Turn your Thinking Around: New Approaches to Problem Solving

Course Description

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My aim in **Turn your Thinking Around: New Approaches to Problem Solving**, is to help problem solvers think about the issues they face in different ways. We can easily get into a rut in our problem solving using the same tools over and over, and producing predictable answers. In this course, I introduce new problem-solving tools to help you think about problems in new ways and, hopefully, develop new solutions which will address a problem more thoroughly than previously.

The problem-solving tools I introduce are grouped into four categories:

1. New Thinking for when you want to think about things differently
2. New People for when you want to freshen up the mindsets of the people you're working with
3. New Resources for when you want a new technique to try
4. And Counterintuition for when taking a non-conformist view might bring new ideas

This is the third course I have written on problem solving and decision making. All three courses cover different aspects of this fascinating field:

- In **Problem Solving and Decision Making Creatively**, I cover a five-stage approach to problem solving and introduce some of the most used problem solving tools including the Problem Statement and Goal Statement; Stakeholder Analysis, Process Mapping, The Ishikawa Diagram, Data analysis and the Ideas Grid
- In **The Creative Accountant: Personal and Professional Problem-Solving Skills**, I look at the three types of problem and the different tools that work best with each type of problem. The Critical problem is a crisis where a response is needed urgently. The Tame Problem is a situation where a standard problem-solving approach works well; and the Wicked Problem is a highly complex and multi-faceted problem where a more flexible approach is needed and where new tools can help. The new tools covered include the Four Frame Model, Perceptual Positions, Bright Spots Analysis and solution focussed approaches.

In this course I introduce 11 new problem-solving tools that are designed to help enhance the thinking of any problem-solving team, particularly if they want a change from the “usual” tools.

I hope you find the course helpful.

Key Learning Points

On completion of the course, delegates will be able to:

- Understand why problem-solving efforts sometimes fails.
- Recognise that creative thinking is a mindset supported by clear principles.
- Deploy the new problem-solving tools to enhance the thinking of any problem-solving team.
- Organise an effective problem-solving team.
- Quantify the benefits of the problem-solving and improvement work carried out.

Curriculum

Part 1: Creative Thinking

Lesson 1: The Copernican Revolution

Lesson 2: New Tools for Problem Solving

Part 2: Problem Solving Tools for New Thinking

Lesson 3: Tool 1: A Higher-Level View

Lesson 4: Tool 2: Combine Ideas

Lesson 5: Tool 3: Word Association

Part 3: Problem Solving Tools with New Resources

Lesson 6: Tool 4: Intelligent Design

Lesson 7: Tool 5: Driver Analysis and Tool 6: Solution Focus

Part 4: Problem Solving Tools with New People

Lesson 8: Tool 7 Perceptual Positions and Tool 8: Simplify the Solution

Part 5: Problem Solving Tools using Counterintuition

Lesson 9: Tool 9: Bypass the Barrier

Lesson 10: Tool 10: Contrary Mary and Tool 11: Impose Constraints

Part 6: Using the Problem-Solving Tools

Lesson 11: The Problem-Solving Team

Lesson 12: What to use When

Pre-Course Requirements

There are no pre-course requirements

Additional Resources

None.

Course Tutor

Your tutor is Ross Maynard. Ross is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants in the UK and has 30 years' experience as a process improvement consultant specialising in business processes and organisation development. Ross is also a professional author of online training courses.

Ross lives in Scotland with his wife, daughter and Cocker Spaniel

Questions

1. What does the phrase "Copernican Revolution" describe?
   a. The study of the motion of the earth and planets around the sun
   b. A shift in thinking away from established constructs
   c. The changes brought about by the protestant reformation
   d. The application of Einstein's theories to business processes

2. Which of the following statements is ***not*** a reason why problem-solving efforts sometimes fail?
   a. We're rational decision-makers who focus on the facts to the exclusion of feelings.

b. We sometimes spot patterns where there are none.

c. We make assumptions and jump to conclusions.

d. We're lazy and often opt for an "easy option".

3. How can the "Higher-Level View" tool help with problem solving?

   a. It maps how work flows through a business process, showing every twist, and turn in that journey.

   b. It provides a structured way for an improvement team to examine the root causes of a problem.

   c. It allows an understanding of a problem in the context of the surrounding environment and interconnecting processes.

   d. It involves putting yourself in another person's "shoes" to provide different points of view on a problem or issue.

4. How can the "Driver Analysis" tool help in problem-solving?

   a. It helps design a process in such a way that the objective of the process is achieved in the simplest possible way.

   b. It looks for a way of delivering the objective of the process affected by a problem that doesn't involve going through the problem step.

   c. It encourages the group to break out of the groupthink consensus and think of other counterintuitive possibilities

   d. It provides a visual representation of the factors that drive a specific root-cause or issue, and it links those drivers to proposed actions.

5. Why does the "Impose Constraints" tool help in problem-solving?

   a. It helps design a process in such a way that the objective of the process is achieved in the simplest possible way.

   b. When we impose constraints on what we can do, we are forced to develop up new ideas and new proposals.

   c. It involves putting yourself in another person's "shoes" to provide different points of view on a problem or issue.

   d. It focusses on finding a "minimum acceptable" solution to the problem.

6. Which of the following approaches would help you quantify the benefits of an improvement project?

   a. The increased time it takes to process customer orders from order entry to delivery.

   b. The value of the increases in inventory after the process has been improved.

   c. The average contribution generated by the process after the change, compared to before it.

   d. Higher labour turnover caused by the removal of incompetent staff.