Menu

Think Solutions

2 ½ - 3 hr.

AN ILLUMINE PRODUCT

GUIDE TO CONDUCT

Introduce the module

Start by introducing the purpose and context of the module and what students will get by the end of it.

Message checklist: *Points you can cover*

- In today's context, being a solution thinker is a necessity and is increasingly becoming a basic expectation of organizations.

- Solution thinking also gives us the power to solve challenges, innovate, and resolve tough situations.

- What is the way of thinking or approach that can enable us to do so? What would it mean for us to become a 'solution thinker' i.e. grow into someone who has the ability to 'think' solutions in any situation we are faced with?

EXPLORATION

1 **What does it mean to Think Solutions?**

~45-50 min.

GUIDE TO CONDUCT

Start the Exploration:

Introduce the first exploration on 'What does it mean to Think Solutions?'. Then, immediately move on to the next slide.

A quick reflection before we begin...

What do you usually do when faced with problems or difficulties?

Engagement 1A

What are some common problems or difficulties you face?
Think of examples & how you typically deal with it.

SOME EXAMPLES

What if you are doing badly in some subject?

What if you don't get into the college or job you want?

What if some group of students is giving you trouble in college?

Any other...

- Reflect individually & put down for yourself.
- Then a few participants may share examples.

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A quick reflection exercise

The goal is to encourage students to think of how *they* typically deal with problems or difficulties that they face in their lives.

It is an open question for students to reflect individually and put down for themselves. Then a few may share if they wish to.

Best practices:

- Some examples are given on the slide as triggers in case students are unable to think of examples.
- Everyone does not have to share, let 2-3 participants whoever feels confident to share.

Since it is mainly an ice-breaker, there is no right or wrong answer here.

Some ways in which people typically deal with problems or difficult situations –

For example: When doing badly in some subject

Avoid facing the problem - running away from it, rebelling

Why should I be forced to study this useless subject? I won't do it...

Complaining, blaming, waiting for someone else to solve it for me

I'm doing badly because the teachers are bad...

Coping with the problem, resigning myself to it, ignoring and hoping it will go away

If for some time I bear with the lectures my parents and teachers are giving me for doing badly, they will soon give up and leave me alone..

Reframing the problem as a challenge to solve; and then finding an appropriate way to solve it

So if my goal is to improve my performance in this subject, how do I go about doing it...

This is Solution Thinking

Share examples from your life where you have encountered similar situations where challenges are faced
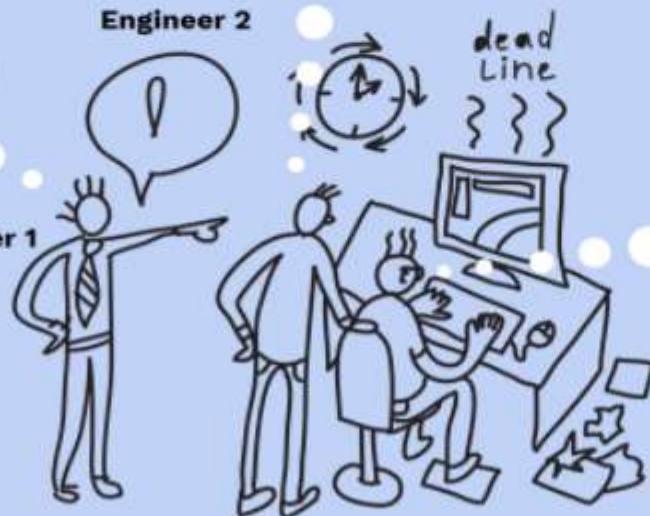
Open discussion.

Which of these engineers are Thinking Solutions?

Example 1:

This data analytics team is working on a high-pressure deadline, when there is a breakdown...

Engineer 1: We're working as hard as we can, but there is too much to do. Get ready to work all night again...

Engineer 2: The troubleshooting procedures will take at least 2 days. We will have to ask the management for more resources...

