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EMPOWERING TIMES



THINKING ALOUD

Evolving our Thinking:
From the land of the gullible
to the knowledgeable
Jay

PODIUM

Dr. Matthys Fourie
Founder
- Thinking Dimensions
Global & KEPNERandFOURIE



WE RECOMMEND

That will never work
Marc Randolph

Dear Reader,

It was a global wake-up call for companies to rise beyond their limits after the World Health Organisation declared Covid-19 a pandemic. Currently, corporates are knee-deep in making challenging decisions as they attempt to absorb losses, steady cashflows and balance the competing needs of various stakeholders. There are no firm answers, just best judgements at this point. In the business world too, the cost of poor decisions is unthinkable. But the good news is that these too can be rectified. Various techniques and tools of problem solving are available to help in better decision making.

ET this month throws some light on '**Problem Solving & Decision Making: The K&F way**'. The KEPNERandFOURIE® (K&F) framework is the interplay between Divergent and Convergent Thinking. Companies today are investing in creating a pool of expert problem solvers who can think critically and resolve issues. However, mastering this technique and making it intuitive to oneself requires practice, mindfulness and dedication.

In the **Thinking Aloud** segment, **Jay** shares some nuggets of knowledge on how we can journey from that of lazy thinking to growing to a rational and knowledgeable thinker by using the right tools of critical thinking. We appreciate the expert thoughts of Founder of KEPNERandFOURIE Global Consulting, **Dr. Matthys Fourie** on the **Podium**, as he shares the core principles of the K&F framework and how this tool is applicable across industries. In the **We Recommend** section, we review **That will never work** by first CEO, Mark Randolph who takes the leap of faith in building the Netflix empire.

In **Figures of Speech**, **Vikram's** toon inspires us to learn the art of problem solving!

In light of the turbulent business climate, we wish our readers good health & stay safe!



As always, we value your opinion, so do let us know how you liked this issue. To read our previous issues, do visit the Resources section on the website or simply [Click Here](#). You can also follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) & [LinkedIn](#) - where you can join our community to continue the dialogue with us!

THINKING ALOUD

Evolving our Thinking: From the land of the gullible to the knowledgeable Jay

Is the world full of lazy thinkers?

Consider this: the first 2 decades of this century have seen such turbulence in the socio-politico-economic spheres that making sense of ordinary events has become a serious challenge to many people. The global wake-up call on terrorism happened after 9-11 (though terrorism had infested various parts of the world well before that), and the economic collapse of 2008 shook the world so hard that reverberations are still being felt and arguably the anti-globalists came out of the woodworks (slowly at first, and then in droves post-2015), as a consequence, challenging a world order that had got established in the post-cold war era. The frenetic rise and impact of technology in every aspect of our life is considered to be the rocket fuel for the rate of change in the world. And, to top it all, we are now living amidst perhaps the biggest scare of them all - an unknown enemy, a powerful virus, Covid-19, that is scaling every physical barrier that man can create. As I write, the virus has put the fear of God in everyone - even the ISIS has been compelled to issue an advisory to its faithful!

All this has provided the most fertile ground ever to rumours. Fake news abounds on almost every subject and the most illogical arguments are placed forward to spread confusion, some deliberate but mostly out of ignorance and naivete.

Which brings me back to my question: is the world full of lazy thinkers? Why do we spread wrong information without stopping to evaluate our position when we encounter any new situation? Why is logic and rational thought so uncommon? How does one evolve one's thinking process?

The answer perhaps lies in the work of psychologists who have studied the manner that man resolves problems and makes decisions. One of the most well-known researchers of recent currency is Daniel Kahneman, whose classic work, 'Thinking Fast, Thinking Slow', has attracted much attention. Amongst the various ideas offered in the book, Kahneman's primary postulate is that human beings have 2 types of thinking, what he termed as System 1 and System 2. The first is an instinctive reaction from a person to any situation that he encounters, almost a visceral reaction, harking back to the primitive fight or flight response that kept ancient man alive in tough situations. However, this process of reacting from our gut is not an outmoded thinking process from old times but a deeply ingrained, perhaps crude, switch that is snapped on in our body when we are asked to address a situation. Often considered an 'unthinking' method, this is a heuristic approach to solving a problem that we face, by digging into our body and psyche and expecting answers to be created from past experiences (hence, 'thinking fast').

