

THE EXCHANGE

This issue's featured subject is "Making Tough Decisions."

MAKING A DECISION MATRIX

How confident are you at making decisions? What type of process do you follow? In his book, *The Confident Decision Maker*, Roger Dawson explains the importance of having a method for making decisions. One method is to ask yourself a series of questions. These questions can include:

- Does the problem require a complex decision?
- Is this a problem or an opportunity?
- Are there existing guidelines to follow?
- Is the problem real or imagined?
- Is it a money problem or a people problem?
- What would happen if you did nothing?
- Is the problem unique?

Next, strive to decide what type of answer you are seeking.

"Am I looking for an answer that is either right or wrong?" This type of decision involves concrete rather than abstract concepts. It requires analysis where you figure out what will work and what will not work. This is like the true or false test in school.

"Am I looking for all the possibilities?" This type of answer requires you to use judgement and choose the best answer. Logical decision making skills will be put to use here. It is like taking a multi-question test in school.

"What if there are no answers?" This can mean that you do not see any solutions to the problem. Remember those trick questions on tests back in college?

"Do I move forward or not?" This is different from the right or wrong answer because it does not require a judgement, rather an action. This type of answer may work best when there is an opportunity rather than a problem.

The more important the decision, the more information you need. In Mr. Dawson's book, he gives a test of knowledge and asks you to give a range for an answer to ensure that you are 90% correct. Most people, even when they give a wide range, miss many of the answers. The purpose of the test is not to determine how smart you are or how much you know, rather how much you think you know. When you think you know, you will be more optimistic about your decision. Get the information first, and then put your optimism to good use to sell your decision to the rest of the team.

Once you have information, beware of errors you may make in interpreting that information. For instance, you may

- Give more importance to information that is more available to you without looking further.
- Perceive information according to your

personal or professional interest.

- Reject information that conflicts with your core beliefs.
- Recall information about things that are familiar to you.
- Ignore information about things that do not interest you.
- Hold onto the first piece of information that you get without questioning it.
- Place greater importance on information that you have just experienced.
- Look harder for information that supports your theories.

For more information on how to improve your decision-making abilities, TLC recommends that you read *The Confident Decision Maker*, published by Nightingale-Conant. It could be the best decision that you make today.

IN THE NEWS: E-LEARNING/ ONLINE TRAINING



TLC is now a provider of core skills training and services in e-learning/on-line training.

- **Affordable on-line learning through 70+ courses** for core soft-skills, conveniently accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for a full year.
- **Focus is on practical working knowledge that is immediately usable**, where the content is focused on the few fundamentals that have the greatest influence on overall performance.
- **30-45 minute sessions** where the major thoughts and ideas of each course have been condensed into a short time frame with automatic book-marking capabilities so a learner can come back later and finish where they left off.
- **Quality content**, rich with usable job aids, developed by professionals who are considered content experts in that particular category.
- **Reporting capabilities** allow management to access the system anytime to see who took what courses, how long they spent, if they completed them, and more.

For information or to arrange a convenient demonstration, call Don Wheeler at 423-622-8255.



DECEMBER 2004

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

HOW TO SAY NO (AND BE GUILT-FREE)	2
DECISIONS AND STYLES	2
BACK IS AGAINST THE WALL	3
WHAT OUR CLIENTS ARE SAYING	3
FEATURED SERVICE: SEASON TICKETS	3
CEO CORNER: "Getting the Present Right"	4
ASK THE EXPERTS	4

LOOKING AHEAD:

- ♦ **New Habits - the focus of the January issue of the Exchange.**

LOOKING BACK:

- ♦ **For previous editions of The Exchange, go to our [back issues](#).**
- ♦ **Re-read the 09/2000 edition: Making Decisions as a Team.**

Again and again, the impossible problem is solved when we see that the problem is only a tough decision waiting to be made.

