

THINK
STRATEGICALLY.

ACT
DECISIVELY.



“Life is the sum
of our choices.”

ALBERT CAMUS

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BUILDING BLOCKS GAME

Decisions are the most fundamental building blocks of successful change and growth in our teams, our organizations, our careers and our lives. The faster and more strategically you stack those blocks, the faster and more effectively you achieve success.

It really is that simple. But it's not always that easy.

- ① What did you observe during the building blocks game? How did the people interact? What were the challenges you saw?

- ② What did you see or experience that related to the decisions you make at work?

“Chance favors
the prepared mind.”

LOUIS PASTEUR

BUSINESS CASE

THE POWER OF A DECISIVE MINDSET

Psychologist Timothy Judge at the University of Notre Dame and his colleagues tracked the progress of 12,686 people from the average age of 14 to the average age of 38. They found that the less educated, less privileged, and less academically successful people with a decisive mindset ended up outperforming their more privileged peers who had a naturally indecisive mindset.

We call people with a decisive mindset Deciders. Deciders share a common belief that through the power of their decisions, they possess the ability to shape the events in their life more than those events shape them.

DECIDERS TEND TO...

- Earn 50-150% higher incomes
- Perform better in sales positions
- Deliver better customer service
- Adjust better to foreign assignments
- Experience less stress and burnout
- Report higher job satisfaction
- Persevere more when searching for a job

DECISION POINT

What is a strategic decision you're facing right now that you could respond to more decisively?

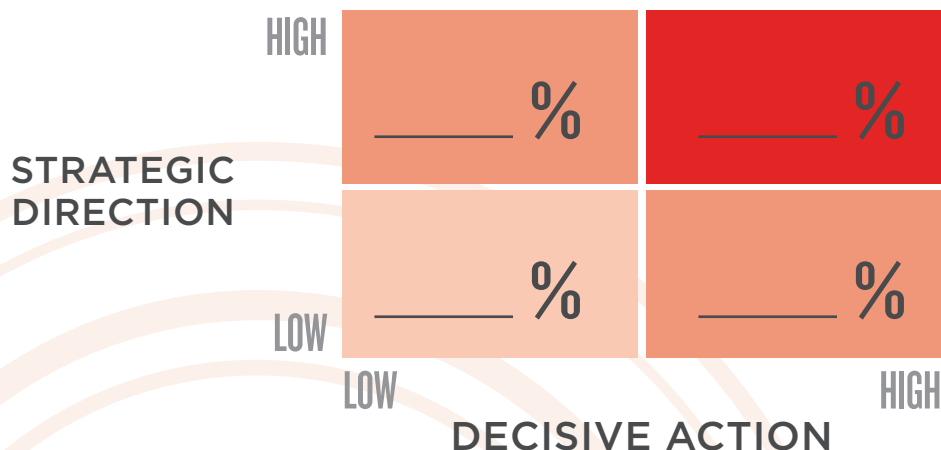
BUSINESS CASE

ACTION + DIRECTION = DECISIVE
ACTION - DIRECTION = IMPULSIVE

A field study led by Kevin Wilde, Chief Learning Officer at General Mills, examined the progress the performance of more than 25,000 managers representing a cross-section of companies, industries and geographical regions. The results showed an enormous performance advantage for those leaders who were merely above average in just two skill areas: strategic thinking and decisive action.

What percent of managers in each category were rated as excellent leaders overall?

EXCELLENT LEADERS



DECISION POINT

What is your top strategic priority right now?

OUR CULTURE OF DECISION MAKING

In the space below, draw a cartoon representation of what decision making looks like in your organization. In other words, how do decisions get made in your organization?

Note: We like good art as much as the next folks, but we aren't looking for the next Mona Lisa. Stick figures are fine.



① What are some of the strengths of your organization's current approach?

② What are some of the challenges?

DECISION
POINT

Until the overall culture of decision-making in your organization changes, what is one thing **you** can do differently starting today to be more effective?

