



December 2016

Volume 23, Number 12

As we are in full swing of holiday parties, gift giving, and traveling, it may be difficult to dial it in and make major decisions while boosting productivity in the workplace. However, I hope you find these articles useful since we are only a few short weeks away from the New Year when organizations and teams often need a "fresh start." Among all the mayhem, don't forget to truly enjoy time with your loved ones and have a safe, happy, and healthy holiday.

Kristin

#### IN THIS MONTH'S **ISSUE**

- ◆ [Try this Process for High-Stakes Decision-Making](#)
- ◆ [Creating a Roundabout Style Workflow](#)
- ◆ [How Panel Moderators Can Manage Panelist PowerPoint Slides](#)
- ◆ [From the Bookshelf: Together is Better: A Little Book of Inspiration](#)
- ◆ [Contact](#) Kristin

#### TRY THIS PROCESS FOR HIGH-STAKES DECISION-MAKING

At the recent Chief Executive Network Fall Leadership Conference at the PGA National Resort in Palm Beach Gardens, Brent Adamson, principal executive advisor at CEB and co-author of *The Challenger Sale* and *The Challenger Customer*, shared his insights on the dynamics of large, complex purchases.

He said,

"The days of selling to one person are over...It's now a purchase by committee where the average buying group size is 6.8 people."

Why have we migrated from one decision maker to many? Adamson suggests that these broader solutions span across the organization, necessitating more involvement, especially when multiple functions are responsible for implementation. And since the modern organization is fairly "flat," they can spread the risk among the leaders.

The problem is that this diversity of functional decision-makers all come with their own priorities, agendas and metrics. And when you put them in a room together, what can they agree on? Where's the common ground? Adamson contends that it is "very little" and typically revolves around decreasing risk, minimizing disruption and saving money – which ultimately makes the group move more cautiously!

Furthermore, he suggests that there are all kinds of dysfunctions that occur:

1. Stakeholders don't have a fair say
2. They avoid discussing key issues
3. There are multiple disagreements that don't get resolved.

While I agree that these things do happen, I don't think it's all that bleak! A high

performing team will agree on the *process* to make the decision even before they start discussing the options – so they can avoid the dysfunctions and truly achieve the best decision for the company.

I suggest the following process when making an important, “high-stakes” decision:

### 7 Steps to MAKING A HIGH STAKES DECISION

The tricky part to all of this, but particularly as the group is trying to narrow in on a decision, is for people to let go of their preconceived position and be open to the discussion and rationale - as to what's best for the company rather than their own personal function.

- 1 Agree on specific criteria for a successful outcome.
- 2 Confirm the process you will use and ground rules for engagement.
- 3 For each option, go around the room and list all of the options' strengths and benefits.
- 4 THEN list each of the options' areas for improvement - teasing out what's important to each stakeholder.
- 5 Take a "Straw Poll" - a first pass at which option is best for the organization.
- 6 Discuss the results. Just because an option got a majority vote doesn't mean it's a slam dunk!
- 7 Listen carefully to the minority opinion. Ask, "What makes you prefer this option over the majority option?"

For more information on how we help leaders make better decisions and achieve sustainable results, contact Kristin Arnold at [www.ExtraordinaryTeam.com](http://www.ExtraordinaryTeam.com)

1. **Agree on the criteria** for a successful outcome – and try to make it as specific and/or quantifiable as possible. For example, if you are trying to decide on which car to buy, the criterion of “must exceed 30 miles per gallon ” is better than “must have good gas mileage.” For more complex decisions, you may also want to rank the relative importance of the criteria such as high (must), medium (should), or low (optional).
2. **Confirm the process** you will use to discuss the various options. Make sure everyone understands and agrees with the process and the ground rules. Some ground rules I often use during decision-making meetings are:
  - Candid, frank conversation
  - All participate, no one dominates
  - Listen intently
  - Generate light and not heat
3. For each option, go around the room and list all of the **options’ strengths and benefits** FIRST. Then, go around the room and list the options’ areas for improvement. It’s helpful to have one person record the ideas on a flip chart for all to see. This step is hugely important to ensure that all ideas are put on the table, and each team member listens intently to understand each idea. Questions may be asked for clarification, but not to criticize or judge the idea or option.
4. This conversation, in essence, **teases out what’s important** to each stakeholder. You may even find that there are some “missing” criteria the team failed to consider OR that someone is lobbying for a “new” criterion that no one cares about! Be very careful about adding or amending the criteria. Make sure you have full team agreement before you do!
5. Take a **“Straw Poll”** – a first pass at which option is best for the company. For example, each stakeholder writes down the best choice on a piece of paper or sticky note, based on the conversation. One person (the group leader) tallies the results and shares the results by option and number of votes.
6. The group then **discusses and comments**. Just because an option got a majority vote doesn’t mean it’s a slam-dunk! Unless it’s a unanimous vote (where all agree), then there will be a majority who agrees and will support the decision and then there will also be a minority who does not agree and may sabotage the successful implementation of that decision.
7. **Listen carefully** to the minority opinion. Ask, “What makes you prefer this option(s) over the majority option?” or “What kept you from choosing the majority option?”

