

# Problem Solving

## OLC Course Recommendations

### Competency Definition

Identifies and analyzes problems; weighs relevance and accuracy of information; generates and evaluates alternative solutions; makes recommendations.

### OLC Component Titles

#### Advancing Your Administrative Career

##### **COURSE TSA-ADM-ADVADMCAREER-0001**

Description: Getting a position as an administrative support professional is a great accomplishment. However, have you considered what your next move should be? This course will show you how to advance on the job by providing you with important information about having a professional image and a successful attitude. You will learn valuable leadership skills and methods for motivating others. You will gain essential problem solving skills and learn strategic guidelines for managing your career. Putting in your eight hours is one thing, but advancing your administrative career is another. You can make the most of your administrative career by searching for new challenges and opportunities to grow. This course will show you how. **Duration=3.0**

#### Analyzing Workplace War Zones

##### **COURSE TSA-TEAM-ANALYZWARZONE-0001**

Description: A team would be worthless if everyone agreed on every issue. The purpose of teams is to facilitate discussions and foster creativity. Sometimes the same discussions and creative thoughts that help the team can also bring about conflict. Nobody is perfect and not everyone is going to get along. It's important that teams identify and target any problems before they escalate. At the end of this course you'll have the skills needed to recognize why teams stop working, identify why battles begin, learn how to target team problems, and develop the skills to discuss problems as a team. **Duration=2.5**

#### Critical Thinking Skills for Managing

##### **COURSE TSA-PD-CRITCTHNKMANAG-0001**

Description: Rational decision making is linear and is what you do when you put your facts in order. Intuition is looking at those facts and trying to see a pattern-and the patterns aren't always evident because the patterns aren't always linear. The two together are an extremely powerful combination." Joel Kurtzman, President, Kurtzman Associates and former editor, Harvard Business Review. The Critical Thinking Skills for Managing course charts the concepts and skills that can transform competent leaders into discerning situation analysts, focused problem solvers, and powerful decision makers. The course offers analysis methodology that will sharpen managerial ability through all the stages of the critical thinking process; situation assessment, problem solving, and decision making. Leaders will learn how to hone their issue identification skills, refine their questioning techniques, and maximize their decision-making outcomes. Critical thinking processes are broken down into discreet stages or steps that can be applied and tracked easily. Mastering the processes in this course can result in better action planning and implementation throughout the organization. **Duration=3.5**

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### Developing Fundamental Critical Thinking Skills

#### **COURSE TSA-PD-DEVFNDCRITCTHINK-0001**

Description: You may not need an MBA to succeed in the corporate arena, but regardless of position or industry, you do need to be able to analyze, reason, and communicate effectively. These and other critical thinking skills are increasingly consequential as organizational planning and decision making become more distributed and reliant on written and verbal communication factors. Developing Fundamental Critical Thinking Skills coaches you through the acquisition of an array of critical skills that can help you improve your information processing and delivery agility. You also will learn how to maximize your inferential and evaluative competence to achieve better planning and decision-making efficiencies. Improving your critical thinking skills will increase your performance value to any organization. **Duration=3.0**

### Dynamic Decision Making

#### **COURSE TSA-PD-DYNAMICDECISION-0001**

Description: Your decisions determine your life. Nowhere is this simple statement so unabashedly evident as in today's business world. Made consciously or unconsciously, your decisions represent the fundamental tool you use in facing the opportunities, challenges, and uncertainties of life. It's not a case, however, of -make a decision, any decision.- The increased complexity and competition of the 21st century marketplace calls for dynamic decision making--the kind of decision making that significantly boosts productivity. The objective of this course is to turn you and others in your organization into dynamic decision makers. You'll gain the skills necessary to avoid the psychological pitfalls that adversely affect decision making. You'll hone your decision-making ability in risky and uncertain circumstances. You'll walk away from this course with concrete and powerful decision-making tools, both rational and statistical. When you use the decision-modeling techniques presented here, you'll enjoy enhanced accuracy and, hence, business confidence. Then, with these strategies in hand, you'll explore ways to better make decisions even when you're working with others who aren't completely "on your side." It's true that decisions determine your life. It's time now to better determine your decisions.

**Duration=2.5**

### Foundations of Effective Thinking

#### **COURSE TSA-PD-FNDEFFECTIVTHINK-0001**

Description: Albert Einstein once remarked that -the significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them. - It necessarily follows that you must raise your own level of thinking in order to solve pressing business problems and make effective decisions. In this course, you'll explore how to think about the most critical business skill of all--thinking itself. You'll first learn about the counterproductive thinking patterns and tendencies most people naturally fall prey to. You'll then discover how these largely intuitive tendencies manifest themselves in problem-solving mind-sets and decision-making styles. Finally, you'll take the necessary steps to neutralize ineffective thinking habits and instead practice dynamic and results-oriented thinking strategies. The result? You'll become a better thinker, someone who can apply these new-found techniques to achieve organizational goals within the current climate of great institutional change. **Duration=3.5**

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### Framing the Problem

#### COURSE TSA-PD-FRAMEPROBLEM-0001

Description: When you frame a picture, you intend for the viewer to examine everything within that border. Problem framing is similar in that you must not only consider what objectively makes up the problem itself but also what subjective tendencies influence your view of the situation. This course is designed to help you effectively frame problems so that you're sure your line of sight is aimed straight toward the solution. You'll discover how to recognize and gather information about a problem so that all contingencies are accounted for and all subtleties considered. You'll learn how to uncover the various assumptions, both conscious and unconscious, that are typically made about problems. After identifying these assumptions, you'll be able to tell the productive ones from the nonproductive. You'll also explore specific strategies for getting to the heart of any problem and learn dynamic techniques for framing that problem so that success is greatly enhanced. In the end, your ability to frame problems will be museum-quality. **Duration=3.0**

