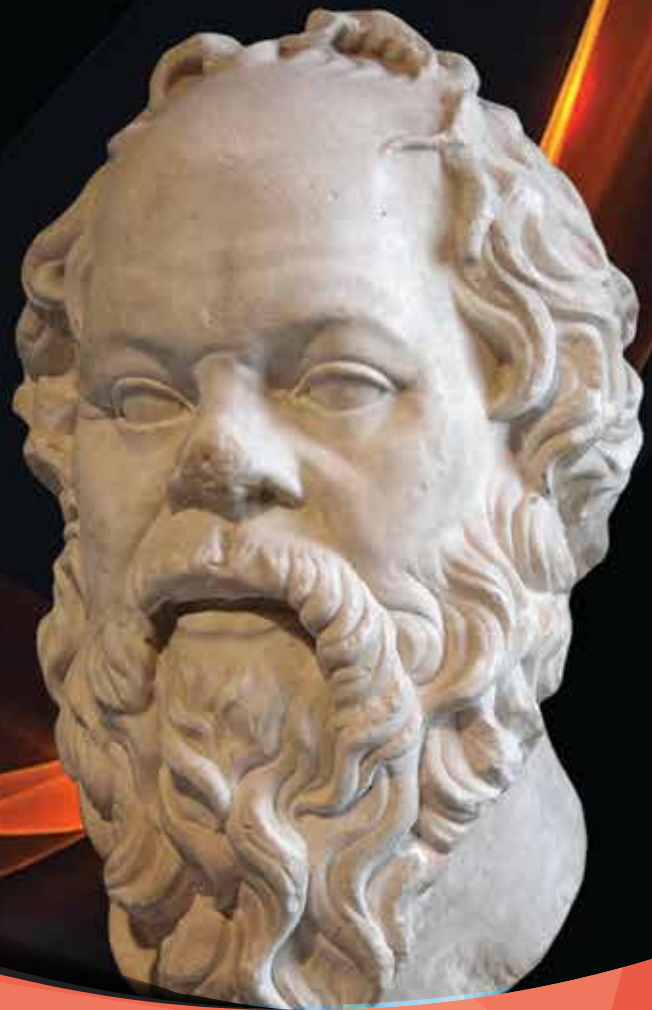


I know you won't
believe me, but the
highest form of
Human Excellence
is to question
oneself and others
- Socrates



Ask Questions like a
Philosopher
to Unlock
Business Growth

Adam C. Fischer

 **Strategy Kiln**
Know thyself & thy customer

“A whole [story] is what has a beginning and middle and end.”

- Aristotle, *Poetics*

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Your Philosopher Marketer



ADAM FISCHER

Hello,

It's fantastic to connect with you!

