

Course ID  
**THINKSOLVE**  
Course Duration  
**2 days**

Course Title  
**Problem Solving and Critical Thinking: Making Sound  
Decisions in a Fast-Paced World**

**Related  
Courses**

Think Smart: Unleash Your Hidden Creativity (CREATE, 1 day)

**Aimed At**

Professionals and managers in all areas who wish to acquire the proven tools and techniques for independent, critical thinking and problem solving.

**Group Size**

7-25.

**Prerequisites**

None.

**Course  
in a Nutshell**

Lack of critical thinking and problem solving skills is one of the greatest detriments to success in business today. A solution that's implemented without a thorough problem definition, understanding of organizational objectives, review of alternative solutions, assessment of the likelihood of their success, and preparation for the obstacles that may impede it is as likely to fail as to succeed. Many a problem solving session has also been derailed by the desire to quickly agree with each other, leading to dangerous "group think". It need not be this way. Today, problem solving is more of a science than an art, and it can be learned.

This course provides a step by step process for problem solving either alone or in a group and gives guidelines for tackling each step. Tools for determining problem causes, evaluating selected alternatives, narrowing to one proposed solution, implementing a pilot program, and generating creative ideas will be covered. The course also offers suggestions for when to use a team approach or when to get your internal customers involved. Upon course completion, you will have learned a set of proven skills, strategies, techniques, and tools to sharpen your thinking and improve your problem solving ability.

**Eogogics Will  
Customize It!**

Our instructional designer will work with you to design examples, anecdotes, exercises and case studies that match your industry, business culture, processes, and policies. The course will incorporate state-of-the-art tools and techniques as well as the prevailing best practices.

## Learn How To

- Link customer requirements and strategic goals to work in order to determine where problems and opportunities exist
- Follow a nine step process for problem solving to resolve both operational and strategic issues and to uncover the real issues so the right problems get resolved
- Apply futuring to address problems with a solution that withstands time and changes
- Successfully use brainstorming and other techniques to generate creative ideas
- Use benchmarking effectively in your decision making
- Use research tools to gain relevant data
- Recognize when group think is taking over and be able to challenge it
- Develop a communication plan for problem solutions that influences others' buy-in
- Evaluate when other people's input is helpful and when problem solving is best done by one person
- Use tools effectively for evaluating alternative solutions and selecting the best alternative
- Unblock biases which restrict you from seeing other vantage points and solutions; explore new paradigms for creative problem solving
- Utilize evaluation techniques to ensure solutions have significant ROI

## Course Outline

- Introduction
  - Fascinating Shocker: The primary reason our customers' real problems don't get solved
  - Making the connection: Customer focus, strategic direction and problem solving
- Futuring and Strategic Thinking
  - Systems thinking
  - Futuring tools and application
  - Help others break through their paradigms to uncover truth
  - Embark on problem solving with staying power
  - Overview of the nine step problem solving process
- Problem Solving and Critical Thinking Approach
  - Assess the implication of problems and decisions you face everyday
  - Use a data driven method to select challenges, issues and improvements and sell your ideas upward
  - Develop a problem scope statement that directs you to efficiently solve the right problem the first time
  - Gap analysis; current and future state statements
- Techniques for Data Gathering and Analysis
  - Avoiding data gathering approaches that fail
  - Research methodology in today's government

- Uses, limitations and parameters of benchmarking
- Tools to gather and analyze data effectively, considering anticipated and unplanned consequences
- Strategies to import ideas from internal and external sources
- Tools for critical thinking
  
- Forecasting What You Will Achieve
  - What happens when you solve a problem without a fixed goal
  - Objective setting: Measurable, realistic, achievable, and tangible, and which withstand time and change
  - Explore implications of a decision to determine pitfalls, opportunities and alternatives
  - Root cause analysis tools and application
  
- Planning and Implementing Strategies
  - Critical thinking tool: Implications of decisions on the organization
  - Creative problem solving: Jumping out of the box
  - Tools for selecting the best solution
  - Developing tracking mechanisms for implementation of problem solutions
  
- Influencing Others
  - How to ensure good solutions don't fall on deaf ears
  - Strategies to influence others regarding your recommendations or solutions
  - Designing a communication strategy for buy-in appropriate to the audience
  
- Applying lessons learned
  - Report out
  - Q & A

## **How You Will Learn**

- A seasoned instructor will present this course in a highly interactive “workshop” format, so that skills are honed before ever leaving the classroom.
- You will learn via lecture, state-of-the-art videos, and extensive in-class practice sessions.
- You will receive a printed Participant Handbook which will help you remember and retain what you learned in class and to apply it on your job
- You will also receive a set of reproducible problem solving and critical thinking tools which can be used upon return to work.

*Revised*

*June 9, 2010f*