Dr. Robert H. Schuller



Helpful Hints:

- Before making a tough decision, seek advice from someone who knows you and that you trust.
- Take time to ponder extreme decisions instead of making them spontaneously based solely on emotion.
- Share your dilemma with another person who thinks differently to gain another perspective.

Of all earthly creatures, humans alone have the power to choose.

Anonymous



To learn more about it, click here!

HOW TO SAY NO (AND BE GUILT-FREE)

By Vincent Ivan Phipps, B.S.

Deciding when to tell someone no is perhaps the toughest decision we can make. When it comes to saying no, there are two types of people; a.) Those who say no, mean it, and feel fine, and, b.) Those who say no, don't mean it, and feel guilty.

I would like to propose a third way. First understand that this article is coming from a person who is a pushover sometimes. I made a New Year's Resolution to say no at least six times in 2004. So far, I have said no five times this year, so, I've got one more to go. (I'll probably use it on my daughter when she asks for a puppy again this Christmas!)

Approximately 30% of our population can tell others no very easily. That's because they are task-focused and are more concerned with accomplishing what is currently on their to-do list than with hurting anyone's feelings. The remaining 70% of us just have a hard time saying no. We may sacrifice our own time, food, health, and responsibilities just to avoid letting someone down by telling them no.

What about the times you truly have to say no because of lack of time, money, preparation, energy, or information, etc? Although we understand the logic of saying no, it does not compensate for the guilt we feel once we say that awful word.

Saying no and knowing when to say no can be tough. Use the following tips to make it easier:

- **Be informative.** If someone invites you to a Christmas party this year and you are unable to go, instead of just saying, "I'm sorry but no thank you." Instead say, "On that day, I committed two weeks ago to attend another party. Please invite me to the next event."
- **Suggest alternatives.** If someone asks if you can bake homemade cookies for the office, and you cannot, you can respond by saying, "Because I am visiting family and friends this year, I cannot bake homemade cookies. Let me know how many people are coming and I can purchase store bought cookies or have them catered and delivered."
- **State your limitations.** Let's say one of your co-workers is burning the peppermint candle very late on Christmas Eve. They want you to review a contract at 6:00 p.m. today and you planned on being gone by 12 p.m. You can say, "I am leaving today at 12 p.m. If you can have it to me by 11:30 a.m., I can have it to you before I leave. If you cannot, I will look at it immediately after the holidays."

I remember my father noticed how often I over exerted myself to help others. He said, "People get themselves in more trouble by saying yes too soon than by not saying no soon

enough."

This year I am on pace with my goal of saying no six times. So when my daughter asks about that dog, I will say, "Honey, since daddy travels and you live in a different city, the dog would not have anyone to take care of it during the day. I bought us a membership to the zoo so every time we are together, we can see a lot of animals and even pet and feed them!" (Please don't spoil her surprise!)



DECISIONS AND STYLES

Extroverts, people who think out loud, and introverts, people who edit before they speak, make decisions differently. Let's look at the extroverts first because they are the first to speak up.

Extroverts have little fear of making decisions. They are comfortable with making decisions rather quickly. For this reason, extroverts tend to make more decisions per day than their introverted counterparts.

Task-focused extroverts will make the decision based on information; that is to say, information that they have on hand. Because of their speed, they will usually not slow themselves down enough to obtain further research. Of course, this depends upon the importance of the decision.

People-focused extroverts will make the decision based on feelings or intuition. They seem to sense the right action to take. While they may exhibit great confidence in their choice, this type of extrovert may have difficulty gaining the buy-in from others who rely on hard data.

Because extroverts are willing to take more risks and make decisions more quickly, it will not surprise you that they may make more errors. Their approach may be captured in the phrase, "Win some; lose some."

Introverts take their time making decisions. You might think of them as being more incisive than decisive. They like to gather data and input from others before deciding.

Introverts focused on task may believe they can never have enough information. They may research their research. Extroverts might claim that introverts suffer from paralysis of analysis.