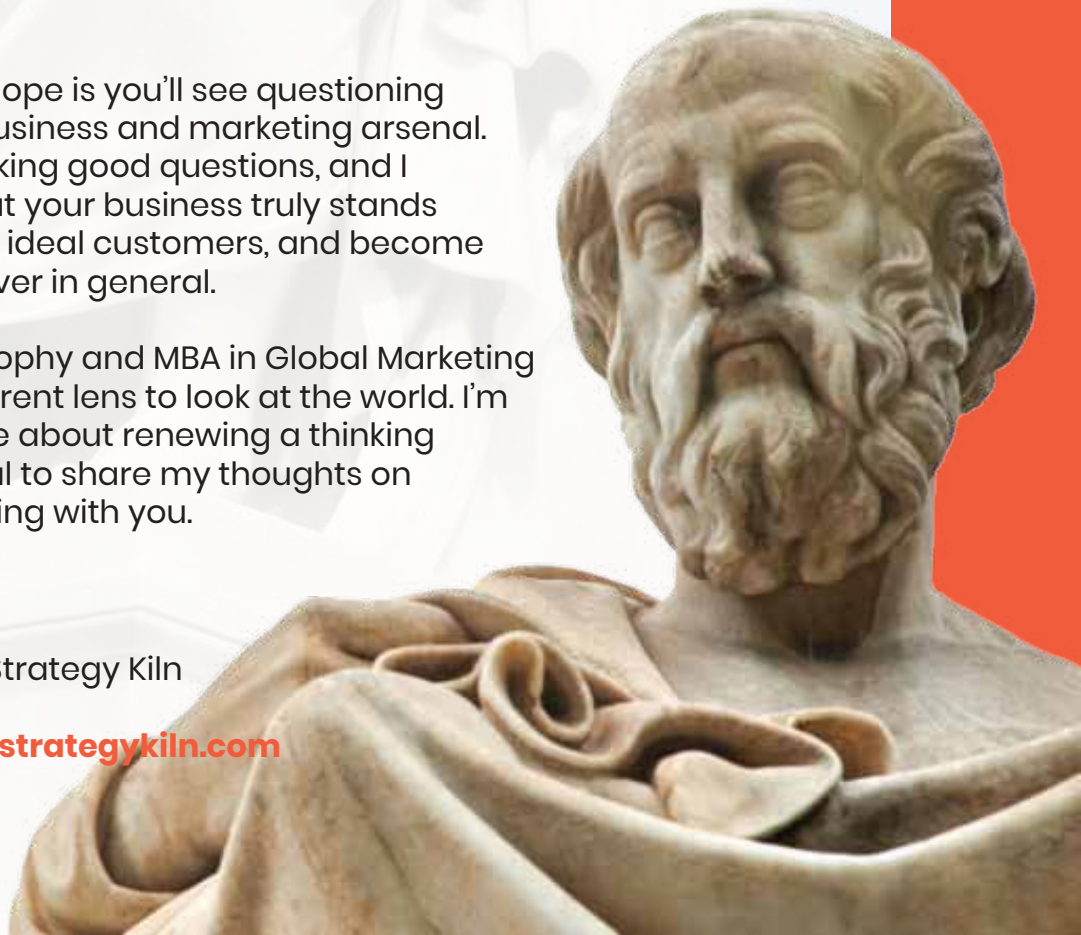
There's a major difference between asking a question to look good in a meeting vs. the deep thinking and practice required to gain true insight.

After reading this, my hope is you'll see questioning as a new tool in your business and marketing arsenal. Be curious, practice asking good questions, and I believe you'll learn what your business truly stands for, how to attract your ideal customers, and become a superior problem solver in general.

My bachelor's in philosophy and MBA in Global Marketing instilled me with a different lens to look at the world. I'm curious and passionate about renewing a thinking culture, and I'm grateful to share my thoughts on philosophical questioning with you.

Sincerely,
Adam Fischer
Chief Content Officer, Strategy Kiln

Say hello: Questions@strategykiln.com



Beginning Chat GPT & The Downfall of Thought

How Chat GPT and A.I. hijack our ability to think deeply

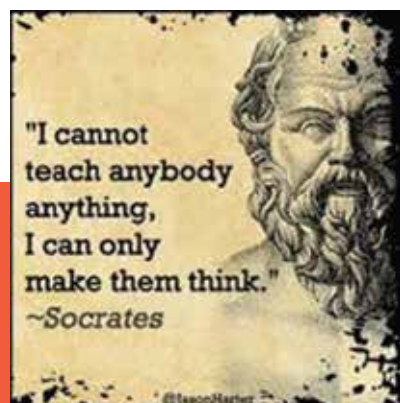
The Challenge

Is Chat GPT hi-jacking your mind? I ask myself this question every time I use it. Time will tell, but the "garbage in, garbage out" adage will likely hold true. We must resist lazy (and natural) tendencies toward letting A.I. to do our essential thinking for us. If we aim to improve critical thinking, we can properly leveraging A.I. tools. Let's keep our minds fit; asking great questions is a good mental exercise.



The Goal

Learn to leverage the skill of philosophical inquiry to ask simple, powerful questions in a pragmatic and strategic way. This is not simply about open vs. closed ended questions. We'll take a deep, but practical view of the Socratic Method that is even more relevant today. Sections are organized by beginning, middle, and end, a la Aristotle's Poetics.



What Else?

Are you a philosophy hater?
No problem. There's only one dense excerpt from Plato's "Phaedo"

Data:

The death of good questions and decreasing IQs

Essential Question

How can we ask questions like a philosopher in a practical & actionable way that relates to business outcomes?

