

A Consultant's View

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Are You a Good Decision Maker?

Decision making is the essential skill of management, yet few people examine how they make decisions or try to improve their decision making. There are ways to make our decision making better. Research is showing that the speed in which we make a decision affects the quality. There are a number of ways to improve a decision including getting multiple choices, increase the time in which we make the decision, and educate ourselves as much as possible prior to making the decision.

Research on the processes of decision making is an active part of psychology and is finding some interesting results.

First off is that it is hard to make good decisions.

The faster we make a decision, the more likely that decision is based on emotions and is wrong. It is surprising how many times we will struggle with a small decision and quickly make a big decision only to regret both.

We make snap decisions based on our expertise. However, when we make all decisions that fast, we make a "snap decision" about something where we don't have expertise. We tend to be overconfident in our abilities to see all the important factors leading into a decision. We do well to recognize when we need to change from a snap decision to one which needs more time to see all the factors involved.

In our decisions, we often do not want to move far from a known spot. It is hard to change an existing decision. Thus, in negotiations, often the first

person to state a position "anchors" the discussion near to that position. We see this also in how corporations get stuck doing things the same way even when that way has known problems.

In order to get past that problem, it can help to have "day dream" time where you postulate picking something totally different and seeing how that choice would work out. Pick a choice quite different from the usual and look at what the ramifications would be.

One way to make a better decision is to select between two or more choices. We humans are much better at choosing between two alternatives than on whether or not to make a single choice. So, creating an alternative to

the choice in front of you is far better than simply facing one choice.

Another way to make better decisions is to make them further in advance. Thus, the general staff of an army will spend time working on decisions to make in advance of the actual events. In addiction recovery, one part of that recovery is to work towards making decisions earlier instead of at the moment of crisis. Some people will create books listing in detail what they will do in many different situations.

Often, the only way to make better decisions is to understand how we make decisions and to work to educate that part of us. If we make "gut choices", then educating our "gut" is the best way that we can wind up with better decisions.

Decision making is a complex area, but as we learn more about it, there are ways to make our decisions better.

**It is Hard
to Make Good
Decisions**

Agreement with a Decision

When the American Colonies finally won independence from Great Britain, there was substantial unity among the colonists, but the revolution did not start that way. At the beginning, many including Benjamin Franklin, were opposed to the revolution. Likewise, during the Civil War, many on both sides were opposed to the war and wanted peace. This illustrates one of the problems with any decision we make: people react to any decision with various levels of support. One way to help get agreement with a decision is to let people participate in the making of that decision.

In many cases, when a decision is announced, 10% of the people are enthusiastic for it, 20% are somewhat in favor of it, 40% are neutral, 20% are somewhat against it, and 10% are actively antagonistic. The challenge is how to move people out of their initial position and into support of the decision.

In the business world, we can reiterate the decision enough times to get the message communicated. We can reinforce the decision by consistently making follow up decisions that support it. We can put our time, resources, and effort into making the decision stick. Other venues have to work to persuade people to change their minds.

In volunteer work and other similar venues, people participate in the making of any decision. Leadership in a volunteer effort involves far more listening and eliciting of input from people. Often, using a consensus approach to making a decision will wind up with a better decision and almost always will result in a decision that has far more support.

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Risky World

There is an app for Android phones that have the NFC antenna built in. The app allows anyone to read the card number, expiration date, and card holder name of any NFC capable credit card. This can be done for any such card within 10 inches including those inside wallets and purses. Organized crime has already taken notice.

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