



BUSINESS CONSULTING |

The Thinker

Think first, act later. Business consultants need to be able to think by themselves and to think in groups.

By Thibault Dubois

L1

LECTURE 1
Creative thinking

L2

LECTURE 2
Systems thinking

L3

LECTURE 3
Problem-solving thinking

L4

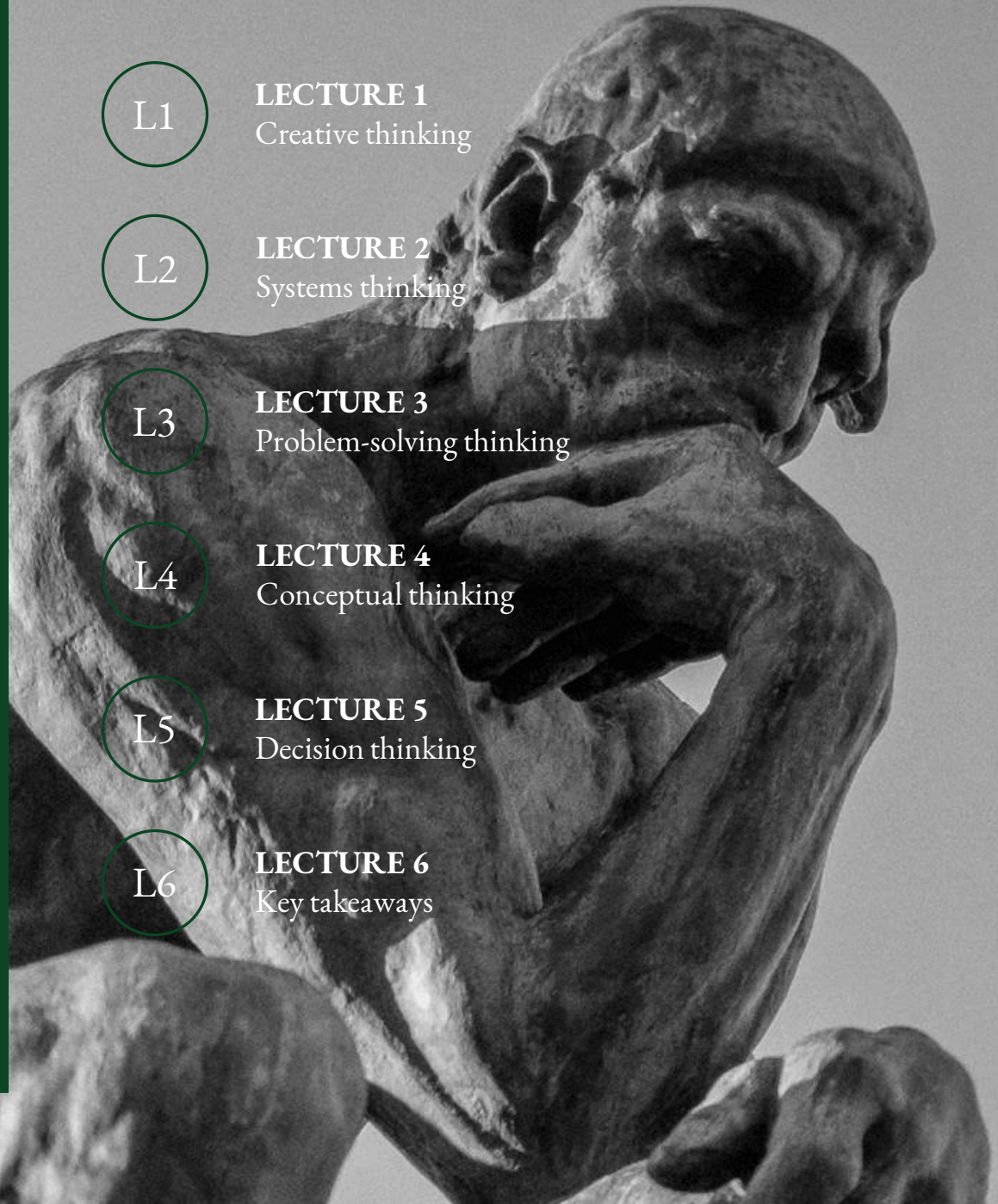
LECTURE 4
Conceptual thinking

L5

LECTURE 5
Decision thinking

L6

LECTURE 6
Key takeaways



●●● L1 | CREATIVE THINKING

Generation of new ideas and concepts.

What you need to **know**

DESCRIPTION



- Process of generating new ideas and concepts
- Finding associations (connecting the dots)

BENEFITS



- Solve existing or new problems
- Challenge the status quo
- Access creative mind
- Allow us to dream!

What you need to **do**

ADVICE



- Create safe environments
- Choose the right location
- Morning creativity
- Timebox creativity to 2 hours max
- The power of breaks
- Sequential creativity and realisme
- Use ice breakers
- Ground rules



●●● L2 | SYSTEMS THINKING

Systems are everywhere and everyone is part of a system.