Engineer 3: The final goal is that the customer should get data reports on time, to help them make a market decision. Why not find a faster approach to provide this data to them? We can reorganize our efforts accordingly...

Engagement 1B

Examine the thinking of all 3 engineers. Identify who amongst them are 'thinking solutions' and who are not. Discuss why.

Open discussion.

Did you consider this?

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We're working as hard as we can, but there is too much to do. Get ready to work all night again...

Engineer 1

The troubleshooting procedures will take at least 2 days. And we will have to ask the management for more resources...

Engineer 2

dead Line

The final goal is that the customer should get data reports on time, to help them make a market decision. Why not find a faster approach to provide this data to them? We can reorganize our efforts accordingly...

Engineer 3

Insight

When you think solutions, you stay focused on the end-goal and figure out the best way to get there.
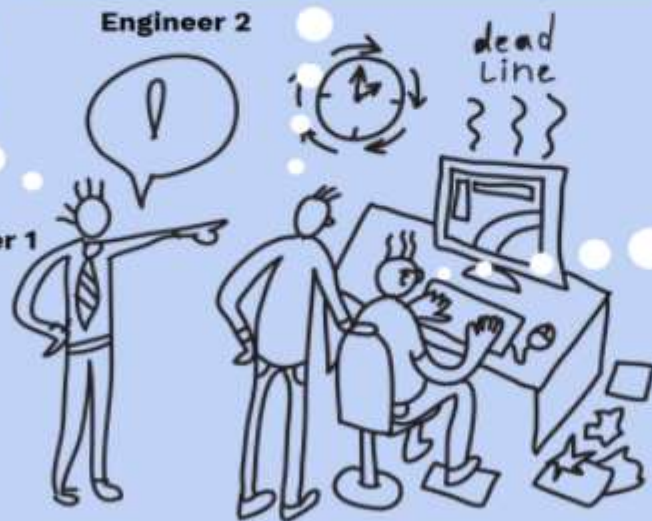(like Engineer 3)

You don't get stuck in the process or routine approaches
(unlike Engineer 2)

Nor do you just cope & manage within the situation
(unlike Engineer 1)

Which of these citizens are Thinking Solutions?

Example 2:

On a local street –

Citizen 1
Our street is filthy. The municipality is not doing their job properly to keep it clean. We residents are forced to live with it! Why don't they do something about it?

Citizen 2
Let me get a few residents together to find a way to get our street cleaned up. Let us also figure out a way to ensure that it stays clean...

Citizen 3
I'm concerned about the state of our street... but there are too many problems... there are problems with the municipal corporation, the mentality of residents, the lack of modern garbage clearance facilities...

Engagement 1C

Examine the thinking of all 3 citizens. Identify who amongst them are 'thinking solutions' and who are not. Discuss why.

Open discussion.

Did you consider this?

