



INNOVEST SME
Accelerating Small Business

Critical Thinking Skills

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PREFACE

We live in a knowledge based society, and the more critical you think the better your knowledge will be. Critical Thinking provides you with the skills to analyze and evaluate information so that you are able to obtain the greatest amount of knowledge from it. It provides the best chance of making the correct decision, and minimizes damages if a mistake does occur.

Critical Thinking will lead to being a more rational and disciplined thinker. It will reduce your prejudice and bias which will provide you a better understanding of your environment. This book will provide you the skills to evaluate, identify, and distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information. It will lead you to be more productive in your career, and provide a great skill in your everyday life.

*Thinking is the talking
of the soul with itself.*

ANONYMOUS



COMPONENTS OF CRITICAL THINKING

Critical thinking is akin to the study of logic. It relates to how we make decisions and use our judgment. Critical thinking is more than just thinking about thinking or metacognition. It is also about how we take action. It involves many components, and we will address a number of unique components in this chapter.

APPLYING REASON

The ability to reason is often considered one of the characteristic marks of being human. An individual's ability to reason well is a critical thinking skill. Many of the definitions of critical thinking tend to focus on the ability to reason. Reasoning occurs when we use our knowledge of one thing, process, or statement to determine if another thing, process, or statement is true. When we apply reasoning, we use logic to determine "*what follows what.*" Human reasoning does not always follow logic and is often based on emotional bias.

OPEN MINDEDNESS

Open-mindedness is the virtue by which we learn. In particular, being open-minded means taking into account relevant evidence or arguments to revise a current understanding. It means being critically open to alternatives, willing to think about other possibilities even after having formed an opinion, and not allowing pre-conceived notions to constrain or inhibit reflection on newly presented information. Open-minded inquiry is a central theme in education.

ANALYSIS

In critical thinking the step of analysis helps us to discriminate and access information. Learning occurs in three domains: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. In the cognitive domain, analysis involves the process of discriminating or separating. It gives us the ability to break down the complexity of an item or idea, and allows us to gain a better understanding.

LOGIC

Logic and reasoning are similar but not the same. Logic is the branch of philosophy that gives the rules for deriving valid conclusions. A conclusion is valid if it follows from statements that are accepted as facts. For instance, a logical statement might be, $1 + 1 = 2$. This is a rule based on fact. Factual statements are called premises. When reasoning does not follow the rules, we say it is illogical.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

A group of physicists have been researching matter and motion for some years. After numerous studies, they have come to the following conclusions:

“No physical activity happens by chance. All chance occurrences are random events. No random events are physical activities.”

*Neither a closed
mind nor an empty one
is likely to produce much
that would qualify as
effective reasoning.*

R. S. NICKERSON



NON-LINEAR THINKING

As we learned in the previous chapter we can approach critical thinking and problems in a step-by-step fashion. This is called linear or vertical thinking. However, often we tend to not line up the premises in a normal step-by-step fashion. When we approach a problem in a different order, we are using non-linear thinking. Sometimes, non-linear thinking is also called lateral thinking.

STEP OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE

One of the first steps in developing non-linear thinking is to step out of your comfort zone. Basically, this concept involves seeing information or circumstances from a different perspective. A zone is defined as an area set apart in some way. In critical thinking and problem-solving we sometimes have to get out of the areas or zones that make us comfortable and stretch our thinking.

DON'T JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS

An important step in problem solving is taking the time to acquire the necessary information. Often, we tend to jump to conclusions before we have all of the facts. How can we use our understanding of logic to gather all the necessary facts? Remember, the premises are the facts or statements that help us come to conclusions.

EXPECT AND INITIATE CHANGE

“Be the change you wish to see,” is a common slogan on bumper stickers. With so many events happening on an international and national level each day, change is simply a standard course in businesses. We can always expect changes in organizations. Nothing stays the same, and we sometimes are in the position where we the ones initiating the change.

