

The Critical ThinkerSM

PURE & SIMPLESM Critical Thinking Tips Used By Winners

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It's not the answers but the questions we ask!

We all want instant answers but it's the probing questions we ask ourselves ... and the answers we think through to get there, that are important.

Who has all the answers?

Over the past 10 years, we must have spoken to an average of 10,000 people annually in various capacities – as management consultants, trainers, businessmen, volunteers and citizens of the world. Almost without exception, some people would come up to us either during the coffee break or at the end of our presentations and pose us questions. No problem with that – except when we begin to answer *their* questions with *our* questions! That is when you see the “I-thought-you-had-all-the-answers” look on their faces.

We live in an “instant” world nowadays. Instant coffee, instant noodles, instant messengers, instant response, instant this, instant that. What's wrong with wanting “instant answers”? Nothing. At least on the surface. Unfortunately, getting instant answers is rarely the best or most enduring solution. Neither will instant or “quick fix” solutions help us the next time around.

Michel Robert, DPI's Founder, and the originator of our Strategic **Thinking Process**SM, once told a gathering of human resource personnel – in response to a question on the value that a consultant brings to an organization, “*It's not the answers; I am more concerned about asking the right questions.*” Indeed, the ability to ask the right question, at the right time, is a key skill possessed by all good critical thinkers. For evidence, think of those snazzy presentations you've seen be unraveled after one or two insightful questions from a manager or customer.

To us, critical thinking and questioning skills are different sides of the same coin. Indeed, the ability to ask the “right questions at the right time” is the underlying premise behind all of DPI's renowned Critical Thinking Processes.

If, like us, you believe that asking the right question is 50 percent of the solution, the biggest impact you can make when helping others is to help them find that question!

Give a fish or teach to fish

It's similar to the familiar old story of giving a man a fish and feeding him for a day, compared with teaching him to fish and feeding him for the rest of his life.

If we were to pause and reflect for a while: From the great teachers of years gone by (Christ, Buddha, Socrates, Ghandi) to those of the recent past (one of your school or university lecturers, your parents, an uncle or aunt), one common trait of all of them is that they taught us to ask questions ... of ourselves.

How often have we stopped to ask – and ponder on – questions about our direction in life, our work, our family, our health, our faith, the community in which we live? When did we pause and ask questions such as:

- What are my goals in life?
- Where am I headed in my job? Is that where I want to be? What can I do about it?
- How often have I stopped this last month to smell the flowers? To work out in the gym?
- Is there a better way to accomplish this task? What alternatives might there be?
- How can I better serve the community in which I live?

Afraid of learning?

It is literally an endless list. The Danish have a saying that the man who is afraid of asking is ashamed of learning. A former manager once told me, “*When you know all the answers, you haven't asked all the questions.*”

And if you don't know where to start, you can refer to DPI's books. Of course, we don't have all the questions either, so for a more philosophical slant, you can read the best seller by Stephen Covey, *The 7 Habits Of Highly Effective People*. We've read many a self-help book; this one is different. But don't take it all in – hook, line and sinker. **Question. Question.**

Question. As it relates to you. We can assure you that it will change your life – for the better!

The **Critical Thinker**SM is produced by DPI Asia, the Asian operations of Decision Processes International, a global management consulting and human capital development firm specializing in critical thinking processes that help organizations transform the way they conduct their business.

It is an insightful yet light-hearted series of articles that take a **PURE & SIMPLE**SM look at the essential day-to-day aspects of critical thinking that separate winners from the rest.

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