

Critical Thinking - Introduction

In today's knowledge-driven world, the advantage lies with those who can think critically and keep improving their knowledge. Critical Thinking helps you in developing your analytical skills so that you can evaluate the data given to you and interpret it in the most optimal way. This helps in error-minimization and taking correct decisions quickly in crucial situations.



Critical Thinking, in other words, is a **logical study of decision-making techniques** and enhancement of judgment-skills. It's not only about the way we think and analyze facts, but also how we use those facts to decide upon a course of action and act upon them. Action is an important step of critical reasoning, as the entire concept of Critical Reasoning revolves around acting on solid, irrefutable evidence.



Reasoning is the ability of using available knowledge to process some information related to it and determine whether it's true or false. It is this quality of reasoning that has made the human race evolve from being a bunch of cave-dwellers to acquiring the coveted top position in the animal world. However, human reasoning is not always flawless because it's not always based on logic. It has been frequently observed that human **reasoning is influenced by emotional bias**. One of these emotional biases is prejudice. We tend to judge people based on their appearances but are often proven wrong too.

There are numerous cases in the service industry where businesses lost potentially huge customers and clients because of judging people wrongly. A famous case is that of **Hyderabad's Nizam** who was denied entry into a Rolls Royce showroom owing to his simple grooming. He later went on to purchase a Rolls Royce, ordered large brooms to be tied around its front wheels, and sent the car to sweep the streets of Hyderabad, much to the global embarrassment of the reputed car manufacturer.

What is Critical Thinking?

Critical Thinking is defined as the ability of putting forth an open-minded inquiry. It is one of the founding stones of human civilization. A person who lives his life bound by pre-conceived notions and doesn't allow people to suggest changes is like a **frog in a well**. Open-mindedness broadens our horizon by allowing us to listen to different points-of-view and learning from each one of them.

Open-mindedness also means understanding the relevant evidence and basing an argument upon it, while also being responsive to accurate, positive criticisms. Open-minded people don't mind having a second opinion from a credible source, even after they have arrived at a conclusion. They are always on the look-out for different alternatives and possibilities to approach a situation and don't like being bogged down under the weight of preconceived ideas and notions.

It has been observed that people with critical thinking abilities are not so much interested in listening to the extent of the damage of the problem before setting to work upon addressing it. This means their approach to problem-solving remains the same for every problem they face. This is markedly different from those who don't think critically, as their reasoning often gives way to emotional handling of things.

Importance of Critical Thinking

Critical thinking plays an important role in getting success in all professional fields. Critical thinking deals with careful interpretation of information and using it to reach a practical conclusion. The principle of critical thinking can be applied to any context, as the concepts are universal in nature, however their application depends on the specialization that you want to apply it to.

Critical Thinking is applied in the following spheres -

Anthropology	Psychology	Biology
Sociology	Philosophy	Ecology
History	Mathematics	Legal
Politics	Chemistry	Ethics
Music	Artistry	Business

In these fields, it is extremely important to analyze, evaluate, and explain everything in detail with sound logic and research, hence Critical Thinking is essential in getting success in these fields. There are cases where people with sound knowledge and logical inquiry have made mistakes, because they couldn't apply the methods, which were too complex and impractical to implement successfully.

Critical thinking includes identification of prejudice, bias, propaganda, self-deception, distortion, misinformation, etc. Given research in cognitive psychology, some educators believe that schools should focus on teaching their students critical thinking skills and cultivation of intellectual traits.

Critical thinking helps us in recognizing problems and finding out solutions for them. In addition to that, it also teaches us to prioritize between a set of tasks so that we understand the preference in problem-solving. It also helps in comprehending data with accuracy and check for the existence of logical relationships between them. After reaching the conclusion, the theory is then put into application to check the various generalizations that were considered at the time of formulating the conclusion.

Critical Thinking - Applications

In the business world, Critical Thinking influences three prominent areas of the organization, namely human resources, marketing, and customer service. Let's see how the three areas are handled properly using critical thinking.

