

Discussion questions week 1



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Critical Thinking at Work Critical thinking is the path we take to solve a problem by utilizing reason and the ability to think. The workplace is often inundated with information on processes, machinery, and the methods that are used to accomplish a task. Often times our decisions are made based upon a salesmans pitch, an advertisement, or assumed information. Only by utilizing critical thinking can we break out of the box of preconceived notions and get a more accurate description of the situation. My position in the office at a meatpacking plant gives me ample opportunity to use critical thinking. It aids me in analyzing purchases, printed claims, and our existing processes. As part of my responsibilities I am tasked with ordering office supplies for our modest office. Salesmen routinely contact me in regards to toner, paper, and computer supplies. They usually make claims about how many sheets can be printed with a single toner cartridge or a color ink jet cartridge. Only by reading the material completely can the specifications be assessed. I need to look at how the tests were accomplished and how it may compare to other similar products. There is a further concern about what I would need to do if the product does not live up to its expectations. The warranty and the methods of making a warranty claim needs to be critically analyzed to get a picture of its true value. These are skills I use everyday in my position. Though I often use critical thinking at work, there have been times when it was an overlooked asset. The plant had for years used a processing method that transported carcasses throughout the facility. Everyone assumed that the process was maintaining a temperature that was in accordance with the US Department of Agriculture guidelines. The common thought was that we have always done it this way and there has never been any problems. However, when one enterprising health specialist in the company did a

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detailed analysis, she found that the meat had an opportunity to deviate from the USDAs mandatory temperature window. A closer inspection by the engineers validated her concerns. Complacency had relegated critical thinking to the background and could have eventually cost the company in lost production.

The lesson I learned from the above experience was valuable to me because it caused me to analyze my own office processes. My workflow process was taught to me by my mentors when I started there. Yet, I had never really applied critical thinking to it. I found that by using critical thinking I was able to change my workflow schedule and become more efficient. Analyzing required that I ask questions and look at the problem from several different angles.

In conclusion, critical thinking is the ability to reason and the awareness that we need to. Advertising claims that are circulated in the workplace need to be critically analyzed for accuracy and context. The simple acceptance of a method because that is the way it has always been done denies our disposition to think. Applying reason to our existing processes can uncover flaws and recommend improvements. Critical thinking is an important tool in the workplace toolbox.