

## **SOAR to Success Thinking!** **A mental strategy for developing strategic insights**

Our normal day to day working life or even just life itself can leave us feeling mentally confused. When we find ourselves so caught up in the whirlwind we often cannot see the wood for the trees.

In this fast-moving mental state, our brains are very capable at using past experiences to make decision. In these situations, we make decisions intuitively and mostly this works okay. The more successful experiences we have built up over time in a particular field, the better our decision making will be when we face similar challenges in the future. That's why experience counts in business.

Intuitive thinking is an excellent mental strategy because it saves us having to think consciously. Conscious thinking can use around a fifth of our calorie intake and so our brains try to convert all new learning and behaviours into an unconscious habit. The more we use the new strategy, the deeper the tread becomes in our neural pathway, making the decision process quicker. When we're very busy we can make the majority of the 50,000 decisions we do daily, in the blink of an eye or quicker.

However; we can also arrive at a situation where we need to see into the future. When we'll have to use a different mode of thinking and develop the ability to gain new insights. We should make a point of doing this on a regular basis otherwise we can head into a dead end, because, as the saying goes:

*'if you always do what you've always done, you'll end up getting what you always got'*

So, the usual strategy for everyday thinking goes something like this:

**Trigger:** Some event in our environment or another thought starts the process.

**Release:** We release bio-chemical messages and we can do this 100,000 times a day

**Examine:** We send that message or feeling, through our meta-programs (habitual sorting filters).

**Assign:** We give the feeling a meaning e.g. this is good ..or this is bad

**Decision:** We make a decision about what to do next.

As mentioned before, these messages can move very quickly around the body at between one metre per second to two hundred metres per second. So, when we're

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developing our strategic insight, the first step is to stop doing the habitual response and operate differently.

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If you read the biographies any great inventor or a genius mathematician like Einstein, you often find they employed different methods for creative problem solving. Either that or they were often doing something unremarkable when the brilliant idea popped into their mind. One thing we all have to do is act upon the idea quickly before it is lost. How many times have you woken up with a great idea, then your internal voice took over nagging you about the everyday trivia making you forget the brilliant idea.

The SOAR model is a conscious process to help you create and capture your flashes of creative brilliance at will. When stuck for ideas on what to do next or feeling overwhelmed after a particularly busy period, follow these steps:

**Suspend:** Our usual neural treads will force us to make snap decisions continuously until we give up trying to think because it hurts our head, we often feel overwhelmed or foggy. Just don't make that decision right there and then. Suspend making any judgement and realise that you might have to do some deliberate insightful thinking which takes a little longer. So instead of making the decision, just gather all the information about the situation you can and examine your situation more thoroughly. Become mindful of how you're thinking and what you're thinking about.

**Observe:** Look at your situation from as many angles as possible, know the challenge you face intimately and continue to search for as many opportunities available within the present challenge. Ask yourself some possibility questions such as:

*"How can I experience more (fill in the blanks) than I do already?"*

Use different techniques such as re-framing the problem. Turn the problem upside down, start with the end in mind, visualise solutions. Try looking at your situation from another person's point of view, maybe imagine what your coach would ask you right now. Or try to imagine that your next move will be a major turning point of your life. This is quite challenging to do and is the struggle part of this type of thinking because

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you're preventing your monkey brain from just making a snap decision based on your past.

**Allow:** Then just let go of the struggle. Peak performance states known as 'Flow' states have a four-step sequence. The first is the struggle, then there is a letting go, then there is the Flow state itself and then there is the recovery state when you may experience a 'Flow' hangover!

Flow states are identifiable because they make the task you're doing in itself, feel rewarding. This is because you've triggered a flood of feel good neural chemicals in your brain, immensely more powerful than the manufactured variety. Operating in this zone feels effortless even though you're often at the limit of what you can do. The sense of self dissipates and you feel connected to the universe. And lastly, time just seems to fly by as you lose yourself in the experience.

The SOAR process, triggers 'flow' state thinking. When you get to the 'Allow' stage it is time to let go of the struggle of hard thinking and go do something else. And to help with the process of letting your mind enter a flow state, you can do something which will deliberately release those feel good, flow neurotransmitters.

Go for a walk, listen to some music, meditate, read a book, wash the dishes, go do something which is relaxing but requires some focus. Do something which calms your *inner monkey* mind. Control the *inner critic* by giving it something to focus on, but that is an easy task for it to do. And this will then help you connect to your *inner Guru* mind.

At some point, you will begin to start getting good ideas. The key to getting brilliant ideas, is to enter this state often and have a plethora of ideas. In amongst them will be a brilliant nugget. Einstein wrote thousands of papers, but he is known primarily for the paper on relativity. Edison is known for his light bulb but he registered thousands of patents.

**Respond:** The last step is just as crucial as the rest, and that is to respond. Firstly, you'll want to capture that idea. Carry a pad and a pen (or other device) around with you and just expect to have flashes of brilliance and you will. Once the mind's been asked a question, it will continue looking for the answer, even if you've given up.

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This stage is when we speed up again. When your entrepreneur mind should jump in with both feet and have a go. One caveat though, you might be having a brilliant idea, but this might not be the right time for the idea to be a success. Plenty of genius ideas fail. The key is to try, experiment and then evaluate the response from the universe and determine whether it is worth the effort to continue or maybe you need to make adjustments along the way.

Remember, when in doubt...SOAR!