BEING READY TO ADAPT

The question in today’s culture is not will change occur in an organization, but how well are employees at adapting to change. Employees protect themselves from becoming obsolete by changing. Adaptation is a survival skill of nature. The species which survive in an environment are those that are capable of adapting well.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

You are a high school, mathematics teacher and you want your students to improve their reasoning skills. You assign word problems, but most of the students are just not getting it. At the present time, the students do not comprehend the process of using logic and why the word problems are important or relevant. Some students can do the calculations, but even these students lack an understanding of the process of logic. You want your students to understand that coming up with the right answer is not the most important goal in solving the word problems.

*Reasoning is simply a
matter of getting your
facts straight.*

B. F. ANDERSON



LOGICAL THINKING

Logical thinking is a process which involves steps. In general logical thinking involves checking the components of the argument and making connections between them, which is what we call reasoning. The four major steps of logical thinking are:

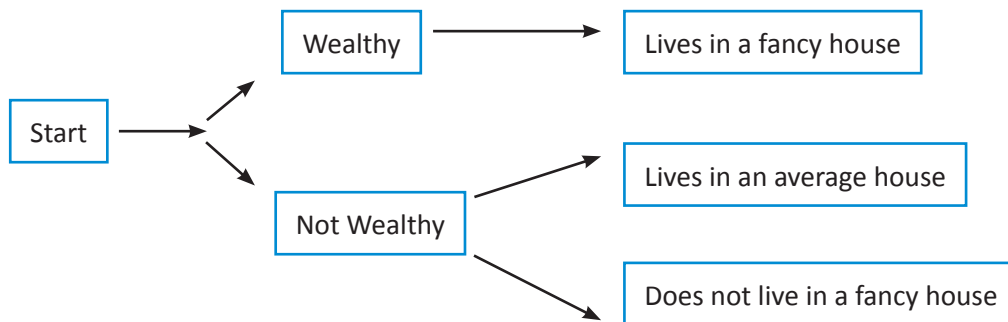
- 1) Asking the right questions,
- 2) Organizing data,
- 3) Evaluating the information, and 4) drawing conclusions. In this chapter, we will analyze these basic steps.

ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

The first step in logical thinking should begin with asking the right questions. Based on the components of critical thinking, the logical thinker should begin reasoning by asking many questions. An important question to ask is “*What are the premises?*” If we are confused about the premises, we may make mistakes further down the line in the logic process. We should distinguish between whether the statement is a fact or a value, what should or ought to be the case, and be alert to not confuse the two. Finally, we should check to see if any premises or vital information is missing. A key point to remember is that no conclusions can be made without premises.

ORGANIZE THE DATA

Organizing data is the second step in the logic process. Once we know the premises we can begin to organize the data. We can organize the information by making connections. An effective method of organizing data includes breaking up the information and diagramming or laying out the premises. Tree diagrams are helpful because they graphically show the connections. For instance, we can use tree diagrams such as this one:



EVALUATE THE INFORMATION

After organizing the information, the logical thinker can proceed with evaluating it. Evaluating information involves determining whether the information is valid. Conclusions cannot be made until a distinction is made between truth and validity. People often have trouble separating what is valid from what is true because of their ingrained beliefs. **Belief bias** occurs when an individual's belief system interferes with their ability to come to a logical conclusion. **Confirmation bias** is the tendency to use information to support your hypothesis about a problem.

DRAW CONCLUSIONS

Once the data has been collected, organized, and evaluated, we can then draw conclusions. Recall that in deductive reasoning, conclusions are inferred based on valid premises. In inductive reasoning, we use observations to draw conclusions or a hypothesis. Inferences naturally flow from the evidence. In making inferences, the logical thinker should be certain not draw more or less than what is implied, instead:

- Infer only what the data implies
- Check to ensure inferences are consistent
- Identify underlying assumptions

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Logic problem: You are a chemistry student in the lab and your group has is to mix chemicals until a color change occurs. In this case, you should see a pink color. You are given four beakers of colorless liquids, labeled 1-4. You are given a flask labeled X, which contains the reagent (activating solution). The reagent is needed to cause the color change. How will you determine which combination of chemicals will produce the required pink color?

