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Critical Thinking and Decision Making

Nova Southeastern University
February 17, 2019
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Introduction

Present-day organizational leaders face a multitude of challenges, such as innovative technology, globalization, and unforeseeable volatile environments, which exponentially increases their potential for failure (Cohen, 2001). As a result, we are in an epoch which requires leaders within contemporary organizations to have to change traditional mindsets to ones that are flexible, adaptable, and intuitive to be critical thinkers with good decision-making abilities. A mentality that inspires and motivates by creating positive associations and generate a feeling of belongingness and interconnectedness amongst employees (Dabke, 2016). That is if they want to improve their competitive positions and remain relevant.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide current and future leaders with a comprehensive reference guide of various aspects of the decision-making process — first, the manual reviews the process, challenges, and strategies to improve decision making. Then, the handbook discusses the importance, characteristics, and relevance of critical thinking. Next, the manual explores the concept of emotional intelligence and explains how emotional intelligence can make leaders better decision makers. Finally, the manual explores the empowering role of leaders within an organization and how they are creating agents of action. Ultimately, the objective of the handbook is to help current and future organizational leaders in the decision-making process.
Chapter 1

The Processes, Challenges and How to Improve Decision-Making Process

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February 17, 2019
What is Decision Making?

Decision-making is something that the human family or mankind in general cannot avoid. It is an inescapable fact that every man and woman must grapple with. Even when I have failed to make a purposeful or intentional decision, I am inadvertently still making decision by default. Decision-making is one of the certainties of life of which no individual can escape; neither the janitorial worker at the public school nor the scientist at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) cannot avoid. It is like breathing. Decision-making process is not status specific. The process transcends color, culture and creed. Everybody makes decisions. Decisions are being made by the highly sophisticated and by others who we may deem as uncultured. However, in my opinion, perhaps no other entity in the market place of ideas within our post-modern society that bears the heavy burden of decision-making than our businessmen and women. From the lowly Mom and Pop stores to the Ivory Towers on Walls Street. Every business entity is making decision at one level or the other. These businessmen and women in my opinion must make daily unforced and forced decisions that are based on prudent judgments to keep their businesses solvent; and to maintain a stable economy for their employees.

Furthermore, I am fully aware that the process of decision-making can be categorized into two groups using computer parlance; for instance, programmed and non-programmed decisions. The former type is comprised mainly of routine and repetitive quality decision. For instance, a certain procedural system is put in place by managers to anticipate and correct recurrent problems to avoid treating the situation as rare each time it occurs. This also assist in ensuring smooth and orderly process. On the other hand, the later decision-making process is more complicated in nature. It demands immediate, special, creative, outside of the box approach or thinking.
Hypothetically, if all the accountants in the accounting department of an insurance company should choose not to work on their receivable and payable accounts without notice, obviously, this would create a huge problem within the operation of the company. This problem obviously would not be solved by simple procedural rules. Instead, it would be solved through problem solving technique or procedures and not rules. Therefore, my intent is to focus this module of the handbook on the following areas of decision-making; the processes of decision-making, the challenges of decision making and how to improve decision-making process.

The Processes of Decision Making

In my opinion, decision-making process and critical thinking are undeniably and indisputably intently coupled together. They are almost like Siamese twin. They are at the core of the administrative and middle management processes (Shapiro & Others, 1994). In addition, proper and prudent decisions are made on the grounds of 7 pillars. The processes of decision-making are built around the following circumference below (Lucidchart, 2017). Each radius will be discussed briefly below:

*Figure 1. Decision Making Process*
1. **Identify the Decision:** I must identify and define the problem before I make the decision. Should I misidentify the problem I would defeat the entire process from the beginning of the process. Problem identification and clarification are critical in the enter process of decision-making (Meyer, 2018).

2. **Gather Relevant Information:** The second step after I have identified and defined the problem is to gather all appropriate and relevant information that are in sync with my choice. I should endeavor to avoid too much research data, which has the potential to swamp me with overkilled data and statistics that might muddle the process.

3. **Identify the Alternatives:** The third step after I have identified, defined and gathered all relevant and appropriate data is to identify feasible and practicable options as solutions to the problem.

