



# TriMetrix®HD Proactive Thinking

## Proactive Thinking:

The ability to evaluate future implications of current decisions and actions; the ability to mentally create the scenarios and outcomes of situations that could develop from decisions or plans of action.

### Why is this skill important?

People who are good at Proactive Thinking tend to evaluate current situations, needs, and actions based on how they will change in the future. In contrast, people who have poorly developed skills in Proactive Thinking will tend to react to events as they present themselves without regard for future potential. Their focus is on the now.

Of course, sometimes you NEED to focus on the now. Every day brings new challenges and unforeseen obligations—you can't anticipate EVERYTHING! But developing your Proactive Thinking skills will help you become a better employee, a better manager, and most likely, much less stressed!

Proactive Thinking is exactly what it says—being PRO-active about your thinking processes. Anticipating things before they happen. Taking action to prevent problems. Encouraging positive events to occur by taking thoughtful action. Looking at your job from a 30,000-foot perspective to see what patterns emerge when you step back.

- What if you knew ahead of time that your department was going to be reorganized? What would you do differently? How would you try to affect the outcome?
- What if you knew ahead that your project team would hit a major glitch in completing a huge project? How would you shift resources to help manage the problem? Who would you call on to help? How could you AVOID the problem entirely?
- What if you could accomplish 10% more in the course of a year? What would you focus your efforts on? How could you add value? When would you make the time to work on your pet projects?

Being a proactive thinker enables you to identify a variety of POTENTIAL future activities—you may not be right every time about what you think will happen, but having been through the exercise of working out potential situations, you will be much better prepared for whatever DOES occur. There was research recently that showed that people who were a little bit paranoid—people who anticipated what they would do if they were robbed, if their house caught on fire, or caught in some other catastrophic event—were much more likely to SURVIVE the event because they had mentally prepared themselves for it.

Now, I'm not saying to become a paranoid person. But a little bit of time spent thinking about how your present situations will evolve in the future, how your current actions will affect future actions, will benefit you almost exponentially in the work-place. You will be seen as a problem solver and will stay ahead of the game.

### **What are skills associated with Proactive Thinking?**

Someone who has mastered skills associated with Proactive Thinking:

- Is mentally flexible—can be imaginative and creative.
- Is flexible with time and ideas—can shift priorities or responses rapidly as required.
- Makes plans for future events that may or may not occur.
- Can take a "big picture" perspective, looking at disparate events as interrelated.
- Is a good planner, taking time and spending energy making thoughtful project plans.
- Is able to make difficult or unpopular choices now based on knowledge of positive future effects or results.

### **How do you develop your own Proactive Thinking skills?**

- Keep a SINGLE calendar for all personal and professional commitments—keep it up to date and check regularly for upcoming deadlines.
- Make detailed project schedules for every project.
- Force yourself to think long-term—envision how the decision you are making today will affect other activities and decisions down the road.
- Brainstorm!
- Ask yourself a series of what-if questions when you are making plans or decisions: What does this mean in one week? One month? Three months? A year?
- Assume a long horizon even if you can only SEE a short one.
- Anticipate potential organizational changes or shifts in corporate priorities.
- Plan scenarios for high-potential future situations.
- Evaluate possible solutions to problems against one another—keep short and long-term effects in mind.
- Take the 30,000-foot view—what do you see if you step back and look at your projects from a big picture perspective?
- Compare milestones reached to your plans to see if events are playing out as you expected them to.
- Develop a crisis plan—try to think of the worst possible situations and brainstorm solutions or management plans.

- Analyze unexpected situations with a view to anticipating them better in the future.
- Follow up on leads or warnings you receive from others.
- Don't be complacent—keep yourself thinking about potential upcoming situations, both positive and negative.
- Establish blocks of time each day to devote to planning.
- Be positive—seek out opportunities!

## Proactive Thinking

### **Activities**

#### **Activity 1: Calendar Checks**

Gather your planner, personal digital assistant (PDA), your corporate calendar, your family schedules, and any other schedules you may have kept. Consolidate events from all of the schedules/calendars into ONE planner—whichever one you think you will most likely use. When you have completed that task, check the due dates. Check for overlapping events. Try to plan ahead for difficult times with a lot of activities.

#### **Activity 2: Brainstorming**

A big part of being proactive is taking time to anticipate potential changes or future possibilities. Take some time to think about the following questions. You don't have to be RIGHT about your ideas, but the important thing here is to be considering future possibilities.

1. What are some potential organizational changes that might happen? Is someone disgruntled—might she leave? Is someone clearly being groomed for management? Is there a department that might merge with another?
2. Make a list of your three most important projects right now. What are three potential problems that could occur on each project? What could you do to avoid them or prepare for them?
3. Where do you think your company is headed in the next year to two years? Talk to managers and peers—compare notes. How do you think company policies or directives will change? How might those affect you?

### Activity 3: Hindsight is 20/20

Think about a time in the past that you failed to anticipate a major event—a problem with a project, a delay reaching a goal, a personality conflict, etc. What could you have done to envision that event? What could you have done to avoid the problem? How can you incorporate what you learned from that experience into your daily life?

### Activity 4: Recommendations

If your best friend came to you and asked your advice on improving his/her abilities in Proactive Thinking, what four things would you tell him/her to do?

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

4 \_\_\_\_\_

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