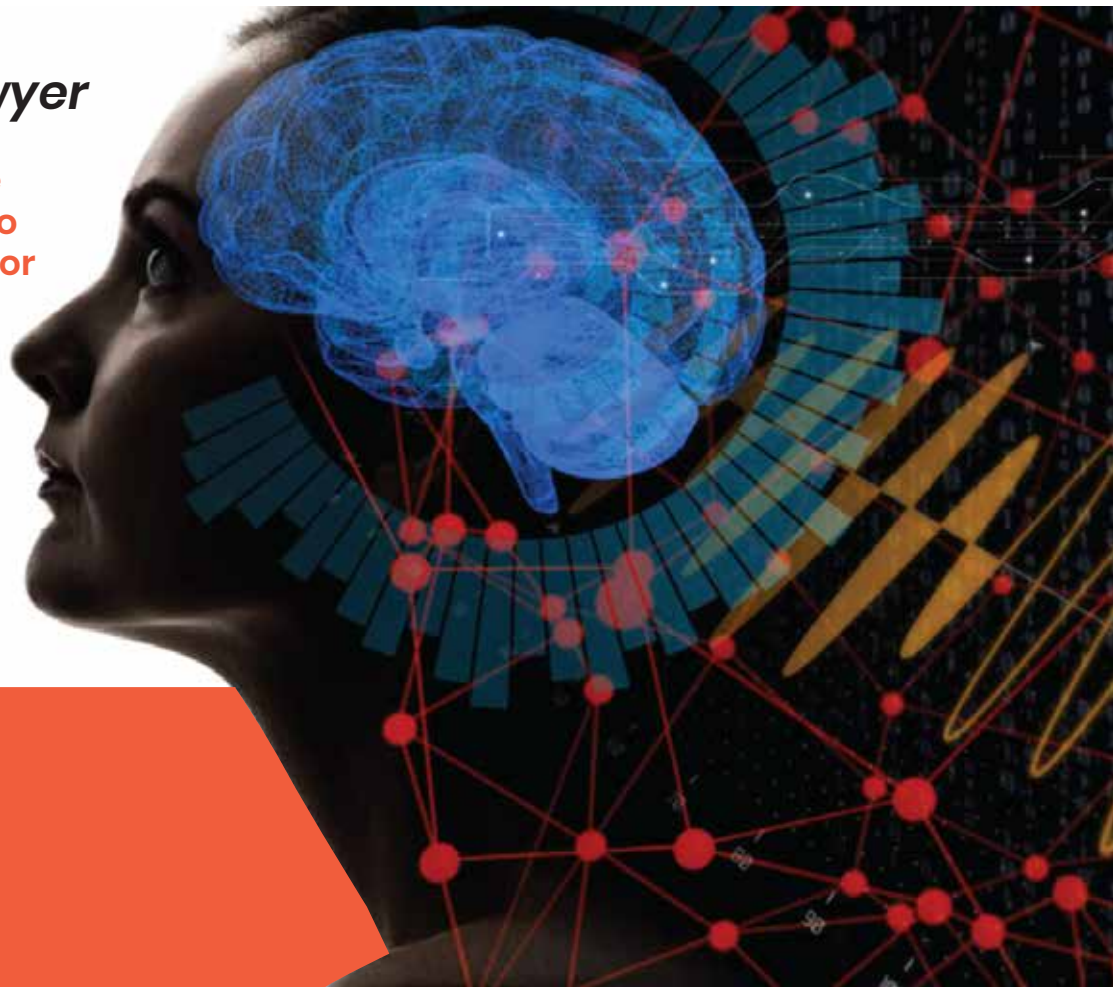
Researchers across the globe have been tracking an apparent decline in human IQs, starting around the turn of the millennium. Theories abound as to why scores are dropping, but the smart money says our cognitive skills may have plateaued, teetering into an era of intellectual lethargy. If you want to ascribe blame, look no further than this screen.

Cognitive researchers hypothesize that smartphones, autocomplete, artificial intelligence, and runaway social media have conspired to supplant the higher functions of the human brain. In its quest for labor-saving tech, the world may be dumbing itself down.