4. **Weigh the Evidence:** Having looked at several options to solve the problems, then I would weigh the alternatives; the pros and the cons. Evaluate the actions and outcomes of other companies who were in similar positions. Consider the successes and failures of my own organization. I also recommend the use of the decision tree, which is below (Lucidchart, 2017). Figure 2 below highlights an organization seeking to ascertain if they should conduct a market testing before a product rolls out from a plant. The diverse branches document the prospect of success and projected the cost. This data assists the manager to discern which of the options is more revenue friendly (Lucidchart, 2017).
5. **Choose Among Alternatives:** This is a very critical section of the decision-making process because here I have to make the decision to choose what viable path to take, which is based on identified and clarified gathered data

6. **Take Actions:** Seeing that I have made my decision then the most natural action that comes after is to act upon my decision. I must create a plan of action that is concrete, specific and attainable to achieve my goals

7. **Review My Decision:** At this final step of my decision-making process I would look back at the defined problem at stage one; and look seriously at my present decision.

*Figure 2. Decision Tree*
In addition, I would ask myself these questions: Did I solve the problem? Did I answer the question, and did I meet my goals?

The Common Challenges of Decision Making

**Having too much or not enough information.** One of the common challenges that decision makers frequently encounter in my view is having too much or too little information to make the right decision. Having too much information can overcomplicate the whole process of decision-making. On the other hand, having too little information can also render the decision-making process extremely ineffective and impotent. The risks are extremely extraordinary from both points of views. In my opinion whenever statistics, data, researches, questionnaires and any other potential data that attempts to help with decision process are incomplete; they become kryptonite to the entire process of decision-making. It is very important that we avoid all forms of kryptonite potential material within the process, which are clearly harmful to the process. For instance, whenever data are delivered in piecemeal, delayed, fail to sufficiently deal with the question or plainly overwhelmingly and are hard to understand (Anderson, Milner, & Foley, 2008) then the process becomes very challenging. Therefore, data in all forms in my assessment must be moderated and just right to significantly empower the decision process.

**Misidentifying the problem.** Another potential challenge to Decision-Making Process (DMP) is the problem of misidentifying the problem. Misidentifying the problem in decision-making is deem very costly to the DMP. It is like a patient who went into surgery to have his left gangrened leg amputated but unfortunately got his right leg mistakenly severed instead. We must know where the infection is within our organization to tackle and deal with it promptly and accurately.
Overconfident in the outcome. The fact that I have diligently followed the 7 steps of decision-making process with exceeding confidence, the possibility of a faulty outcome is still very real. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that we identify feasible and practicable options earlier during the process. They must be viable, achievable and authentic solutions to the problem.

How to Improve Decision-Making Process

Fully grasp of the dynamics of decision-making processes. I strongly believe that managers who fully grasp the processes, challenges and principles of decision-making will grapple more effectively with the choices between a bad or good decision, rather than managers who do not. Some of these choices embodies subjects that have to do with planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling, which are settled on the manager’s desks. As decision makers we both solve problems and exploits opportunities on behalf our organization. Therefore, having the required knowledge that each different decision I make does change the possibility of different results and how that decision impacts my company helps to form the basis of a good decision (Frick, 2018).

We should be less certain of outcomes. In addition, we must embrace the cardinal rule in decision-making, which is to be less certain or cautiously optimistic of the outcomes. This approach in decision-making stifles the very life of over confidence that is also a grave challenge in the decision-making process. This approach does enable me to explore other alternates so become less rigid in my decision, but more permeable to new perspective.

Should Ask the Question: How Often Does that the Case Historically? Based on my reading that I have done I have encountered scholars suggesting that the initial step in improving decision-making process is to ask how regular that particular thing happens. For instance, if I
were giving serious thought in investing a Subway Restaurant, I should ask myself; what percentage of subway investors fail in the first 3 years or succeed (Frick, 2018).

Having focused on this module of the handbook on the following areas of decision-making; the processes of decision-making, the challenges of decision-making and how to improve decision-making process. I am confident that each person who has the opportunity to read this handbook will become more aware of the nature and dynamic of decision-making.
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Chapter 2

The Importance, Characteristics, and Relevance of Critical Thinking

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What is Critical Thinking?

Critical thinking is defined as a process in which an individual analyzes, synthesizes and evaluates information in order to make a judgment on a particular matter at hand (Nordquist, 2019). Critical thinking is a skill that a lot of employers are looking for in their employees in order to help take the company to the next level to remain relevant in the future. As everyone knows, people are always thinking about something as it pertains to their personal and professional lives, it is our nature to do so. However, just thinking can sometimes end up biased, prejudice or distorted at times if left by itself.