System 2, on the other hand, is a rational, well-thought out perspective, harnessing our reservoir of knowledge, gathered from applying our faculties intensely, keeping aside the various biases that we are all susceptible to. This is where we apply critical thinking skills, by discarding the coloured lenses that prejudice our mind – both in terms of favourites or bugbears - and examine arguments on their individual merits, and without becoming victim to personal slants, take a logical call. Laborious though it may appear at first glance, it is not so for someone who values exactitude in proceedings. When facts score over shotgun opinion, you can be sure that reason is the tool that is in use, not a recycled idea full of guess work that is loosely thrown around. Such a process of 'thinking slow' (in Kahneman's figurative words) requires the application of deep, unblemished thought - a world where logic reigns supreme and ideas are verified and validated with tests and where rigor is

valued over hasty surmises.

Prima facie this may appear to be a slower process. However, that again is the conclusion of a lazy mind. Getting recognition as a true professional requires the discipline of an earnest student. Practising with sincerity is but one aspect; what is also crucial is the use of right tools and techniques of problem solving and decision making. Becoming an expert is a journey of growth, be it the ability to recognise that a check-list approach is a fundamental tool to begin with, and then graduating to deep investigative levels where process-oriented thinking tools take you to root-cause analysis. Similarly, in the fuzzy world that we live in, creative solutions have to be manufactured as linear answers are usually inadequate.

Should one choose to become a sensei, then further application is required, going beyond slavish adherence to technique. This is the stage where one proceeds further in the journey of learning and is able to marry intuition to technique. Such sharpening of skills requires one to work on many different situations until one is able to bring laser focus and concentrated purity of action to the task at hand. Intuition, technique and speed are now coupled together in a world where one solves issues with humility by harnessing the collaborative strength of a group of stakeholders, thereby delivering not just buy-in but the commitment of all concerned, a stay-in, as it were, to execute decisions that have been jointly created.

The offer to you is not to ignore this invitation: a journey of growth from the false comfort of lazy thought to the full application of one's mind using the right tools of critical thinking. Accept this and evolve to the next level.

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Podium

Dr. Matthys Fourie

Founder – Thinking Dimensions Global & KEPNERandFOURIE



Dr. Matthys J Fourie co- founded Thinking Dimensions with Chuck Kepner in 1997. Together they developed the KEPNERandFOURIE™ thinking methodology. His primary focus is on product design and managing the international network across 20 countries. This is supported by solution design, facilitation and capability development in the areas of Root Cause Analysis, Process Improvement, ITIL Continual Service Improvement, Project Management, Lean-Sigma and general problem-solving practices.

He holds a B.Mil (B.Sc) from The University of Stellenbosch in Cape Town, a M.Comm (Honors) from the University of South Africa and his Ph.D from UCL London, UK. He is a Master Professional Problem Solver (IPPS) specifically in the fields of Root Cause Analysis and Project Optimization.

ET: Chuck Kepner, your former colleague, is famously quoted as having said, 'But you cannot just tell people, 'Look, you've got to solve your own problems!' You must provide them with both the skills and the confidence to do that.' What are the fundamental skills necessary to succeed as a business professional?

MF: Chuck always said that when a manager realises, they do not possess all the information to make a decision on their own, they would start becoming better managers and ultimately leaders. The following skills are critical for a business professional:

- a. **First understand a problem before taking any action** - trillions of Dollars have been wasted by professionals due to "trial and error" implementations. We always suggest standing back for a few minutes and think about the problem first before acting. Those few minutes should be spent doing a quick factual snapshot of the problem situation.
- b. **Collaborate with the correct resources for maximum implementation success** - We have a mantra and that is "ask the right question from the right person to get the right answer". Look at your snapshot and decide what information you are still missing. Decide who should have that information and frame your question and ask that person your specific question and expect a specific answer.
- c. **Ask for inputs from the appropriate stakeholders and buy yourself success** - Do you want commitment for a decision? If so, involve the appropriate stakeholders from the beginning and together arrive at the best implementation option. It is free and it is easy to do that. It is only going to cost you a bit of time.

ET: What are the core principles of the KEPNERandFOURIE® (K&F) framework of problem solving & decision making?

MF: The Core principles are the following:

- a. Using templates with structured questions to encourage transparency and collaboration
- b. Specificity - the more specific your data is, the better your chances for solving the problem
- c. Quality of data - Use strategies that would separate relevant data from irrelevant data, because irrelevant data would confuse the problem solver
- d. Test assumptions – anybody is allowed to suggest theories, and some would provide them anyway without having been asked to contribute. Have a method that would allow you to test the thinking of others in a constructive way.

ET: From your vast experience, please share why most managers have difficulty in prioritising issues & how can you help them overcome this handicap?