Think like a Lawyer

Lawyers spend three years learning how to ask good questions for a reason.

Learn to restructure your brain with the same methods lawyers use.



We're Going to Get Worse at Asking Good Questions:

There doesn't seem to be a lot of system 2 thinking here...

Is deep inquiry dead? Are silver bullet marketing tools and re-runs of "How I Met Your Mother" all are our puny minds crave these days?

100 Most Asked Questions on Google in 2023

Here is the list of 100 most asked questions in Google most asked questions with their average monthly sean below:



01. what to watch – 9,140,000
02. where's my refund – 7,480,000
03. how you like that- 6,120,000
04. what is my IP address – 4,090,000
05. how many ounces in a cup – 2,740,000
06. What time is it- 1,830,000
07. how I met your mother – 1,830,000
08. how to screenshot on mac – 1,830,000
09. where am i – 1,500,000
10. how to lose weight fast – 1,500,000

Challenge Yourself

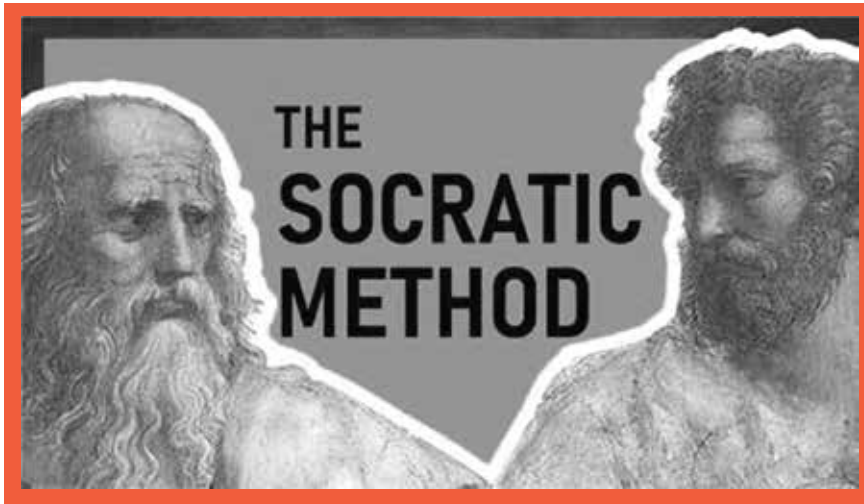
Are you willing to let your brain hurt a tad by thinking more deeply and strategically?



Middle

Socrates, Billy Beane, & Asking Questions

Overview of the Socratic questioning method



The Man

Socrates was known for his slovenly, googly-eyed appearance and relentless pursuit of questioning. His quest for knowledge earned him a dose of hemlock, being sentenced to death in 399 B.C. for "dishonoring the gods."

The Method

Socratic questioning is a shared dialogue based on asking and answering questions. Good questions cause thinking; fostering critical thinking is core to the method.

Challenge assumptions: The Philosophy of Billy Beane

Key Tenets

- Assume you know nothing
- Challenge assumptions
- Logical progression
- Look for patterns
- Identify inconsistencies
- Develop new questions – how can you build off what you've learned and start a new **Question Path?**

Ancient excerpt from the *Phaedo*

Dialogue between Socrates and Cebes

Is not death opposed to life?

Yes.

And they are generated from the other?

Yes.

What is generated from the living?

The dead.

And what from the dead?

I can only say in answer – the living.

Then the living, whether things or persons, Cebes, are generated from the dead?

That is clear, he replied.

Then the inference is that our souls exist in the world below.

That is true.

What's Happening here?

First off, this is from 3,000 years ago when when Zeus was still throwing lightning bolts from the sky, logic was not yet “invented,” and Cyclopes still roamed Athens.

So yes it's antiquated.

Notice the guided drill down, the forcing of clarity, and how Socrates works towards an agreement. Socrates is creating a “Question Path.”



Learn the Art of Asking Questions

Socratic Method, Loose Steps

Remember

Good Socratic questioning comes from a place of curiosity; ego will hold you back. Look for different points of view as you unfold your line of reasoning and gain insight.

The (Modern) Socratic Method

Created by Theo Winter

Elicitation

What is a square, my friend?