THE FRAMEWORK

KNOW

THINK

DO

SECTION ONE

KNOW

CHECK YOUR
PULSE



CASE STUDY

Imagine you are the manager of a major U.S. airline. You have just received the results of a customer satisfaction survey you conducted. It turns out that customers on a 2-hour flight are overwhelmingly requesting a meal service. It's up to you to decide how to respond to that customer data.

What would you decide? Discuss with your small group.

MISSION STATEMENT

"XYZ Airline is dedicated to the highest quality of Customer Service delivered with a sense of warmth, friendliness, individual pride and company spirit."

EMPLOYEE VALUES

- Work Hard
- Desire to be the best
- Be courageous
- Display urgency
- Persevere
- Innovate

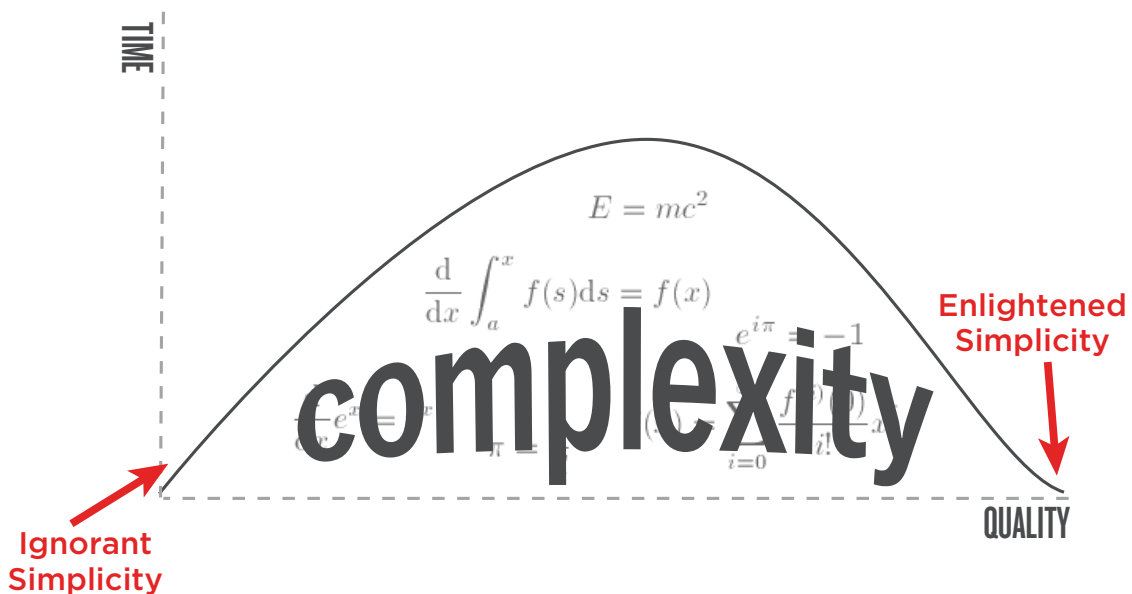
SERVICE PRINCIPLES

- Adhere to the principles
- Treat others with respect
- Put others first
- Be egalitarian
- Demonstrate proactivity