The tricky part to all of this, but particularly as the group is trying to narrow in on a decision, is for people to let go of their preconceived position and be open to the discussion and rationale – as to what’s best for the company rather than their own personal function. More often than not, the group will coalesce around one option and, because the process included these diverse stakeholders and opinions, will have a higher probability of a successful implementation.

In a subsequent conversation, Adamson agreed: “There is much that teams can do to increase their chances of reaching bigger/better decisions with less pain and more productivity. In fact, our CEB data demonstrates pretty emphatically the value of the kinds of actions you describe. In our work, we call it “Collective Learning.”

And we find that in those purchases where customers engage in collective learning, the supplier is 20% more likely to win a high-quality sale (which is a significant/meaningful jump). The specific customer behaviors that comprise collective learning in our research

are:

- Exploration of objections, concerns, and uncertainties amongst stakeholders
- Surfacing disconnects and competing viewpoints
- Mutual willingness to deepen their understanding of their challenge and solution
- Active probing for missed interdependencies or unanticipated consequences
- Joint resolution of objections, concerns, and uncertainties

So let's have a little collective learning when making high-stakes decisions!

## **CREATING A ROUNDABOUT STYLE WORKFLOW by Joe Sherren**

I am sure many of you have been noticing that Prince Edward Island (PEI) is now catching up with the rest of the world and installing more traffic circles or "roundabouts." I highly commend this move. These efficient, traffic movers have been used for over 50 years in other countries.

It shows there is a change in mindset of government and planners that we can trust drivers to make appropriate decisions when entering intersections. Of course to succeed, driver training is absolutely necessary.

I first experienced the efficiency of roundabouts was in The Netherlands. I noticed that even during rush hour, there was very little traffic congestion. These traffic circles eliminated the need for stop lights and I was intrigued at how well they worked.

Most of North America uses traffic lights. This outdated paternalistic system takes decision-making from the people, assuming it will make traffic safer. However, when too many areas of oversight (traffic lights) are implemented, we get interrupted traffic flow and the enticement to disobey the traffic light "boss."

There was a recent study done in Indiana where the City of Carmel replaced stoplights with roundabouts. Not only did traffic flow smoother, they experienced the following benefits:

1. Repair and road construction dropped \$125,000
2. There was a reduction in gas use of over 24,000 gallon/year
3. Accidents involving personal injury dropped 80%
4. Total accidents dropped 40%

These roundabouts have also made it easier and safer for pedestrians and bicyclists to navigate. Indiana won an international award for this innovation. In the Netherlands, they use traffic circles almost exclusively, however, there are guidelines and drivers are properly trained. There is trust that everyone will follow the rules of respect and politeness to others. Because of that, traffic flows freely.

I believe this is a great metaphor for how organizations should be structured. Instead of the boss taking the attitude of "I know best," which causes interrupted workflow by their constant monitoring, empower employees and give them more autonomy to keep the workflow moving efficiently.

Could an organization maintain efficiency using this model? We actually witnessed it at Microsoft in Amsterdam. There, employees are not required to be 'desk-prisoners' for eight hours a day. In fact, most do not even have assigned workstations — not even the managers. People are trusted to do their work how and where they choose, and output among employees is shared through cloud computing. There are guidelines which govern how people share and respect each other's time and personal working style. These procedures are followed, reviewed, and revised with input from all employee levels.

The workflow is not interrupted because every decision does not have to go through the manager (intersection). Employees discover their own problems and work together to

find the best solutions. Even individual performance plans are shared with colleagues. Increased efficiencies are achieved because the manager is not a "traffic light" causing workflow to stop and start. Employees are measured and compensated for the value of their output.

The PEI road system is trending towards more traffic circles. Can PEI organizations evolve to this model of trust in the workplace as well?

