
TTI DNA[®]

Conceptual Thinking

*A session from
Rx Online*

Conceptual Thinking

Analyzing hypothetical situations, patterns and/or abstract concepts to formulate connections and new insights.

Why is this skill important?

A person who has good Conceptual Thinking skills can take a step back to see the bigger picture at hand, drawing connections between the different aspects of a situation and seeing the whole. These people have the uncanny ability to analyze every situation on multiple levels to see the common threads or similarities that it might have to other situations they've faced in the past. In simpler terms, good Conceptual Thinking skills allow you to see patterns not recognized by others.

Taking the hypothetical or abstract and understanding what it might look like in the real world seems to come naturally to some people. Many leaders who are good Conceptual Thinkers are curious and flexible, integrate past knowledge with current problems, have a can-do attitude and are open to new ideas in a variety of ways.

Conceptual Thinking is a critical skill needed to abstract what might come of a hypothesis and see it through to creation. Conceptual thinkers think in terms of patterns, strategies and paradigms and then apply those ideas to the real world. They can analyze a concept or structure and then determine how to best apply it to their current environment. They are constantly analyzing the structures and processes behind real life events. Trying to determine how things move from an idea to a concrete object. They're the type of people who are interested in uncovering how a restaurant sources its ingredients. They get a sense of fulfillment by being able to figure it out.

What are skills associated with Conceptual Thinking?

Someone who has mastered skills associated with Conceptual Thinking:

- Demonstrates the ability to identify patterns, themes or connections not noticed by others.
- Gathers hypothetical or abstract concepts to formulate new insights.
- Evaluates many patterns to formulate connections.
- Recognizes unique or unusual perspectives.
- Envisions hypothetical situations to formulate new concepts.
- Utilizes patterns to develop new ways to process information.
- Observes and analyzes data to create new methods, techniques or processes.
- Sees new possibilities by dissecting the situation and examining the parts.
- Integrates issues and factors into a practical framework.
- Understands a situation or problem by identifying patterns or connections, to address key underlying issues.

How do you develop your own Skills in Conceptual Thinking?

- Read industry publications and attend trade shows or conferences to stay abreast of current thinking in the field. Try to incorporate what you learn into your daily job.
- Always be on the lookout for new ideas and new approaches. Be educated about and open to trying novel technologies or processes.
- Review the results of past projects to identify what contributed to the outcome. Utilize this knowledge to repeat desired outcomes. Keep developing your strengths and work to improve the areas that have caused failures or problems.
- Look at your own functional area from a strategic perspective. What are your group's particular strengths and weaknesses? What external organizations or factors affect the activity in your functional area? Define options to leverage opportunities in achieving business goals.
- Perform a risk analysis to identify potential impact and develop plans based on these scenarios.
- Think big! Don't just think about the short-term; operate from a long term perspective.
- When you find a strategic opportunity, develop action plans that will lead to desired outcomes. Plan your approach in detail, including time, finances and human resources.
- Develop several solutions, analyze the possible outcomes of each and then act on the best possible strategy.
- Force yourself to think long-term. Envision how the decision you are making today will affect other activities and decisions down the road.
- Brainstorm!
- Assume a long horizon even if you can only see a short one.
- Plan scenarios for high-potential, future situations.
- Capture the 30,000-foot view. What do you see if you step back and look at your projects from a big-picture perspective?
- Demonstrate the ability to forecast long range outcomes and develop suitable business strategies.
- Identify, evaluate and communicate potential impacts of hypothetical situations.

Conceptual Thinking

Activities

Activity 1: Brainstorming

A big part of Conceptual Thinking is being able to make the abstract real. Take some time to think about current projects you are working on. What will the world look like when you have completed them? You don't have to be right about your ideas, but the important thing is that you are defining a concrete future driven by your current actions.

What are some potential organizational changes that might happen? How will those changes affect individuals? Is there a department that might merge with another? Will anyone take on new responsibilities? Will anyone's day-to-day activities change?

It's important to be able to explain the effects of change in order to help people prepare and accept it. Use your Conceptual Thinking skills to demonstrate how your current projects might affect the future.

Project 1: _____

Initiatives:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Possible Outcomes:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Project 2: _____

Initiatives:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Possible Outcomes:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Project 3: _____

Initiatives:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Possible Outcomes:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Where do you think your company is headed in one to two years? Talk to managers and peers and compare notes. How do you think company policies or directives will change? How might those affect you?

Activity 2: Strategic Opportunities

Identify key strategic opportunities that are possible for your organization. After you complete the following questions, decide what strategies will be most effective and develop action plans for all stakeholders.

Who are the internal customers or people within the organization that we must support or work with?

What do our internal customers need or request from us? _____

Who are our external customers: clients, suppliers, others outside our organization? _____

What do our external customers need or request from us? _____

What external trends may shape our customers' needs and wants in the future? _____

How can we learn more about those upcoming trends? _____

What products or services do we offer to meet the needs of our customers? _____

What can we develop to accommodate them? _____

What are our competitors doing to meet those needs? _____

How can we find out more about what is going on in our industry or market? _____

What can we do to stand out positively from the competition? _____

What are our unique qualifications? _____

What can we do with and for our customers and suppliers that will have the best possibility of helping us meet our goals?