Undefined Answer

I'm not sure.

- or -

Hypothesis

A square is a shape with four sides.

Examination

I see. And are there any other shapes with four sides?
What about a door?

Response

Yes, a rectangle has four sides.

- or -

New Hypothesis

Then I suppose a square is a shape with four sides of equal length.



Questioner
Teacher
Facilitator
Coach
Manager



Interlocutor
Student
Participant
Client
Employee

Pose a Question

- Pose a question in order to understand something
- The goal of the question is to begin formulating a kind of hypothesis and point of view on a subject

Response to Initial Question

- The person answers the question with facts, their belief, an agreement or argument, or a request for further clarity

Dive Deeper

- Playback & understanding of their statement or position, ensure you've defined topics clearly
- Potentially ask for further evidence about their position (challenge their assumptions) with a new question

Response to Latest Question

- The person once again answers the question with facts, their belief, an agreement or argument, or a request for further clarity

Rinse & Repeat or Develop a New Question Path

- Continue drilling down with more clarification questions, or develop a potential new hypothesis
- If the question is satisfied, leverage the new information to begin a fresh question path leading to further understanding

Glossary: Build Your Repertoire of Question Styles

Question Style	Examples
Challenging assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What evidence or information supports the assumptions I or the person I'm speaking with is making? • Are the assumption based on facts, data, or personal beliefs? • How can we test these assumptions?
Clarification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could you explain that point further? • How do you mean? • Is what you're saying the same as? • Can you share some examples? • How can we refocus on what really matter here?
Evidence and reasoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What concrete evidence do you have? • How can we confirm this evidence? • What additional information might we search for?
Alternative viewpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the devil's advocate position? • Are there other emotional or logical appeals we haven't thought of? • How can we consult with others to gain additional insights?
Implications and consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the long term implications of what we're talking about • Is this an abrasive question that will harm our relationship and discussion process?
Challenge your own questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did I ask that question with real purpose? • How did the person receive and respond to the question? • Did I develop a question path? • Was there an even better question?

Good questions linger, and leave you scratching your head. Leverage these question styles daily to hone your craft and skills in the art of questioning.

More Question Type Examples

Funnel Questions

In contrast to various question types, funnel inquiries consistently follow a series format. Their progression resembles the shape of a funnel, beginning with expansive, open-ended questions and then transitioning to more specific, closed questions. Alternatively, the sequence can be reversed, commencing with precise, closed questions and gradually expanding into open, subjective ones.

Take a look at this series of illustrative funnel queries:

- *What did you think about the conference?*
- *What aspects of it stood out to you the most?*
- *Are there any particular elements you would improve about the conference?*

Guiding Questions

Guiding questions are designed to elicit a predetermined response from the listener. Frequently, speakers craft these questions to steer the listener toward agreement with their own viewpoint. It's advisable to employ such questions judiciously, as an excessive or inappropriate usage can be perceived as manipulative.

Here are a few instances of guiding questions:

- *Do you believe the sales call was successful?*
- *Could you envision the benefits of automating that process?*

Remember

Effective Socratic questioning originates from a state of genuine curiosity, with no ego. While navigating your line of reasoning, strive to explore diverse perspectives and gather valuable insights.

More Question Type Examples

Emotional Questions

Emotional questions aim to gauge others' sentiments regarding the information they're absorbing. These reactions can assist the speaker in validating the listener's emotions or providing further clarification.

As an example, if you were having a serious conversation with your partner you may ask:

- *Was what I said hurtful ?*
- *I know this is a sensitive topic, but can you...?*
- *How can we discuss this without being negative and accusatory?*
- *How does it make you feel when I...?*

Organizing Questions

Organizing Questions serve to guarantee that group participants grasp the information you are conveying. They provide a chance for learners to clarify the material or pose additional questions.

For example, following a presentation, you could ask

- *Is there anything you would like me to cover more in depth?*
- *Did the meaning of that quote come across to you?*
- *Was anything confusing in the material shared?*

Now onto a Case Study with Billy Beane, the guy who challenged assumptions and brought deep data insights to baseball...