Human Resources

Many companies have now started appointing trained and certified specialists in Employee Relations who conduct workplace investigations frequently. When faced with a situation where they have to either warn, suspend, or terminate employees who have been accused of deviant behavior, they rely on Critical Thinking to arrive at a conclusion.

Techniques like fact-finding interviews, witness statements, gauging employee credibility, impact of termination on the team productivity, are applied to deduce whether an employee should be terminated immediately or given another chance.



Marketing

People in the field of marketing, public relations, operations management and sales utilize their critical thinking skills in building the public perception of a company with respect to the company's products and services.

Earlier, marketing a product in such a way that appeals to only certain demographics was considered a good ploy. However, niche markets have now seen a huge decline, especially in the face of global recession and economic meltdown. Marketing Agencies used critical thinking and found a way to tackling this issue.

The idea of targeting a niche market was completely abandoned. Instead of that, marketing techniques were used to make the product appeal to a wider base, even if the product itself wasn't made to undergo any modifications. This way, the products kept getting customers from all demographics without losing out on their core market base.

For example, if a car is marketed in such a way that it appeals to only women, it will face issues with achieving the expected sales figures. The reason behind it is the public perception that has now gone behind the product, making the male customers distance themselves from the product. The right strategy that is being implemented nowadays is to make it appeal to all the members of the family, and that includes the children and the dog too.



Customer Service

Employees who have regular contact with business customers use critical thinking skills every time they engage in understanding customers' needs and imparting product knowledge. Using information about a customer to achieve a satisfactory resolution is an important part of **conflict resolution**.

One example is a customer care executive taking ownership of a case and extending the deadline for due payment of a customer, who previously has a clean record of payment. Another example could be not penalizing a customer for his delayed

payment, keeping in mind the long-standing business relationship with the customer.

In both these cases, the customer care executive had to take the help of the customer's history with the company before arriving at the final decision, and providing a speedy resolution to the problem.

Norm, a subscriber with Netflix, contacted the company about an issue he was facing with the video player while viewing an episode of Parks and Rec. The video player kept continuously playing the last three seconds in a loop. He opened up Netflix's chat service and initiated a conversation with a customer service executive.

The person who responded to his chat message was Michael, who introduced himself as "Captain Mike of the good ship Netflix" – a reference to the famous Star Trek series. He then asked which crew member he was speaking with. Obviously amused and delighted by such a greeting, Norm responded by typing, "Lieutenant" Norm, another Star Trek character, that of a Fleet Officer.

Neither of them broke character during the entire conversation. This call is now a classic in how to provide both delight and service to the customers.

Going Beyond Comfort Zones

In today's era of international business, many events take place on a global level daily. Influenced by these events, organizations all over the world keep making changes to their strategies, business approaches, and investments. These changes are sometimes gradual, however in some cases, sudden changes are also seen.

In this changing world, organizations have come to realize that changes are a standard course of action in business and they have to adjust accordingly and fast, so that they don't miss the train. In situations like these, the employees shouldn't ask themselves if their organization is ever going to change. Rather, they should ask themselves how well they will be able to adapt to change, when that comes.

The first step of learning adaptability is **stepping out of your comfort zone**. This involves viewing things from a different perspective and under different circumstances. A single-view approach to any problem will alienate the rest of the co-workers who might have different and better ideas to address the situation. Getting out of your comfort zone takes a lot of listening to different people's opinions, and analyzing facts based on these inputs.



Often, we tend to rush to conclusions without having all the necessary data with us. People with a predetermined approach to handling a problem have a habit of solving the problem without even listening to it. That's because they don't like to be challenged with new scenarios. In other words, they don't feel comfortable stepping out of their comfort zone. However, efficient managers always like to challenge themselves with handling new conflicts so that they become better managers.

Qualities of Critical Thinkers

What are those qualities that are common to all the influential critical thinkers? More importantly, are these qualities the ones that make them better at thinking in a non-linear, critical way? It has been observed that some people are just better than others in arriving at logical decisions.