*The ear says more
than the tongue.*

W. S. GRAHAM



CRITICAL THINKERS (I)

What are some characteristics of critical thinkers? Do they have innate abilities that make them better at thinking critically? In chapter four and five, we will examine eight characteristics of critical thinkers. The four characteristics we will discuss in chapter four are:

- Active Listening
- Curiosity
- Self-Discipline
- Humility

ACTIVE LISTENING

We have all heard it before the best communicators are active listeners. What does it mean to practice active listening? Active listening means the listener is completely engaged in what the speaker is communicating and judging what is being said. The listener is not formulating his rebuttal or responses to the speaker, or even worse thinking about something else unrelated.

BE CURIOUS

Curiosity is yet another skill in developing critical thinking. Some scholars believe that Socrates ultimate goal was not so much to advocate his methods, but to advocate self-improvement and to spark curiosity. The main goal of a teacher is to spark curiosity and engage their students. There are many methods to engage curiosity but they all essentially involve raising a question. For instance, Einstein prompted his curiosity by asking questions about how matter and energy functioned.

BE DISCIPLINED

Reasoning and rationale are often associated with self-discipline. Critical thinking is a self-disciplined and self-guided action. Critical thinking requires the individual to use their own reasoning skills and have the ability to evaluate and reflect. One important thing to consider is that people who are critical thinkers commonly are also more empathetic and aware of their world. They show a commitment to self-development and strive to make their environment a better place.

BE HUMBLE

Humility is defined as the *“quality of being modest of opinion or estimate of one’s own importance.”* Humility is the opposite of arrogance. Humility relates having an open mind. To be receptive to new information or opinions, the critical thinker would have to be modest of their own opinion. Being humble allows you to accept and see information in a way that is not filtered through your ego.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

You are on a management team responsible for determining how to reduce the number of returns of defective software products in a large company. No particular department wants to take responsibility, but the problem must be solved because the company is losing revenue and customers.

*Man is but a reed, the
most feeble thing in nature,
but he is a thinking reed.*

BLAISE PASCAL



CRITICAL THINKING (II)

In the previous chapter, we began to examine characteristics of critical thinkers. In this chapter, we will continue to look at more characteristics to help us improve our critical thinking capabilities. Four additional topics are presented here, they are:

- Seeing the big picture
- Objectivity
- Using your emotions
- Being self-aware

SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

One of the main functions of thinking is to make connections. Our own ideas gain significance when we can relate or connect them to other ideas. We start to gain insight when we see the similarities between ideas. The way we structure our ideas can be based on how they connect in one of two ways: causal or conceptual relationships. Since many problems arise due to causal changes, we will focus on this aspect. Steps in discovering causal relations include:

- Laying out the account
- Determining a hierarchy
- Interpreting convergences and divergences
 - Convergences are ideas/things that reinforce, supplement, or complement events
 - Divergences are points that do not reinforce events

OBJECTIVITY

Objectivity is defined as *“intentness on objects external to the mind.”* In critical thinking, we want have a keen sense of objectivity. This is a heuristic or rule/strategy for problem solving. Objectivity helps us to engage more thoughtfully and deliberately in the critical thinking process. However, we should not completely exclude our emotion or subjective feelings in the decision making or problem solving process. The most important thing to remember is that evaluating information objectively helps us to be more deliberate or thorough.

USING YOUR EMOTIONS

As mentioned in the previous section, emotions should not be ignored altogether when thinking critically. Emotions play a crucial role in the thinking process. For instance, professionals need empathy when working with others regardless of their occupation in order to vicariously experience what others feel, believe, or wish. The issue with emotions and decision making is to not allow emotions to cloud your judgment.