### Generating Alternatives in Problem Solving

#### COURSE TSA-PD-GENALTPROBLEMSLV-0001

Description: When faced with any problem, it's tempting, especially in today's frenzied business atmosphere, to either take the easiest route or rely on the old tried-and-true methods. But how many times have you taken a certain action and realized afterward that you had more options than you realized? Now more than ever, today's business world is complex and multifaceted. As a positive result of that complexity, however, you can enjoy the benefits of increased opportunities in problem solving. This course is designed to equip you with numerous and productive alternative generation strategies that will enable you to draw from a pool of expanded options. By so doing, you'll better recognize and act on the best possible business choice. You'll explore ways to begin generating alternatives and get into the flow of enlarging your store of possible solutions. Using both rational and creative approaches to problem solving, you'll be sure that no good idea is left unnoticed. And even when you get stuck, when that rut becomes tiresomely deep, you'll be able to right your course by using the dynamic strategies provided here. Options and alternatives are valuable commodities to possess. Get ready to take them to the bank.

**Duration=2.5**

### Implementing and Evaluating a Decision

#### COURSE TSA-PD-IMPEVALDECISION-0001

Description: You've made your decision after careful and considered thought. The deal is done, right? Not really. Your decision, no matter how considered and creative, won't walk out on its own two legs and implement itself. It's time to nurture your decided course of action and then evaluate its effectiveness. This course will help you do just that. And you'll do it in a way that will better ensure the success of your present decision and those decisions yet to come. After all, no decision is an island: You need to build on past achievements as well as learn from previous mistakes. In this course, you'll first explore how to act on your decision in a way that optimizes its chances for acceptance and success. Once your plan is underway, you'll also know how to manage that decision so that your effective results don't wither on the vine. Lastly, you'll find out how to evaluate the soundness of your decision so that related business methods can be refined and enhanced in the future. By establishing this feedback loop for success, you'll better reach your goals, reduce wasted time and money, and avoid much worry and regret.

**Duration=3.0**

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### Special Design Tools

#### COURSE TSA-PD-SPECDESIGNTOOL-0001

Description: Creative solutions to problems are easily recognizable, after they have been created. But how does one arrive at the solution in the first place? This course examines how TRIZ and axiomatic design have been developed to aid design decision making and related problem solving. It looks at the work of Genrich Altshuller, an engineer born in the former Soviet Union in 1926, who worked in the Soviet Navy as a patent expert in the 1940s. Altshuller's curiosity about problem solving led him to discover that over 90% of the problems engineers faced had been solved somewhere before. If engineers could follow a path to an ideal solution, starting with the lowest level - their personal knowledge and experience - when working their way to higher levels, most of the solutions could be derived from knowledge already present in the company or industry, or in another industry. Altshuller distilled the problems, contradictions, and solutions in these patents into a theory of inventive problem solving which he named the theory of inventive problem solving (TRIZ). Axiomatic design is a general methodology that helps designers to structure and understand design problems, thereby facilitating the synthesis and analysis of suitable design requirements, solutions, and processes. This approach also provides a consistent framework from which the metrics of design alternatives can be quantified. **Duration=3.0**

### Strategies for Facilitating Critical Thinking

#### COURSE TSA-PD-STRATCRITICTHNK-0001

Description: Workplaces are not typically associated with reflection or critical self-reflection, ideas that are often considered 'soft' to the bottom-line, results-oriented world of business.... Yet, paradoxically, reflection is becoming more part of the lifeblood of organizations in today's economic environment." Victoria Marsick's words illustrate why businesses can no longer thrive on the unexamined repetition of established formulas. Today, people at all levels of the organization are asked to think in new ways about themselves, their work, and their organizations. In this course, managers can learn a variety of strategies to encourage the development of critical thinking skills within their organizations, for both individuals and teams, and to ensure that critical thinking is deployed effectively. **Duration=4.5**

### Systems-thinking Models and Thinking Skills

#### COURSE TSA-STGY-SYSTMTHNKMOD-0001

Description. How is "systems" thinking different from everyday thinking? Learning to apply systems thinking involves more than just knowing what it is. There are many ways to look at a problem, and how you approach it can drastically change the outcome. This course looks at the four-step systems-thinking method for addressing issues. It covers four different styles of thinking: dynamic thinking, big-picture thinking, operational thinking, and quantitative thinking. Each style will bring you closer to the core of your problems or concerns and enable you to make changes that will benefit your organization in the long run. No more quick fixes that only cause more problems and don't really treat the problem at hand. No more shrugging your shoulders when asked why a problem has come up once again. No more explaining away certain aspects of a situation only to have them come back to haunt you at a later date. Learning the "thinking" of systems thinking will quickly put you in the driver's seat of problem solving within your organization. **Duration=2.5**

### What Is Systems Thinking?

#### COURSE TSA-STGY-SYSTEMTHINK-0001

Description: What exactly is a system? Why is it important to understand systems? How can you use systems thinking to manage your organizations more effectively? Systems thinking enables you to delve into the inner workings of your organization to get to the core of what drives your company forward--or backward. Not only will you solve problems, but you will also be able to change the thinking that leads to the problems in the first place. Systems thinking is a way of seeing more and farther, enabling you to manage yourself and your people with the best information possible. **Duration=2.5**