The secret behind their being so good at decision-making is not the quality of education that they received, or the places they have travelled. The secret lies in how much of their education they have applied in their life in a practical manner, and how much they have absorbed from the places they have visited and people they have conversed with.

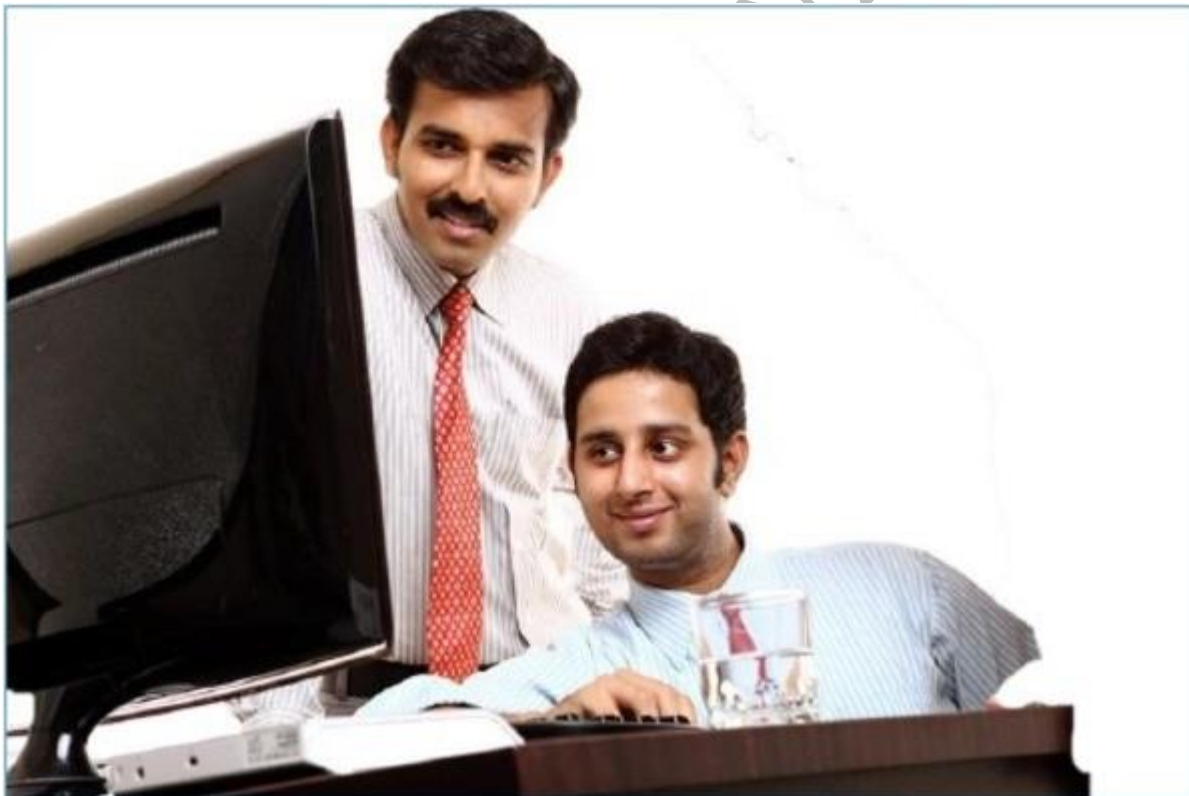
Researchers state that critical thinkers all over the world have four common qualities –

- They are active listeners.
- They are curious people.
- They have self-discipline.
- They are humble and rooted.

Active Listening

It is an oft-repeated quote that the best communicators aren't those who speak well, but those who listen well. You might be a persuasive speaker, however when you don't listen to others, you will keep on speaking out of tune. Your brilliant statements and observations will be totally irrelevant in such cases.

Being an active listener means you have to be completely attentive and engaged to what the speaker is saying. Not only that, an active listener can also understand the subconscious messages that the speaker is sending, just by interpreting the words of the speaker when the speaker might not have explicitly mentioned it otherwise.