BEING SELF-AWARE

Self-awareness is yet another characteristic of the critical thinker. This characteristic relates to acutely being aware of one's feelings, opinions, and assumptions. Moreover, it is a starting point for thinking critically. Our assumptions are how the first impressions and strongest emotions are filtered when we evaluate information.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

You are a financial officer in a medium size company, which has been in business for 10 years. The owner of the company stays abreast of changes and trends in their industry. The owner uses their intuition when making decisions. He not only bases decisions on how he feels but he also acts quickly. Initially, the owner's way of doing business worked. He seemed to be on a winning streak, so to speak. Now that the economy has changed, the financial manager is concerned. However, the owner continues to makes decisions in the same manner. Recently, the owner has requested funds to purchase a fleet of 20 new hybrids cars, in the next three months. As the financial officer you are concerned about this decision.

*True genius resides in the
capacity for evaluation of
uncertain, hazardous, and
conflicting information.*

WINSTON CHURCHILL



EVALUATE THE INFORMATION

A big challenge in the process of critical thinking is how to evaluate information. We have already looked at some steps in evaluating information with the process of logic. In this chapter, we will delve deeper into evaluation. The best critical thinkers are those people, as Winston Churchill noted, who are capable of gleaning through information that may be unclear or conflicting.

MAKING ASSUMPTIONS

As we mentioned in the previous chapter, self-awareness is a starting point from which we begin to think critically. We based our decisions on assumptions we make about objects or things. Assumptions are the arguments, but the distinguishing feature of an assumption is that it is a statement in which no proof or evidence is provided. Assumptions can be either verbally stated or mentally held (unstated). In most cases, they are unstated.

WATCH OUT FOR THE BIAS

As we learned in the section on logic, confirmation bias can influence the inferences we draw. Bias is not something that we can completely

eliminate. However, when thinking critically, we need to watch out for confirmation bias. We should ensure that we don't allow our preconceived opinions to influence the way we evaluate data to the degree that we use the data to confirm what we already believe. We can use objectivity to oppose bias.

ASK CLARIFYING QUESTIONS

As we addressed in an earlier section, asking the right questions is important. Equally important is to ask clarifying questions when making decisions. Clarifying questions are thought-provoking questions and help the thinker acquire more information. Question types can be either generic or specific. With clarifying questions you can expect other questions to arise out of the answers you receive, so be prepared for those.

SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT Analysis is also called Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. We use this type of analysis to be more objective thinkers. SWOT allows us to think cleanly and clearly, and from a logical point of view. It is very helpful in most business and marketing situations, Strengths and Weaknesses are regarded as internal factors, while Opportunities and Threats are regarded as external factors.

Strengths and Weakness	Situation inside the company or organization (Internal environment)	Examples: pricing, products, costs or performance	Factors tend to be in the present
Opportunities and Threats	Situation outside the company or organization (External environment)	Examples: markets, sectors, audience, or trends	Factors tend to be in the future

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Your department has really worked hard over the past 18 months. Your boss wants to implement an employee recognition program spanning a twelve-month period. He wants some form of recognition to take place every month, and at the end of the year when your department has its annual team meeting. He wants a trophy awarded to one outstanding employee, and a plaque awarded to the department that preformed the best.

How will your employee recognition team go about implementing this challenge? What responsibilities and timeline will you follow?

*Life consists of what a man
is thinking of all day.*

RALPH WALDO EMERSON



BENEFITS OF CRITICAL THINKING

We have already determined why critical thinking is important. We know in particular that critical thinking helps us make better decisions and to rationally apply information. While there are many benefits of critical thinking, in this chapter, we will examine only four. They are:

- Being more persuasive
- Better communication
- Better problem solving
- Increased emotional intelligence

BEING MORE PERSUASIVE

Persuasiveness is the characteristic of being able to influence others. We normally think of salespersons and politicians when we hear the word persuasiveness. However, all managers or professionals use persuasiveness on a daily basis. Anytime, we want to have others accept our ideas, we do so through the power of persuasion. How will critical thinking make us more persuasive? It is because critical thinking is a deliberate or thoughtful process, and the more deliberate we are, the

better we are in expressing our assumptions or ideas and persuading others.

