Making Great Decisions Is Part Of The Job

" *"A problem well stated is a problem half solved."* "

Charles F. Kettering (US Engineer and inventor)

There are six important steps you need to consider when making decisions. They are all equally important and equally simple – but not necessarily easy!

Step 1 – Identify and understand the problem/ challenge

Step 2 – Establish clear objectives

Step 3 – Generate alternative solutions

Step 4 – Evaluate alternatives and select the most suitable

Step 5 – Get started - take action

Step 6 – Evaluate - How is it going?

We will now look at each of these steps individually and then create a decision making template that will assist us in making far better decisions.

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Step 1 – Identify and understand the problem/ challenge

- Is this really your decision or someone else'?

- Do you really need to make a decision? (do you have at least two options?)

- When does the decision need to be made?

- Why is this decision important to you?

- Who will be affected by this decision?

Don't move to Step 2 until you have clearly specified the problem you intend to solve.

Think of a problem in your work place that you need to make a decision on.

Later we will take this problem through the decision making process.

Identify a problem/challenge requiring a decision

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Step 2 – Establish clear objectives

Now it's time to think about the result you want.

What must this decision do, or the solution to the problem achieve? How will you know if your action is working?

A clear idea of the effects of your decision will concentrate your thinking towards a desired outcome and help you in the latter stages of the decision making process.

For complex or very important decisions, divide your criteria into 'musts' and 'wants.'

What must your decision do for you and ideally, what would you also want it to do?

Establishing these two things puts you in a good position to select the best alternative and determine how well it is working.

Step 3 – Generate alternative solutions

There are 3 things to remember about making the right decisions:

- The solutions never announce themselves and they can be elusive to find - dedicate time
- The best solutions come not from logical thinking, but from creative thinking
- Don't settle for the first action that you think of

How can you facilitate active participation in this stage from members of your team?

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Step 4 – Evaluate alternatives and select the most suitable

Now it's time to evaluate the possible solutions you have developed and decide which will best meet the objectives you set in **step 2.**

Every potential solution is likely to have some pros and cons.

The purpose of evaluating each, is to select the one that will achieve your objectives in the best possible way.

Previous experience can help you select a solution, but remember, history does not always repeat itself, especially in today's rapidly changing environment.

What worked before may not work this time.

Blindly following past experience without considering other possibilities is dangerous.

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Step 5 – Get started - take action!

Once you have made your decision, get moving on it!

There are 3 things to do:

1. **Plan**
   Use who, how, what, where, why and when questions to develop your plan.

2. **Safeguard – Manage Risk**
   What can go wrong? How would you know if it was about to happen?

3. **Communicate**
   How, and to whom, will you communicate your decision?
   (Include everyone who will be involved or affected)

Step 6 – Evaluate - How is it going?

- Be sure to review your decision at specified points throughout the process.

- Are the outcomes what you expected?

- Are you happy with the outcomes?

- Do you want to let the decision stand or would you like to make some adjustments?

- If the decision did not come out the way you planned, go through the complete decision making process again.

- Remember, you can always change your mind!

Using the problem you identified at the end of Step 1, go through the 6 Step process using the Decision Making Template on the next page.