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General pointers

- This is a heavy duty doc. For 98%+ of problems, you won't need to use it. However, for those 10% of wicked problems, it will be useful.
- I strongly recommend setting a 10 minute timer as you begin working through these questions
 - At the 10 minute mark, if you are rolling, keep going!
 - If not, pause and return later.
- It is not essential to go through all questions. Not every question will add value to your thinking.
- The amount of detail and the extent of analysis should not extend beyond what is minimally necessary for an informed decision
- **Highlighted** questions tend to provide be most valuable to think through/carry highest utility

Basics

Date:

What larger goal is this most closely related to? Some domains (personal, relationship, team, company)

What triggered this decision?

What environmental factors are affecting this decision? (That is, what is going on outside of your control?)

Problem

What are all the various problems tied into this? (problem dump)

What is the core problem you are trying to solve? (1st principles thinking/[5 Whys](#))

[rough problem statement]

1. Why? Because...
2. Why? Because...
3. Why? Because...
4. Why? Because...
5. Why? Because...

How is this problem being solved today?

1. Why is it failing?

What data do you have supporting that this is *actually* a problem worth solving today?

Goals/Objectives

What are all the concerns you hope to address through your decision?

What would make you really happy?

How would you justify the decision to someone else?

Step back, reflecting on those lists, what are your *fundamental* objectives? (ask “why?” about what you wrote down to get to fundamental objectives)

Alternatives

What are the potential solutions to this problem (alternatives)

How are you limiting the scope of this solution? (i.e. non-technical solution, only for sales, only for CS, etc...)

This is not...

[pause 🧑 do you need to align with any else before moving on to solutions? Aligning on the problem & goals with stakeholders *before* moving on to solutions is often incredibly helpful]

Solution

What is the proposed solution?

1. What is the underlying hypothesis of that solution?
2. Is this in your circle of competence? Why are you the right person to solve this?
3. Why are you incentivized to see this solution through?

What remains uncertain?

Is this in your circle of competence?

What is this solution optimizing for? (l.e. time, money, customer happiness, learning..)

What does this look like if it were easy? (reframe)

1. What is working?
2. How do we do more of it?

What alternative solutions are you choosing not to pursue? (via negative)

1. ...
2. ...
3. ...

What is the step-by-step proposed process for enacting this solution?

1. ...
2. ...
3. ...

Estimated costs (\$ and money)

1. Time
2. Money

How and when are you pausing to decide whether/not to continue? (don't fall prey to sunk costs)

Potential Outcome Analysis

What does doing this the completely wrong way look like? (inversion - should be lots of obvious stuff, it's good to lay out and thus avoid the obviously dumb!)

What are possible second and third order consequences of this decision? (second order thinking)

1. If this solution is successful...
2. If this solution is not successful...

Outcome	% Chance	Magnitude If True (1-10)	Result

Final Checklist

1. Is this decision reversible? **Y/N**
2. How much information do you have? %
3. Any need to disagree and commit?
4. Is there any true misalignment (--> escalate)?

Review

Review Date:

What happened:

What did you learn?