Curiosity

A curious brain is a learning brain. It has been seen that people who have good decision-making skills are always trying to learn new things. That inquisitiveness keeps them ready and updated, so that they are in a position to handle any crisis

in the best possible manner. People like these love asking questions and reject explanations that are not based on logic and rationality.

There is a fine line between being curious and being nosy, though. Many people try to intrude into other person's life and business and are generally termed as "meddlesome". In stark contrast to that, being curious is about learning things using your own facilities of sense, as compared to collecting rumors.

Self-Discipline

One of the main objectives of self-discipline is to prevent others from influencing your thoughts, so that you can have an independent reasoning and rationalizing ability. Critical Thinkers are more aware of their surroundings and their own strengths and weaknesses than others. This is due to their commitment towards improving the world. They are empathetic and believe in quality for all.

Humility

Humility is the quality of downplaying one's contribution in a successful task while giving credit to others. Humility is also the quality of being open to new ideas. Critical thinkers are always humble while learning so that they can learn new things without their ego fighting against someone teaching them something.

Critical Thinking - Worksheet

Achieving self-development is all about steady planning to achieve current and long-term goals in personal and professional life. To develop oneself, one has to take stock of his present situation, draw a strategy and take necessary actions.

The following activity is designed to give you a clear idea of your present state – what's working for you, what needs to be addressed, and what changes you need to bring in your life. Take your time and fill in the blanks below the questions.

Strengths

- What are your greatest assets?

- What work are you really good at?

-
- What skills do people like in you?

-
-
-
- What do you do better than your co-workers?

-
-
-
- What one thing are you most satisfied with?

-
-
-
- Which life-experiences of yours make you stand out from others?

Areas of Improvement

- What skills and competencies you need to have to improve?

-
-
-
- What skills do others have that you wish you had?

-
-
-
- Which project in your office will help you learn new skills?

- What certifications do you need to move ahead?

- Which courses will give you vertical growth in the department?

- What development opportunities are there in your daily professional life?

- How will you track the progress you are making?

Desires

- Do you want to be a better writer?

- Do you want to visit a gym and improve your physique?

- Do you want to improve your leadership skills?

-
- Do you want to be a better communicator?
-
-
-

Results

- What would attaining these goals mean to you?
-
-
-

- What does is this success mean to you and how will it impact you?
-
-
-

- How would your life change if you be the change you want to see in you?
-
-
-

- How will you measure your development in the areas you have identified?
-
-
-

Critical Thinking - Improving Communication

One of the main purposes of thinking is to get the ability of connecting different thoughts and facts, and getting a cohesive picture in the end. Our own ideas gain more value and weight when we realize that other distinguished thinkers are also thinking the same. The way ideas are structured in our mind depend on the **conceptual relationships** we make to the sayings and teachings of the people

we follow. This connecting of thoughts make our decisions objective and practical. It increases our self-awareness too.

Objectivity is an important requirement for critical thinking. Objectivity is the practice of drawing your conclusions based on facts and data available, while keeping personal equations and relationships away. For example, a referee might be a friends with a player, however his decision of penalizing the same player in the case of a foul he did shouldn't be influenced by their personal equation.

Although **emotions** should be kept aside while making a decision, some emotions must be retained for critical thinking, which is different from taking a decision. A bakery shop's owner wanting to help her customers out by starting a free home delivery service is a critical thinking where she is involving the emotions of her customers. However, if she finds out that the cost of the service would not be financially feasible for her business, she has to take a tough decision and modify her thought.

Self-awareness is the characteristic of being aware of one's thoughts, limits, and emotions. People who think critically conduct frequent **self-assessment** to see where they stand in the changing order of things, if they are ahead of the curve or lagging behind. This periodical evaluation helps them keep updated as per the current demands and changes in global scenarios.