What you need to **know**

DESCRIPTION



- Study of individual parts are interconnected and achieve a greater purpose.
- Systems characteristics:
 - Purpose
 - Complete
 - Ordered
 - Feedback mechanism

BENEFITS



- Understand system behaviors
- Identify and solve chronic problems:
 - Identify recurring pattern
 - Identify best feedback mechanism
 - Breakdown into components
 - Interconnected feedback loop to find root cause

What you need to **do**

ADVICE



- Recognize chronic problems by looking at the symptoms
- Experiment as much as possible
- Agree on feedback indicator

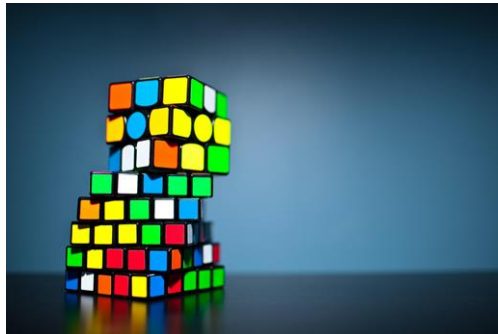


●●● L3 | PROBLEM-SOLVING THINKING (1/2)

Finding solutions to complex issues.

What you need to **know**

DESCRIPTION



- Problem-solving is the process of finding solutions to difficult or complex issues.

BENEFITS



- Focus on the root cause and not the symptoms
- Structured approach to solving problems
- Access to techniques:
 - 5 whys
 - Fishbone diagram
 - HBPS

What you need to **do**

ADVICE



- Don't jump into solution mode
- Structure approach through techniques
- Be critical and challenge assumptions



●●● L3 | PROBLEM-SOLVING THINKING (2/2)

Zooming in on the techniques.

1 The 5 whys

Why has the operational cost of product X increased in the past month?

Because we had to do many time-consuming reworks on product X after manufacturing.

Why have there been more reworks on product X?

Because machine Y has been badly calibrated.

Why has machine Y been badly calibrated?

Because none of the workers knew how to calibrate correctly.

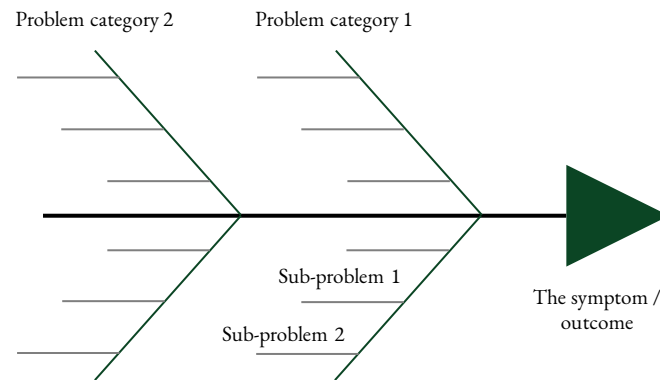
Why did none of the workers know how to calibrate it correctly?

Because it's a new machine and they did not receive any training on it.

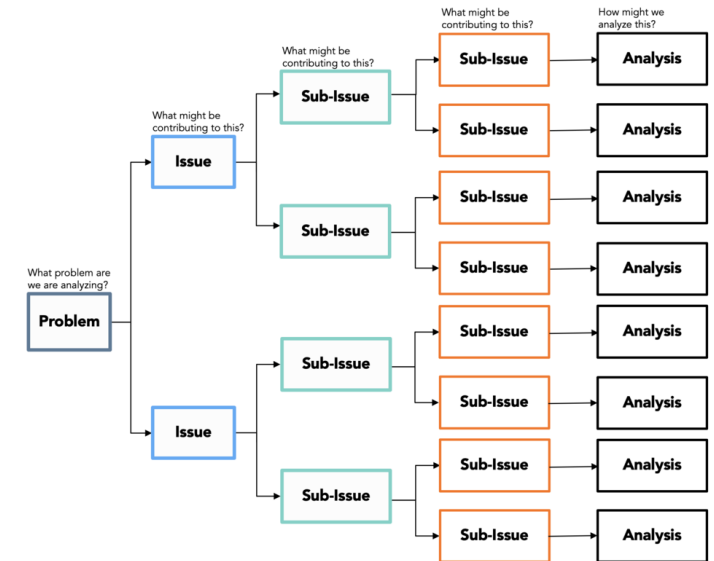
Why did workers not receive any training on it?

Because training budgets have been cut.

2 Fishbone diagram



3 HBPS (issue trees)

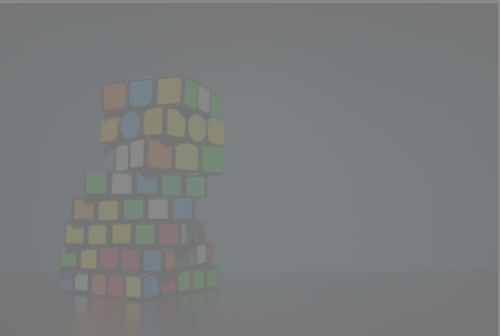


●●● L3 | PROBLEM-SOLVING THINKING

Finding solutions to complex issues.

What you need to **know**

DESCRIPTION



- Problem-solving is the process of finding solutions to difficult or complex issues.