Challenge Assumptions like Billy Beane

Billy Beane is best known for his role as the General Manager of the Oakland Athletics (A's) Baseball team. Beane gained widespread recognition for pioneering the use of advanced statistical analysis and data-driven decision-making in player scouting and team building, a methodology commonly referred to as "Moneyball."

He was in uncharted waters, and no one believed in his unorthodox approach.

See how he challenges the group and builds a questions path in the dialogue excerpt below.



Billy Beane



[Watch the scene here >>](#)

Can we recreate Giambi in the aggregate? (Billy's Question)

- Pose a question in order to understand something
- The goal of the question is to begin formulating a kind of hypothesis and point of view on a subject

Response to Initial Question (Group response)

- Huh, in aggreh- what?

He can't throw and he can't field, but what can he do? (Billy's Question)

- Playback & understanding of their statement or position, ensure you've defined topics clearly
- Potentially ask for further evidence about their position (challenge their assumptions) with a new question

He can't throw and he can't field, but what can he do? (Billy's Asks Again for Clarification)

- The person once again answers the question with facts, their belief, an agreement or argument, or a request for further clarity

Rinse & Repeat or Develop a New Question Path

- Continue drilling down with more clarification questions, or develop a potential new hypothesis
- If the question is satisfied, leverage the new information to begin a fresh question path leading to further understanding

End – Making Philosophy Practical

Summary

Like any tool, the Socratic method is only good as the person who uses it.

Socratic questioning requires an absence of ego and a level playing field for all who take part. If you are willing to use logical, open questions, and are prepared to practice, the technique is an effective way of exploring ideas in depth.

“ Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel”

- Socrates.

Enduring Understanding

Asking good questions is a practice that takes dedication, a curious mindset, a willingness to challenge assumptions with deep thinking.

Bonus Materials

20 Essential Customer Questions to Drive Your Business

Analyze Your Business:

1. Who are your best customers?
2. Why are they your best customers?
3. How do you best attract them now?
4. How (what marketing vehicles) and where (targeted channels) can you find more like them?
5. Is your CAC (customer acquisition cost) low enough for you to acquire customers at scale with marketing?
6. What's your brand identity, and do your customers & employees agree with you?
7. How long does it take for your customer to purchase a product like yours?
8. What are the key moments in the customer journey you need to show up?
9. What would customers who considered you and then declined your product or service say about you?
10. What would a journal in the day of the life of your customer look like?

Ask the Customer:

1. What are your biggest problems?
2. Any gaps in your current solution?
3. What does your dream solution look like?
4. What do you wish we could do?
5. How do you make decisions on what to buy?
6. How has this approach changed over time, or has it always been like this?
7. Why did you choose us over the competition?
8. What do you like (and least) best about our company, brand, product, or service?
9. What are the best outcomes from using our product/service?
10. On a scale of 0 to 10, how likely are you to recommend our business to a friend or colleague?

Thanks for reading and thinking with me!
I know your time is scarce.

I also know how hard it is to pause, think deeply, and ask the right strategic questions. Strategic questions are the primary tool for arriving at calculated, measured decisions about customers and driving growth for your business, as well as all aspects of life.

We're here to help guide you and unlock your best thinking so you can unlock growth.

Sincerely



Adam Fischer
Chief Content Officer, Strategy Kiln
Say hello: Questions@strategykiln.com

