



# Geared for Success

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## Decision-making and Leadership

Making decisions is at the heart of every leader. Nothing tests leadership more than your ability to make solid decisions. The choices you make define who you are, what you stand for and how you will/will not move forward in an organization. Your career has been built on years of decision-making-large and small in scope.

Decision-making like any other capability can be developed. How leaders make decisions is based on a hierarchy of knowledge. This hierarchy begins with gut instincts and knowing yourself and continues with data, information and knowledge. Each factor plays an important part in your decision making framework.

A useful tool for understanding your style of decision-making is the Decision Style Profile. It takes into consideration five decision factors: Clarity, Information, Commitment, Alignment and Time. Additionally, leaders can clearly see how these factors coincide with five styles-Directing, Fact Finding, Investigating, Collaborating and Teaming. As with any other capability, leaders with self-understanding have an edge in seeing the big picture and what needs to happen.

Making the right decision involves knowing how to synthesize the overwhelming amount of data and information that leaders receive every day. Knowing how to discern what is important is critical for timely decisions. The best leaders use resource tools and trusted people to process what is and is not important. Gut instincts which are made of professional experiences and personal values help leaders to get comfortable

with options.

The complexity of today's workplace combined with constant change make decision-making challenging and difficult. Mike Myatt, author of "6 Tips for Making Better Decisions", recommends the following metrics for your decision-making process:

1. **Perform a Situation Analysis** - Think about these questions: What is motivating the need for



this decision? Does a decision need to be made? Who will the decision impact-directly and indirectly?

2. **Put the Decision Possibility out for Scrutiny** - No decision should be made in a silo. Seek feedback. Ask an array of trusted people for input.
3. **Conduct a Cost/Benefit Analysis** - Do the potential benefits justify the costs?
4. **Assess the Risk/Reward Ratio** - What are the potential risks associated with the reward of the decision?
5. **Do a Gut Check** - Is this the right thing to do? Are you compromising your integrity, character or value system? Are

you expecting others to do so?

6. **Make the Decision and Also, Have a Backup Plan** - Be a leader who acts. But, realize decisions come with many changing variables. Have a contingency plan just in case.

Even applying each of the metrics explained, decisions may be met with pitfalls along the way. Be aware that derailers such as: overconfidence, lack of big picture thinking, analysis paralysis, finger pointing, personal bias, disregarding diverse views and not reflecting on previous lessons learned can stop you from making the best decision.

Always look inward before projecting outward with your decision. Reflect on your emotional intelligence competencies. Should you be

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**"Inability to make decisions is one of the principal reasons leaders fail. Deficiency in decision-making ranks much higher than lack of specific knowledge or technical know-how as an indicator of leadership failure."**

John C. Maxwell



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exercising Impulse Control? What about the people involved in the decision (e.g. Empathy, Problem Solving)? Do you know how you are feeling (e.g. Emotional Self-Awareness)? How are your actions/behaviors being demonstrated (e.g. Emotional Expression)? Are your Assertiveness and Independence competencies aligned?

As a leader your decisions shape who you are, where the organization is going and what it will be like in the future. Make sure yours are well thought out, in synch with the vision of the organization and connected to your heart.

## Driven to Distraction

How many times are you distracted from your work every day? Smartphones, the internet, social media, emails, and co-workers can sabotage a planned out work list of "to do's". According to a study by Glassdoor, more than 50% of workers waste an hour or more each day on interruptions. 60% are regularly interrupted by email and other electronic devices. In fact, some Americans report checking their phones up to 150 times a day. Others say phone calls and colleagues are their biggest distractions. Of course, your productivity suffers when you are driven to distraction.

In "10 Distractions that Kill Productivity", by Chad Brooks, the author identifies ten productivity killers that create distractions:

1. Cell phones/texting
2. The Internet
3. Gossip
4. Social Media
5. Email
6. Co-workers dropping by
7. Meetings
8. Demands from others
9. Noisy co-workers
10. Sitting in a cubicle

Obviously it is easy to get sidetracked. However, you own your behavior and what you do with your time. So, here are some time management tips for regaining your control.

