

PAYING IT FORWARD

Leading With Purpose

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If You're On The 8 Second Train-Jump Off

After 40 years in the fire service, Chief Randy Bruegman founded The Leadership Crucible Foundation to reshape future leadership with a focus on fostering courage, empathy, and humility in leadership positions.

When we observe today's society, it appears that few take responsibility for their actions or obligations. It's a concerning trend that has led to a lack of accountability and an erosion of trust in our institutions. Many individuals and organizations adopt a "pass the buck" mentality, where they shift blame onto others or make excuses for their shortcomings. I've seen this behavior many times while working in local government.



LEARN TO BE A CRITICAL THINKER

Have you heard of the 8-second rule on attention span? It refers to the average amount of time people can focus on something before their mind starts to wander. The 8-second rule on attention span is a well-known phenomenon that has been studied extensively in the field of psychology. This aspect of how one processes information has become especially relevant in today's fast-paced society, which is driven by social media, where individuals are constantly bombarded with stimuli that can compete for their attention. According to Lunio, a content marketer with expertise in digital marketing, the average a

person encounters between 6000 to 10,000 ads every single day and that does not take into account the social media impressions to which one is exposed.

Research has shown that the 8-second rule is a result of the way our brains process information. In communications research, the 8 second rule suggests that people form their first impressions within the initial 8 seconds. Whether it's a presentation, marketing message or a website, those initial moments matter. Therefore, effective communication during this brief window can determine whether someone stays engaged or moves on. But there's another

aspect to this that is consequential to how people's opinions are formed and the actions that they take as a result.

Individuals with an 8-second perspective often form opinions or viewpoints based solely on headlines, without delving into the content of the story. Headlines are designed to grab attention, but in many cases, they often do not accurately reflect the content of the story. Relying solely on headlines can result in a significant misunderstanding of the issue at hand, as a headline alone may not provide the necessary context to form an informed opinion.

GROUP THINK

Another trend that has emerged is that people often form their opinions on a topic solely based upon the influencers that they follow. In today's world, it has become quite common for famous personalities such as professional athletes, actors, and actresses to express their opinions on various topics, even if they may not be well-informed about the subject matter.

Unfortunately, many of their followers tend to blindly accept these opinions as truth without considering the facts. As a result, it is important to be cautious about the sources of information we rely on and to always verify the accuracy of the information before accepting it as our own. It's

unfortunate that with the rise of social media, many people have lost their ability to access factual knowledge and make evidence-based decisions. Instead, they rely on influencers or fail to take the time to critically evaluate the information available to them, creating a groupthink.

Groupthink is a phenomenon that occurs when a group of people prioritize consensus and harmony over critical thinking and decision-making. In a groupthink situation, members of a group may feel pressure to conform to the group's opinions and ideas, even if they do not necessarily agree with them. This can lead to poor decision-making and a lack of innovation. I believe

this has been a contributing factor to the increased lack of truth and transparency in government, business, and in organizations.

To overcome this issue, it is essential that we enhance our critical thinking and analysis skills. This will enable us to ask the right questions and grasp the implications of what is being communicated, as well as what is not being said. By doing so, we can gain a deeper understanding of the proposed ideas and the potential outcomes they may bring about. Ultimately, it is our responsibility to challenge the information we receive and to think critically, rather than blindly accepting everything that is presented to us.





LEMMING EFFECTS

The failure to resist the pull of groupthink can give rise to the lemming effect, which serves as a powerful metaphor for human behavior. The term “lemming effect” originated from the popular myth that lemmings, small rodents found in Arctic regions, would blindly follow one another off a cliff or into bodies of water, resulting in mass fatalities.

Over the past century, this myth has been used to express contemporary concerns about how individuality can be consumed and obliterated by mass phenomena, such as political movements or consumer culture. The prevalence of the “lemming effect” in contemporary society underscores how social influence can prompt individuals to conform to group norms, even if such actions are irrational or detrimental. This phenomenon arises when individuals embrace certain behaviors due to their observance of others.