Citizen 1
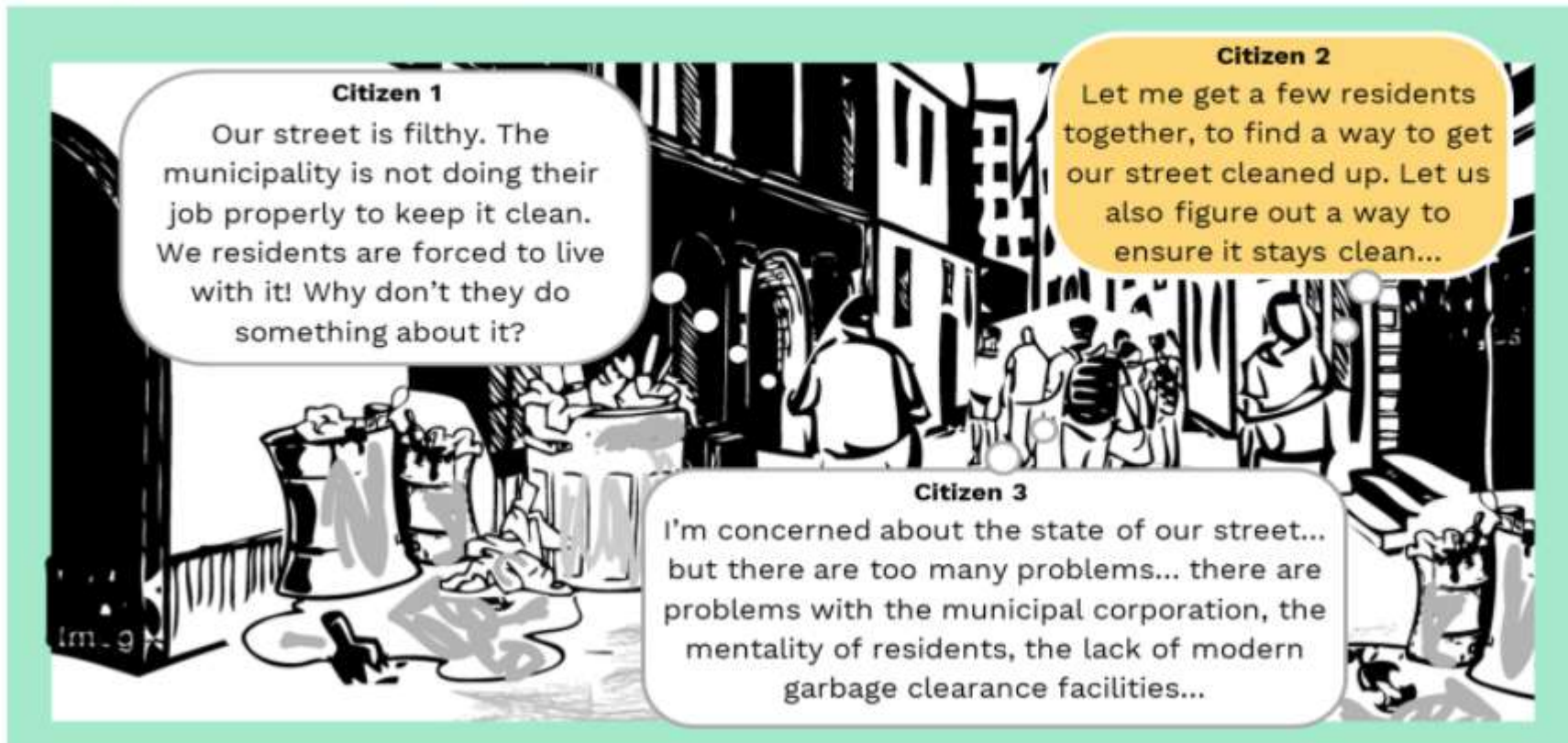Our street is filthy. The municipality is not doing their job properly to keep it clean. We residents are forced to live with it! Why don't they do something about it?

Citizen 2
Let me get a few residents together, to find a way to get our street cleaned up. Let us also figure out a way to ensure it stays clean...

Citizen 3
I'm concerned about the state of our street... but there are too many problems... there are problems with the municipal corporation, the mentality of residents, the lack of modern garbage clearance facilities...

💡 **Insight**

When you think solutions, you take ownership for finding solutions & making those solutions work (like Citizen 2)

You don't just complain and wait for others to solve the problems (unlike Citizen 1)

Nor are you just analyzing the problems, seeing no solutions (unlike Citizen 3)

Which of these students are Thinking Solutions?

Example 3:

This year students wanted to make their 25th year annual celebrations grand.

But they have a tight budget. How different student-organizers think...

> The facilities we have are limited, so it will be hard to do anything grand.... We will have to be happy with whatever we are able to manage out of this...

Student 1

> Without enough funds, we won't be able to manage. So we need to convince the management to increase our budgets after all it is for the good of the college...

