

# Why We Struggle with Tough Decisions

## Overcoming Doubts and Dilemmas

### How to Make Effective Decisions

- Have a clear objective.
- Gather/evaluate information in a structured way.
- Avoid common decision traps.
- Use intuition to confirm or question the decision.

#### What Makes a Decision Tough?

- ✓ You can't decide what to do.
- ✓ Often involves a conflict of values or a fear of making the wrong choice.

There are two general categories of tough decisions:

- ✓ You really don't know what to do.
- ✓ You know what to do but are concerned about potential consequences.

### Emotions Affect Decision-Making

The neuroscience of decision-making involves studying what is happening in our brains when we make decisions.

- **Columbia Business School Study:** Found that people who trusted their feelings were consistently more accurate in their predictions than those who didn't.
- **Antonio Damasio:** Identified the part of the brain responsible for integrating emotions into the decision-making process. When it is damaged, we lose access to the experience and information that we rely on to make decisions.

**The lesson:** Making decisions well requires the involvement of emotions.

### Key Steps of Making a Tough Decision

- **Before:** Determine values and objective.
- **During:** Collect and analyze information.
- **After:** Gut check.

### Methods for Gathering and Analyzing Data

**Weighted criteria** approach is most useful when:

- You have a number of different alternatives.
- Many different criteria will influence your decision.
- You want an apples-to-apples comparison.

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**Decision tree** approach is most useful when:

- There are several courses of action (four or fewer is ideal).
- You can foresee the potential consequences of each alternative.

### Decision Traps

The following situations complicate the process of making tough decisions:

1. Not being in the right frame of mind
2. Inaccurate or incomplete assumptions
3. Analysis paralysis (perfectionism)
4. Needing approval from others
5. Not learning from mistakes

### How to Deliver a Difficult Message

- Be direct yet sensitive.
- Be empathetic.
- Plan the conversation.
- Prepare for the receiver's response.
- Be available after the conversation.

### Dealing with a Fear of Failure

- Increase your positive thinking.
- Develop a contingency plan.
- Take action: small or big.

#### Questions to Ask Yourself

The following questions will help guide you through the process of making tough decisions.

- ✓ What is your objective? (Define by asking: "What is the best way to...?")
- ✓ What values are important to you that relate to this decision? Do any of them conflict with one another?
- ✓ What structured method(s) will you use to collect and analyze information?
- ✓ What does your gut tell you about your choice? Does your instinct confirm or oppose the decision that looks best based on rational analysis?

Stand alone or as part of a Coaching Engagement.