

# Critical Thinking & Problem Solving for Public Service Leaders

## INTRODUCTION

- Critical thinking is the ability to think clearly and rationally, using information to solve problems in our teams and organisations. It is an essential business skills that allows us to think outside the box, spot consequences and inconsistencies, construct and evaluate arguments, identify relevant ideas and systematically solve problems.
- This Critical Thinking & Problem Solving for Public Service Leaders training seminar enables delegates to apply the skills of critical thinking and problem solving in the global knowledge economy so that they can deal with change quickly and effectively. They will return to their organisations able to analyse information from diverse sources to solve problems.

This training course will highlight:

- Strategies for applying critical thinking in teams and organisations
- Solving problems using the range of techniques available
- Understanding personal preferences and adapting them to situations and other people
- Practical applications of critical thinking and problem solving tools in the workplace
- Developing critical thinking and problem solving skills within teams and business units

## OBJECTIVES

During this training course, participants will develop the following competencies:

- Recognising when to use critical thinking in business situations
- Thinking clearly and solving problems rationally
- Analysing information from diverse sources in solving problems
- Developing, evaluating and selecting new ideas
- Critical self-reflection and self-evaluation for justifying decisions

## TRAINING METHODOLOGY

- The programme combines presentations that share both theory and industry best practices with practical sessions in accordance with adult learning and learner-centred learning principles. Overall, 60% of training will be experiential and 40% will be theoretical.
- Participants will have lots of opportunities to put into practice the skills they develop and enhance during the course. We make the most of small and whole group exercises, videos, case studies, peer exchange, brainstorming, role plays and discussions. Participants are encouraged to reflect on and discuss their own professional issues and experiences.
- We will spend lots of time working one-on-one and in small groups to resolve the challenges participants face. They will leave with new ideas and skills they can implement immediately they step back into their teams.
- Case studies will be included in each of the modules to demonstrate the variety of ways global organisations are using critical thinking, creative thinking and problem solving.

## ORGANISATIONAL IMPACT

Organisations benefit when leaders and managers take the time to think through issues before acting, including:

- Looking comprehensively at an issue, brainstorming and surfacing solutions to other unresolved problems
- Looking beyond conventional solutions and embracing new ideas to address problems
- Encouraging more teams and staff members to work together in solving company problems
- Developing multiple solutions to an issue and being able to select the most appropriate in any situation
- Avoiding making mistakes and jumping to the wrong conclusions
- Making decisions that deliver benefits in the longer term for the business
- Gathering information and analysing internal and external factors before making decisions
- Making decisions that take all stakeholders views into account

## PERSONAL IMPACT

Delegates will be able to:

- Make logical connections between ideas
- Explain their reasoning in rational ways
- Participate in and evaluate discussions and debates
- Detect inconsistencies and common mistakes in reasoning
- Systematically solve problems on their own and in teams
- Justify their own opinions and recommendations

## WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

This training programme is designed for leaders in public service organisations who are involved in decision making or lead teams of decision makers, including:

- Senior Management Team Members
- Programme Directors and Project Managers
- Heads of Functional Units in HR, IT, Finance and Strategy
- Heads of Customer Service, Marketing and Sales Teams
- People with Leadership Potential who are preparing for their next role

## Course Outline

### Becoming a Critical Thinker

- Definitions of Critical Thinking - rational, sceptical, unbiased analysis, evaluation of factual evidence
- The Skills We Need for Critical Thinking
- Key Traits of Critical Thinkers
- Improving Critical Thinking Skills
- Developing the Ability to Reason Logically and Rationally
- How to Engage in Reflective and Independent Thinking
- Assessing our Critical Thinking Abilities
- Complimentary Thinking Skills including Creativity
- Using the Cognitive Reflection Test

### Taking a Systematic Approach to Problem Solving

- Identifying and Articulating the Challenge - issue or problem to be resolved
- The Main Problem Solving Models
- Identifying Possible Solutions using the CREATE Model
- Implementing Solutions using Analysis and Prioritisation Tools
- Overcoming Obstacles to Solving Problems
- Winning Support for Your Preferred Solution
- Problem Solving Techniques for Individuals
- Problems Solving Techniques for Team

### Understanding Your Personal Preferences

- Assessing Your Preferred Approach to Thinking
- Enhancing Whole-Brain Thinking – left and right brain
- Recognising and Adapting to the Preferred Thinking Styles of Colleagues and Team Members
- Exploring Your Creativity
- Identifying the Things that Stimulate Your Creativity

## Skills for Critical Thinking & Problem Solving

- Recording the Creative Process using Mind Maps, Concept Charts, Flow Charts, Triangulation and Meta-thinking
- Building Knowledge with Data and Information Blocks
- Tools and Techniques to Become More Creative
- Critical Reading Skills and Practices
- Speaking and Listening Critically
- Reasoning and Arguing Logically
- Using Words to Influence and Persuade
- Presenting Evidence and Justifying Opinions and Advice

## Applying Critical Thinking in Your Team

- Encouraging Group Creative Thinking
- Brainstorming Options for Use in Teams
- How to Challenge Assumptions in Constructive Ways
- Ensuring Teams Avoid Group Think
- Encouraging Critical Thinking among Team Members
- Developing a Personal Action Plan based on Your Strengths and Areas for Development Identified during this Programme