Student 2

> How to achieve a grand celebration making the most of whatever we have? Lets creatively think together to come out with new exciting events.. why not tap into our student network to raise funds... why not set up competitions where different student groups build different parts of it...
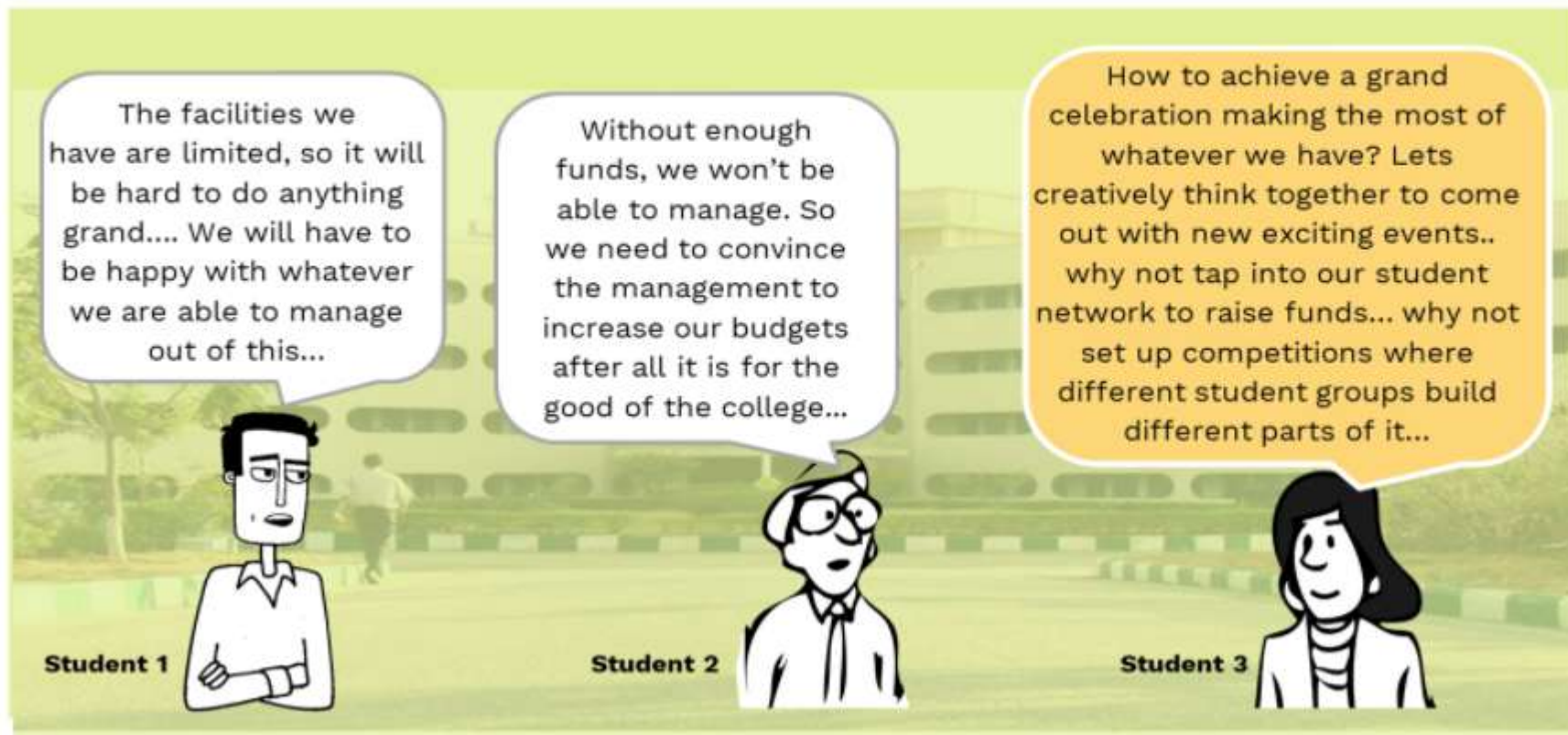
Student 3

Engagement 1D

Examine the thinking of all 3 students. Identify who amongst them are 'thinking solutions' and who are not. Explain your reasons.

Open discussion.

Did you consider this?

