

Make the Decision to Be

BY ANDY BAILEY

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.

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% 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.

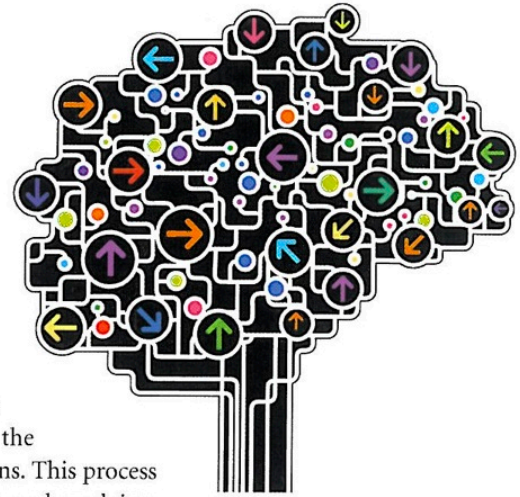
As managers, sometimes we’d rather just give direction. We think it’s more efficient if we skip the team meeting. Plus, we think directing without the team’s input somehow reinforces our role as the leader. Both points are flawed. First, asking the team’s input may take more time upfront, but when the team carries out the decision without your having to 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% 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 making the right decisions.

FIVE STEPS TO SOLID DECISION MAKING

Before we start, I’d like to point out there are five steps, not 10 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.

DECISIVE



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.

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.

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.

STEP FOUR: Rally the troops. Present your ideas to your team and get them on board. 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 the group in on the circumstances.

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.

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 that 85% 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.

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. *MW*

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