So, communication needs to be done in an objective light which can only be possible if we keep reading and knowing about new stuff so that our judgment is based on facts, and not emotional responses. In addition to that, we should also be aware of our shortcomings and try to address them as soon as we can.

As the financial officer in a company that deals in cars, you are facing a unique situation. The owner of the company is an intuitive man and loves taking decisions based on his gut feeling. This method has got him success in the past number of times, however now the economy of the country is undergoing a change.

The owner is a well-read man who keeps himself updated with the market scenario, however, true to his intuitive style of doing business, he is planning to order a fleet of 30 Chevys, hoping that the cars will be sold before the Christmas.

As the financial advisor of this company, what would your decision be and how would you convince him of your decision, if it were different from his?

Critical Thinking - Problem-Solving

Critical thinking has existed for centuries. In fact, all the philosophers and poets of the world have managed to look beyond what looks obvious, so that they could understand the deeper meanings of things and the functioning of the world. While apples have dropped from trees for centuries, it took Newton to think about the reason behind it and that brought about the Law of Gravity.

According to psychologists, problems are the path that connects Point A and Point B, where Point A is the present state of the problem-solver and Point B is where he would want to be. All solutions lie in the path of travelling from Point A to Point B. Critical Thinking helps people in looking for the path that connects Point A to Point B. This is called **connecting the dots**, where people look at a problem as an opportunity to exercise their collective ideas and reach a conclusion. It won't be amiss to say that Critical Thinking is one of the first steps to effective problem-solving.

Discrepancies are fluctuations from the desired way of problem-solving or functioning. The way in which many of us will like to solve problems is by removing any discrepancies, however that will lead us to adopt a totalitarian thinking process where no thoughts other than the ones we have decided upon will be accepted. Critical thinkers are not interested at all in removing discrepancies. They see them as variances, which means "variations" on their own problem-solving methods. They like to observe these variances as possibly better methods to address the problems and find solutions.

It's also a good idea to trust your instincts while trying and solving a problem. Many thinkers like Edison have stood at crossroads in their lives, where they were faced with many options and didn't know which approach to take. In cases like these, they relied upon their intuition, and coupled with informed guessing and brainstorming, were able to find a way out.

People often have the tendency of rushing forward when a possible solution appears, however they tend to forget that many problems can have multiple solutions, and it's quite possible that the path you are following is not the most logical and practical path to the problem's solution. Critical Thinking helps in also finding multiple solutions to a problem so that the best method can be adopted.

Any problem must be solved keeping in mind the following factors –

- Is the method of problem-solving logistically viable?
- Is the method of problem-solving as inclusive as possible?
- Does the method of problem-solving have any strings attached?

- Is the solution being opposed by a few people, and are their objections considered?

Keeping these factors will help us in arriving at a solution that is not only agreeable to all the people, but also will have the maximum inputs on solving it. There is a case study mentioned below that will ask you to test your problem-solving skills. You are encouraged to implement Critical Thinking to find out the different ways in which the issue can be addressed.

Your company has a couple of managers who report their team's sales figures at the end of the week, however, when the reported sales numbers are tallied with the number of leads generated, some numbers are found not matching.

Another issue is that while the sales are reported, the transactions don't start showing up till weeks later. This causes issues in billing and record maintenance. The customer care department reports heavy customer complaints for these managers too.

The management has decided to follow-up the matter with their account managers and hand this matter over to a task-force who can find out the optimal solution to this problem.

As the head of this task-force, how would you solve this problem?

Critical Thinking - Changing Perspectives

People believe that the faster they solve a problem, the better problem-solving skills they have. This thought has been ingrained deep into the general people's minds right from their childhood through a series of traditional evaluating techniques called **end-term examinations**, where people are asked to answer a few questions in always a time-bound scenario.

This thought encourage the students to arrive at the quickest conclusion, and not the most optimal conclusion. This method has been observed to leave a disastrous effect on the lateral thinking of the students. They stop having imaginative answers and get institutionalized as per the methods given in their books. In other words, they learn to give their meek adherence to the norm, as opposed to challenging the norm, which brings progress and novelty. A simple exercise will illustrate what we mean.