Introverts focused on people highly value input from other people. They are most comfortable with team decisions. This usually takes more time; yet, these folks are not in a hurry.

Your tendencies in decision-making may well be influenced by your behavioral style. Regardless

continued on page 3

BACK IS AGAINST THE WALL

Having to make tough decisions can make us feel as if our "back is against the wall." What does this expression have to do with making tough decisions? Although many of our popular idioms come from other cultures and other countries, we owe this one to good ole' 19th century American slang.

There are three particular situations when someone has their back against a wall.

1. A police lineup: suspects stand with their backs to walls with numbers measuring their height. Even if you are innocent, when your back is against this wall, you are in a predicament because the witness/victim identifying you could inadvertently choose you.

2. Being arrested: when police officers arrest someone, before they put handcuffs on the other person, they make the perpetrator spread their hands on something flat: hood of a car or against a wall.

3. A firing squad: those sentenced to death by firing squad were often placed with their backs against a wall, or sometimes just a pole, and were made to face a row of gunmen. The gunmen would then draw their guns, and...well, you know the rest!

Because of these occurrences involving a wall, whenever "against a wall" is used, it is referring to a difficult situation. Remember to apply effective communication skills to make sure that the next time you are faced with making a tough decision, you are well equipped to decide instead of having your back against a wall!



DECISIONS AND STYLES, continued from page 2

of your style, remember to determine the importance and urgency of the decision. The more important the decision, the more information you may need. The more urgent the decision, the quicker you may need to make it. For the best decisions, strive to avoid urgent and important decisions by looking ahead to remove the urgency. Some situations demand both urgency and importance. Because this is inevitable, it is best to follow the scout motto and "always be prepared."

WHAT OUR CLIENTS ARE SAYING

"As the logistics planner for our team building trip, the good times started for me during the initial planning process. TLC is easy and fun to work with. It was great as a team member who participates as well as plans logistics, to still be just as surprised as the rest of the group about the event. I had a wonderful time. Educational, fun and just what I needed!"

Vivian Cobb, Atlanta, GA

FEATURED SERVICE: Season Tickets with TLC

Beginning in February of 2005, TLC will provide top-notch seminars at The Chattanooga the third Friday of each month. Each program provides six hours of training, a continental breakfast, a superb buffet lunch, and customized materials to enhance learning. See the schedule below for a listing of the entire year's program topics.

Companies may purchase as many Season Tickets as they desire. Each ticket admits one person to all twelve 6-hour training sessions. A different person may attend each month for each Season Ticket purchased. Call today to qualify for charter membership and receive 40% off the season price. Materials, refreshments, and lunch are included. This program can also be brought in-house and customized for a company.

February 18, 2005

Customize Your Communication

March 18, 2005

Get Results Through the Power of Questions

April 15, 2005

Understand What People Are Trying to Say

May 20, 2005

Meetings That Matter

June 17, 2005

Find a Better Way to Say It

July 15, 2005

Reducing Defensiveness

August 19, 2005

Listen for Success

September 16, 2005

Interviewing for Success

October 21, 2005

Presentations That Get Ovations

November 18, 2005

Understand Your Leadership Capabilities

December 16, 2005

L.E.A.R.N. as a Team

January 20, 2006

S.O.S. Success Over Stress

Call Don Wheeler today at 423-622-8255 to get your Season Ticket!



Remember to...

- Look for alternatives in making tough decisions.
- Have a backup plan in case your primary decision does not work.
- Request input from others who will be affected by your decision.

Making a wrong decision is understandable. Refusing to search continually for learning is not.

Philip (Bayard) Crosby

Do something. If it works, do more of it. If it doesn't, do something else.

Franklin D. Roosevelt



Your life changes the moment you make a new, congruent, and committed decision.

