Thinking Tactics

Workshop Description

Professionals are paid to think—to figure out what the company or the client should do. Whether they are managers or engineers, lawyers or marketing specialists, they solve problems for the business, make business decisions, and dig up facts the business needs. They are the brains of a company. When their thinking gets stuck or slowed down, the business gets stuck or slowed down.

When an organization bogs down, management can assign a Six Sigma team to analyze what’s happening and reorganize the work. But when a thinking process bogs down, only the thinker can analyze the mental obstacles he faces. No one else has access to their mental processes.

In Thinking Tactics, thinkers learn to become their own mental efficiency experts. They learn to identify mental obstacles and to surmount them with confidence.

In part 1, we focus on mental obstacles that break concentration. Thinkers need to concentrate even when it’s noisy, there’s no time, there’s too much to think about, or they can’t settle down. In this workshop, they learn a technique that helps them switch mental gears and avoid losing their place, so they can think effectively despite interruptions. They learn tactics to identify and conquer three mental obstacles: overload, uncertainty and vagueness. They learn how to spot internal conflicts and vague goals that can derail them—and how to get their thinking back on track.

In part 2, we turn to mental obstacles that can kill momentum. In a large task, a person needs to keep extensive background information at the ready. But at first, the subconscious may balk; the information flow dries up. In this class, thinkers learn to “gear up,” to activate their background knowledge quickly and painlessly. Throughout a large project, a person needs to ratchet up his thinking whenever the end seems far away or unreachable. Otherwise he risks wasting effort, missing deadlines, or simply failing. In class, thinkers learn an adaptive “spiral” approach to planning and prioritizing that ensures they keep the end in sight and work flowing productively.

Most people solve thinking problems in an ad hoc manner. In Thinking Tactics, they learn a flexible system of practical techniques—a system that ensures their thinking gives the best possible results in the available time.

John Allison, Chairman & CEO, BB&T, says: “Having participated in the Thinking Tactics course, I would recommend it to anyone who wants to improve their thinking methods. The course is particularly helpful in bringing to consciousness practical techniques to focus your thought process and overcome thinking inertia. Every participant in the course I attended found it to be extremely helpful.”

Thinking Tactics is a 6 ½ hour workshop, which is offered in one all-day session or two half-day sessions. Hundreds of people have benefited from Thinking Tactics. For testimonials, a detailed workshop description, and information on public and private workshops, visit: www.thinkingdirections.com
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Topical Outline

Part 1: Concentration

Unit 1: "Thinking on Paper"
1. Thinking Tactics
2. Concentration
3. Obstacle #1: Lack of quality time for concentrating
4. "Thinking on Paper"
5. Directed Thinking

Unit 2: Getting Better Answers
1. The Conscious Mind vs. Subconscious Memory Banks
2. Obstacle #2: "Bad" answers derail a train of thought
3. Overload
4. Uncertainty
5. Vagueness
6. Thinking Flow Diagram

Unit 3: Thinking at the "Meta-Level"
1. Obstacle #3: Lack of active guidance
2. Thinking at the "Meta-Level"
3. Judging Progress
4. Diagnosing Floundering
5. A Birds-Eye View
6. Four "Meta-Level" Mistakes in Thinking
7. Thinking as a Goal-Directed Process

Part 2: Momentum

Unit 4: Gearing Up
1. Momentum
2. The Work Cycle
3. Obstacle #1: The subconscious balks at giving information
4. A "Can-Do" Mental Set
5. Warming Up the Context
6. Pre-Packaged Questions
7. Generating Questions
8. Interest
9. A Virtuous Cycle

Unit 5: Spiraling
1. Obstacle #2: Mental circuits are overwhelmed by complexity
2. Spiraling
3. Passes
4. The Overview
5. Time Pressure
6. Interim Products
7. Keeping Thinking Flowing
8. A Virtuous Cycle Revisited
9. Lessons of Thinking Tactics

Doug Arends, Chairman, Canadian Bank Note Company, says: “As Jean energetically presents her course in an organized, skillful manner, I listen with a big grin knowing how much extra profit I will make by having our employees spend a day with her being taught how to think better. The attendees come back charged with Jean’s energy and ideas, ready to work.”

Brett Crawford, Automotive Engineer, Detroit, Michigan says, “I use Thinking Tactics for a lot of day-to-day activities at work. It’s a great tool to have available. Before I took the class, I might stop working on a problem when I got stuck, and move on to something else. Now I know what to look for and what to do. I’ve not had an instance where I haven’t been able to come up with a solution using Thinking Tactics. Thanks for a great life lesson.”