

THE PHOENIX CHECKLIST

This checklist was developed by the CIA to encourage their agents to look at a challenge from many different angles. You may have other questions to add that will be helpful.

HINT. Pick a problem or challenge that you need to address that would make a significant difference in your life.

1. Why is it necessary to solve the problem?
2. What benefits will you gain by solving the problem?
3. What is the unknown?
4. What is it you don't yet understand?
5. What is the information you have?
6. What isn't the problem?
7. Is the information sufficient? Or is it insufficient? Or redundant? Or contradictory?
8. Should you draw a diagram of the problem? A figure?
9. Where are the boundaries of the problem?
10. Can you separate the various parts of the problem? Can you write them down? What are the relationships of the parts of the problem?
11. What are the constants (things that can't be changed) of the problem?
12. Have you seen this problem before?
13. Have you seen this problem in slightly different form?
14. Do you know a related problem?
15. Try to think of a familiar problem having the same or a similar unknown.
16. Suppose you find a problem related to yours that has already been solved. Can you use it? Can you use its method?
17. Can you restate your problem? How many different ways can you restate it? More general? More specific? Can the rules be changed?
18. What are the best, worst, and most probably cases you can imagine?