The following string of words is actually a sentence from which one vowel has been removed. If you can use the vowel only eleven times, and in eleven different places, you will get the sentence. Try to find out what could be the sentence.

VRYFINXMPLARXCDSWHATWXPCT

Most people attempting a solution would rush into their assumption that the first word is "very", and depending on that, they would arrive at the conclusion that the

missing vowel is 'e'. However, as they move forward, they realize that placing 'e' eleven times in eleven different places doesn't create any meaningful sentence in the end. The reason behind their confusion is their speedy but faulty decision that the first word is "very". Hence, they are trying their best to create a sentence with the wrong word.

When preconceived notions prevent us from exploring other options, we are stuck in trying to find a solution for ourselves within that limited thinking. In other words, we think the rest of the options as discrepancies, or as in this case, different words as discrepancies that don't adhere to our way of solving the puzzle.

How about trying to solve the puzzle using a different word? Let's try "every". You can find the problem is immediately solved. The words form a meaningful sentence that reads – **"Every fine exemplar exceeds what we expect."**

Problem-solvers around the world are caught up in what we know now as the "speed web", where they are more inclined to find the fastest solution, as compared to the best solution. They need to realize that speed is a necessary, but it is not the ultimately sufficient condition for critical thought.

Speed must be complemented with creative thought and conclusive analysis. Hasty judgements and decisions end up bringing disastrous results at both personal and professional levels. Ironically, a hasty decision causes more loss of time at correcting the mistakes, which could be easily avoided if proper thought were put into the planning and execution in the initial stages.

When we face personal or professional crisis, we are required to find an accurate identification of our problem and then come up with outcomes that are better and faster. A recent report stated that about two-thirds of managers use less than 50% of their collective brainpower for the organization they worked for.

In today's world, many individuals, teams, and whole institutions put themselves in trainings that help them in sharpening cerebral skills. The need to think critically now lesser of a valuable commodity, and more of a requirement.

Critical Thinking - Quiz

The following quiz is designed to give an idea of Critical Thinking abilities. The reader is encouraged to spend as much time as possible on each problem to find the solution. The questions are designed such that the answers can only be gotten from considering multiple possibilities of the solution.

Try to find out what's the best solution.

- **1)** How to get exactly 4 liters of water if you have only an 8-liter jug and a 3-liter jug, and both containers are unmarked? You have a running tap handy.
- **2)** What can you add to 1,000,000 and always get more than if you multiplied the 1,000,000 by the same value?
- **3) What are the common sayings that these words signify?**
 - a. DECISION
 - b. ANOTHER ONE
- **4) What is the 50th number in this sequence?**
5, 11, 17, 23, 29, 35, 41, ...
- **5) Determine both one-word answers –**
The floor of ship or boat,
They walk on me at sea;
Where there's a C, make it an S,
At school you sit on me.
What am I?
- **6) Determine both one-word answers –**
Another word for sick,
Your forehead is quite hot;
Now put an H in front,
A mountain I am not.
What am I?
- **7) Use the clues to solve the puzzle –**
A duck, a goose, a goat, and a horse all entered the barn at different times one day last week.

A mammal entered the barn first.

The duck entered before the goose.

The goose entered ahead of the horse.

Who entered the barn first?

- **8) What are the common sayings that these words signify?**
 - a. CHIEDITOREF
 - b. T 2222
- **9) Use the addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division symbols once each to make these equations true.**
 - a. $600 _ 200 _ 400 _ 300 _ 200 = 200$
 - b. $200 _ 300 _ 600 _ 400 _ 200 = 200$
- **10) While relaxing on the deck outside her cabin one summer evening, Viva fell into a deep trance-like sleep. When she awoke, she felt as if she had slept only an hour or two, but it was now the middle of winter. How could this be?**