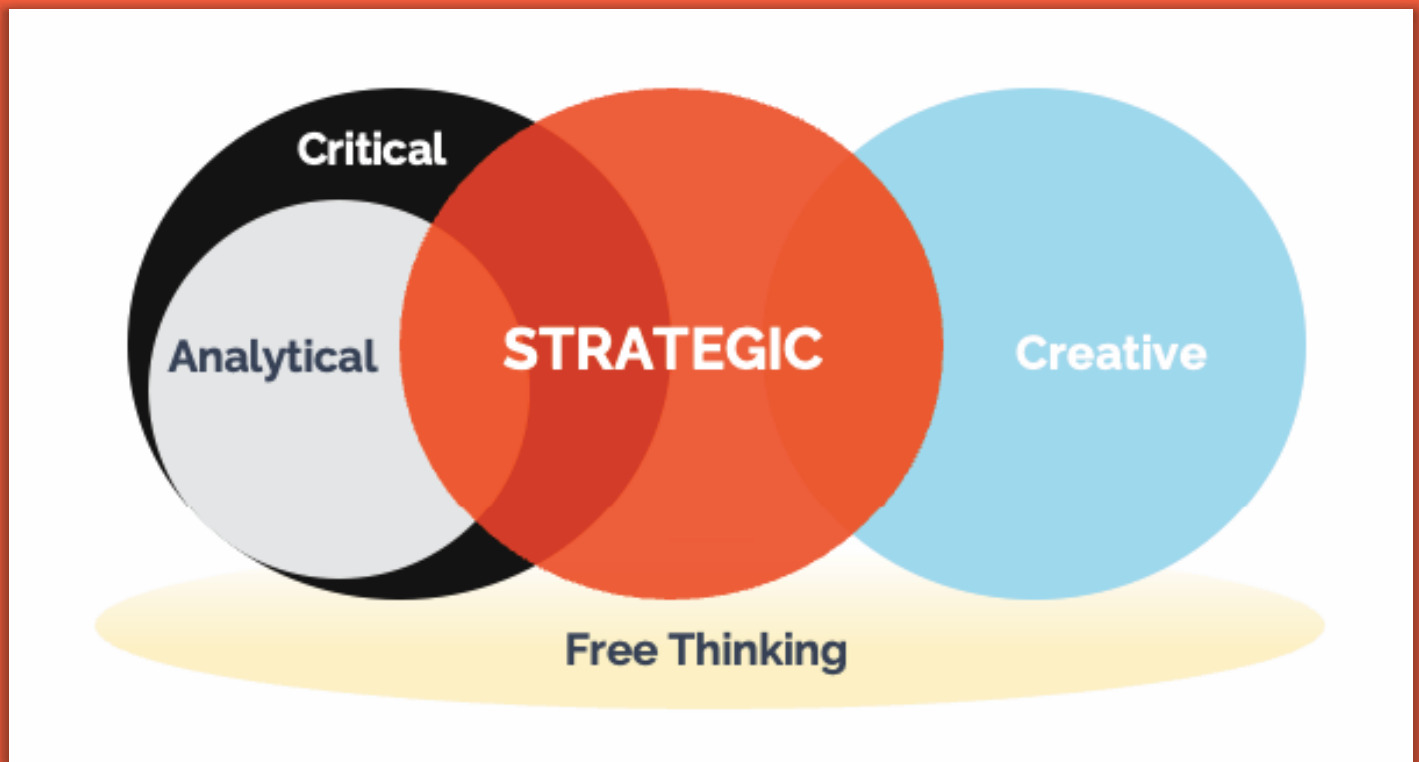
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Bonus Material

Different Types of Thinking and Questions



Critical: What are the patterns?

Creative: What are the new ideas?

Analytical: What are the components?

Strategic: Where do I focus resource to win?

Free Thinking: Ohm-Shanti

Remember: Thinking Sets Leaders Apart

Bonus Material

5 Whys Analysis

<i>Define the problem</i>	Identify the Problem: Start by clearly defining the problem or issue you want to address. It's essential to have a precise understanding of what you're trying to solve.
<i>Why is it happening?</i>	Ask "Why" Once: Ask why the problem occurred, and then identify the immediate cause or reason for the problem. This is usually the most obvious and visible cause.
<i>Why is that?</i>	Ask "Why" Again: Take the answer from step 2 and ask "why" again. Continue to dig deeper and ask why this cause occurred. This might involve looking beyond the immediate cause to identify a more fundamental reason.
<i>Why is that?</i>	Same as above, continue the drill down towards the root cause
<i>And... Why is that?</i>	Address the Root Cause: Once you have identified the root causes, work on developing solutions or actions to address these underlying issues. This will help prevent the problem from recurring in the future.

The goal of a 5Ys analysis is to go beyond addressing the symptoms of a problem and tackle its core causes. By doing so, organizations can implement more effective and long-lasting solutions. It's a technique commonly used in problem-solving and continuous improvement processes, such as Lean and Six Sigma methodologies.



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