

Ready. Aim. Think!

Empowering Employees to Make Decisions at JDSU



Success Story: JDSU

Creating Effective Thinkers Across the Enterprise

Only five years ago, technology powerhouse JDS Uniphase Corporation (JDSU), a leading provider of test and measurement solutions and optical products for the telecommunications industry, faced a difficult challenge. In the midst of a turnaround, senior leaders were making virtually every decision, both large and small. But to enable rapid growth, they needed to decentralize decision making and empower staff. Dealing with the typical outcomes of growth — handling more vendors, managing higher volume sales — would require staff capable of stepping in, assessing situations, and making strategic decisions.

Senior management at JDSU recognized the dual needs to empower staff with decision-making authority and implement skills training so staff could operate in a decentralized fashion and make sound decisions. These needs led to a two-pronged training strategy focused on empowerment and decision making that was initially designed for Director-level staff, the first leadership group who would be assuming greater decision-making responsibility.



“Empowering employees by devolving decision making to the lowest appropriate level will enable our business unit to keep up with the pace of growth our fast-changing industry demands. Improving critical thinking skills and their abilities to make business-advancing decisions is key to our ambitious goals for the next three years.”

- Sharon Parker, VP and Senior Business Partner, JDSU

Critical Thinking as a Core Competency

JDSU has a core set of competencies expected of all employees, which include thinking skills such as innovation, problem solving, and collaboration. Within their leadership track, decision quality is emphasized at the managerial level and becomes increasingly important with each successive

leadership level. The Talent Management group within JDSU understands that the ability to think critically, solve problems, and make decisions is imperative for the company's success. The more immediate need to empower employees and strengthen decision-making skills dovetailed with the longer-term strategy of building thinking skills across the pipeline. This synergy is an important ingredient for training success, as noted in the recent survey, **2012 Trends in Executive Development: A Benchmark Report**, which identified alignment with business strategy and support from senior management as key indicators of training program success.

Decision-Making Training

Mike Shur, HR Manager in Talent Development, JDSU, was charged with designing the decision-making program and he decided to use Pearson TalentLens' critical thinking model and materials. As Mike noted, "TalentLens materials offer an easy-to-understand and systematic way to improve critical-thinking skills. They also combine the analytical approach of assessments and structured decision making with a moving and visceral story of how good decision-making skills helped save a little girl's life. Training participants saw immediate improvements in their ability to make better decisions and find new solutions to technical and business problems by applying the systematic and simple approach that TalentLens offers."

Most people are not familiar with the process or terms associated with critical thinking, so the first part of the training introduced participants to an easy-to-use 5-step model of critical thinking and a self-assessment, My Thinking Styles™, aimed at increasing self-awareness. Prior to the first session, participants read the book *Now You're Thinking!*, which uses an inspiring story to teach the 5-step thinking model. The book had a priming effect, enabling participants to actively engage in the more instructional portion of the training.

Once the foundational learning components were introduced, the training shifted to real-world application and practice. An example from within JDSU – responding to the effects of a natural disaster on a manufacturing facility – was used so participants could apply the five steps of critical thinking. Using an uncommon event in the learning scenario helped participants absorb the training and focus on skill building rather than rely on past knowledge. The natural disaster scenario was followed by more specific examples that were selected to give participants an opportunity to practice each step in more detail (Stop and Think, Recognize Assumptions, etc.).

The program was positively received, and has been run 15+ times since its inception. Now, JDSU has a cohort of leaders who are able to apply critical thinking through the 5-step model. An engagement survey in 2011 had shown that employees wanted JDSU to become more effective at presenting and receiving negative information or conflicting views, and they



personally wanted to improve their decision making. The critical-thinking training specifically addressed these needs. In light of the success of the training, several JDSU business units have undertaken programs to address accelerating change, organizational restructuring, and shifting from a crisis footing to growth mode. All of these programs emphasize longer-term strategic thinking and are examples of how critical thinking can be applied to improve business functions as well as organizational well-being.

“By recognizing assumptions about how change happens and the best ways for employees to adapt, our organization was able to create a program to help make their transitions less painful and more long-lasting.”

- Erica Calhoun, Change Management Leader in JDSU's CommTest business unit

Accelerating Learning: Training Teams

JDSU plans to implement critical-thinking training with intact teams to leverage the dual focus on empowerment and decision making. One business unit will initiate a JDSU Decision Making Certificate program that will be offered to all members of that business unit from senior leadership through individual contributors. A common thinking language and model paired with endorsement and participation of senior leaders will accelerate skill acquisition across the business unit.

The My Thinking Styles™ assessment was a favorite part of the training program, and it lends itself to group interpretation. When team members can share their preferred thinking styles and see their colleagues' preferences, it opens a discussion for how they can best work together to solve problems, make decisions, and evaluate opportunities. Team members are able to quickly grasp the benefits of creating a balanced team, in terms of including diverse thinking styles, to achieve the best results.

The Power of Effective Thinking

JDSU's commitment to developing confident and capable thinkers across the organization is a strategic people initiative that supports their growth and gives them a competitive advantage. Rather than relying on the thinking of a few senior people, they will enjoy the benefits of an entire workforce that can rapidly assess situations, evaluate options, and respond in the best interests of the company. JDSU is better positioned to meet the demands of growth – to strategically execute vendor relationships, expand alliances, and serve an expanding customer base. They are also rapidly becoming a thought-based organization, using critical thinking as the foundation for proactively managing change and growth.



The Measures of Success:



Goals

Decentralize critical decisions
Strengthen employees' decision-making skills



Solutions

THINK Now!™ onsite training for teams
My Thinking Styles™ assessment
Now You're Thinking! book



Results

Teams learned how to apply the 5-step critical thinking model
Employees better appreciate diverse thinking styles
Helped shift the company from crisis to growth mode
Company is better at dealing with negative or conflicting information

About Us

TalentLens, a Pearson business, publishes scientific assessments that are used globally to hire and develop the 21st century workforce. Our instruments measure critical thinking, problem solving, and a range of job skills to deliver data-driven insights that inform and clarify an organization's human capital decisions. Learn more at TalentLens.com or call 888.298.6227.

We are part of the Assessment & Information group within Pearson Education. Pearson's other primary businesses include the Financial Times Group and the Penguin Group.

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