



Have you realized that as a leader you are actually being paid to THINK? That could be an intimidating thought. So, how do you do it better? How do you improve your critical thinking and decision-making skills? You may want to get reading and learning, fast! Hopefully this month's articles can help you plan, strategize, and organize your team to reap extraordinary results.

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FREELoader PHENOMENON AND THE POWER OF TEAM PRESSURE

One of the hallmarks of a high-performing team is that everyone works together. That each person pulls their fair share. Sure, there are times when a few team members need to work more, later, and harder when others need to slow down, take time off due to family emergency or illness, or just go on vacation. But all that is understandable.

But what about the person who willingly doesn't pull their fair share of the load? What happens to the team dynamic when there is a freeloader on the team?

Adapted from Harvard Management Update—January 2007 Ernest Fehr and Simon Gächter, two researchers at the University of Zurich, wanted to explore the dynamics of the “free rider” in the following experiment:

1. They put people in groups of four and gave each person 20 points. Each person could choose to keep their points — or they could contribute all or a portion of their points in the group's pool of points.
2. The pool would then be increased by 40% and would be divided equally among all four group members *regardless* of the amount contributed. How much would you contribute? None? Some? Or all twenty?

At the beginning of the game, most group members contributed some of their points for an average of nine points. (Lower than I expected!)

As the game continued, the contributors realized that others were freeloaded. The group reduced their contributions until ten rounds later, the average contribution was only three points! Group members would rather keep their points than be taken advantage of!

After a few more rounds, the researchers added a fascinating change to the ground rules: Members were allowed to assess “punishment points” that would reduce the funds of the

freeloaders. Even though spending money to punish another player also reduced their own funds, they were quite willing to pay the price.

Adding the chance to even the score with a slacker changed the whole game: The average contribution soared to 18.2 points with 82.5% of the players investing everything in the common pool. Do you have ground rules to help the freeloaders participate?

BTW, I often replicate the first part of the experiment in my team training and speeches, and it ALWAYS surprises people about the powerful dynamic of team pressure!

Derived from Harvard Management Update—January 2007

EVERYTHING PANEL MODERATORS SHOULD DISCUSS WITH THEIR MEETING ORGANIZER

Just as an excellent party requires an overall theme, marvelous guests and careful planning before the party can start, so does an excellent panel discussion. And just like a great party, the secret sauce is in the planning – even before the guests arrive.

Typically, by the time the moderator has been brought onboard, several decisions have already been made by the meeting chair and/or organizer, so you will need to come up to speed on what has already been decided and what assumptions have been made for you. When you clarify the “starting conditions,” you will find that you have much more freedom than you initially thought!

Have a chat with the meeting chair and/or organizer to discuss:

The Event. The panel discussion is typically one session within an entire event. Determine where you are in the event agenda, what comes before and after the panel discussion. Take a look at the event website and marketing materials.

Panel Dates/Time/Location. Block this day off on your schedule and plan to get to the venue well ahead of the start time.

Panel Title. An intriguing title will capture your audience’s attention. Work with the meeting chair to develop a catchy and effective title that is consistent with the event theme.

Panel Objectives. Clarify the stated objectives for the panel – especially if marketing material has already been published. What do you want them to know, think, or feel about the topic?

Panel Format. Discuss their vision for the panel. How formal or informal? Traditional or more unique? Confirm how much latitude you have to play with the format and agenda.

Sponsoring Organization. Review the mission of the business, association, or organization. Ask about their past experiences of having panels on their program – the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Audience. Confirm the audience size, demographics, and expectations for the panel discussion.

- What’s the expected level of expertise in the room around the panel topic?
- What are their key interests, needs, and concerns?
- What questions are they hoping to find answers to?
- What will be the impact of the panelists’ comments on their work and lives?

Panelists. Get the name, bio and contact information for any panelist who has already been invited or confirmed to participate, why they were selected, as well as a copy of what has been communicated to them. Ask for recommendations (*see Step 2*). Determine any inducements you can offer additional panelists to serve and if there are any promotional policies or prohibitions you need to be aware of.

Success Criteria. Ask about who and how they will determine and evaluate the success of the panel. Evaluation forms? Hallway buzz?

Room Logistics. Find out about the room size and layout, furniture setup, and color of the backdrop.

Audio/Visual. Determine the availability of audio (microphones), visual (video projection) and internet (Wi-Fi) connectivity.

Rights. Ask if the panel will be recorded (audio and/or video) or live streamed? If so, ask for the release form the moderator and panelists need to sign.

Support Staff. Ask about any additional support you will have in the room, e.g., room monitors, microphone runners, etc.

Promotion. Offer to help get the word out to promote the panel.

Attire. Determine the expected attire/dress for the conference.

Contingencies. You'll also want to chat about various contingencies that may arise – the “if this, then that” discussion:

- If we start late, do you still want me to end on time or use the full allotment of time?
- If one of the esteemed panelists derails a conversation, how do you want me to intervene? (give a few options you're comfortable with)
- If a popular panelist starts to excessively promote their new product/company, how do you want me to handle that?
- Any other potential thing that might happen...

To make your life easier, follow along with this [planning worksheet](#) to help you have a fabulous conversation with the meeting organizer for your next panel discussion!

FROM THE BOOKSHELF: PAID TO THINK

Amazon, in all it's infinite AI wisdom, recommended the book, "[Paid to Think: A Leader's Toolkit for Redefining Your Future](#)" – presumably because I have a keen interest in critical thinking and decision-making.

I had NO IDEA that it was over 700 pages long! It is literally a tome of all the knowledge David Goldsmith has learned as a consultant and entrepreneur.

The premise is simple: Leaders are paid to think – yet many don't know how to do it well. Goldsmith has created four quadrants of “Enterprise Thinking:” Strategizing, Learning, Performing, and Forecasting.

Yes, some of his models are simplistic (the Cyclonic Strategic Thinking Model), well-known (Critical Path Method), or obvious (do we really need to have a model to explain the “daily planning cycle”?). And therein lies the brilliance of this book – he takes the complex and makes it extremely simple.

I don't recommend reading this book from cover to cover. It's just too dense. Read the first chapter first and then see what is of interest to you – jump around from topic to topic – so that you can “make better, faster, and more accurate decisions that will ultimately lead to improved outcomes with less risk, waste, and mistakes.”