

ELEVATE YOUR CAREER WITH MORE STRATEGIC THINKING

PRESENTED BY:

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Practical PD

Courses For Accountants

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If you print, we suggest you make sure you print the material large enough to take notes on it

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Welcome

Please fill out the anonymous **polling** survey while you wait

When we start, we prefer cameras on for a more personal experience for all

You are allowed to eat and drink on camera!

Some prizes can't be won, without your camera on....

Introduction

We will be together for 2 hours to talk strategically

Participate via Chat

You will get a fully completed slide deck after from me, blanks filled in _____

There will be some random, off the wall stuff from me, we don't want this course to be boring!

You are allowed to disagree with me on issues in the course!

There will be some anonymous polling questions

Timing, one never knows if I will get through all the material in the first try...don't worry

Notes

We had a different kind of summer, basically no vacation due to...

This is a rare course of mine that doesn't cover _____

Also, no _____ jokes, I am sorry...

REMEMBER written feedback I am requesting after

List some things that you liked about the course

List some ways the course could be improved

What could be dropped if I had to cut 10-15 minutes

Can you think of a better title? \$100 cash

Please give an overall evaluation in short statement:

I will give you're your coupon and course completion certificate when I get this!



About you

It was hard to get this audience together in the summer season...thanks for being here, you are all busy people

An elite group of smart CPAs, great past participants, or you provided useful, engaged comments on my video courses

Some of your best chats may become _____ in future courses, but they will be anonymized

All my live courses have an opportunity to win prizes

The Top Participant will get a prize

There will be a few other prizes, maximum one per person except the Top Participant can double up



YOU WILL
FIND WHAT
THE PRIZES
ARE LATER

Let's get to know each other a bit

Opening poll results

And I will check my email, people looking for Zoom link, because they have misplaced it...

I have just had a career change

Co-owner, Secretary and Board member of SureWx, a global aviation software company

I just **stepped down** from the CFO job there this year in my 12th year

I will continue to grow this company

The job

CFO & VP Finance - Fidus Analytics Inc.

I work remotely from Ottawa for a global business, nominally out of Calgary

The company that hired me has the _____ as a 7 year former employer in a different industry

The President and founder is very, very _____



Course objective and coverage

- Discuss what is higher level strategic thinking
- Learn how to think at a higher strategic, big picture level, primarily by examples
- Get an idea of what is your current thinking level from your interaction with the examples
- Dozens of examples to improve your thinking in the areas of business, systems, technology, accounting, tax, compensation, M&A and more

If your Zoom name

Does not match the name on which your PD Certificate will be made out to, let me know (Private Chat or email), we take attendance from Zoom

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Have you ever had a discussion at work?

Where others have raised much bigger, more important, strategic, big picture issues related to the issue, when you didn't/couldn't or were into the details?

This used to regularly happen earlier in my career, but I have continuously improved my thinking level

It wasn't from _____

I did this by _____

This course will provide you with more “_____”

I have never seen a course like this, although there are a lot of strategy courses

I wish I took this course when I was younger!

Key

I believe a key thing that separates people in the business world, is the **level** at which they think

Generally, strategic level thinking is more broad, creative and big picture and more senior people think at that level

(These are just concepts, I will illustrate this with many specific examples soon)

You are all at different places

Some are Presidents/CEOs/owners/partners

I was a “CEO” for over 8 years...

You are all at different places

Some are Presidents/CEOs/owners/partners

Some are earlier in their career

Some are C-Suite and some are not

Some have sat in many Board meetings as members, observers or management, and some have not been to any Board meetings

This course will help see your thinking of level when looking at many scenarios and also improve it, no matter what level you sit in your organization

If you can think more like your boss, the CEO, the Board, the owner, the partner, you will be ahead

Even if you don't aspire to the higher position

We will be mentioning Boards

I am aware that some of you don't have functioning, independent Boards, directing your business, for example:

US subsidiaries, so parent company management directs

Closely-held family businesses, the Board doesn't meet

That is OK, substitute this oversight for the Board in the examples

Think of the owner

If you can think like an owner, it is always good

I sit on four Boards now

It is easier to think big picture and strategy when you don't even know all the details that management is aware of, and distracted by

I have turned down quite a lot of charity Boards

I worked with a very big picture guy

Long-term Board member of a company I was CFO of

Seven years of Board meetings with him helped my thinking

His LinkedIn said:



Board Member

Fidus Systems

2002 - Present · 22 yrs 8 mos

Provide nothing but brilliant advice.