BETTER COMMUNICATION

Critical thinking improves communication for some of the same reasons that it improves persuasiveness. Many of the same factors we use to improve our persuasiveness also make us better communicators in general. For instance, the use of analogies and metaphors are a great persuasion and general communication technique. In addition to helping us in using language more persuasively; critical thinking also helps us use language with more clarity.

BETTER PROBLEM SOLVING

Critical thinking and problem solving are closely related and are almost intertwined. Sometimes we say that to solve logic problems we must use our critical thinking skills. In fact, logic, critical thinking, and problem solving use some of the same cognitive processes. Critical thinkers use their problem solving skills and not just their intuition to make decisions or draw conclusions.

INCREASED EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

What is emotional intelligence and how does critical thinking help increase our emotional intelligence? Emotional intelligence is identified as the ability to assess and control the emotions of oneself, others, and even groups. Emotional intelligence is being “heart smart” as opposed

to “book smart.” Critical thinking helps increase emotional intelligence because one of the characteristics of a critical thinker is self-awareness. Also, critical thinkers know how and when to use their emotions, such as empathy, in making decisions. The more a person uses his or her critical thinking skills the better adept they should become at identifying, understanding, and managing their emotions. Emotional intelligence in general consists of four abilities:

- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Social awareness
- Relationship management

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Your team of cardiovascular nurses has been assigned the duty of developing some patient education materials. Your patient population is primarily comprised non-English speakers. In the training you must develop education on how to lower the risks of a heart attack. You must first identify the at risk behaviors that may cause heart attacks. In three weeks, two members of your team will be presenting to 25 patients at a health forum. How will you design and implement training for these patients? Before the actual forum, your team should have a practice run of the training sessions.

*Everyone sees drama
from his own perspective.*

JEAN-MARIE LE PEN



CHANGING YOUR PERSPECTIVE

The interesting thing about perspective is that everyone has one. Earlier in this book, we learned how important having an open mind is in critical thinking. One aspect of open-mindedness is that it makes us receptive to other viewpoints. In this chapter, we will examine further the concept of changing our perspective.

LIMITATIONS OF YOUR POINT OF VIEW

As mentioned at the beginning of this course, one component of critical thinking is open mindedness. This component as well as bias relate to the critical thinkers point of view. The less open-minded and more biased a person is, the more limited their point of view. The challenge in critical thinking is avoid limitations of your point of view and not be constrained by cognitive or mental blinders.

CONSIDERING OTHERS VIEWPOINT

One reason we find it so difficult to consider another's viewpoint is that we are over-concerned with our own opinions and views. A challenge for the critical thinker is to step down from the "mountain of self", and climb up the "mountain of the other". Considering others viewpoint is

easier when we understand the benefits. For instance, it helps us be more empathetic, it helps to see the bigger picture and it also promotes objectivity.

INFLUENCES ON BIAS

In this book, we have discussed bias and how it influences our conclusions in the logic process. What are some influences on bias? The first thing that can influence bias is the way the person interprets information he or she is receiving. The other influence on bias is the way the presenter or speaker frames questions and information. For instance, researchers have found that hypothetical questions influence behavior and promote bias. The key to not being influenced by hypothetical information is to remember that it is just that and not factual information.

WHEN NEW INFORMATION ARRIVES

When the critical thinker receives new information, how should they organize it? Probably the most common way of handling new information is through an organization schema. Schemas indicate which role new information plays. It compartmentalizes information into a familiar format, which makes it easier for the critical thinker use.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Ronnie owns a spa and salon. Generally her customers leave satisfied and she has developed a loyal client base. However, recently she had an incident where a customer came into the spa to receive a facial and

a microdermabrasion. Prior to the service the front desk staff explained the procedures and the risks, which included skin irritation. After the service, the client's face was red as it normally should be. The client did not indicate any problem as she was checking out. Two days later the client calls the spa to speak to Ronnie. The client is upset because her face is still red and she has an important engagement to attend where she is a speaker. What should Ronnie do?