DECISION POINT

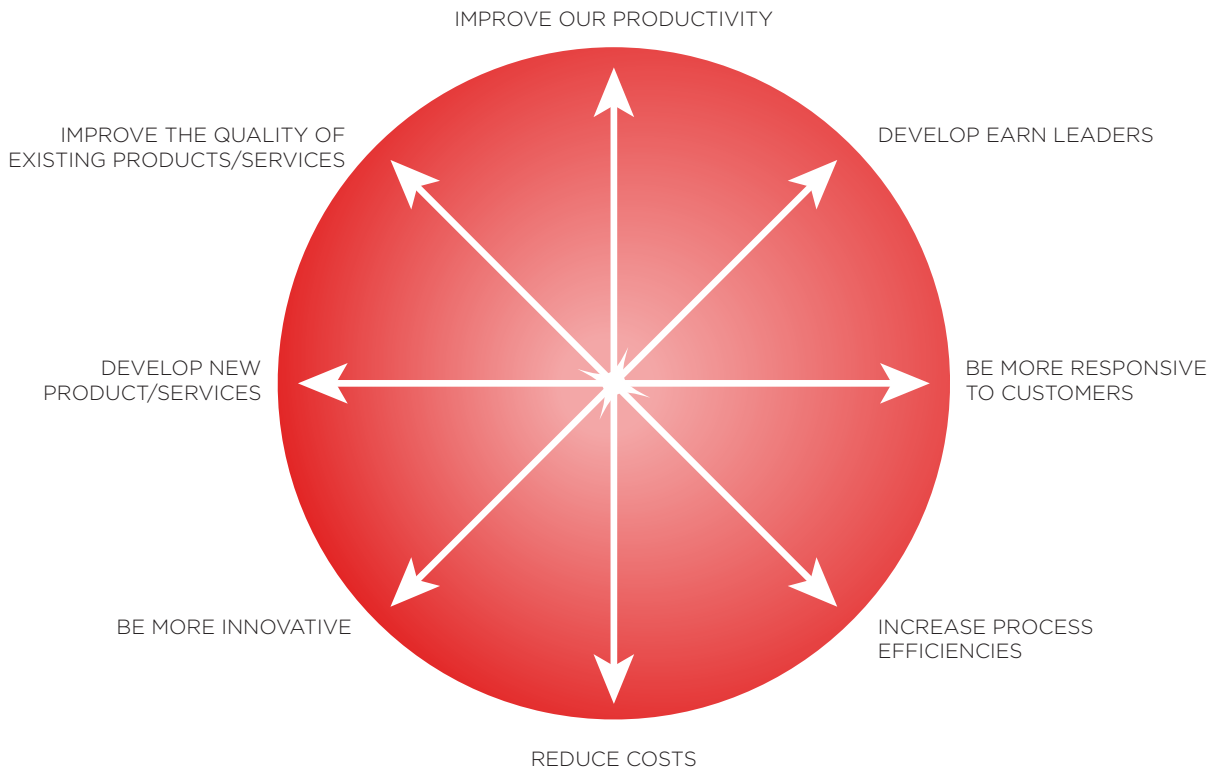
What is your decision?

We live in a complex world. Ignoring that reality will land us on the wrong side of complexity—the ignorant side. But getting lost inside the complexity is no better. By learning how to identify your Decision Pulse and behaving like a Decider every day, you can learn to live and work on the happy and productive other side of complexity. The rest of this guidebook will show you how.



“I wouldn’t give a fig for the simplicity on this side of complexity. But I would give my life for the simplicity on the other side of complexity.”

