



# PETRA PLANNING

MAKE THE DECISION TO BE DECISIVE



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### LIFE LESSONS for BUSINESS OWNERS

Your business becomes the result of the decisions you as a manager or business owner make. That being said, the best managers must be equipped with one common strength—decisiveness.

Napoleon said, "Nothing is more difficult, and therefore more precious, than to be able to decide." I couldn't agree more. Decision-making is difficult and risky for a reason. You're responsible for not only the positive potential outcomes of the decision, but also the negative. You could potentially damage yours or someone else's career, business or even life.

With all that on the line, no wonder so many are trapped by indecision. When you find yourself similarly stuck, remind yourself that there is something worse than making a poor decision—not making a decision at all. Theodore Roosevelt said it best when he said, "In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing the wrong thing and the worst thing you can do is nothing." We've established that decision-making is important; now let's talk about how to do it well. If you're a manager and decisiveness is not your strong suit keep in mind that your decision-making process can be democratic. I've found that 80 percent of the time, if you and your team are in alignment, general consensus will rule. Meaning most of the time the team can make the decision together.

It's your job as a manager and leader to facilitate that democratic process through constructive conversation. The key word being conversation—no one wants to be told what to do. Instead of leading a team meeting with directives and appointments, lead with questions and several solutions that will stimulate conversation. Not only will this contribute to a strong resolution, after all two minds are better than one and three or four are even better, but it will also result in a solution your team will stand behind because they were part of the decision-making process. Your job as a leader and key decision-maker is to make the decision your team's idea.

Sure, as managers sometimes we'd rather just give direction. We think it's more efficient if we skip the team meeting. Plus, we think directing without the team's input somehow reinforces our role as the leader. Both points are flawed. First, asking the team's input may take more up front time, but when the team carries out the decision without your having to constantly coach them, you'll be happy you took the extra time. As for the second point, dictating does not make you a leader. That's your ego getting in the way. Dictating breeds resentment which will slow and could even destroy your progress.

To get you through the remaining 20 percent of decisions, either when you have to make a decision on the spot, or your team can't come to a conclusion, I've pinpointed five steps to solid decision-making

#### **FIVE STEPS TO SOLID DECISION-MAKING**

Before we start, I'd like to point out there are five steps, not ten or 20. This is to underscore the importance of efficiency in your decision process. Think about your decisions carefully, but don't mull over the situation long enough for the decision to make itself. Decide and move forward..

## **STEP ONE: UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE**

Whether you're choosing where you want to eat lunch or how you want to grow your business, you must understand what you want. Are you craving Mexican or Italian food? Do you want your business to grow into a national corporation or into a local staple? Understanding your underlying goals will guide you toward your decisions.

## **STEP TWO: CONSIDER THE PATHS**

Multiple roads can lead you to the same destination but will have different obstacles along the way. Contemplate the different paths so that you're well aware of your options. This process should include research, recalling past experiences and applying existing data. To continue with the travel analogy, you'd research by looking into each path's mileage, traffic pattern and design, then you'd delve into you and your friends' experiences on each path and finally, you'd look at your data. Do you have enough money to fuel your car on each path? Logistically which path will work?

## **STEP THREE: CHOOSE**

You've decided what you want, you know the different ways of getting it and you've done your research—so be confident and choose. In the Marine Corp they have something called the 70 percent solution. If they have 70 percent of the information, have completed 70 percent of the analysis and feel 70 percent confident, they move forward. If this logic is good enough for the Marine Corp while they're in battle, it's good enough for you while you're at work.

## **STEP FOUR: RALLY THE TROOPS**

Present your ideas to your team and get them on board. Again, make it a conversation. If you were forced to make a decision without their input, or had to conclude a team-decision discussion because the team couldn't agree, fill them in on the circumstances, the options and your thought process. If you find yourself in the latter situation, where your team couldn't agree, you'd say: We're not making any headway here, after hearing your thoughts on decision options A, B and C, we're going to proceed with C because I truly believe it will be the best option for our team and the business. In the end, if you believe in your decision your team will too, which will increase the likelihood of a positive outcome.

## **STEP FIVE: FOLLOW THROUGH AND TRACK YOUR DECISION**

As a manager it's your job to jumpstart the decision by making a plan and gaining the agreement of your team members to take ownership of that plan. Once the plan is in action, you must monitor the team's progress and the decision's effectiveness. There are different ways of doing this. The old fashioned way is by simply asking team members about their progress and then determining the success or failure of the decision based on the end result. The better way is to systematize the follow-through and monitoring with an online software tool.

## **SYSTEMATIZING DECISIONS WITH SOFTWARE**

Steps one through four are contemplative and theoretical whereas step five is actionable. It's where your strategic decisions are in play to carry out the larger goal you defined in step one. This is why step five, Follow through and track your decision, is the most important step and the step 85 percent of managers miss. To help business owners and managers successfully complete this step, I developed Align, a web-based software that systematizes company accountability and follow through.

Align is a platform where team members have individual dashboards to keep track of personal Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that contribute to larger team priorities. Team members track their KPIs within the software. Since everyone in the company can view all profiles, progress towards goals and the effectiveness of a manager's decisions are transparent. By having an online system that manages team members' activities, business decision-makers are free to focus their attention on more important, impactful activities—maybe even the next big decision.

Additionally, by tracking your decisions with software, you can gauge the effectiveness of your decision while it's in progress versus when it's completed. This allows you to realize a bad decision before it's too late so you can change your course of action.

Ultimately, good decisions come from good information. If you follow the five steps and systematize your follow through, you'll be an effective decision-maker and manager. It's that simple.

# THE PETRA EXPERIENCE

**The Petra Experience is like a Mental Marathon of focused effort to create a specific set of priorities and a planned process to achieve them... as a team.**

## Looking to change your business life - forever?

The daily grind of growing a business is tough... it doesn't have to be that way. We work from our own business experiences while focusing on your business – as coach and an accountability partner. We implement the Petra Process in a way that ensures it “sticks” then we stay engaged to keep you on your path to success and less frustration. We don't want this to be just another thing you start – then it gets ignored and finally dies... let's stop that cycle in your business. The Petra Program 'clarifies' what is most important to be done – by whom, by when – **AND** creates an accountability structure to ensure **IT GETS DONE.**

*Andy Bailey is lead entrepreneur coach with business coaching firm Petra and serves as the Entrepreneur Organization's global membership director. Visit his blog at [www.petracoach.com](http://www.petracoach.com) for more business and leadership insight.*

### **PETRA COACH**

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