

It's decision time. And the decision is clearly yours to make. You've done your due diligence, gathered as much data as you can reasonably expect to get, made your pros/cons list, done the cost/benefit analysis, sought the perspectives of every stakeholder – now all that's left to do is decide. But the decision still isn't clear.

When the facts are clear, some decisions jump out at us. If I want to fill my gas tank at the cheapest price, I can gather information on local gas prices and decide where to go. But life is bigger than logic, and some problems involve unknowable or unmeasurable variables. This is especially true when results are dependent on human behavior. We can't always predict how everyone – even in a relatively homogenous group – will respond to our actions.

Before flipping a coin, here are some things to consider. They may not make the decision easier but might help you feel better about the decision you make.

- 1. The Big Picture.** At crunch time, decisions can feel bigger than they really are. True, some decisions really are “bet the farm” calls. But most of us face few of those. Keep perspective: Are there contingencies if things turn south? Is it reversible? Will a bad call still generate learning and other benefits?

Remember that for a true leader *it's not about you*. If you take personal impact out of the equation, does the best decision for the organization become clearer?

- 2. Consensus doesn't equal good decisions.** Participative decision making is good, but full agreement may just represent “group think”, not “best choice”. If you're fretting over diverse opinions, your leadership goal isn't consensus but to keep everyone moving in the same direction even when they disagree. Team players commit to supporting the organization's direction even when it requires personal sacrifice.
- 3. There is no perfect answer.** The “solution” to any major problem is just a choice of which residual problems you're going to live with. Choose the solution that leaves problems your organization is best equipped to handle.
- 4. You and those you lead will make some bad decisions.** What matters is how you deal with them. Creating the culture of a learning organization will prepare you to make lemonade out of the lemons.
- 5. How you communicate the decision may matter more than the decision itself.** It's an art to mingle confidence and humility. Cocky assurance will enlist some while disenfranchising those who think you're blind. Too much doubt will increase everyone's doubt. Acknowledge uncertainties but maintain confidence that we can pull together to navigate them. Make extra effort to assure the naysayers feel heard and appeal to the importance of their role in your success.



When this decision is history, whether it proved successful or not will pale in comparison to whether the organization was strengthened or weakened through the process.

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