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CRITICAL THINKING TECHNIQUES FOR INSIDER THREAT ANALYSTS

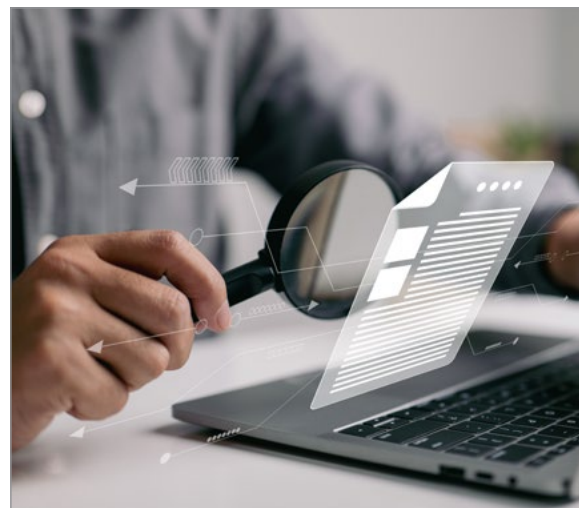
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Critical thinking is the deliberate and systematic means of processing information to arrive at better decisions. Critical thinkers consciously develop habits that may be employed to accurately interpret evidence from the world around them. To do so, you need to develop the following skills:

DEFINITIONS

INTERPRETING	Understanding the significance or meaning of information.
ANALYZING	Breaking down information into components and examining in detail.
CONNECTING	Correlating between related items or pieces of information.
INTEGRATING	Combining information to understand the interconnected relationships.
EVALUATING	Judging the value, credibility, or strength of something.
REASONING	Creating an argument through logical steps.
DEDUCING	Forming a logical opinion about something based on the information or evidence that is available.
INFERRING	Arriving at a conclusion through reasoning based on evidence, experience, or ideas.
GENERATING	Producing new information, ideas, products, or ways of viewing information.



There are at least nine basic intellectual standards outlined by the Foundation for Critical Thinking¹ that, when practiced, provide the means of arriving at reliable conclusions. Here are the standards and questions to ask to facilitate critical thinking:

INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

CLARITY	Could you give an example? Could you illustrate what you mean? Could you elaborate further? Is the meaning being grasped from confusion and ambiguity?
ACCURACY	How could we check on that? How could we verify or test that? How can we make sure all information is correct?
PRECISION	Could you be more specific? Could you give me more details? Could you be more exact?
RELEVANCE	How does that relate to the problem? How does that bear on the question? How does that help us with the main issue?
DEPTH	What factors make this a difficult problem? What are some of the complexities of this question? What are some of the difficulties we need to deal with? Is it detailed enough?
BREADTH	Are all views considered? Is anything missing in the scope of the topic that would help the analyst achieve enough breadth?
LOGIC	Forming a logical opinion about something based on the information or evidence that is available.
SIGNIFICANCE	Arriving at a conclusion through reasoning based on evidence, experience, or ideas.
FAIRNESS	Producing new information, ideas, products, or ways of viewing information.



1 - Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2013). Critical Thinking: Intellectual Standards Essential to Reasoning Well within Every Domain of Human Thought, Part Two. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 37(1), 32–36.

For successful decision making and problem solving, we need to incorporate the basic intellectual standards and critical thinking definitions. Below are a few scenarios to help solidify your understanding and generate discussion:



SCENARIO 1

An Insider Threat report is submitted with limited information regarding a recent domestic violence incident. The alleged perpetrator submits a statement that they were acting in self-defense and had contacted the police for assistance.

What critical thinking techniques will help the analyst ensure all views are being considered when assessing the information available and making mitigation recommendations?



SCENARIO 2

A report is made related to an incident of sexual assault and the analyst already has a personal relationship with the alleged victim.

Does the analyst have a conflict of interest?

What critical thinking skills should be applied in this case?



SCENARIO 3

A hub submits an Insider Threat report related to unauthorized disclosure of protected information. The person of concern has a previous DUI as well as additional minor traffic infractions.

Is that information relevant to the current reported concern?

What techniques should an analyst use to determine a correlation?

Should all information be regarded equally, or are some pieces more salient than others?



SCENARIO 4

An employee storms out of a meeting and makes a statement that their supervisor is incompetent and would be better off dead. A co-worker overhears the statement and must decide how to react.

What critical thinking techniques will be needed to determine whether this requires reporting the statement of concern?



SCENARIO 5

A contract employee fails to report their recent foreign travel to China and additional compensated work separate from their organization. Their undisclosed work involves academic research within the aerospace industry which they shared with their colleagues in an attempt to recruit them.

What techniques will be useful for the security personnel who receive this information of unreported foreign travel and unauthorized outside work?



SCENARIO 6

An active-duty service member assigned to the base armory is reported as a potential insider threat. The report indicates the service member has a history of substance abuse, angry outbursts, and family advocacy counseling.

What techniques will be useful to assess the potential risk for self-harm or violence to others?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Insider Threat Analysts should continually seek to learn and implement critical thinking techniques to bolster their analytical capabilities. Critical thinkers bring tremendous value to their teams by focusing efforts on the bigger picture and adequately framing information in a digestible and actionable format.

Reference the documents below for additional reading on analytical standards and tools:

- Office of the Director of National Intelligence. (2015, January). *Intelligence Community Directive 203; Analytic Standards*.
https://www.odni.gov/files/documents/ICD/ICD-203_TA_Analytic_Standards_21_Dec_2022.pdf
- Central Intelligence Agency. (2009, March). *A Tradecraft Primer: Structured Analytic Techniques for Improving Intelligence Analysis*.
<https://www.cia.gov/resources/csi/static/Tradecraft-Primer-apr09.pdf>