*We can't solve problems
by using the same kind of
thinking we used when we
created them.*

ALBERT EINSTEIN



PROBLEM SOLVING

A major function of critical thinking is it gives us the ability to solve problems. Regardless of our vocation or profession, we are presented daily with a host of decisions and problems to solve. In this chapter, we will learn some steps for problem solving. Some psychologists define a problem as a gap or barrier between where an individual is and where they wish to be. In other words, a problem is the space between point A and B. Problems then essentially consist of the initial state and a goal state. All possible solution paths leading to the goal state are located in the problem space. Some researchers say that problem solving has three primary stages:

1. Preparation or familiarization
2. Production
3. Judgment and evaluation

IDENTIFY INCONSISTENCIES

Much of critical thinking is about how to connect the two points in a problem. However, sometimes critical thinkers are presented with inconsistencies or what scientists call cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance can appear through a discrepancy between attitude and beliefs. Inconsistencies can also be called variances or dissimilarities. It

is a natural tendency to want to eliminate inconsistencies when solving a problem. The best way critical thinkers can identify inconsistencies is by using their logic and objectivity to see variances. Identifying inconsistencies would fall under the first stage of problem solving in which we are familiarizing ourselves with the subject.

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

“Trust your instincts” falls under the second stage of problem solving, and you should now start to see solution paths. Instincts are defined as a natural intuitive power. Intuition or instincts are key pieces in problem solving. When coupled with trial and error, informed guesses, and brainstorming, intuition and instincts can lead to a highly creative process. Many scientific discoveries and inventions were made because the innovator followed their instincts. Think of Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Edison, for instance.

ASKING WHY?

In a previous chapter, we discussed how asking the right question is important in logical thinking. Asking why is equally important in problem solving. It is not sufficient to be simply presented with the information or data. Critical thinkers must always be willing to dig deeper and explore various possibilities. Asking why can fall under any of the three stages of problem solving.

EVALUATE THE SOLUTION(S)

Once a possible solution has been derived, problem solvers may feel they can proceed with the solution. However, they should not overlook the all-important step of evaluating all possible solutions. Sometimes, one problem has more than one solution and taking the time to evaluate the efficacy of each alternative is a critical thinking skill. Evaluation is also called judgment, and this is the third stage of problem solving. The critical thinker should evaluate each alternative and judge which one is the best. The following steps are an effective evaluation technique:

1. Make a T-chart to weigh the pros and cons of each possible solution
2. Develop criteria (or requirements) and assign weights to each criteria
3. Prioritize the criteria
4. Rate the proposed solutions using the criteria

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

A team of account managers need to implement a better system to track their sales. One problem is that some managers say they have generated X amount of leads, but when the team lead looks at the weekly reports the number of leads on the computer do not match what the managers' report verbally. Another issue is that the sales are promised but transactions do not actually occur until weeks or months later. The sales team has been trying to work with customer service and billing on

this issue. After several meetings the account managers and their team lead have decided that they need a task force to solve the problem. Your group is the task force.

*Happiness comes
from when we test our
skills toward some
meaningful purpose.*

JOHN STOSSEL



PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

We have learned many new skills for logic and critical thinking. Now, we need to learn how to combine these new skills. A skill is only beneficial if it is easy to apply. In this chapter, we will in particular learn how to:

- Retain your new skills
- Reflect and learn from mistakes
- Always ask the right questions
- Practice critical thinking

RETAINING YOUR NEW SKILLS

Now that we have learned many new critical thinking skills, our next challenge is to retain these skills. There are many methods to help you retain your new critical thinking skills. Developing a schema for organizing and remembering information is one method. The subject of critical thinking and metacognition (thinking about thinking) is vast, so there are many resources both online and in print to help you retain the information from this book. The most effective technique to help you retain and improve your critical thinking skills, however, is for you to practice them regularly.