I learned from his approach

Issues and decisions face us all the time

The narrow-minded accountant thinks at the lowest level:

- What is the impact on what I do ____?
- How can I get my job ____
- How can I make my job ____?

How will this help your career?

I want to make you look good

That is what all my courses try to do

You will look good in meeting and internal discussions if you are thinking well at your level, or even better, above your level

You can ask better questions

(My questions at KPMG)

You will be able help your organization more

What is the difference?

Higher level, strategic thinking in my view encompasses the _____

It is better quality thinking

It is looking beyond one's own job

Lower-level thinking tends to be tactical and detailed and operational and short-term

Both must be done well in any organization

The best people can operate at both levels

They recognize the big picture but are helpful with the small picture

Example: I want you to implement, but watch out for...

We will focus on the higher level

What is your current thinking level?

See where your answers fit in relation to the class and my answers on the difference scenarios

We will study this, by way of examples

Very short scenarios that lend themselves to the topic

Directly or indirectly inspired from real life

They may not be set in your industry or be familiar issues, but they are thinking tools

Not theoretical diagrams and flow charts or professor stuff



EXAMPLE SCENARIOS

Scenario

There is an annoying problem with the accounting system, which hinders normal reporting

Let's think of levels of thinking based on these positions

Staff	
Controller	
CFO	
CEO	
Board	

What do you think?

Use your experience, your imagination

Write in the Chat for one of the levels in the organization, hopefully different participants will cover them all

Controller: would want to..

CFO: I recommend....

Board: we think...

There are layers of thinking

Hopefully getting bigger as you get more senior

I just have one diagram, not theory

You may prefer the _____ illustration...

Polling question

Have you ever been on a cruise?

We once went on a 4 day, Florida-Bahamas last minute cruise, a very good price

I authored the _____



Scenario

Smaller cruise ship line is still struggling from debt accumulated during COVID, although business has picked up quite a bit, but the public still has some reservations about being on a ship in close quarters with a lot of people.



What do you think?

You could put in Chats for high-level thinking or low-level thinking

Scenario

The company has not been able to find a person with a certain skill set, through the normal channels (Job ad, LinkedIn, Indeed site and the regular headhunter)

What do you think?

Levels

Staff	
Controller	
Executive	
CEO	
Board	

What do you think?

Levels

Staff	
Controller	
Executive	
CEO	
Board	

Scenario

Cark Inc. is owned by a number of unrelated private investors. It has been a builder of large residential apartment buildings, since 1979. It functions as a general contractor on all projects. Recently a large customer has asked the company to be the co-owner of the next two complexes it was to build for them. The executive team finds this a very attractive opportunity.

A reminder about this topic

Big picture vignette

My son's CPA neighbour becomes Chief Operating Officer of a medium-sized regional law firm

He had worked for all of the Big Four and his father is a retired Big Four accountant

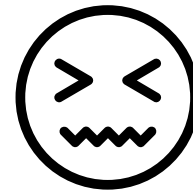
His first big question was on the job was a big strategic one:

“What is our _____?”

All he got was _____ from the lawyers

Do you know your market?

I know it is harder for law firms/accounting firms....



Scenario

One of the company's two regional A/P units functions quite a bit better than the other, it is more efficient

(a bit more of a day-to-day matter)

What do you think?

Levels

Staff	
Controller	
CFO	
CEO	
Board	

Asking the right, big picture questions?

Why are we _____?

What is the _____perspective

Are they dealing with the _____ only?

What is the impact on _____?

Does this tie into our _____?

Is there another way of _____?

Do we have the right _____?

Can you think of more?



The strategic solution

The top commodity tax specialist in Canada, working for a Big Four firm has solved a complicated provincial sales tax problem for a famous audit client of mine, which will save a lot of cash and the books need to be corrected

The journal entry to solve the problem was faxed over from the partner

Not the real entry, something like:

The client _____!

They missed the big picture, or maybe it was the little picture!

FAX COVER SHEET	
RECIPIENT:	
TO:	_____
FAX NUMBER:	_____
SENDER:	
FROM:	_____
PHONE:	_____
TOTAL PAGES:	_____ (including cover sheet)
DATE:	_____
MESSAGE:	_____

Scenario

UniCollegeSystems is a five year old startup, which raised \$20 million of venture capital in its first year, and now has market saturation with virtually all customers in the target market signed up, being a special enrollment system for large universities and colleges. This was accomplished by diligent sales work, particularly by the VP Sales, Dod, to break into these customers, after Harvard and University of Toronto, became the launch customers. There is more potential revenue in terms of upgrades, features and customization. The management team is the same as day one, it consists of Dod, veteran startup CEO Caily, experienced CFO Clancy, Systems Development VP, Fistriu and Customer support VP Akim.