This phenomenon is commonly known as social influence, where individuals adopt certain behaviors simply because they

have observed others doing the same. Often, social influence can be a powerful force that drives individuals to conform to the norms of their social group or community.

However, it is important to be aware of this phenomenon and to make conscious decisions about our behavior rather than blindly following the crowd. We observe this in stock market bubbles or crashes, the rapid spread of fashion trends, the virality of memes and hashtags on social media, and in riots and crowds where large gatherings and heightened emotions create conditions that facilitate destructive behavior.

This group think prioritizes consensus over critical thinking, which is a crucial skill in today’s complex and ever evolving world. As such, it is imperative to remain vigilant of the lemming effect on your own judgement and work on the development of your independent thinking and decision-making that is grounded in analytical reasoning and sound judgement.

Every day we are inundated with information from various sources, making it difficult to determine what is factual and what is not. Critical thinking is a valuable tool that helps us sift through this massive amount of information and determine what is credible so that we each can make informed decisions. From a problem-solving perspective, our future depends on our ability to innovate and use technology while also possessing effective problem-solving skills. Critical thinking can help us tackle challenges effectively and find creative solutions. In addition to these benefits, I believe critical thinking provides a degree of rationality that is sorely needed in our society today.

The challenges facing society today have existed for some time, yet remain unresolved. Which begs the question - why? A significant factor is the collective failure of the general population to demand accountability and transparency from elected officials and organizational leaders.

By failing to ask critical questions, individuals inadvertently perpetuate the very issues that they seek to have resolved. It's time to take action and hold leaders accountable by asking the tough questions necessary to gain a comprehensive understanding

of the issues at hand. This approach empowers individuals to demand transparency and ensure that meaningful progress is made towards resolving pressing issues.

By prioritizing active engagement and critical inquiry, we can contribute to a more informed

and productive society that is better equipped to tackle the challenges of today and tomorrow. And that process begins when we stop being lemmings, and become critical thinkers.

CRITICAL THINKING

By embracing critical thinking, each of us can approach decision-making with a rational mindset and avoid being swayed by popular opinion or misinformation. Ultimately, critical thinking is an essential skill that can help each of us navigate an increasingly complex world, where we can make informed decisions, tackle challenges effectively, and find creative solutions to the problems we face. Most important, is for each of us to arm ourselves with factual information, to ask the right questions to the people that are leading in government, in business, and organizations today. We may find that if we collectively do this, we can begin to address those societal issues we are facing today.

But it starts with each of this improving our critical thinking skill set, Here are some tips to help you develop your critical thinking IQ:

1. Ask questions: One of the best ways to develop critical thinking skills is to ask questions. Don't just accept information at face value. Foster curiosity by asking thought-provoking questions that challenge the status quo. This helps develop a deeper understanding of issues and innovative solutions. By embracing the power of questions, we can become more effective problem-solvers and decision-makers.

2. Evaluate information: Develop a discerning eye by verifying the accuracy, credibility, and relevance of information before accepting it. Assess its source and potential biases, and be

critical of any claims that seem too good to be true or seem so too outlandish to be true. By evaluating information objectively, you can become more informed and a better decision-maker, leading to better outcomes for yourself, your organization, and society.

3. Is what is being said actually what's occurring: It's important to ensure that the statements being made on an issue align with what is actually occurring in order to determine the credibility of the information. A good litmus test for this is to compare the statements with the reality of the situation.

4. Consider different perspectives: Embrace diversity of thought by exploring alternative viewpoints and considering multiple perspectives. This fosters personal and intellectual growth, challenges assumptions, and promotes empathy and understanding towards others.

5. Analyze arguments: Improve your analytical reasoning by dissecting arguments, objectively examining evidence, and scrutinizing logic. This leads to better decision-making and a better understanding of diverse perspectives.