BENEFITS



- Focus on the root cause and not the symptoms
- Structured approach to solving problems
- Access to techniques:
 - 5 whys
 - Fishbone diagram
 - HBPS

What you need to **do**

ADVICE



HBPS steps

- Step 1: state the symptoms
- Step 2: build the issue tree
- Step 3: check if MECE
- Step 4: shortlist of problem branches
- Step 5: deep-dive problem shortlist
- Step 6: provide solutions
- Step 7: shortlist solutions
- Step 8: deep-dive solutions
- Step 9: present recommendation

●●● L4 | CONCEPTUAL THINKING

Analyze theoretical ideas and concepts, identify patterns and define transversal solutions.

What you need to **know**

DESCRIPTION



- Analysis of theoretical ideas and concepts
- Identify recurring patterns (past occurrences, ongoing issues,...)
- Define transversal solutions

BENEFITS



- Think at an abstract level
- More open-minded to alternatives
- Stronger sense of purpose
- Educate stakeholders

What you need to **do**

ADVICE



- Learn from leaders
- Consider past experiences
- Pursue outside information
- Keep up with relevant trends
- Consider new practices
- Discuss with co-workers
- Have a mentor



●●● L5 | DECISION THINKING (1/2)

A structured way of thinking to make decision-making easier.

What you need to **know**

DESCRIPTION



- Identify the most desirable solution out of multiple options based on sound analysis.

BENEFITS



- Remove uncertainty
- Fact-based decisions
- Allows for scenario analysis
- Remove emotional distractions
- Creates credibility
- Access to techniques:
 - Decision matrix ★
 - Decision trees ★
 - Monte Carlo simulations
 - Etc...

What you need to **do**

ADVICE



- Make the decision options and drivers very visible
- Ensure right stakeholders are present
- Include a do-nothing scenario
- Process rational
- Communicate all necessary info
- Remove uncertainties & assumptions
- New info = adapt past decision?



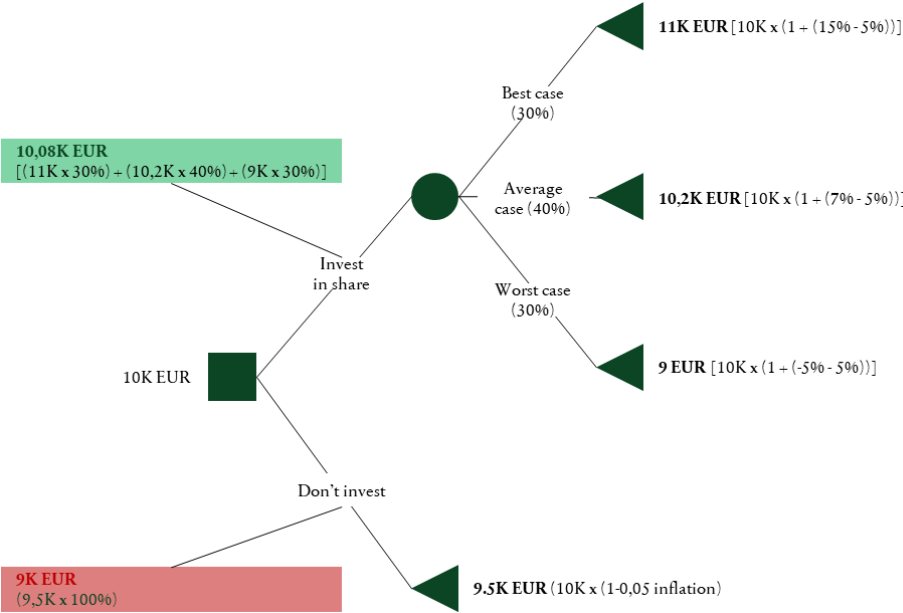
●●● L5 | DECISION THINKING (2/2)

Zooming in on the techniques.

1 Decision matrix

		Weights <i>Between 1 and 3</i>		Decision options		Weighted total score	
				BUY	8	BUILD	13
Decision criteria	Development cost	3	Description x	0,5		Description x	1
	Licensing cost	2	Description x	0		Description x	0,5
	Scalability with third parties	1	Description x	1		Description x	0
	Data security	3	Description x	1		Description x	1
	Contracting difficulty	3	Description x	0		Description x	0,5
	Level of control	2	Description x	0		Description x	1
	Time to market	2	Description x	1		Description x	0
	Roadmap definition	2	Description x	0		Description x	1
	Etc...	1	Description x	0,5		Description x	0,5

2 Decision trees



●●● KEY TAKEAWAYS

Let's do a small recap of what we have learned.



Takeaway 1

Creative thinking is the process of generating new ideas as well as finding associations between ideas.



Takeaway 2

Systems thinking is a way of looking at how the individual parts of any given system are interconnected and how they influence and affect one another.



Takeaway 3

Problem-solving is about first defining the root cause of the problem and then, to define solutions that could solve that root cause.



Takeaway 4

Conceptual thinking is about analyzing different theoretical ideas in order to identify recurring patterns that can be solved with a transversal solution.



Takeaway 5

Decision thinking is about identifying the most desirable solution out of multiple options based on sound analysis.

