

Are You a Strategic Thinker?

Strategic thinking goes beyond looking at what is—it involves imagining the future - what could be. It's a fresh point of view on the business, a customer, a market, a unique vision of the future, or a capacity to imagine new answers to old problems.

Strategic thinking is everyone's responsibility, not just that of a CEO or management team. **BUT not everyone can think strategically!!**

To be an effective strategic account manager it stands to reason that you will be able to think strategically – it is a “must have” for the job! Below is a list of some of the major characteristics of strategic thinkers vs conventional thinkers.

Strategic thinkers	Conventional thinkers
Long-term focus: They look to the future and are willing to invest (time & \$) to gain a better outcome tomorrow.	Short-term focus: They often do not consider the potential impact of an action on long-term goals
Curious: They are interested in what is going on throughout their department, organisation, industry, and the larger business environment.	Isolated: They typically work without input from others or without understanding others' goals and objectives.
Proactive: They anticipate change and make things happen	Reactive: They rarely initiate ideas and wait to be told what to do or what actions to take.
Willing to Take Risks: They aren't limited to past or current thinking and are willing to try new ideas.	Cautious: They fear change or challenging the status quo.
Able to prioritise: They place a high importance on activities with the potential for maximum impact and return.	Unable to prioritise: They see being busy as being effective. They often treat all tasks equally without regard to future consequences.
Flexible They are able to adjust and modify their approaches.	Inflexible: They may be unwilling to alter their plans even when adjustments could yield a better return.
Life-Long Learner: They proactively seek knowledge and skills and are willing to coach others.	Satisfied: They are not interested in learning new things or methods, and are content with their current capabilities.



How did you rate yourself? How can you improve your strategic thinking skills?

1. **Self-development.** Improve your skills through training and/or coaching.
2. **Get other opinions and viewpoints.** Seek out information that contradicts your point of view. You'll end up with a more balanced and complete view of any situation. Especially older and wiser mentors - just speaking to agreeable people will limit your thinking.
3. **Include people with diverse areas of expertise on your team.** Especially older and wiser mentors. Their different thinking styles and experience will complement your own—and improve the quality of your strategic thinking.
4. **Change of environment.** Whether it's going for a short walk or traveling to a new location, when you give yourself a break from routine to reflect, you can gain valuable new perspectives.
5. **Take your time to reflect.** Sleep on it. Instead of making knee jerk, instinctive decisions, spend time reflecting on options and alternatives. What seems like an insurmountable problem now can be solved easily with a fresh mind in the morning.

Successfully incorporating new skills and behaviours into your daily activities and habits takes time, focus, and commitment. But with a little work and support from management, you and your company can reap the benefits - new ways of doing business, insights into emerging opportunities, satisfied customers and competitive advantage.