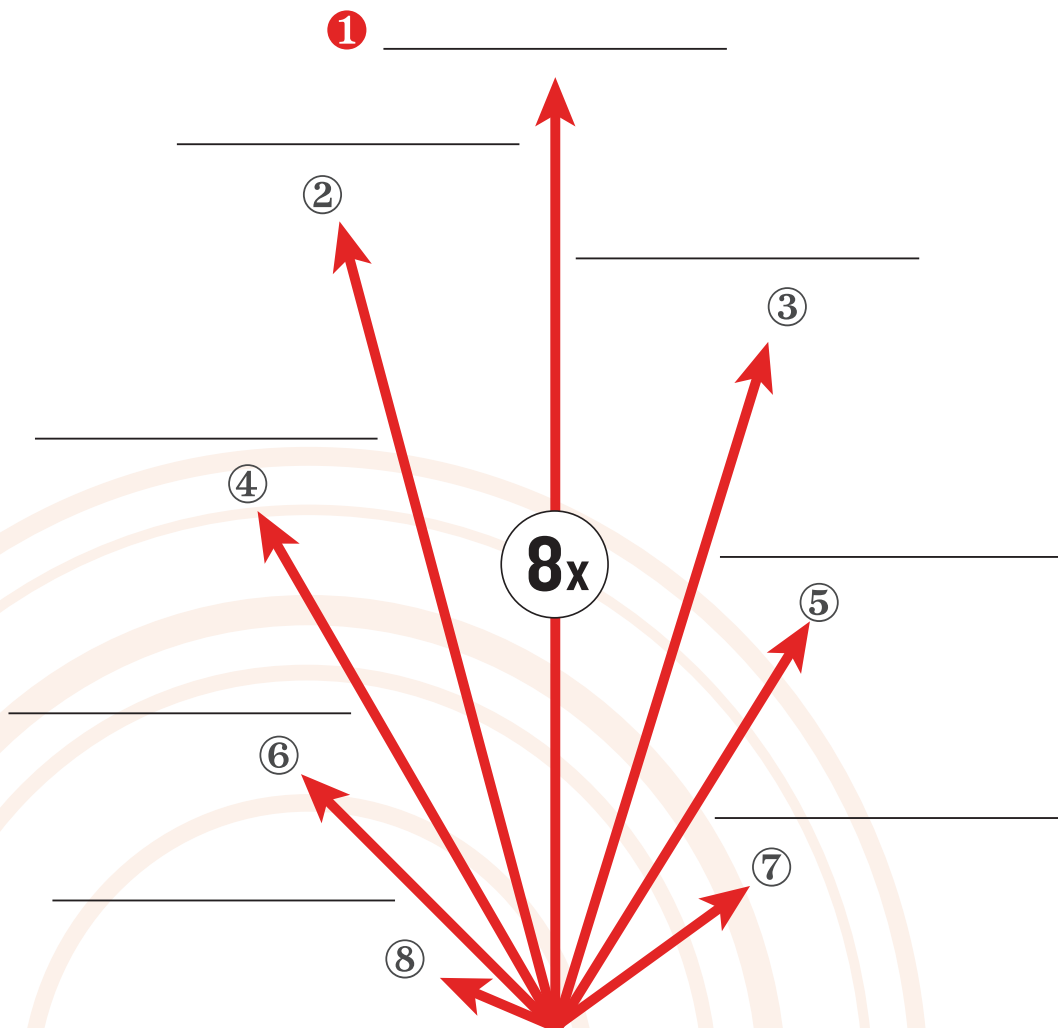
OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES



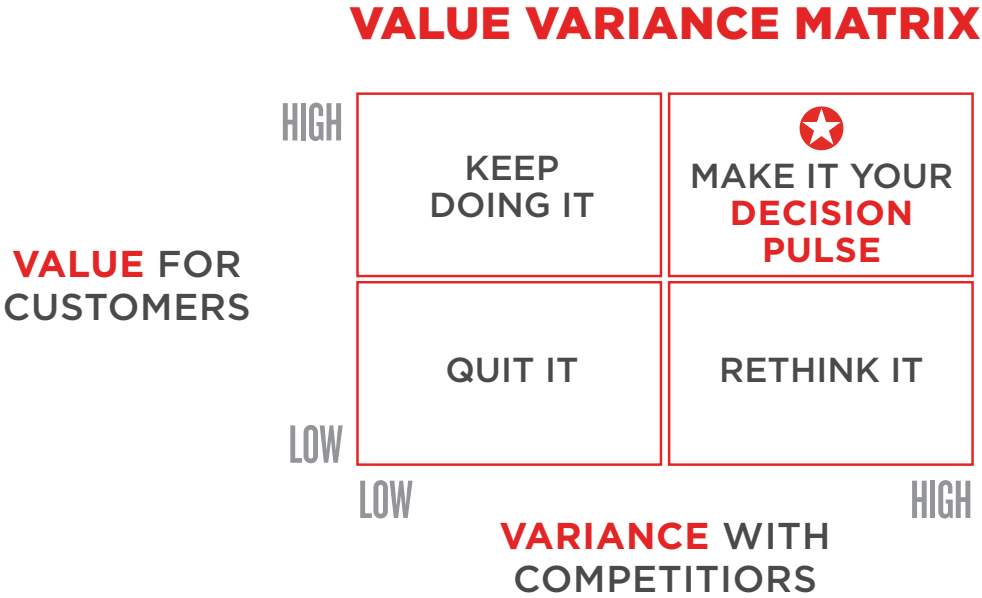
You could make a sound business case for all eight directions. But eight directions is about seven too many if you actually want to get anywhere. A leader's most important job is to align the team by deciding which one strategic direction will trump all the others.

