

Solutioner or Critic?

A quick gut check on whether you naturally solve problems, or simply point them out

THE IDEA

In “Finger Pointers,” I talk about the people who look for solutions, and the people who are remarkably good at finding someone else to blame. Most of us probably have a little of both in us.



How to use this resource: Answer each statement as honestly as you can, then total your points to see whether you naturally lean toward being a solutioner or a critic. Use the result as a gut check on how you respond when something goes wrong.

PART ONE

Signs of a solutioner

Give yourself +1 for every statement that's true.

- ☐ If I find an issue, I immediately want to start ideating on how to fix it. +1
- ☐ I avoid assigning blame or shame when something hasn't gone well. +1
- ☐ When I bring up a problem, I like to bring several options for how we could fix it. +1
- ☐ I assume good intent and don't immediately think people made bad choices. +1
- ☐ If I find a gap, I take note and ask about the current status rather than assume no one is taking care of it. +1
- ☐ I can see the order in which things need to be fixed, and I want to help. +1
- ☐ If someone needs help with a problem, I actually make time to help—not just tell them I will. +1
- ☐ I like to get to the root of a problem so I can solve it, not just blame the person in the current seat. +1

☐ I analyze pros and cons lists quickly in my head.

+1

☐ I strive to be helpful, not just to be right.

+1

PART TWO

Signs of a critic

Give yourself -1 for every statement that's true.

☐ I get frustrated when people do things incorrectly.

-1

☐ I feel like the right choice should be obvious in most situations.

-1

☐ I feel like there must be someone to blame when a poor choice is made.

-1

☐ I struggle to dive in and help fix something—especially if the problem is one someone created for themselves.

-1

☐ I think it's important to point out the culprit behind a bad decision.

-1

☐ I don't want my leader to think I was the problem, so I make sure they know who actually was.

-1

☐ I struggle to want to help someone who clearly can't help themselves.

-1

☐ I find it easy to highlight someone else's flaws.

-1

☐ I have a hard time taking accountability for my own shortcomings.

-1

☐ I believe there is a right and a wrong way, and it's important to point out when someone has done something wrong.

-1

Sum the totals (including the negatives)

YOUR TOTAL SCORE

What your score says

7 to 10

You're likely a solutioner. You naturally lean toward solving problems, assuming good intent, and helping move things forward.

4 to 6

You may lean toward being a critic. You may have some critic tendencies, but with awareness and practice, you can lean more toward being a solutioner.

3 or below

You may be a deflective critic. Take a closer look at how you respond when things go wrong, particularly around blame, accountability, and your willingness to help solve the problem. Consider what you may need to change, and whether personal or executive coaching could help.