



February 2016

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Decisions, decisions. We make them all the time. Minor, major, big, little and even ginormous decisions! Lately, I have been giving a lot of thought to how we make decisions. Even NOT making a decision can be a decision!

So let's make a special effort this month to think about HOW we make decisions - and improve our ability to think things through. Would love to hear your thoughts on this.

Kristin

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WHAT WAS I THINKING? TO BUY A NEW CAR . . . OR NOT?

This article is NOT about buying a new car...but it IS about the decision-making process I used this month in THINKING about buying a new car.

My 12-year-old Cadillac CTS inexplicably rolled into the file cabinet at the back of my garage. The file cabinet was relatively unharmed, however, my sweet little Cadi's front bumper broke in two. If the crunch had been three inches to the right or to the left, the bumper would have emerged unscathed. But no. The edge of the file cabinet struck a strut in the front bumper and it suffered a pretty significant crease.

So I went down to my local collision center to get it fixed and possibly spend a few bucks touching up the myriad dings and scratches elsewhere while I had the car in the shop. The damage? \$1,000-\$1,500 to fix.

Since my CTS is only worth about 1.5-2k, the question is, "Do I really want to put that kind of money into my cream puff of a car that has been lovingly cared for over the years, but also has 120,000 miles?"

The question became even more poignant when the collision center manager looked at me and said, "I wouldn't put one more dime into this car. The technology and gas mileage is so much better on the new models."

So my brain went into hyperdrive. Is it time to buy a new car?

I called my bank to find out about the loan amount, rates etc. As a basis, I threw out \$30k and got easily pre-approved for \$45k! Then I started looking online through the bank's auto-buying service and looked at a few models that I have salivated over while working with my clients: The Kia K-900 and the Mercedes-Benz E350 Sport looked really nice. A little over my 30k budget...but still doable. I even went for a test drive.

Ahhh...the nappa leather, the smooth ride, air-cooled seats for the blistering hot Arizona summers. The siren call was beckoning....

As a [professional facilitator](#) who preaches about the importance of thinking things through, I could feel myself being sucked in to the glamour of buying a brand new (in this case slightly used, certified pre-owned) vehicle. Sometimes, I get on a freight train and start LOOKING for reasons to support my decision. Ah! I'll have bluetooth! Navigation! Air-cooled seats AND steering wheel! Sweet ride! Safer too! And here's the most suspect: I'll be able to show support for my client.

But then I paused and thought, I could fix my beloved Cadi and asked myself, "What else could I do with \$40k?"

I bet you have a laundry list of things you'd like to do, but here's my top five:

- Remodel the kitchen in my 25 year old house
- Remodel the two bathrooms in that same 25 year old house
- Go on a really amazing vacation with my fabulous husband
- Sock that money away in my retirement account
- Don't go into debt at all - stay debt-free.

Frankly, I kinda like that last one. More than air-cooled seats.

So dear readers, my Cadi is in the shop getting fixed, and I'll be happy to drive her around for a few more years. BUT, it was nice to go exploring!

REMOVING THE DOUBT FROM DECISION-MAKING

- by Joe Sherren

I recently had a tough decision to make regarding a business venture. On the upside, it was a potential opportunity to considerably increase revenues. On the downside, it would consume substantial resources and precious personal time.

As leaders, one of the top daily activities is to make smart decisions. Yet how can we know we're making the right decision when we live in the world where there are no absolutes? Many of these decisions are urgent; others strategic; some can even be life changing. But most importantly, decisions must be made in a timely manner. The right decision made too late becomes a bad decision.

Often, I see [managers](#) who are decision-averse. They wait too long and then make a decision by default, which they later regret. Even making no decision is still a decision. To compound matters, we often make decisions based on our confirmation bias. Using our pre-programmed mental conditioning, we do not even question or explore alternatives.

The number one reason why most managers fail is because they make poor choices that lead to bad decisions. In some cases, they compound that bad decision with more bad decisions.

It is impossible to separate good leadership from decision-making. Whether you like it or not, the two are unavoidably connected. Managers who rise to senior positions in the organization, do so largely based upon their ability to consistently make sound decisions in a timely manner.

For managers to get promoted into senior positions, it may take years and years of consistent, sound decision-making. But as many of you have experienced, one bad decision can end your career.

So, how can managers increase their decision-making ability? First, by knowing the three value-based decision-making styles and understanding their most preferred. These are as follows:

- **Deontologists.** “Deon” is a Greek word meaning duty. These people are duty-bound and see everything as black or white, right or wrong. They are what we call absolutists, always wanting to follow the rule and never bend policies. Deontologists require lots of raw data, facts, statistics, and flow charts. They will want to study policies, practices, and moral laws.
- **Teleologists.** “Tele” is another Greek word meaning far off, in the distance; such as tele-commute, telephone, tele-seminar. They primarily make decisions based on what they see as the better outcome at some point in the future. Teleologists will want to examine case studies, do what-if scenarios, and collect lots of prior history. They think of themselves as part of the bigger business community and try to consider the well-being of others.
- **Situationalists** make decisions based on just the merits of the current situation before them right now. If they had the same decision to make again in the future, it might be totally different because some of the particulars might have changed.

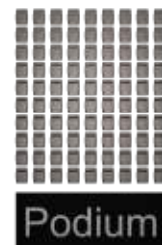
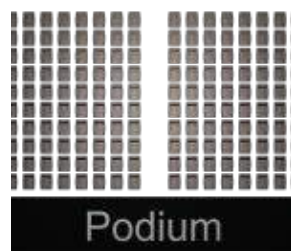
Using any one of these three styles on their own can produce a flawed decision. Each constituency must be considered equally; but above all, you must trust your gut instincts. Even when refined information and solid analytics are available, your instincts can often provide a very valuable check against the reasonability or biases of those other inputs.