Instead of a circle with 5, 8, or 20 equally important directions guaranteed to make your team go in circles this year, successful teams create a clear pecking order for their directions that looks and feels like the diagram below. The #1 direction is that team's Decision Pulse, This provides a single clear decision criterion for every strategic decision every member of the team will make this year, every day. That is the very definition of alignment.

So what is your team's Decision Pulse this year? The activity on the next page will help you decide that. Afterward, you can come back to this page and identify the order for the rest of your year's objectives.



The Value-Variance matrix is a simple way to make sense of how all the things that could be your strategic focus fit with and relate to one another. Your Decision Pulse should define the thing your team does that makes it both Valuable and Unique. Your team adds value in any number of ways. But very few of those things are both exceptional *and* valuable to the right people, and are also unique in comparison to the value that other teams or companies also provide. The activity on page 20 will help you discover your Decision Pulse.



CUSTOMER: Which person in your organization makes the final decision on this year's strategy? CEO? GM? President? Write that person's name in the space below.	What is that "customer's" ultimate strategic objective for your organization this year?
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YOU Our team supports that objective in the following ways:	Indicate "E" if you can be exceptional on that valued item	If the "customer" you named were ranking this list of "E" items in order of importance, how would that person rank them?
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OUR TEAM'S DECISION PULSE IS: What is the exceptional thing your team does that your customer would rank #1 in importance?
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SECTION TWO

THINK

CONSULT
AN ANTI-YOU



“A great number of people
think they are thinking when they are
merely rearranging their prejudices.”

WILLIAM JAMES

DECISION STYLES

We will all approach the Know Think Do process from a slightly different angle at every step of the way. Every approach is helpful and necessary for sound decision making. Unfortunately, it's extremely difficult for the same human brain to consider all of these angles simultaneously. That is why the simplest way to instantly improve the rationality of your judgments and the soundness of your decisions is to "consult the anti-you."

The beauty of a team is that you have access to those critical, and opposing frames of reference all around you. Your job is simple. You just have to be courageous and bold enough to ask for those alternative views.

Take out your Decision Styles score sheet from the online assessment you took and plot your scores for each of the 3 categories in the space below.

KNOW



THINK



DO



	SELF SCORES	

STYLES & ANTI-STYLES

On the chart below, identify where your team members fall in each of the 3 categories:



NAMES	SCORES		
Me			

DECISION POINT

Based on these scores as well as your own past working experiences, name 2-3 people you could start using today as your Anti-You.

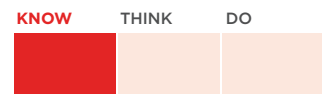
WHAT YOUR SCORES MEAN

KNOW

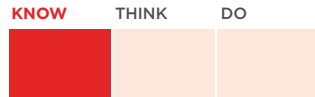
Smart decisions are the result of consciously aligning the choices we make with the strategic direction of our team and our organization. Consequently, the first step in making those choices is:

- Ⓐ knowing what your organization's strategy is, and
- Ⓑ knowing how your team contributes to that strategy.

Find your score below to gain a deeper understanding of your **KNOW** tendencies.