REFLECT AND LEARN FROM MISTAKES

Reflection is a useful step in the logic process. Reflecting and learning from mistakes is also helpful in critical thinking. You may not be able to reflect every time you engage your critical thinking skills. However, from whenever possible, reflect back on the steps taken to come to major decisions. Particularly, managers should regularly reflect on how they interact with their employees, peers, and supervisors or directors.

ALWAYS ASK QUESTIONS

The importance of inquisitiveness cannot be overemphasized in the process of critical thinking. One contribution to civilization that Socrates made was that he advocated the questioning process during debate. Furthermore, learning is a process sparked by the desire to know more. The inquisitiveness and curiosity of the individual is the foundation of the learning. Questions lead to possible solution paths and ultimately answers. Critical thinkers should never abandon the questioning process.

PRACTICING CRITICAL THINKING

The best way to improve your critical thinking skills is to practice. Develop ways to remember and organize the techniques from this course. Develop a schema. The way you organize information will affect the way you think. Additionally, try to improve upon critical thinking and creative thinking as these two types of thinking tend to support each other.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Retailers realize the economy is still recovering, and have been pulling out the stops. A team of retailers on South Congress, a 1 mile run of eclectic businesses located in Austin pulled together the past season to tackle the problem in a unique way. They wanted to encourage local shopping, while promoting the holiday spirit and repeat business. You were on that team and part of the planning included a brainstorming session called *'Stop the Grinch from getting Christmas.'*

*All our dignity
lies in thought.*

BLAISE PASCAL

CLOSING THOUGHTS

- **Alison King:** Good questioners are good thinkers.
- **Henry Ward Beecher:** All words are pegs to hang ideas on.
- **Rudolf Arnheim:** All perceiving is also thinking, all reasoning is also intuition, all observation is also invention.
- **Walt Disney:** The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing.



Rick Chisholm made history when he single-handedly changed the professional Audio Visual industry by breaking all the rules and capitalised over 50% market share in Australia with very little capital, no partners, mergers or lenders and set up the first franchise operation of its kind in the world in the late 1990's and early 2000's.

As a 7x founder of companies and 30x businesses such as Innovest, AI Machine, Lightsounds, LSW, Light Emotion with revenue in excess of \$300 million and having employed more than 1,000 staff over the last 35 years. Rick is known as the Start-Up and SME Guru and is Author of a number of books including Business Success for Life. Unlike many mentors, he actually walks the talk and has a number of businesses under management in such areas as Automation, Events management, Importing, Distribution, Retailing and E-commerce.

His BIG passion is Business Education empowering Businesses Owners through knowledge and skills. Whilst Rick has experienced great success, he has also endured many failures. Rick has faced and overcome the exact same challenges you are facing now.



Tala Chisholm is an SME specialist who has owned and managed several small to medium sized businesses in the last 20 years, several of which were eventually sold. She has extensive experience in the fields of retail, franchising, licensing, dealerships, education, importing, distribution and consulting.

Her expertise lies in building and implementing customised cross-platform database and software solutions for businesses, automation, IT, web marketing, advertising, graphic design, business administration, process refinement and implementation. Her business experience ranges from bricks-and-mortar Giftware retailing to highly technical fields such as Security, CCTV, Entertainment Lighting and Audio sales, hire and installations as well as e-commerce.

Throughout her career she also trained and mentored Franchise business owners as well as internal division managers. Some areas of training included retail operations, management practices, business strategy, accounting, cash-flow, marketing, customer service and IT. She has also headed up the drafting of Operating Compliance Manuals for Franchise operations and implementation of all the elements involved.



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