What do you think?

Levels

Staff	
Controller	
Executive	
CEO	
Board	

Scenario – more micro and on compensation

Company policy is to put 5% of employees base salary in a group RRSP. An employee asks if they can take it in cash

What do you think?

Levels

Staff	
Controller	
Executive	
CEO	
Board	

Scenario

Walin Inc's important customer in a significant industry segments, just called a finance team member and wants 40 more days to pay the current invoice past term. The annual credit check one month earlier, was very positive. The company is owned by one individual, who is not involved in the business.

What do you think?

Levels

Staff	
Controller	
Executive	
CEO	
Board	

Scenario

Small oil company gets 30% of its profit from selling oil to a medium-size country via a subsidiary in that nation. This country has just elected a new interventionist government, which has put in place draconian currency restrictions, making it impossible to repatriate any profits.

What do you think?

Levels

Staff	
Controller	
Executive	
CEO	
Board	

One of my uncles

Worked 40 years at a Lloyds of London insurance broker selling shipping insurance to Asian billionaire shipping magnates

He made an interesting statement once

“The billionaire’s kids had all earned their MBAs and were being passed the business”

“But they _____”

I believe this, the Dads learned from the school of “hard knocks” and were more experienced

(For funny MBA jokes, see my course **Practical Works Smarts For All**

Don’t take me too seriously if you have an MBA)



An illustration

The more senior people should always have a higher, bigger view of issues, direction, etc.

Scenario

Management of Matthias Inc. (MI) hears that a Canadian company is being sued for automating a requirements in a certain industry. The litigant claims they have a Canadian patent for automating any such industry processes by software. MI business is automating a different part of the same industry requirements

What do you think?

Levels

Staff	
Controller	
Executive	
CEO	
Board	

Can you share a scenario, which results in a good illustration of thinking levels?

My favourite gets a **prize!**

What is this?



Missing the big picture as a teen

My three brothers and I, young teen, hand shovel most of the seniors' driveways on our city block

Killer work in the great snow falls of the 1970s in Ottawa (40% more snow than Calgary/Edmonton)

Big picture thought yesterday, we should have together bought a _____!

But it helped our work ethic!...

Scenario

The Board proposes buying a small competitor for a fairly high price, due diligence must start soon.
The Board is composed of four individuals.

What do you think?

Levels

Staff	
Controller	
Executive	
CEO	
Board	

Scenario

A well-known fast-food chain has 4,000 outlets. Last week, a server took discriminatory approach that is indefensible, when serving a customer, who was the sibling of a famous Canadian. The Internet has lit up about this.

What do you think?

Levels

Staff	
Controller	
Executive	
CEO	
Board	

Big picture thinking illustrated w/ job opportunity

The company appears to be leading in a hot space, the early days of GPS, commercial fleet tracking, the year 2000

What are the big picture issues?

How _____?

How soon, before _____?



I was applying for the Controller position, I drill the CFO with dozens of questions on the market, the prospects, over several weeks

The Big Four partner who referred the job to me, says: “hurry up, you must decide, the CFO is losing patience with your questions”

I remember the excitement of “we are tracking this vehicle on the map with GPS”

My ____ turned out to be right, the market was _____....

Scenario

Canada Post



What are the big picture, strategic questions?

I was talking to senior finance employee about this the other day,

Questions

Should Canada Post _____?

Should a post office be funded by _____?

(I know this is a bit of politics/economics)

Should _____ replace the post office directly or under contract?

The same could be asked about another federal crown corporation, the _____

Our daughter used to work there

Other threatened businesses/trades

Do they realize it, or are they missing the strategic big picture?

Can you suggest others?



Scenario

Kassian Inc. is trying to open up business in a certain large Asian country. A local representative, who is a national of the country, has been hired and has been trying to get contacts and contracts without success

What do you think?

Levels

Staff	
Controller	
Executive	
CEO	
Board	

Once upon a time

I decided to become a CA, which involved passing the 4 day, 4 hour per day **Uniform Final Examination**

Day 1 was one very difficult 4 hour case, about 25 pages long

I sat down to read and write my first practice case

I was completely _____

I will _____

I did _____

I have now _____

Some for _____



My cases

Always have higher level strategic issues to find out who sees them and who doesn't, to rank candidates in examination and other situations

There was once a famous CA four hour case

Assignment: help this company with an acquisition

Underlying strategic issue: _____

A large number of candidates in Canada, missed this higher level thinking

Lesson: Think bigger, when you are told to do something...