- **Get off autopilot.** Notice when and how often you are checking your phone, emails, social media, etc. Start exercising Impulse Control-one of the fifteen competencies

**""Great leadership is not a solo act. It's a group performance. You need to connect through the heart to lead effectively." "**

Robert Vanourek, Chairman, Vail Leadership Institute

of Emotional Intelligence. Do you really need to check Facebook every 20 minutes? Notice your electronic temptations.

- **Start the day with a list of priorities.** Focus and follow-through. What really needs to get done?
- **Force yourself to work on one thing at a time.** Everyone knows multitasking isn't the most efficient way to work. Concentrate.
- **Stop allowing yourself to be distracted.** This is a form of procrastination. You can be your own worst enemy.
- **Shift your schedule.** Ever notice how much you can get done when others aren't in the office. Come in early or stay late to avoid distractions.
- **Limit your availability.** This one is tricky. Be engaged and present when people stop by to talk with you. Control the time. Say "I want to talk, but I only have ten minutes". Stand up and walk toward the door if the conversation gets too lengthy. Or, be honest-"I am working on a big project today. Can we talk another time." If appropriate, close your door for 1 hour or so-say 4:00 pm-5:00 pm daily. Let your team know this is time you need alone.
- **Take a break.** Walk outside for a few minutes to clear your head and re-focus.



When you limit distractions, you will feel more satisfied, productive and in control.

**"You can't do big things, if you're distracted by small things."**

Picturequotes.com

## Not Speaking Up Enough in Meetings? Make It a Priority

Do you have reluctance to speaking up in meetings? Are you finding yourself attending meetings yet not participating on a regular basis? Speaking up in meetings can yield immediate benefits: feedback for your point of view and an exchange of ideas with others. Additionally, speaking up should be a priority because professionally you can add value, deepen dialogue with others, provide your unique perspective and gain important exposure. Speaking up involves getting comfortable with who you are, what you stand for and what you know. It is critical for building your career and being seen as a contributor to the organization.



To increase your capabilities to speak in meetings, try the following techniques:

- **Sit near the center of the table.** Position yourself in the middle of the conversation flow. This location also, sends a message to your brain that you are central to the discussion at hand.
- **Prepare ahead of time.** Know what will be discussed and be ready for how you can be a valued part of the conversation.

- **Speak up early in the meeting.** The longer you wait to speak, the stronger your self-doubt may be as you compare yourself to others.
- **Watch your Body Language.** Be alert, engaged and sitting up straight.
- **Know that Your Ideas/Thoughts are Worth Sharing.** When someone else speaks up in the meeting and your ideas/thoughts are contrary, don't automatically discount your own. Your information might be exactly what needs to be said.
  - **Jump in tactfully with an add-on.** Use starter phrases like: "I like Bob's suggestion and would also like to recommend...", "One other thing that I am thinking about is...", etc.
  - **Ask questions.** Use your knowledge and expertise to probe deeper into what others are saying.

As you work to build your skills in meeting involvement enlist a work friend, colleague or your boss to provide feedback to you. How you perform in meetings is important on many levels for building your career and contributing to the organization.

Resource: "10 Ways to Increase Visibility in Meetings",  
by Joel Garfinkle and  
"Speak Up! Five Tips to Make Yourself Heard in Meetings"  
by Jenni B. Baker

## What is Peer Coaching?

Peer Coaching can be a great method for seeing challenges from different perspectives, uncovering assumptions that are limiting options, exploring alternative courses of action and building confidence in problem solving abilities. The purpose is not to advise or fix, but to help others gain insights.

Here is how Peer Coaching works:

1. Create groups of 3-4 people.
2. Peer A begins by presenting his/her leadership challenge. This should be done in a brief, succinct way.
3. Peers B, C, D listen carefully and ask questions. Only questions are permitted. No advice may be given--focusing only on Peer A.
4. After the questions are asked, peers B, C, D take time to write down questions for the peer to consider. These questions are given in written form to Peer A for consideration.
5. Now Peer B begins the same process.

Peer Coaching can be powerful for helping leaders come to their own conclusions and insights. It helps to expand thinking and build new ideas into problem solving. Peers are set up for success by discovering their own pathway rather than being told or advised.

Peer Coaching is a method created by Discovery Learning, Inc. which is now a part of Multi-Health Systems, Inc.