Student 1: The facilities we have are limited, so it will be hard to do anything grand.... We will have to be happy with whatever we are able to manage out of this...

Student 2: Without enough funds, we won't be able to manage. So we need to convince the management to increase our budgets after all it is for the good of the college...

Student 3: How to achieve a grand celebration making the most of whatever we have? Lets creatively think together to come out with new exciting events.. why not tap into our student network to raise funds... why not set up competitions where different student groups build different parts of it...

💡 Insight

When you think solutions, you act with faith in the potential of people to think creatively, figure out answers, go beyond the usual ways of doing, so as to achieve any goal, however impossible it may seem
(like Student 3)

You don't depend on resources alone to achieve goals. So you don't get tied down by resource constraints
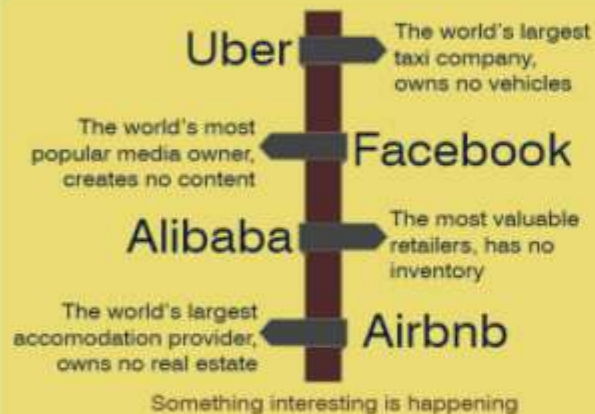(unlike Students 1 & 2)

EXPLORATION

2 **Why does Solution Thinking matter?**

~45 min.

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Solution Thinking is an essential need in the future workplace

Future Workplace Trend #1

Innovate, or be out-innovated

Uber — The world's largest taxi company, owns no vehicles

The world's most popular media owner, creates no content — Facebook

Alibaba — The most valuable retailers, has no inventory

The world's largest accomodation provider, owns no real estate — Airbnb

Something interesting is happening

Future Workplace Trend #2

Increasingly volatile market environment

MONDAY LOSSES
Warren Buffett -$5.11 bn
Mark Zuckerberg -$3.62 bn
Jeff Bezos -$3.26 bn
© Bloomberg Billionaires Index

Future Workplace Trend #3

Increasingly complex challenges are hitting organizations e.g. sustainability

Economic

COST
Revenue

Social   Environmental

1. What do these trends show in terms of the kind of challenges people are dealing with in workplaces?
2. In light of these trends, why do you think organizations value Solution Thinking as a key capability they look for in employees?

Open discussion.

Explore future workplace needs further in your Digital Textbook

What is the power of Solution Thinkers?

Examples of some well-known Solution Thinkers –

Steve Jobs

Pioneered the smartphone revolution and changed the way users communicate and interact with technology.

Verghese Kurien

Transformed the farmer's cooperative movement which led to the 'white revolution' in India.

Jeff Bezos

Founder of Amazon.co. He started out by selling books online. He is now transforming the retail industry one sector at a time.

1. What makes solution thinkers stand out from others?
2. Why are 'solution thinkers' valued wherever they go?

Share more examples to discuss their thinking & approach and what makes them stand out from others.

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Consider, around us a society where people 'live' with so many difficulties –

Inefficient services

Work done shabbily or inappropriately

Poor hygiene in the environment

Etc.

Some points to consider..

- How many of us simply 'run away' by migrating or living in closed enclaves or shutting our minds to problems?

- How many of us wait for 'external solutions' hoping for 'imported' answers from some aid agency who comes to solve our problems; or wait for some new leader to come and magically solve our problems?

- How many of us quietly cope and do nothing, blaming karma, and take no responsibility for changing things?

What would happen to our country if many more people adopted a 'solution thinking' approach to a situation?

Open discussion & sharing of examples of the need for solution thinkers in problems we have observed around us

In your digital textbook, explore role model solution thinkers who contributed to solving some big problems in society

EXPLORATION

3 **How to think solutions?**

~45 min.