Answers

- **1) Fill the 3-liter jug three times, each time dumping the water from it into the 8-liter jug. The third time, this will leave one liter of water in the 3-liter jug, and the 8-liter jug will be filled. Dump the water from the 8-liter jug down the drain, and then empty the one liter of water from the 3-liter jug into the 8-liter jug. Now fill the 3-liter jug again and dump the water into the 8-liter jug. The 8-liter jug now contains 4 liters of water. Various answers are possible.**
- **2) zero, or any fraction less than a whole, or any negative number**
- **3) a. split decision**
 - b. one after another
- **4) Add 6 to 5, getting 11, then add 6 to 11, getting 17, then add 6 to 17, getting 23, etc., until 6 has been added 50 times, getting the final answer 299.**
- **5) Deck, desk**
- **6) a. ill**
 - b. hill
- **7) the goat**
- **8) a. Editor in Chief**
 - b. Tea for two
- **9) a. $600 \times 200 / 400 - 300 + 200 = 200$**
 - b. $200 / 300 \times 600 - 400 + 200 = 200$

- **10)** Viva fell asleep just before the ship crossed the equator on a trip from Hawaii to New Zealand. She fell asleep north of the equator where it was the middle of summer, and awoke two hours later south of the equator where it was the middle of winter.

Critical Thinking - Aspects

In today's world of quick-fix solutions, problem-solvers don't always have the luxury of preparing well in advance for a situation. If sufficient time is provided, then many can find out perfect solutions to problems. But it's when a problem needs to be addressed urgently with an "on-the-spot" solution that people resort to hasty decisions.

These hasty decisions are often wrong decisions and are exposed with passing time. That's because in a hurry to find a solution, many important parameters are often missed or ignored, which play their part in the later stages of the implementation of the plan.

The ability to **think on your feet** is not an innate talent. It is a quality that can be honed and developed in all individuals. The idea is to keep conditioning one's mind according to different scenarios and into looking at a problem from all different angles, so that the final solutions are comprehensive and inclusive.



Depending on this approach to problem-solving, there are three important aspects of Critical Thinking –

- **Quick Thinking** – It is the quality that enables a few people to give quick and accurate answers in a flawless manner when they face unexpected questions, while others might be caught mumbling and fumbling over words. This quality needs a lot of practice and depending on the amount of practice you put into thinking fast under time-bound circumstances, your answers will be prompt and satisfactory.
- **Creative Thinking** – Many problem-solvers can find out the solution to the problems by the traditional method, however when they are faced with a unique problem, they tend to stop functioning. The reason behind this is they think this new situation is not their problem and they can save the time needed to solve this new problem in completing more tasks of the kind they can handle. On doing this, they restrict their thoughts and analytical skills which is extremely important to hone creative thinking.
- **Analytical Thinking** – Despite facing numerous problems and situations daily in our life, we don't receive any formal training on how to handle these situations using logical and scientific methods. Analytical thinking involves defining the problem and generating a list of possible solutions for a problem. After that, the best solution is determined of the entire list of problems.

Critical thinking teaches that open-mindedness is the most important requirement for learning, as it helps people to step out of their comfort zone, and draw effective conclusions. Critical thinking has many benefits, such as improving persuasion skills, enhancing communication skills, and improving problem solving skills.

Critical Thinking also helps us evolve our Emotional Intelligence. Critical thinking requires that a person change his approach to problem-solving by changing his perspective while analyzing data.

Critical Thinking - Enhance

Critical thinkers require many characteristics to be effective. These characteristics include qualities such as curiosity, humility, objectivity, self-awareness, and active listening. In the professional world, an employee is expected to have a set of skills that make him a productive asset for the organization that he works in.

Let's list of few of these skills and see what are the qualities associated with these skills.

Technical Skills

This is the ability to understand and use the financial systems. It involves correctly completing transactions in a given amount of time. Having good technical skills also means that you can decipher error messages in a system, understand the discrepancies and resolve them in a timely manner.