Anthony Robbins

Christmas gift suggestions: To your enemy, forgiveness. To an opponent, tolerance. To a friend, your heart. To a customer, service. To all, charity. To every child, a good example. To yourself, respect.

Oren Arnold

TLC, Talk Listen Communicate, LLC

842 S. Germantown Road
Chattanooga, TN 37412

Phone: 423-622-8255
Fax: 423-624-4365
1-888-BECAUSE

Email: tlc@talklisten.com
www.talklisten.com

CEO CORNER: "Getting the Present Right"

By Beverly Inman-Ebel, MA CCC-SLP



I bet you have someone on your holiday list for whom it is a challenge for you to buy the right present. For me, it is my father. He doesn't have hobbies to support or cravings for specific objects of his desire.

About a decade ago he told me he had enough "Tennessee stuff" to last a lifetime for several fans. I think the toilet seat cover sent him over the edge.

Every year it is a major decision for me because I see the holidays as one more opportunity to demonstrate my love and admiration. Earlier this year I thought I had the problem solved, not only for this year, but for several years to come. I offered to buy him a pair of miniscule hearing aids. For years he has missed out on conversations due to his hearing loss. He would only agree if I promised to count it as his present for the rest of his life. I bartered him down to ten years before my mother decided she would just buy it for him. Not fair. I had the idea for the right present and I didn't get to give it to him. He told me it was the thought that counts.

On a recent trip to Dallas, I happened upon a unique antique store that specialized in old magazines. I bought my father a copy of Life magazine that was originally published the week he was born. I was very satisfied with the knowledge I had found the right present.

This fall, I have traveled more than usual for business. In one month alone I went to Scotland, Washington State, Philadelphia, New York (twice), D.C., Detroit, and Italy. In all my travels, I managed to keep in touch with my parents through the wonders of my Blackberry. Even when we were apart for those important autumn football games, we kept in touch electronically. During this busy time I made the trip to their home twice and they came to our house twice, an hour journey for the traveler.

As I get ready to wrap the magazine for Christmas, I realize that not only did I get the

right present, I got the present right. I took the time in my daily life to connect to the people that I adore. How about you? December is traditionally a time to give a gift to meaningful people in your life. Send a hand written note or make that personal call. This is one decision that is not difficult. Find a way to let them know that they are special to your life.

So during this busy holiday season, make the right decisions, get the right present, and most importantly, get the present right. All we are guaranteed is the present. Live it! Live your dreams.

ASK THE EXPERTS



Dear TLC,

I have a tough decision to make. I have to promote someone within my department. There are only two people who are qualified. Either would do well in the position. The first person is Henry. Henry does not have any formal training or education but is the most knowledgeable member with over 15 years experience. The other person is Suzie. She has been with the company for about 3 years. She has two degrees in this field but lacks experience. Both have their set of friends. I don't care who gets the promotion but I want my team to be happy. What should I do? Stuck Like Glue

Dear Stuck,

Break this decision down into two parts. First, focus on the job and not the employees. Forget about your two candidates and identify what responsibilities the job requires. Second, be systematic. Based on the requirements of the job, create a t-chart/check list. Rate requirements based on their importance. Give a check to each point required and go down your list to determine which employee possesses the most skills.

Then, consider a trial basis. Meet with Henry and Suzie. Ask them what their thoughts are. Align them with their career goals. State that you are considering each for the promotion and ask them for feedback on how they think the decision should be based.

TLC establishes long-term relationships with our clients. If we have helped you or if you believe our approach to change would work for someone you know, please communicate with us by email [tlc@talklisten.com] or phone [1-888-232-2873]. We work with individuals and groups on the following subject areas: attitude, listening, body language, voice, leadership, compliments and corrections, behavioral style, teamwork, effective meetings, public speaking, accent reduction and much more!

All original materials in this newsletter are the copyrighted property of TLC, Talk Listen Communicate, LLC. For reprint permission, please email a request to tlc@talklisten.com.