Solution Thinking is different from Problem Solving

In a problem solving approach, my starting point is -
what are the problems to address?

So the approach I follow is –

To understand the current situation (e.g. by collecting necessary data about the situation).

⬇

Analyze the situation to identify what has gone wrong or why have things deviated from normal.

⬇

Then I try to isolate causes or the underlying problems that have led to the symptoms.

⬇

Then I try to address the problem so that the symptoms or deviations from the normal go away and normalcy returns.

In a solution thinking approach, my starting point is -
where do I want to go?
So the approach I follow is –

1 **Identify the end-goal we want to achieve**
i.e. where do we want to go?

2 **Identify alternative approaches to get to the end-goal**

3 **Out of these, design the best solution or way to get to the end goal,**
keeping in mind the constraints of the situation to get a solution that works

Lets understand through a case example →

Try a Problem Solving approach to this case –

Take the example of Anand. He is a young professional who is having problems at work due to his health.

He enjoys his work and also works long hours and irregular work schedules.

He also enjoys the city lifestyle. He sleeps late. Feels sleepy and lethargic in the day. Since he lives alone, he often eats whatever is convenient, skips meals, eats fast food. Tries to exercise, but usually doesn't feel like it.

He has started falling ill often, which has started affecting his work.

Problem Solving

What are the problems to address?

- Unable to sleep
- Lethargy
- Bad food habits
- Irregular work timings
- Lack of exercise
- Etc.

Engagement 3A

How would you suggest he address all these problems?

Brainstorm & discuss

Try a Solution Thinking approach to this case –

Take the example of Anand. He is a young professional who is having problems at work due to his health.

He enjoys his work and also works long hours and irregular work schedules.

He also enjoys the city lifestyle. He sleeps late. Feels sleepy and lethargic in the day. Since he lives alone, he often eats whatever is convenient, skips meals, eats fast food. Tries to exercise, but usually doesn't feel like it.

He has started falling ill often, which has started affecting his work.

Solution Thinking

What is the end-goal he seeks?

Anand says "I want to be able to work with full energy and no compromises on work & I also want to enjoy what life has to offer."

Engagement 3B

What alternative approaches can he use to get to his goal?

Brainstorm to generate alternative approaches

What is the difference you notice between a problem solving approach & solution thinking approach?

Lets practice some Solution Thinking...

Case 1:

Kavya, a college student, is preparing for "group discussions" or GD rounds, that are part of the admission process for post-graduate studies.

During GDs, the participants get the topic on the spot. Kavya is confident with any topic from her own subject area, but she realizes that she knows little about current affairs.

To prepare, she reads up on a range of topics.

However, she finds that it is not helping much as she still faces topics she knows nothing of. At such times, she is at a loss of having nothing to add to the discussion and is forced to keep quiet. She doesn't know how to deal with this.

1. End-goal: Where does the person want to go?

Fill here.

2. Identify alternative approaches to get to the end-goal

Fill here.

Fill here.

Fill here.

3. Considering all these approaches – design a solution, also keeping in mind the person's constraints to ensure it's a solution that will work

Some approaches that others like you came out with...

1

End-goal: Where does the person want to go?

To be able to contribute meaningfully & with confidence in Group Discussions, even if the topic is not familiar to her

2

Identify alternative approaches to get to the end-goal

Learn to develop her own point of view by listening to others first.

First listen to others points of view, and as one listens, develop one's own point of view and then put it forward in the discussion.

Be alert and engaged with all that is going on around her, so that she is learning all the time & builds general awareness.

E.g. read newspapers daily, participate when people are discussing things, show curiosity & ask questions to know more, etc.

Learn to facilitate and navigate discussions rather than just give her own ideas.

So she acts as a facilitator and mediator in discussions helping different people's views get clarified and build on each other to arrive at some conclusions.

3

Proposed solution that can work

Focus on developing the above abilities in herself (rather than just knowing more on lots of topics). For this she needs to practice these in every discussion she is part of.