

The Critical ThinkerSM

PURE & SIMPLESM Critical Thinking Tips Used By Winners

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Of course everyone can think but how well?



What do Michael Phelps, Placido Domingo, Khoo Swee Chiow, and Kenny G have in common?

Nice to have ... or ... essential capability?

What is the common trait of these famous local and international individuals? And, we're not talking about the fact that they are all male!

Not so obvious is it? Here's a hint: they all excel in a skill which many of us take for granted, are not able to "control", and, for the most part, are not consciously aware of. Yet, this is a skill that is essential to life!

If you've not got it, the skill we are referring to is breathing. Luckily for us, "basic breathing" is not something that requires conscious effort. Imagine how tedious life would be otherwise! However, notwithstanding the impact of the current yoga craze, few people really understand how to breathe correctly or have studied the art as a part of a conscious effort to improve their ability. What about you? Can you control your breathing in response to different situations?

No? Why then do Messrs Domingo et al bother? The answer, obviously, is that for their chosen profession it is not a nice-to-have or something taken for granted – "professional standard" breathing is an explicit and critical skill essential to their success.

Thinking is the breathing of business

The parallel between breathing for Domingo and thinking for those of us wishing to be winners in business is, we hope, obvious. Quite simply, thinking is the "breathing" of business. For us to be successful – whether in our corporate lives, as an entrepreneur, a father, a mother etc – "gut feel" thinking is rarely sufficient in complex and fast-paced world we live in.

DPI's raison d'être is to help staff at all levels of our clients think *critically*. This leads to two obvious questions:

- What separates *critical* thinking from "ordinary" thinking?
- Can critical thinking be learnt?

What is *Critical Thinking*?

Like much other business jargon, the term "Critical Thinking" has been around for many years. However, few can describe what it is, and fewer still can explain how to do it! Let us offer a very down to earth definition: Critical Thinking is thinking that is critical to success and, therefore, is too *important* to be left to chance.

Good Critical Thinkers possess the following attributes:

- Ability to ask specific and incisive questions at the right time
- Awareness of where they (and others) are in their thought process
- Clear thinking even when under pressure and/or working on issues outside of their domain expertise or core experience

Here are some examples of real situations faced by our clients. How would you react if confronted with any of these:

1. Two weeks away from a product launch the Strategic Partner pulls-out (and the print ads are printed and scheduled to be released in 2 days)
2. Developing a recommendation for a new Customer Relationship Management system when you are completely unfamiliar with the topic
3. Facilitation of an impromptu meeting to uncover the reason for a host of customer service issues (decline customer service standards, customers complaining etc)

Would you know where to begin? What you would do first? How to proceed? Which questions to ask? Would "ordinary" or sub-conscious or "gut feel" thinking suffice?

It is in these situations that the ability to consciously "activate" critical thinking processes – reusable and expeditious road-maps of how to gain clarity, address problems, make decisions, be innovative etc – come to the fore.

Through this Critical Thinker series of articles, we will share our expertise with you, including tips, tricks, and insights into our Critical Thinking Processes and concepts from "real world" cases and observation. Happy reading!

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 & SIMPLESM look at the essential day-to-day aspects of critical thinking that separate winners from the rest.

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