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# Focus

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## Finding Your Thought Partners

Thought partners help people see things in new ways. They first expand and clarify options and then narrow choices to a manageable number. Everyone occasionally needs a thought partner to provide perspective, and perhaps give a nudge in the right direction. Moreover, two heads are better than one.

We all seek advice from time to time, but thought partners are more than advisors. In the best scenario a thought partner is like any true partner -- someone you trust and in whom you confide. A good thought partner brings relevant knowledge to the table; the best bring wisdom (knowledge + context) to your particular situation.

For example, my job as a management consultant is to provide my clients new resources on demand. Like a lean manufacturing supply chain, the resources are available "just in time" and are not inventory with carrying costs. These resources include coaching, advice, information, facilitation, research and analysis, training and development, and so forth. This client-consultant relationship is a partnership based on trust and mutual respect.

Your potential thought partners aren't limited to management consultants! You can find them in many different relationships; just choose people with enough "distance" to be objective. Developing your personal network of thought partners is an investment that pays lifelong dividends.

Partnering has always had social advantages. Today it's even more essential because of knowledge obsolescence. In the distant past of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, having a Ph.D. meant you

could count on a comfortable living. Now it means you used to know a lot of stuff. Acquiring knowledge is no longer a one-time event you did as a youth to launch your career; we now need to be lifelong learners, and thought partners help with that.

Let's finish by looping back from societal change to you. The bad news is that today's rate of change is uncomfortable for us humans. However, the good news is that we have access to resources even King Solomon would envy. Among your potential resources are thought partners. Are you using them?

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