



CHECKLIST:

Developing decision-making skills

A resource for intentional managers and leaders



The logo for IMLANZ, featuring the text "IMLANZ" in a bold, sans-serif font with a small blue "D" superscript to the right.

Perhaps one of the most important things to learn when trying to achieve big goals is how to make good decisions.

Items for checklisting:

- Be clear about the scope of the decision you are faced with
- Determine your deadline
- Consider the potential impact of the decision and how this will be evaluated
- Decide who needs to be involved in the decision making process
- Define the issue to be decided and collect relevant information
- Take account of uncertainty
- Gather appropriate contributions
- Use decision making tools which fit the situation
- Watch out for biases and common psychological traps
- Communicate the decision and act on it
- Monitor and learn from the outcomes



Still struggling?

Here are some more tips for making a decision:

1. Get analytical

According to a study by Accenture (2013), only 21% of respondent organisations successfully used analytics for routine decision making. Analysing a situation before making a decision is a great way of ensuring an objective approach and gaining the commitment of others. Despite this, analytical decision making takes more time; therefore, it may not always be the most effective approach when prompt decisions need to be made.

2. Block out bias

Bias is a hard thing to block out of decision making; however, accepting that bias occurs and forcing yourself to consider other factors can help. There are three common types of bias in decision making: confirmation bias, availability heuristic and halo effect.

Confirmation bias refers to our natural desire to not rethink our beliefs or change our opinions. When we are presented with new ideas that contradict our beliefs and opinions, we tend to ignore them rather than using them to form new judgements.

Secondly, availability heuristic refers to the mental shortcuts we take when evaluating a specific action or decision. According to this form of bias, we are likely to form evaluations solely on what we initially recall.

Finally, the halo effect refers to our desire for consistency when forming decisions. For example, if we initially form a positive impression on someone, we are likely to judge that person more favourably than someone we initially form a negative impression on. When making future decisions, ask yourself whether any of these three forms of bias could've come into play. By

asking yourself this question, you can prevent bias from steering you in the wrong direction.

3. Think ethically

Ethics is an important factor to consider in any business decision as it is likely to impact multiple people. By not considering the ethics behind a decision you make, it would be harder to build commitment and gain acceptance from others.

4. Consider outcomes

Understanding the gravity of different consequences can assist in formulating responsible decisions. One common consequentialist theory is utilitarianism. This theory proposes that the most appropriate decisions are found by evaluating what decision would cause the greatest good for the greatest number of stakeholders.

5. Solicit stakeholder opinions

Gaining feedback from other key stakeholders enables you to view a potential decision from a different perspective. For example, it may open your eyes to ethical considerations or outcomes that you may not have thought of. This particular approach is also a great way of reducing personal bias as it forces you to consider alternative attitudes.

6. Remind yourself of organizational priorities

Business objectives and an organization's vision serve as a good guide for effective decision making as they can sometimes put priorities into perspective. For example, when choosing between two available alternatives, reminding yourself of organisational values or objectives may change the weighting of certain factors

that differentiate the two alternatives.

7. Get out of your head

Put your thinking down on paper. It doesn't have to be neat; doodles and diagrams are fine. Just get it down. You will get a much clearer idea of the big picture if it is in front of you in black and white, not just inside your head. Plus, you can refer back to it later.

8. Understand the risks

Understand the risks of choosing each possible option - and the risks of not choosing it. You can't avoid risk entirely, but you do need to ensure you are only taking risks you can live with.

9. Work to a deadline

That way you can prioritize the decisions you need to make, and make the crucial ones now while leaving the others for later. It may even be that making the most urgent decisions now simplifies the decision-making for the other ones, because it reduces the choices available

to you. Never put off making decisions that need making. As soon as you have enough information to make a sensible, informed decision, do it and move on to the next one. Even a poor decision is usually better than no decision at all because at least it gives you something to work with.

10. Listen to your gut

In some situations, tapping into your unguarded emotional response can be extremely useful, particularly when there is no automatic "right" or "wrong" decision. Ensure that you are making your own decision and not the decision that someone else wants you to make. If you feel under pressure to make a particular choice, or even to make a choice at all, pause and reflect.

11. Sleep on it

Your brain will continue to mull over the decision to be made even when you are not consciously thinking about it, so if possible give it time to whir away while you are asleep. It may give you useful insights.

Watch out!

Potential pitfalls to avoid include:

- Excluding those who should be involved in decision making
- Information overload – trying to consider every piece of available information before making a decision
- Analysis paralysis – thinking over a decision so thoroughly that you miss opportunities
- Failing to recognise common biases in your thinking that might skew decision making



Found this resource helpful?



Our decision-making skills checklist is taken from our Intentional Leadership™: Accelerate program, designed specifically to help managers of managers lead with ease and impact across their organisations.

The program equips professionals with both the hard skills and people skills to master the competencies of effective leadership.

Find out more about our Accelerate program

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