

Decision Making: A Manager's Perspective

Decision Making – according to Wikipedia the definition of decision making is “the cognitive process resulting in the selection of a belief or a course of action among several alternative possibilities.” It is the role of a manager to convert the theory and vision of executives into viable processes and goals for employees. This involves making decision after decision on a daily basis. For managers, there is no respite from decision making; it is the core of their role within an organization.

How then do managers make the best decision possible in each situation? And how do they handle the inevitable doubt, disagreement, and frustration that can accompany this responsibility? Here are some ideas to help navigate the broad job of making decisions.

Two Key Steps for Making Decisions

Mike Myatt of Forbes.com gives two great pieces of advice for managers when it comes to making decisions. First, always do a **situation analysis**. Whether complex or brief, the idea of a situation analysis can give a manager the right foundation for making choices. A situation analysis includes looking at *why* a decision is being made, *who* the decision will impact (both directly and indirectly), *what* data and research is available to help support a choice, and the *consequences* of making no decision at all.

Secondly, Myatt advocates looking at the decision from a “public” point of view. He concedes that most decisions are made in private, away from the spotlight of public scrutiny. This is often done for perfectly valid reasons – timeliness, confidentiality, etc. However, he emphasizes, decisions are not made in a vacuum. Eventually the decision or its consequences will come to light, and what then? Would you be able to stand by your decision if it were public? How would those closest to you feel about

how you made your decision? How would employees feel?

The point here is not so much a person's happiness or support of the final product, but the faith and trust in the process used by a manager that leads to the final outcome.



Consequences of Indecision

Often managers can become immobilized by the fear of making a poor decision. This leads to a danger zone of indecision and consequently, inaction. The vacuum of indecision can cause a ripple effect throughout an organization. Productivity decreases, doubt and mistrust increase, and overall performance is affected. The act of indecision becomes a decision in and of itself. While waiting to commit to a path or action, inaction can be seen as a lack of support or buy-in for a process or program. It is important that managers understand their *inactions* speak just as loudly as their *actions*. Going back to the steps in the situation analysis can help move a manager past

the hurdle of indecision and commit to action.

Disagreement with Your Decision

More than any other position, managers are subject to constant evaluation of their decisions by others. Direct reports, executives, shareholders, customers... many different levels are affected by

the choices managers make. For every decision made there will inevitably be someone who disagrees with it. However, that is not an excuse to avoid making the tough calls. Understanding and accepting this truth is the first step to trusting your own decision making ability. Have

Stay committed
in your decisions
but flexible in your
approach.
~Tony Robbins

you used all available information? Have you weighed the options? Have you considered the consequences? Does the decision meet ethical standards? If you can answer yes to these questions, then you can withstand the winds of disagreement and stand by your decision.

That Gut Feeling

Managers often have to make quick decisions with limited access to information. Many rely on their “gut” feeling to get them through. This intangible element develops over time, and comes from experience, education, and exposure to years of decision making. While “gut” feelings can be right, they can also be wrong. Be cautious when making a decision solely based on this method. Seek opportunities to substantiate your decision with concrete information and alignment with your personal and organizational values. Oftentimes concrete support for what your “gut” is telling you can be found, and this can make justifying your decision much easier to both yourself and others.

A manager’s day is full of choices. Using the best tools available to make those choices makes for a successful day... and a successful organization.



Decision-Making Compass

- Why is this decision being made?
- Who will the decision impact?
- What data is available to inform my decision-making?
- What are the consequences of taking no action?
- Is my decision aligned with my personal and organizational values?
- How will the public view this decision?



It’s not hard to make
decisions once you know
what your values are.
~Roy Disney

Contact PAS

Decision-making is an indispensable skill for managers. For more information about how PAS’ Organizational Services can help you manage and lead effectively, call PAS at

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