

ThinkingWorks

Problem Solving and Decision Making

PROBLEM SOLVING AIM

Most companies lack a systematic and disciplined approach to solve problems quickly and effectively. This results in loss of valuable time and money as trial and error approaches and blame fixing abound. **The benefit of our approach is in providing employees with a competency in a proven and tested method of finding causes to problems that will save time and money, eliminate recurring problems and stimulate innovative fixes.**

DECISION MAKING AIM

One of the most important functions of management today is making effective and objective decisions. Managers often have multiple and diverse alternatives, but often lack the necessary skills to make quick, effective and participative decisions. **The benefit of our approach is to equip participants with specific techniques for information gathering and analysis to enable them to create the best solution for any required situation.**

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

All management, supervisory and professional staff who need to solve problems and/or make decisions.

METHOD

This is a modular, one to three-day, comprehensive, hands-on, skill-building workshop that will equip participants with the techniques of effective problem solving and decision making. The use of case studies, own-job problems and experiential learning concepts are utilized throughout the workshop.

Participants will learn proven questioning techniques to gather accurate information. They will also improve their ability to organize and then evaluate that information to derive the best possible solution.

WORKSHOP CREDENTIALS

Dr Charles Kepner, co-founder of Kepner-Tregoe, has teamed up with Matt-Thys Fourie to develop and offer the latest technology in Problem Solving and Decision Making. For the first time in the evolution of the field of problem solving and decision making, they have succeeded in integrating **Intuitive, Rational and Creative** thinking dimensions into a natural and easy to use step-by-step approach called **Systems Thinking**.

The key to the success of this new KEPNERandFOURIE workshop is that it harnesses the **natural thinking pattern of divergent and convergent thinking into a practical, user-friendly thinking approach.**

The workshop has the following modules that could be combined in various ways to meet customer needs.

PriorityWise

Learn and apply a proven approach to set, agree and reach consensus on priorities for diverse issues.

WHAT IT IS

PriorityWise is a thinking approach for assessing problem situations accurately and comprehensively. Issues are identified and then prioritized. A plan is developed to resolve each high priority issue.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

- Identify and list problems, issues and challenges.
- Establish priorities and allocate resources for each high priority issue.
- Choose the appropriate problem solving approach to resolve each issue.
- Participate responsively, communicate effectively, and gain consensus and commitment when working with others.
- **Integrate these skills into day-to-day thinking through the Thinking On Your Feet approach.**

TYPICAL OUTCOMES

- Common and shared understanding of the problem situation and ensuring that all stakeholders are well informed and agree before moving on.
- Proper evaluation and analyses of all stakeholders' interests.
- Priorities on agreed evaluation criteria that fit the particular problem situation.

ThinkingWise

Learn a basic thinking pattern of Divergent and Convergent Thinking that can be used in any problem solving or decision making situation. This thinking pattern is the most basic thinking approach for solving problems or making decisions effectively.

WHAT IT IS

ThinkingWise is an **Intuitive** Problem Solving technique that integrates **Systematic, Rational** and **Creative** thinking skills. It utilizes various approaches for divergent thinking and evaluation techniques for convergent thinking.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

- Get all stakeholders to focus on the appropriate problem.
- Conduct an all-inclusive analysis of factors involved in creating a common understanding of the problem situation.
- Evaluate critical issues, golden threads, trends and the pivotal point for a problem situation.
- Re-focus the problem situation into a single solution/action requirement.

TYPICAL OUTCOME

- Is applicable to vague, general and intangible problem situations.
- Forms the basis for all the other thinking dimensions.
- Provides the framework for flexible problem solving applications.
- The thinking approaches are made to fit the problem and not the other way around.

CauseWise

Learn a practical thinking approach that integrates with intuitive thinking to identify, describe, analyze and resolve any deviation from standard.

WHAT IT IS

CauseWise enables a participant to define a problem correctly, to gather, organize and evaluate the problem specific information factually and accurately; and to generate causes logically and intuitively using past experience. True cause is then tested and confirmed before corrective action is taken.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

- An approach that will help problem solvers to avoid panic and act rationally when a crisis occurs.
- **The ability to define a problem accurately before starting to resolve it.**
- The ability to test probable causes against factual information to derive at the most probable cause.
- Assurance that you have identified the true cause of the problem before spending a lot of time and money taking corrective action.
- The ability to use the questioning and thinking techniques on your feet while dealing with others.

TYPICAL OUTCOMES

- Problem solvers will have the confidence to know which probing questions to ask and what to do with the answers in order to extract the most probable cause.
- **There will be less blame fixing and finger pointing when dealing with problem situations.**
- Reduction of "jumping to cause" fixes that normally accounts for expensive revisiting of the problem and its real causes. Elimination of trial and error practices.

SolutionWise

Learn to make the best decision, even when finding that this optimal solution may be difficult and unclear.

WHAT IT IS

SolutionWise is a thinking approach that successful executives use to analyze all components of business decisions: the reasons for making the decision, the purpose of the decision, and the decision requirements. Based on careful analyses of these components, you will be able to find the most effective solution possible.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

- **How to conduct a Stakeholder analysis to determine the correct approach, the level and the positioning for the decision.**
- How to develop key decision requirements to ensure that you accomplish what you really need to.
- How to evaluate alternative courses of action and address the risks involved in each.
- How to create the optimal solution based on long and short-term requirements.
- How to evaluate recommendations made to you even if they fall outside your area of expertise.
- How to involve others in the process to ensure buy-in to the optimal choice.

TYPICAL OUTCOME

Problems solvers will have the ability to use various techniques to forge diverse opinions, preferences and prejudices into a single holistic outcome for the company and its employees.

RiskWise

Optional: Only applicable for the four-day workshop.

Learn and apply a unique process to anticipate potential problems before they occur and then to manage them proactively.

WHAT IT IS

RiskWise is a process that focuses on future planning. It answers the question, “What could happen if?” Learn how to reduce the number and severity of potential problems by assessing the situation and using specific information as the springboard for proactive actions.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

- To uncover potential problems and vulnerable areas in any plan, project, or operation.
- To assess future threats and to determine their seriousness and probability.
- To identify and develop preventive actions to ensure the future success of ongoing activities.
- To develop and implement contingency actions to protect specific areas of your plan.

TYPICAL OUTCOME

This thinking dimension becomes a natural thinking skill that enables the problem solver to become more proactive in all actions, thus improving the chance of success in his or her job.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Problem Solving provides employees with a common approach and language that will enable more effective participation in the operational management of the company.

A unique aspect of the workshop is its emphasis on application to own-job concerns. Immediate results can be expected and recommendations regarding true cause will be understood logically. The following are a few examples:

- In the packaging department of a *Beverage Bottling Company*, machine down time was reduced by 16%.
- A *Financial Institution* improved electronic processing rates by 10% within the first six months of implementation.
- Machine malfunctioning rectification reduced rejects by 21% in a *Paper Manufacturing Company*.
- An *Automotive Company* reduced their maintenance cost by 12% within a year.
- A *Processing Plant* implemented a total system to prevent recurring problems.

Learn thinking approaches that will help you to organize information, to utilize your experience and to improve judgment in solving complex problems and making effective decisions.