SCORE	MEANING
7	People with this score tend to think very conceptually—focusing on the big picture implications for every situation. They prefer to think often about the role they play in the overall strategy. They sometimes spend too much time analyzing the future while paying too little attention to the tasks of today.
5-6	People in this range tend to think conceptually more often than not. They are interested in connecting the dots between overarching strategic priorities and current issues and projects facing their team. They like discussing future opportunities, but can become impatient and frustrated when required to manage tactical details.
3-4	People in this range sometimes think conceptually, and sometimes think operationally. They believe in a healthy balance between big picture, long term strategy and the day-to-day operations that are essential for realizing the promise of a good strategy. On teams with a high concentration of strategic or tactical thinkers, these people can and should play the opposite role.
1-2	People in this range tend to think more often about near term tactics than long term strategy. They prefer to focus their energy on translating strategic priorities into actionable steps, and on completing each project with maximum efficiency. They place a higher emphasis on performing operational duties well, rather than discussing future possibilities.
0	People with this score are very operational in their approach to decisions. They enjoy digging into operational details and being as productive as possible on whatever assignment happens to come their way. Sometimes their preference for efficiency causes them to pay too little attention to the broader vision and strategy of the organization and to overlook big picture opportunities and threats.



KNOW

The previous page above described what your **KNOW** results mean. The activities and suggestions below will provide you with tips for leveraging your Know tendency.

After reviewing your score on the previous page above, what insights did you have? How have you used your Knowing tendency to be effective? What could you do in the next month to further leverage this strength?

QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK DURING THE KNOW PHASE OF THE DECISION PROCESS:

- What are our company's top strategic priorities *right now*?
- How can our team make a uniquely valuable contribution to those priorities with this decision?
- How does our strategy translate to the current decision?

SUGGESTED READING. Below is additional reading to help you develop & leverage your Know skills.

- *Why Quitters Win* by Nick Tasler (Motivational Press, 2013)
- *Understanding Michael Porter* by Joan Margretta (Harvard Business Review Press, 2011)
- *Great by Choice* by Jim Collins (HarperBusiness, 2011)
- *Execution* by Larry Bossidy & Ram Charan (Crown Business, 2002)

WHAT YOUR SCORES MEAN

THINK

Smart team decisions also require a healthy balance between risk and caution. Everyone has a decision style that more or less pulls away from risk or pushes toward reward.

Find your score below to gain a deeper understanding of your **THINK** tendencies.



SCORE	MEANING
7	People in this score range tend to be very careful decision-makers. They rarely support high-risk pursuits and do not like to expose themselves to uncontrollable circumstances. Their role in team decisions is not to prevent risk-taking, making sure there is a Plan B in case the risky move fails to pay off.
5-6	People in this range are moderately cautious. They feel most comfortable steering clear of risks, and pride themselves on being prudent decision-makers. They will pursue appealing opportunities when possible, but they like to be certain that the chance of a good outcome greatly outweigh the risks of a bad outcome.
3-4	People with scores in this range will behave cautious from time-to-time, but are just as likely to pursue risky options. Their disposition towards risk or caution usually depends as much on their mood at the time when the decision is being made as on the unique circumstances and facts of the situation.
1-2	People in this range tend to be riskier than normal. New opportunities excite them at least as much they scare them. When making team decisions they might lean toward safer choices when possible, but their first instinct usually favors the bolder, higher reward option even if they come with higher risk.
0	People in this score range tend to pursue high reward opportunities even if it means exposing themselves to substantial risk. They pay special attention to opportunity costs, rather than dwelling on the obvious risks. They strongly believe that taking risks is essential to success. While that belief can sometimes enable them to explore opportunities that others shy away from, it can also cause them to downplay serious threats.



THINK

The previous page described what your **THINK** results mean. The activities and suggestions below will provide you with tips for leveraging your tendency.

After reviewing your score on the previous page, what insights did you have? How have you used your cautious or risky tendency to be effective at work? What could you do in the next month to further leverage this strength?

QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING THE THINK PHASE OF THE DECISION PROCESS:

- Do any of these options present unnecessary risks that can be avoided?
- How could we minimize the risk for the big bet, high-reward option?
- Are we overlooking an opportunity or “leaving money on the table”?
- What is the cost of passing up the higher-reward option?

SUGGESTED READING. Below is additional reading to help you develop & leverage your Thinking skills.

- *The Impulse Factor* by Nick Tasler (Simon & Schuster, 2009)
- *Winning Decisions* by J. Edward Russo & Paul J.H. Shoemaker (Crown Business, 2001)
- *Thinking, Fast & Slow* by Daniel Kahneman (Farrar, Strauss, & Giroux, 2011)

WHAT YOUR SCORES MEAN

DO

Eventually all of the knowledge and thinking you put into analyzing a decision situation must give way to action. That's why the last phase in the smart decision process is about *doing*.

Find your score below to gain a deeper understanding of your **DO** tendencies.



SCORE	MEANING
7	People in this score range are very impulsive. They usually put a premium on the <i>speed</i> of action and tend to be more comfortable figuring things out as they go rather than taking a “wait-and-see” approach. A high doer’s penchant for decisive action can be a tremendous asset to their personal and team success. However, decision quality can suffer when “decisiveness” becomes an excuse for impatience or laziness.
5-6	People in this range tend to be impulsive. They prefer not to waste time with what they perceive as endless debate, and they often carry a bias toward action. They typically have some respect for the process of deliberation. But they most often believe that decisions simply need to be made even when there is no clear right answer or when there is no apparent option available that pleases everyone.
3-4	People in this range can be impulsive in certain instances, but just as often they also believe in the value of deliberation. They prefer to think things through and to have plenty of time to make a decision, but they are ready and willing to make quicker decisions when they believe the situation calls for it.
1-2	People in this range tend to be more deliberative. They like to analyze decisions thoroughly and insure that they have all of the relevant data necessary before committing to a course of action. They typically enjoy the act of thinking, and don’t mind withholding judgment until they’ve had a chance to dig deep into a situation and uncovered all of the contributing variables.
0	People in this range are very deliberative. They are not bothered by complex problems and usually enjoy the act of thinking through a problem and the possible scenarios as much as they enjoy arriving at the solution. They tend to pursue ideal solutions for the sake of ideal solutions. When taken to extremes, this tendency can sometimes lead to analysis paralysis and stunt progress.



DO

The previous page described what your Do results mean. The activities and suggestions below will provide you with tips for leveraging your tendency.

After reviewing your score on the previous page, what insights did you have? How have you used your tendency to be effective? What could you do to further leverage this strength?

QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING THE DO PHASE OF THE DECISION PROCESS:

- Is it time to make a decision? (i.e. Are we just repeating the same arguments or are we continuing to think of new facts?)
- Are we missing essential information that could be obtained with a little effort?
- Have we reached the point where this nothing left to do but make a difficult tradeoff?

SUGGESTED READING. Below is additional reading to help you develop & leverage your Doing skills.

- *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* by Patrick Lencioni (Jossey-Bass, 2002)
- *Gut Feelings* by Gerd Gigerenzer (Penguin Books, 2008)
- *Blink* by Malcolm Gladwell (Little, Brown, 2005)

“Knowing yourself is the
beginning of all wisdom. ”

ARISTOTLE

SECTION THREE

DO

BE A
DECIDER



I AM A DECIDER

CAVEAT: You can learn the process. You can have great intentions to be more decisive. But if you do not own the fact that you are a Decider, you will not get the benefit of this process.

Defining yourself as the kind of person who takes clear, decisive action every day will do wonders for freeing you of analysis paralysis, hemming, hawing, and feet-dragging. So write down “I am a Decider” in the space below. Tell the person sitting next to you that you are a decider. Set a daily pop-up reminder on your calendar. Just remember that you are a Decider!

① Will you be a Decider from this day forward?

② What are 2-3 obstacles that might get in the way of you acting more decisively?

③ What are some of the strategies you could use to overcome those obstacles when they arise?

