

The Hard Work Few Are Willing to Do

“Think over these things I am saying [understand them and grasp their application], for the Lord will grant you full insight *and* understanding in everything.” –2 Timothy 2:7 AMP

Nobel Prize-winning physicist Albert Einstein, one of the best thinkers who ever lived, asserted, “Thinking is hard work; that’s why so few do it.”^[1] I assert that not only do so few do it, but they also don’t know *how* to do it.

My dad, a college professor, and Cal Tech Applied Mathematics Ph.D. always told me that schools teach people what to think but not how to think. The challenge is that sound decision-making, exercising good judgment, and problem-solving require your ability to form an opinion or idea. If you don’t know how to think, you’ll be handicapped; you may make the wrong decision or be unable to solve a problem.

But the good news is that you can learn how to think. God created you in his image. He’s given you the capacity to reason, evaluate words, and assess the truth. I believe there are four essential thinking skills or mental processes needed to become a successful leader:

1. **Analytical:** Using comprehensive data, you can break down the complex into the simple, detect patterns, and develop insights.
2. **Critical:** You can carefully evaluate information, determine what’s relevant, and interpret data when making decisions.
3. **Creative:** You can consider problems or issues in a new way and generate ideas. You can also offer a fresh perspective with unconventional solutions through brainstorming.

4. **Strategic:** You can leverage unique insights in a changing environment. You can synthesize information, consider opportunities and threats, and imagine a future direction. This leads to a clear set of goals, plans, or new ideas required to survive or thrive in a competitive setting.

How do you develop superior thinking skills?

Take a class, volunteer for a special project, engage a subject matter expert, read books, or play games. Have a learning mindset. Stretch yourself.

Your role as a leader is to think, but it is the Lord who grants you understanding. He will give you the ability to perceive the nature and meaning of problems to be solved, issues to be handled, or decisions to be made. He'll illuminate your thinking and shine a bright light on events. If you do the hard work of thinking and seeking God's insight, you'll be on the road to making sound decisions, developing good judgment, and solving problems.

How to self-evaluate your thinking skills

- Rate yourself from 1 to 10 (1 = deficient, 10 = mastery) on each of the thinking skills: analytical, critical, creative, and strategic.
- Which is the lowest?
- How will you improve your ability?
- Which is the highest?
- How will you strengthen the skill?
- How will improving or enhancing the skills benefit you?
- When will you start?

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Want to learn more? Visit <http://www.prestonpoore.com>

Cheers!

Pres

^[1] John C. Maxwell, *Thinking for a Change: 11 Ways Highly Successful People Approach Life and Work* (Center Street, 2005).