CRITICAL THINKING (continued)

6. Practice active listening: Practice active listening and ask relevant questions to gain a deeper understanding of any matter. This shows that you value others' perspectives and creates a safe space for them to express themselves. This can lead to stronger relationships, greater understanding, and positive outcomes for everyone.

7. Practice problem-solving: To develop creative thinking skills, practice problem-solving. Analyze problems, generate multiple solutions, and evaluate each option's pros and cons. By thinking creatively, you can produce innovative solutions. This helps you become a better problem-solver and decision-maker, leading to personal and professional success.

8. Broaden your horizons: Reading extensively from diverse sources exposes yourself to different ideas, perspectives, and viewpoints. Reading widely also helps you become more open-minded and better able to see things from multiple perspectives, which can be valuable in personal and professional contexts.

9. Question your assumptions. Our beliefs and values can have a significant impact on our decision-making processes throughout our lives. Therefore, it is important to be aware that these beliefs and values may not always be accurate or unbiased. Ideally, you should challenge and refine our beliefs as we gain new experiences and knowledge. By doing so, you

can make more informed and effective decisions that lead to positive outcomes for ourselves and those around us.

10. Develop Your own ground truth model. In today's world, having strong critical thinking skills is essential to make sense of the abundance of often inaccurate information. Ground truth refers to the information obtained on site compared to what was predicted to occur. Think of your critical thinking IQ as your personal ground truth model that helps you to discern and validate the accuracy of the information being presented. By developing a personal ground truth model, you can make informed decisions and accurately evaluate information.

By developing critical thinking skills, individuals can evaluate evidence and analyze information objectively to uncover the ground truth, leading to better decision-making. It is undeniable that critical thinking skills are more important today than ever before. In a society where disinformation and fake news are rampant, the ability to identify reliable sources of information is crucial.

By honing critical thinking skills, individuals can recognize biases and assumptions and use logic to connect ideas and draw reasoned conclusions. This allows you to become informed leaders instead of mere lemmings.

Developing your critical thinking skills is essential for both personal and professional success, as it will help you become a better leader, it

will help you to lead yourself more effectively, and enables you to navigate the complex landscape of information and make informed decisions. I believe if more of us did that, we would become a much more informed society, leading us to effectively deal with the issues we face and the decisions we make, whether they're societal, organizational, or personal.

Chief B's Key Leadership Takeaways



Having the honor of speaking to great leaders in their profession in The Leadership Crucible Podcast, we make notes on the key leadership takeaways that we discussed. We share these personal and leadership takeaways—these insights—with you in hopes it will help you reflect on them personally or from a professional perspective. These may also provide potential talking points that you can discuss with your team or colleagues, which often create great dialogue insights.

- Don't let an 8 second perspective stand in the way of your success.
- Individuals with an 8-second perspective often form opinions based solely on headlines, which can result in significant misconception of what is actually occurring.
- People often form opinions based solely on the influencers they follow.
- The lemming effect can prompt individuals to conform to group norms, even if such actions are irrational or detrimental.
- The collective failure to demand accountability and transparency perpetuates the issues we seek to have resolved. That starts with having accurate information.
- Critical thinking helps you navigate an increasingly complex world and become a constructive problem solver and decision-maker.
- Your critical thinking IQ is your personal ground truth model, develop it!

Leaders Are Readers

I believe that to be a good leader, one must be on a continuous quest to gain more knowledge. The leadership benefits of reading are wide-ranging. Evidence suggests that reading can improve intelligence and lead to innovation and insight. To that end, we provide a few suggested titles below for you to consider:

Thinking, Fast and Slow

Daniel Kahneman

Critical Thinking & Logic Mastery

Thinknetic

Seeing What Others Don't: The Remarkable Ways We Gain Insights

Gary Klein

The Six Disciplines of Strategic Thinking, Leading Your Organization into the Future

Michael D. Watkins