DECISION POINT

Now pick one of those obstacles and the strategy you chose and put it into the format below:

When _____ happens, then I will use
[OBSTACLE]
_____ to be decisive.
[STRATEGY]

A REAL STRATEGIC DECISION

List all the possible projects you could work on this quarter.

POSSIBLE PROJECTS

Using the 3-step decision process, decide which 3 of the projects you listed above are your top priorities for the quarter.

- ① _____
- ② _____
- ③ _____

CHECK YOUR
PULSE

KNOW

CONSULT THE
ANTI-YOU

THINK

BE A DECIDER!

DO

The biggest threat to completing those top priorities will be all of the lesser priorities on your Possible Projects list. Now using the same decision framework, list as many of the remaining projects as you can on the Non-Action Plan below. (Record a minimum of three...but more is better!)

- ① _____
- ② _____
- ③ _____
- ④ _____
- ⑤ _____
- ⑥ _____
- ⑦ _____

NEVER STOP IMPROVING

“Good judgment comes
from **EXPERIENCE**.
Experience comes
from bad judgment.”

NASREDDIN

3 TIPS FOR DEVELOPING YOUR ABILITY TO THINK STRATEGICALLY AND ACT DECISIVELY

1 Review your progress weekly.

Trying to examine every isolated decision you make is a sure recipe for frustration, failure, and insanity. So once a week, take a few minutes to examine what happened last week. What worked and what didn't?

2 Be accountable.

Being accountable comes down to asking three fundamental questions:

- Ⓐ Did I move in the right direction this week?
- Ⓑ Why or why not?
- Ⓒ What will I do differently next week?

Ideally, you would do this with your manager or your “customer.” Career and Team Pulse alignment would be one of the criteria on your performance review process and would be a focal point for regular meetings with your manager.

But if that isn’t possible, then you have two other options:

- Ⓐ Find an accountability partner. This could be a peer or friend to spend half an hour with each week reviewing your decisions and asking the questions above.

My accountability partner is:

- Ⓑ Journal about it. We learn an enormous amount about what we actually believe and how we think by the process of writing it down. So take 15-30 minutes each week to write answers to the three questions above.

Learn for Next Time, Don’t Yearn for Last Time.

- 3 This is about adopting the right mindset. The purpose of learning is not to bury your head in the sand and ignore all of your past mistakes and transgressions, nor is it a time for berating yourself. So, before you sit down to learn, repeat this to yourself:

*“I am human. I will make mistakes.
But if I never stop learning, then I will
never stop improving.”*

"I am human. I will make mistakes. But if I never stop learning, then I will never stop improving."

Rate how you think you did this past week on both Strategic and Decisive. Then use the space below to reflect on your performance.

STRATEGIC

①

②

③

④

⑤

⑥

⑦

⑧

⑨

10

DECISIVE

①

②

③

⑤

⑥

⑦

⑧

⑨

10

[illegible]

"I am human. I will make mistakes. But if I never stop learning, then I will never stop improving."

Rate how you think you did this past week on both Strategic and Decisive. Then use the space below to reflect on your performance.

STRATEGIC

①

②

③

④

⑤

⑥

7

8

⑨

10

DECISIVE

①

②

③

④

⑤

⑥

⑦

⑧

⑨

10

[illegible]

"I am human. I will make mistakes. But if I never stop learning, then I will never stop improving."

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STRATEGIC

①

②

③

④

⑤

⑥

⑦

⑧

⑨

10

DECISIVE

①

②

③

⑤

⑥

⑦

⑧

⑨

10

[illegible]

"I am human. I will make mistakes. But if I never stop learning, then I will never stop improving."

Rate how you think you did this past week on both Strategic and Decisive. Then use the space below to reflect on your performance.

STRATEGIC

①

②

③

④

⑤

⑥

⑦

⑧

⑨

10

DECISIVE

①

②

③

④

⑤

⑥

⑦

⑧

⑨

10

[illegible]