Scenario

An announced change in income tax legislation will impact the business negatively next year

Income Tax Act (R.S.C., 1985, c. 1 (5th Supp.))

Full Document: [HTML](#) (Accessibility Buttons available)

What do you think?

Levels

Staff	
Controller	
Executive	
CEO	
Board	

Let's turn to family life...

Scenario

Young parents' six year old refuses to sit in the assigned seat in the car

Input?

Levels

One parent	
The other parent	
Grandpa	

Big picture and strategy

I like to share about these things in _____

This helps them see the forest, not just the trees

This helps prepare them to be promoted

Most appreciate it

Missing the big picture

After the great Nortel layoffs in the 2004 era in Ottawa, a guy I know worked helping laid off scientists and technical people who were starting businesses

They would present their new product/system idea to him for feedback

He was surprised how often this would happen:

He would say after reading their proposal



Scenario

I am working for a software startup, many years ago, which was very short of money

A star developer once fairly quickly developed the software to manage DVDs and his employer sold it for \$10M US

He has an idea for an analogous software to convert all sound files into the new MP3 format, but we need some funding to do this

What do you think?

Levels

Staff	
Controller	
CFO	
CEO	
Board	
Venture capitalist who we presented the idea to	

Scenario - politicians

Politicians are making decisions about spending. Party thinker has come up with a new spending idea.

What do you think?

Levels

The MP	
The party spin doctors	
The Minister	
The bad Prime Minister	
The good Prime Minister	
Unthinking Canadian voters	
Thoughtful Canadian voters like CPAs..	

Big picture

Shall I give you the big picture on Canadian politics and economics?

Actually, _____

The big picture and a firm partner

There was one KPMG partner who used to walk around the office, and then aggressively ask staff what they were doing

Most answered:

“ _____ ”

“ _____ ”

I would always answer “ _____ ”

He liked the answer

I focused on the big picture

It reminds me that as a CFO in industry, I am more _____....

Scenario

Aila Inc is selling a division that is losing \$1.4M per month. Aila does make annual profits over of \$60M

What do you think?

Levels

Staff	
Controller	
CFO	
CEO	
Board	

Scenario

The CEO is bent on making a dumb business strategic move, albeit not one that needs Board approval

CEO joke

What do you think?

Levels

Staff	
Controller	
Executive	
CEO	
Board	

A Proverb says

*The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance,
but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.*

Think ahead in _____

Have you ever had a

Bungee CEO....?

Scenario

The company has gone through five suppliers of a key input over the past 4 years, trying to find the lowest bid that meets requirements. If the suppliers did some R&D they could probably produce cheaper and with better quality but none of them want to. Zagon is the most promising supplier, but a short dance with them, and then another change would not be good.

What do you think?

Levels

Staff	
Controller	
Executive	
CEO	
Board	

Interesting

I have been asked to join the Board of a Charity that I have supported for a long-time

The US charity with the same name, which is completely separate, has had some management and spending scandals recently

There is an unchangeable law in the world

You only have one chance to _____

Rich or poor, smart or dumb, whatever the context

I hope I have made a good impression most of the time

But here is a bad one

My first day at the KPMG Toronto office (North York), after transferring from Ottawa

I showed up looking like this...

Higher level questions I will be asking are

Can I talk to _____ ?

Is the organization like I had _____ it from the outside as a donor?

Convince me that _____

Why don't you change _____, for at least perception reasons?

Scenario

You have just been hired as the Controller for a federal government crown corporation in finance. You have just been put in charge of insurance, in addition to core Controllershship functions, due to a personnel change. The company has over eight different policies with millions of \$ in premiums

What do you think, not a levels by job discussion?

Rising levels of thoughts/questions

Scenario

Aria Corp is a corporation in the business of providing contract help lines and customer support to all kinds of businesses. Artificial intelligence and machine learning are being used quite extensively now in this field. Revenues and profits are declining slightly. The CEO Micah Melson, an excellent business generalist. Board members are Frank Ronak, 32 years in customer support leadership, Agnes Metski, parent company finance representative, and J Johanson, nearly 40 years in the industry of the main customer grouping, banks.