MF: Most managers have difficulty in prioritising issues, because they do not always understand the cause and effect relationships represented in a problem situation. Most problem situations are hybrid compilations of a series of small problems and somewhere in there is the 20% that is causing the remaining 80% of the problem. That 20% issue is normally the root cause of all the other issues represented in the problem situation.

ET: Are the K&F tools applicable across industries (manufacturing, IT, Service, etc.) or is it meant only for certain sectors?

MF: The K&F processes are specific thinking approaches regardless of industry or contents of the problem situation. Our consultants have proven experience in all industries from IT to production environments and even nuclear situations.

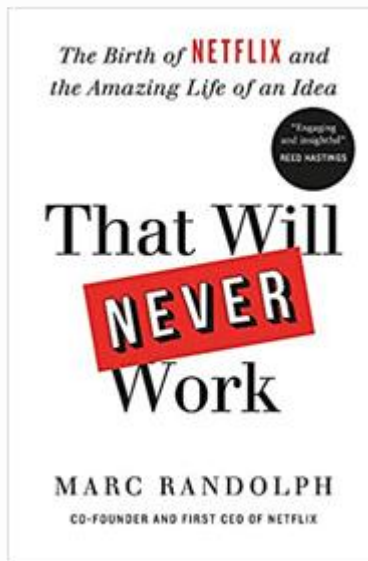
ET: As a professional problem solver, what is your advice to our readers on enhancing their problem solving & decision-making skills? And, can you tell us about your company, Thinking Dimensions Global?

MF: Thinking Dimensions is a global company of worldwide partners and associates who has the exclusive rights to sell and deliver all KEPNERandFOURIE products and services. All the methodologies have been developed and tested by the two founding members in their consulting roles over the last 50 years. My advice is that you might think you know how to solve problems and make decisions and I am sure you got there in the "unconscious competent" route and have done well so far. However, imagine having been trained in the "conscious competent" way and knowing exactly what to do personally and within business team set-up. You will become a super effective problem solver.

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We Recommend

That will never work Marc Randolph



With the recent outbreak of the Covid-19 virus, millions of people around the world are already spending weeks, and probably months, in self isolation. There has been a lot of conjecture that Netflix could be a potential beneficiary of people at home, which begs the tongue-in-cheek question: Will Netflix break the internet?

Marc Randolph in his book, *That will never work*, is an honest account of his journey of the setting up of entertainment services provider, Netflix. In a humorous manner, Marc affirms that things never go as planned. The author takes readers on his journey of starting a company right from idea generation to D-day to challenges surrounding pitching to investors, funding, talent hunting, setting up offices and building on inventory.

While starting this business, the author has frequently heard the words, "this will never work". Taking this as a challenge, the author has interpreted it as doing something that had not been done before, indicating that it could really bring a change in the market. As far as "that will never work" goes, Randolph quotes "nobody knows anything", which he claims is an encouragement. "If nobody knows anything, then you have to trust yourself. You have to test yourself, and you have to be willing to fail."

As CEO of Netflix from 1997, Randolph gives an account of the potential acquisition of the company by Amazon, the possible buyout by Blockbuster (at the time, a US\$ 6 billion company and provider of home movie and video

game rental services) and the re-structuring of the business model. His own business partner, Reed Hastings doubted their own abilities; eventually in 1999, Hastings took over as CEO and Randolph became the President. Marc's self-knowledge made it easier to exit the company in 2003, a year after Netflix went public.

Marc Randolph is a veteran Silicon Valley entrepreneur, advisor and investor. Marc has founded or co-founded more than half a dozen other successful start-ups, mentored rising entrepreneurs (including the co-founders of Looker Data, which was sold to Google for US\$ 2.6 billion). He is a frequent speaker at industry events, works extensively with young entrepreneur programmes, sits on the board of the environmental advocacy group 1% for the Planet and chairs the National Outdoor Leadership School's Board of Trustees.

As we know it, Netflix is currently innovating its service offerings - it is offering UK users the chance to watch films and shows remotely with their friends and chat with each other at the same time! According to Marc, Blockbuster failed to invest in the future. That is where Netflix captured a huge market share and continues to re-invent and innovate even in these trying times.

An entire chapter is dedicated for "Randolph's Rules for Success" which has guided the author through his school and adult life. There is a lot of experience-based wisdom that runs in a conversational tone in the book. The read is filled with counter-intuitive concepts and drives home the message to follow your dreams, despite the doubts.

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THROUGH THE LENS



Our in-house bird photographer, **Rupesh Balsara**, spots the Black-crested Bulbul which is found right from East India to Vietnam and south Malaysia. This species is characterized by its black crest, red or black throat, whitish eye and feeds on fruit and insects.

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