My question for leaders this week: "What process do you use to make a critical, strategic, business or life decision?"

HOW TO CREATE AUDIENCE-CENTERED SEATING FOR YOUR PANEL DISCUSSIONS

You walk into the room and see a traditional seating set-up for your panel discussion: White draped table at the front on a podium, theater-style with two columns of chairs, with a path down the middle. The overhead screen is at the front in the middle of the room. Looks pretty good, right?

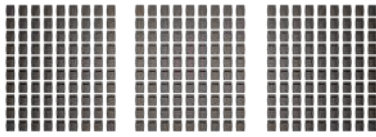
While typical for many [meeting venues](#), and perhaps most comfortable for you, the presenter, meeting planner, or hotelier, it is NOT the best seating arrangement for an audience-centered discussion.



So what's wrong with straight rows?

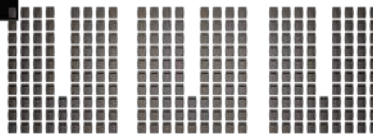
1. Focus. The seats directly in front of the podium are the only decent seats in the house. Everyone else has to adjust the view to get a direct line of sight to the moderator and panelists. And yet we give up this prime real estate to a multimedia projector table or vacant space for a center aisle. Whenever possible, place the chairs in front:

2. Energy Drain. Any feng-shui expert will tell you that the energy flows out of the room through a center aisle. Wherever possible, keep the straight row center section right in front of you, with an aisle in between each outer seating section.



Podium

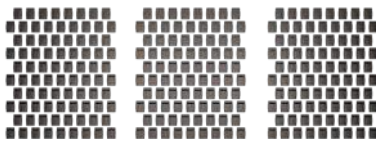
have some ability for their seats, so you can have some extra aisles starting a stage. This way, the energy



Podium

3. Safety. You may want to people to get in and out of modify the seating with third of the way from the won't flow out of the room!

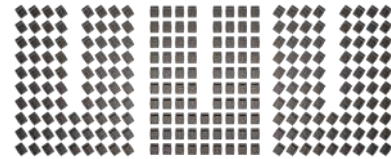
4. Blocked View. Unless you are sitting in the front row, there will always be somebody taller or wider in the seat in front of you. If you are lucky, you will have a semi-obstructed view of the podium. Worst case, you have to lean one way or the other just to get a clear view. Wherever possible, stagger the chairs so they aren't lined up like soldiers behind each other.



Podium

5. Pain. Unless you are sitting right in front of the podium, chances are you must turn your neck slightly to see the moderator and [panelists](#). If you are on the far reaches, then you are probably putting more weight on one butt cheek than the other and are constantly readjusting your seat! Do this for an extended period of time, and it starts to hurt! Wherever possible, angle the chairs toward the podium.

5. Pain. Unless you are sitting right in front of the podium,



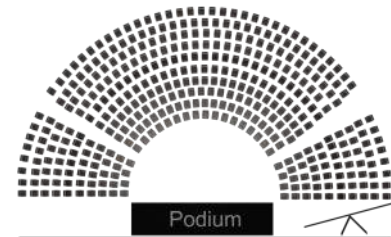
Podium

6. Disconnect. If you want to **connect with the audience**, the best way is to enable the audience to connect with each other. They simply can't connect with each other if they can't see each other. Straight rows allow each person in the row to see only one person on either side (and the back of somebody's head – but that doesn't help connection!) Wherever possible, curve the seating around the podium, so the audience can see each other.



Podium

Finally, if you can, ask for the overhead screen to be placed on the left, looking at the front of the room (otherwise known as upstage right!). Since we read from left to right, make it easier for the audience to “read” what



Podium

you are saying by placing the screen to the left of the stage (downstage right in theater terms). Place the screen at the same depth as you will be standing and close enough to your center position so that your audience's eyes won't have to travel a great distance from you to the screen. Furthermore, should the moderator or panelists have to point to something on the screen, they can use their right hand without turning their backs to the participants!

Depending on the venue's capability, you can transform a ho-hum, boring traditional theater-style room set into an audience-centered seating arrangement. Being able to view the panel discussion in comfort, as well as to see each other enhances the dynamics of the session. In the best of all possible worlds, orient the seats toward the front so they can comfortably connect with the [moderator](#), panelists and with each other.

FROM THE BOOKSHELF: Doing the Right Things Right: How the Effective Executive Spends Time by Laura Stack

I adore practical books that help me be a better leader and manager. And Laura Stack's new book, "[Doing the Right Things Right](#)" is chock-full of practical ideas that I can use immediately in my company and in my volunteer leadership roles.

It starts with a self-assessment in three major categories that she calls "The Three T's: Thinking Strategically, Team Focus and Tactical Work." For each category, there are several subcategories along with short paragraphs of best practices within each subcategory. What I really like about this approach is that you don't have to read the book from cover to cover. You can pick and choose where you want to focus. Read a few ideas, and go implement ONE. Just ONE idea can make all the difference!

UPCOMING WEBINAR/VIRTUAL PANEL

Building an Emotionally Intelligent Team

Thursday, March 24, 2016

Team emotional intelligence is more complicated than individual emotional intelligence because teams interact at more levels. You may have a team with emotionally intelligent members – but that does not necessarily make for an emotionally intelligent group.

In this virtual panel webinar, professional panel moderator and team expert, Kristin Arnold, along with [Scott Halford](#), an expert in emotional intelligence, and communications skills expert [Pamela Jett](#), will discuss what it takes to build an emotionally intelligent team.

If you have a good team and want to take them to greatness, then this webinar is for you! [Register here](#) today at www.ExtraordinaryTeam.com/webinar-series/

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