**"No one can change a person, but a person can be the reason someone changes."**

Sponge Bob

## SCAMPER to Transform Your Ideas

Thinking broadly is important for challenging your ideas and the ideas of others. SCAMPER is a checklist of idea-spurring questions that help to examine and reshape your thoughts. It will assist you in thinking of changes you can make to an existing product or to create a new one.

**S = Substitute** – Who else? What else? What other components, materials or people?

**C = Combine** – Mix, Integrate, Blend?

**A = Adapt** – What else is like this? What other ideas does this suggest?

**M = Modify Or Magnify** – Enlarge, multiply, add, increase?

**P = Put to other Uses** – New ways to use this? Other places to use this?

**E = Eliminate** – What to subtract? How can it be condensed? Streamlined?

**R = Reverse or Rearrange** – Can components be interchanged, used in other patterns?

To use SCAMPER, clearly define the challenge or subject you want to think about. Then, ask each SCAMPER question. This tool is great for team meetings and individual thought. Even using some of the components stretches your thinking. Ultimately, it can get ideas flowing and increase innovation/imagination.

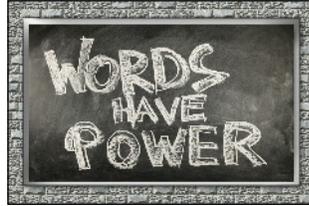
Resource: [Thinkertoys–A Handbook of Business Creativity](#),  
by Michael Michalko

## Powerful Words = Professional Image

The words you choose are important for projecting a professional image. Your words tell others about how you see yourself, if you are well-educated, intelligent, business savvy, can be trusted and much more. In short, word choice can help or hinder your career. Being conscious of your word choice, can have a big impact on your overall contribution to the workplace.

In [Survival of the Savvy-High Integrity Political Tactics for Career and Company Success](#), by Rick Brandon and Marty Seldman, the authors highlight self-diminishing phrases such as:

- Tentative - "Kindof", "sortof", "I think maybe, "If it is ok with you"
- Filler Words - "ah", "you know"
- Apologetic - "I hate to bother you.", "I'm sorry" (overuse)
- Self-Discounting - "You probably won't agree with me, but..."



These phrases can be habits that need to be broken.

To project a professional image, think ABC-Always Be Concise. Build a solid business vocabulary that conveys a positive, conviction to what you are saying. Use active words and authoritative statements, avoid hedging and build on other's ideas not just agreeing with them. Examples of powerful phrases are:

- I strongly suggest...
- That is absolutely right, and here's why...
- I agree completely because...
- Here is my plan...
- I recommend...

Remember your message is reinforced with confident body language, voice tone, rate of speech and volume. Carefully monitor and embrace making small changes that will have big impact.

**"I never lose. I either win or learn. "**

Nelson Mandela

## Learning from Others to Achieve More

Every person you come in contact with has something to offer - regardless of their level in the organization. Listening and observing others can yield great benefits for developing yourself, being more effective in what you do and building relationships. Successful leaders recognize and use their connections with others to think in new, broader ways.

The website, [www.changeyourlifehacks.com](http://www.changeyourlifehacks.com), provides some interesting tips for enhancing the ability to learn from others.

1. **Seek out Diversity of Thinking** - You know the saying "Birds of a feather flock together", defy the odds by really exploring the perspectives of others different from your own. This enables you to learn about new ways of thinking, interpretation and action. It also pushes you to compare, evaluate and look at things in a broader way. In other words, be OPEN.
2. **Use Careful Observation** - Quiet observation can be a strong influencer of your future thoughts and actions. Observe those who succeed and those who fail. This will help you save valuable time and energy by knowing what does and does not work. What methods get results?
3. **Exposure and Connection with a Wide Range of People** - Increasing your ability to connect with others equals your ability to get more things done. Have you ever noticed how the most successful people have contacts in many areas of the organization?
4. **Ask for Opinions and Feedback** - Use tools (e.g. 360 instruments) necessary to collect constructive feedback about yourself. Think deeply about the responses. Ask for feedback and listen, really listen-without being defensive.
5. **Be in Awe of Others** - Use other people as a source of your own inspiration. Surround yourself with incredible people who continuously expand their experiences and knowledge.



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