Analytical Skills

This is the ability of dissecting the problems, realizing its components and organize a way to solve them in a systematic way; the process of looking for underlying causes or thinking through the consequence of difference courses of action. For example, a banker's analytical skills would be –

- Make a step-by-step break-down of constituent financial issues.
- Identify cause after checking the incorrect transactions.
- Analyze issues to arrive at appropriate solution by looking at financial options.

Critical Thinking

The ability to identify a problem, go through the available relevant information to find out discrepancies, and integrate the results of these findings into the final resolution.

Decision Making

Arriving at a solution after addressing issues related to doubts, apparent uncertainties, and the difficulties of running the processes of research. This includes defining the issues, making accurate information requirements for addressing the problems, identifying possible sources for collecting data, and then finding the best alternative after reviewing the available options.

Communication

It is the process of transferring thoughts, opinions, or knowledge, orally or in written form, to individuals or groups. To communicate properly, people are advised to listen actively when others are speaking to them.

People also try and paraphrase (using different words to explain what they have understood from what they have heard) frequently to state their accordence. This includes **mirroring**, i.e. reflecting the speaker's exact mannerisms in speech and then clarifying.

In addition to this, using **body language** that encourages the speaker to continue speaking or expand upon a thought, while listening silently makes a speaker feel as if his words are sinking in and are becoming a part of your thoughts.

When asking a question, it's always important to form clearly thought-out inquiries that highlight your understanding and knowledge levels. A question should be to-the-point and not a meandering one.

Time Management

Time management is the set of practices that increase efficiency and productivity, and ensure accomplishment of tasks. This includes organizing and maintaining information, setting priorities among tasks, keeping track of the status of work completed, and getting work completed within a realistic time-frame.

Integrity

An employee with integrity undertakes tasks assigned to him with unquestionable morals, uncompromising ethics and honesty. A person of integrity will set high standards himself and expect the same of others, both in professional and personal life.

A few qualities of a person of integrity are –

- Keeping commitments
- Honoring promises
- Taking care of needs
- Willing to accept responsibility
- Willing to listen to authority

Attention to Detail

To cultivate Critical Thinking, a person needs to have a thoroughness in his thoughts. He needs to have the same dedicated approach to a problem, irrespective of that problem being a big one or small. Thoroughness includes double-checking sources and their accuracy of information on a periodic basis, monitoring the quality of own work and that of the people assigned to you, adhering to all processes and quality measures and insisting that the work of others also pass the quality measures.

Service

Providing good service is one of the strong commitments that service providers give to customers when they are marketing their products. This service includes providing both internal and external customers timely, quality, and courteous financial service.

It also includes identifying customers' needs by studying the changing customer buying trends and patterns, handling customers' queries and providing them speedy resolutions.

Negotiation

Negotiation is the art of persuading others to accept certain agreements, while also listening to their proposals and finding a middle path between both the disagreeing parties. This includes listening to others' ideas for gaining a balance between different perspectives, develop additional ideas, and verify the solution.

Tesco, the world's third-largest retailer came up with an idea to fill the West Coast of the U.S. with a chain of small grocery stores focusing on fresh foods. Before implementing this plan of opening its first Fresh & Easy stores, Tesco conducted extensive market research. In fact, many Tesco employees started living in the homes of American customers to observe their eating and shopping habits.

However, months into the setting up of these chains, the Fresh & Easy concept turned into a disaster. The concept failed to catch up with the public and any expansion plans for the chain were scaled back.

Tim Mason, the head of Tesco's U.S. business, stated that the company failed to realize that Americans weren't happy with the Fresh & Easy' store's "everyday-low-prices" strategy, as it lacked a comparative for them based on which they can analyze the "low prices". They were much happier with coupons and other special offers.

Critical thinking is a lifelong process of being curious, inquisitive, and interested in learning. To gain the ability of critical thinking, you need to continue asking questions, as well as learning from observing your and others' mistakes. Critical thinking helps us draw practical conclusions by asking us to step out of our comfort zone. This helps us in being adaptive, persuasive, and communicative.