

# Decision Making:

*“Decision is like a sharp knife that cuts straight and clean, indecision a dull one that hacks and tears and leaves ragged edges” – Graham Gordon*

By Liggy Webb

All of us have to make decisions every day. Some decisions are relatively straightforward and others are definitely more difficult. Simple decisions usually need a simple decision-making process. Difficult decisions, however, typically involve a whole host of complex issues. Often there is uncertainty where many facts may not be known and you may have to consider many interrelated factors. There are decisions, too, that have high-risk consequences, and the impact of the decision may be significant for yourself and for others.

Every given situation has its own set of uncertainties and consequences, and anything that involves interpersonal issues can often be challenging as it difficult to predict how other people will react.

With these challenges in mind, the best way to make a complex decision is to use an effective process. A systematic approach will usually lead to consistent, high-quality results, and can improve the quality of almost everything we do.

A logical and systematic decision-making process can help you to address the critical elements that result in a good decision. By taking an organised approach, you're less likely to miss important factors, and you can build on the approach to make your decisions better and better.

To create a constructive environment for successful decision making, you need to first of all establish your objective and define what you want to achieve.

Once you have done this you will need to agree on the process and know how the final decision will be made, including whether it will be an individual decision or involve others. If you have to involve others it is so important to involve the right people and allow other opinions to be heard. Make sure, too, that you are asking the right questions and challenge yourself. Being creative will help too as the basis of creativity is thinking from a different perspective so this is good to do when you are first faced with the situation so that you can explore all your options.

The more good options you consider the more comprehensive your final decision will be. When you generate alternatives, you force yourself to dig deeper, and look at the problem from different angles.



*“In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing.”*

Theodore Roosevelt

If you use the mindset “there must be other solutions out there”, you’re more likely to make the best decision possible. If you don’t have reasonable alternatives, then there’s really not much of a decision to make!

When you’re satisfied that you have a good selection of realistic alternatives, then you’ll need to evaluate the feasibility, risks and implications of each choice.

In decision making, there’s usually some degree of uncertainty, which inevitably leads to risk. By evaluating the risk involved with various options, you can determine whether the risk is manageable. Risk analysis helps you look at risks objectively. It uses a structured approach for assessing threats, and for evaluating the probability of events occurring.

After you have evaluated the alternatives, the next step is to choose between them.

With all of the effort and hard work that goes into evaluating alternatives and deciding the best way forward, it’s easy to forget to “sense check” your decisions. This is where you look at the decision you’re about to make dispassionately, to make sure that your process has been thorough, and to ensure that common errors haven’t crept into the decision-making process.

Once you’ve made your decision, it’s important to explain it to those affected by it, and involved in implementing it. The more information you can give to people about why you made a certain decision, the better. One of the key benefits of taking the systematic approach to decision making is that you will be able to analyse and evaluate your decision making process which will, in turn, make it easier to communicate. If you need support of others they will also feel more reassured that you have given consideration to your actions.

Once you have made your decision, accept that you have made the best decision based on the all information that you had at the time. Deliberation or indecision will hamper your progress so go for it and trust in a positive outcome.

### Decision Making - Useful Tips

- Identify your objective
- Create the right kind of environment
- Establish who else is involved
- Explore the alternatives
- Analyse your options
- Conduct a risk assessment
- Conduct a “sense check”
- Make your decision and stick to it
- Be assertive in how you communicate it
- Believe in a positive outcome

Life is what YOU make it!



The above article is an extract from *The Happy Handbook - A Compendium of Modern Life Skills*

by Liggy Webb which is out now.

Liggy Webb is widely respected as a leading expert in the field of *Modern Life Skills and Workplace Wellness*.

As a presenter, consultant and author she is passionate about her work and improving the quality of people’s lives. She is the founding director of The Learning Architect a consortium of niche industry experts. Liggy has developed a range of techniques to support individuals and organizations to cope more effectively with modern living and the demands and challenges of life in the twenty tens and beyond.

As a consultant with the United Nations she travels expensively and has recently returned from Afghanistan which she describes as biggest life education to date!

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