaluation, public speaking, business and freelance writing, teaching, and retail sales.

A certified executive coach through The Rescue Institute in Golden, Colorado and Quantum Endeavors in Chicago, Illinois (plus a participant in extensive continuing education opportunities with several coaches of national notoriety), Sylvia offers individual and group coaching, assessments, teleseminars, workshops, keynote speeches, and retreats. She also has created tangible and downloadable products that augment her coaching and speaking services.

For more information and to connect with Sylvia try:

[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 career development company for managers and executives located in South Central PA. Utilizing a holistic approach to service provision, Launching Lives focuses on supporting clients as they create the platinum level career they desire by upgrading their job performance, seeking a promotion, or planning/navigating a career transition

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 may be the SOLUTION to any of these issues.

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