There are now studies that show, by implementing a more trusting workplace model, morale will increase, absenteeism will decrease, and working relationships will be enhanced. All this will result in happier people, higher productivity, and more satisfied customers.

## **HOW PANEL MODERATORS CAN MANAGE PANELIST POWERPOINT SLIDES**

I am currently preparing for a panel discussion where one panelist is *insistent* that she needs PowerPoint slides. Considering that slides are usually for presentations - and the "one unforgivable offense" is to rise and give a presentation, I am loathing to entertain her request. Panels should focus on the discussion and interaction between panelists and *not* a humongous screen.

That being said, there can be some instances when slides can be appropriate. Such as when it:

1. Adds value from the attendee's perspective
2. Makes an abstract concept more visibly understandable
3. Grabs the audience's attention

Here are some ideas where I think it is appropriate to have a slide:

- Panelist Slide. One slide for each panelist with a photograph, name, a few key bullets and Twitter handle. Display this slide when the panelist is introduced. Create a continuous loop of all the panelist slides to show as people are walking into the room, prior to the start of the session.
- Panelist Summary Slide. One slide with each panelist lined up in the same seating order with photo, headline and Twitter handle. This stays up for the duration of the session.
- Transition. A funny, applicable video transition as the panel is getting set up or right after it is over
- Reference. Allow each panelist to submit one (or other specific number) slide that he or she may need to reference during the conversation. If you allow more, then you need to allow ALL the panelists the same number of slides.

## **Presentations**

If you are going to allow panelists to present using visuals, encourage them to:

- As a general rule of thumb, a 60-minute panel can get through 15-20 slides and a panelist should speak to only 2-3 slides before giving the floor to another panelist. Set a max number of slides and amount of time.
- Keep the slides brief and specific to the topic. Consider having additional information in a handout, takeaway or on a website rather than in the slides.
- Use the organization's defined format or template, if required.
- Include the panelist's contact name and information on their first slide.
- Keep the slideshow from being dependent on Wi-Fi. Although it may be accessible, it still may not work!

- Use video judiciously. It can gobble up precious time quickly.

If possible, collect the presentations early to review the slides prior to the event to ensure panelists are addressing the topic, limiting their slide count and minimizing duplication among the panelists' presentations. Don't worry about making all the slides look the same – unless the organization has mandated it.

As the panel moderator, I like to assemble one overall slideshow file and be responsible for advancing the slide deck. Preload the file on a single computer so you eliminate the technical difficulties in making multiple laptops work with a single projector. Then, as your panelists speak, you (or the A/V tech) can easily bring up and advance the slides.

Finally, beware of the clever panelist who wants to show a slide or video at the very last minute. Your answer should be a firm and pleasant, "No." You didn't really want slides for your panel discussion, anyway!

### **FROM THE BOOKSHELF: TOGETHER IS BETTER - A LITTLE BOOK OF INSPIRATION**

It started with a two-hour wait at the Portland, OR airport. Perusing the business book section at the airport bookseller (Sorry, Amazon!), I picked up Simon Sinek's latest book, ["Together is Better."](#) I've loved his other books, *Start with Why* and *Leaders Eat Last*, and I speak about teamwork, so I expected....something else.

Yes, this is different from Simon's other fare, but quite lovely. I flipped through the pages and saw quite a few "quotes" that I have heard, seen or even used myself. The drawings reminded me of Maurice Sendak (*Where The Wild Things Are*) - but not really upon close scrutiny.

So I turned to the introduction and was entranced from that moment on. I stood in the airport bookstore and read the entire book. Yep. Right there. All 117 pages. (Although some pages don't even have any text.) Except I didn't read the 20 pages of "a little more" where Sinek goes into a little more detail about some of the concepts.

The story is supposed to be a metaphor. I guess you could call it that...although I think the PICTURES carry the metaphor. The story consists of simple proclamations of how we can work together. Simple reminders of how to lead others to greatness. And how we become better people, leaders, parents, mothers, fathers, etc. when we are around others.

If you are looking for a little inspiration, this is the book!

**©2016 Quality Process Consultants, Inc. | The Extraordinary Team | All Rights Reserved**

USA: 11890 East Juan Tabo Road | Scottsdale, AZ 85255 | 480.502.2100

Canada: 268 Campbell's Way | Cape Traverse, PE COB 1X0 | 416.399.9223

U.S. and Canada Toll Free: 1.800.589.4733

[www.ExtraordinaryTeam.com](http://www.ExtraordinaryTeam.com)