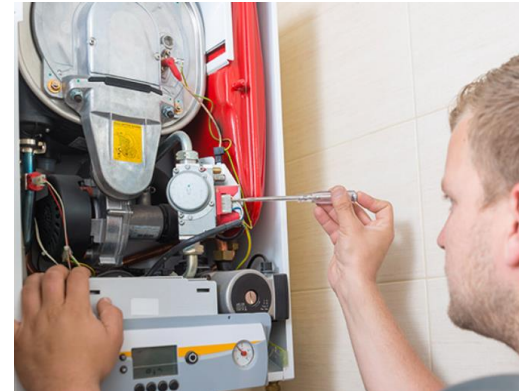
What do you think?

Levels

Staff	
Controller	
Executive	
CEO	
Board	

Scenario

Fixheatcool Inc. is a 300 employee private company making money with long-term contracts for HVAC (Heating, ventilation and air conditioning), repair and installation, upgrade, with thousands of industrial and institutional customers. It employs about 240 HVAC technicians who drive company trucks with tools and equipment. The company is doing well, but there are concerns over employee theft of tools which are expensed for accounting purposes and many employees “padding” their day with up to one hour of down time, spread between jobs.



What do you think?

Levels

Staff	
Controller	
Executive	
CEO	
Board	

In-person sessions

Anyone want to hear me in-person?

I am told I am dynamic

No events scheduled anywhere in the world

But one being discussed for May 2025

I hope to see some of you there

You just need to travel to...

If we go over time

If you can stay, you will get the extra PD hours

CONCLUSIONS

Concluding thoughts

Note

It is easy to go to a pure strategic meeting or course, and talk _____

It is much harder to think about _____ regularly as you go about your busy day to day work, often in the trenches...

Conclusions

This has been a graphic reminder to keep thinking higher and bigger

Best wishes in your own strategic, bigger picture thinking, I hope it improves and helps your career

Top participant prize

I have over 25 other courses

I have a course called

Practical Work Solutions from Case Discussions

This 2 hour course gets into this topic a tiny bit, I decided I needed to expand on it

Check out this course, I think you will like the rest of it...

Also Practical Work Smarts For All

A grab bag of management and work smarts from my career, including some big picture stuff

There is higher level thinking in all my courses

It is not labelled as such, but it is there, I didn't really think about this until I developed this course

Some new courses, to be released soon

How To Manage Lawyers & Legal Fees, 1.5 hours

More Practical Work Smarts For All, 2 hours

Outside The Box Thinking 1.5 hours

A Different Take on KPIs and Dashboards, 1 hour



Remember \$100 cash if you can help me
with a better course title

This is no joke

Closing comments

Was the course boring?

We can chat after

Send me an e-mail spriddle@bell.net, to pick my brain or for questions

Do LinkedIn with me



Please complete course evaluations

Thanks for attending

Extra scenarios if time

Scenario

I am advising a family member who is thinking of buying a business

It was very profitable the last two years

Big picture; why was it _____?

Should he ___ or those profits?

How to de-risk the acquisition if results revert to to _____

Have you ever noticed this?

Many self-employed small businesses, are probably missing the big picture

What do you think I mean?

Hint: _____

They are probably making _____

Their ROI is probably terrible as well

Many don't realize it

Many don't have _____

I am not looking down on these folks

Sometimes, I do repairs around the house, etc, and my wife reminds me that _____

Problem

We sell our regulated systems product to every airline who is interested

We want to enter the market of our certain large country, where we have no existing business

First issue, get regulatory approval

One of the best bigger picture guys I have ever worked with is in charge of this

I get a report on the meeting with the regulator from him, where all ten airlines are present, saying they want our system

I say, “why _____?”

He says “wow”, I didn’t think of that

(Airlines in Canada buy fuel cheaply through a consortium)

Scenario

Splittech Co. builds electronic hardware, with embedded and control software. Organizationally, the head of hardware and software, both report to the Chief Operating Officer, a good management individual. These head of department conflict continuously.

What do you think?

Levels

Staff	
Controller	
CFO	
CEO	
Board	

Sports scenario

Star player __, which the team really needs, has been injured for nearly half the season

What do you think?

Pig picture

Trainer	
Assistant coach	
Head coach	
General manager	
CEO	

Scenario

AirBnB

People I know are making a lot of money from them

I have stayed in them, have you?

What is the big picture?

Will _____

Scenario

A bill is received from a software company to develop a new tool to help in the manufacturing process

What do you think?

Levels

Staff	
Controller	
CFO	
CEO	
Board	