Critical thinking on the other hand, allows for individuals to improve the quality of thinking while skillfully and strategically taking charge of their own intellectual standards. A skillful critical thinker raises questions, gathers and reviews information, thinks with an open mind and communicates effectively with stakeholders or team members to figure out solutions to the problem at hand.

Recently, critical thinking has been classified as one of the skills 21st century students need to succeed in today’s society (Partnership, 2009). The ability to logically reason and rationalize a thought process is a relevant to effectively use the mind to think critically. Furthermore, the philosophy to understand the connection between two concepts or points in thought, allows the thinker to properly reason with not only individuals around them, but to understand the process holistically.

Characteristics of Critical Thinking

Watanabe-Crockett, L. (2018) found that there are seven most common characteristics that highly effective critical thinkers have. These are curiosity, compassion, awareness,
decisiveness, honesty, willingness and creativity. We have all heard the phrase, curiosity killed the cat. However, for critical thinkers being curious tasks at hand is a strong skill to have, while others can say they aren’t curious about outcomes or the process to get to a solution form the issue, critical thinkers are there to ask the questions and get a grasp of what’s going on.

Second, you have compassion, being a compassionate critical thinker allows you to understand who your team and colleagues are, using more compassion about the situation at hand with an open heart instead of their mind. The third trait is awareness, having awareness gives the critical thinker the ability be aware of his or her surroundings, not taking everything for face value, asking questions and looking in to different opportunities to look deeper into what is being presented.

The forth trait mentioned is Decisiveness, critical thinkers are very decisive, they weigh out all options and in order to make a clear and decision and move forward instead of moving backgrounds with thinking. Next, trait is honesty, in general honesty is important when making decisions that can affect anyone that is involved with the decision at hand, for critical thinkers it boils down not only affecting someone but the integrity aspect of it, the ethical consideration and action that affects everything holistically.

Next, the trait of willingness for critical thinkers is important. Willingness to learn from their own mistakes, challenging the status-quo but being open to other aspects of solutions than thinking only one way is the right way. The final trait is creativity. There aren’t a whole lot of individuals in today’s society that sees themselves as creative or have that skill set to be creative. However, critical thinkers rely on creativity to solve challenges and the issues at hand. They use that thought process in order to make decisions and come up with solutions that are out of the box, in order to be different and separate themselves from the norm.
What Does It Mean to Think Critically?

A critical thinker using a wide variety of different philosophical lenses, will raise important questions which will allow more discussions to happen around that specific topic at hand (Raymond, Profetto, 2011). Critical thinking gives me the opportunity to be the first cause of change due to the out of the box thought process, to think critically is to have a healthy questioning attitude about information received. As a critical thinker, the knowledge of the challenge at hand is needed in order to look at the scope holistically and unbiased to make a sound decision based on what is laid out.

When in a critical thinking mode about a subject, task or challenge, the quality of thinking is repositioned to efficiently analyze, asses and reconstruct the data to break it down where understanding everything is second nature to come up with a proper solution. Furthermore, as a critical thinker remember, there is no real conclusion that will happen right Away. The conclusion is more of a constant interaction with continuous change of circumstances and new knowledge that allows a holistic vision to be able to examine new evidence which in some cases can start the entire process over again.

Why is Critical Thinking Important?

As one learns, demonstrates and articulates the skill of thinking critically, it demonstrates and presents that the individual has the ability and knowledge to engage in specific areas that the individual is part of (Volman, 2004). The ability to think clearly and rationally is important in whatever someone chooses to do, whether an individual is working in education, finance, construction or management the skill of being able to think critically is important.
Critical thinking is seen as a skill set that is increasingly valuable in a growing number of career paths. Positions that ask for the analyzing of information, problem solving, innovative solutions, strategic and creative planning are areas where critical thinkers will shine and be challenged on a daily basis (Alban, 2019). Furthermore, critical thinkers are very effective when it comes to reasoning, problem solving and evaluating what they do or “thinking” about doing.

Islam, (2015) describes critical thinking as a short, self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective form of thinking that presupposes assent to rigorous standards of excellence and also a form of a mindful command when used. In other terms meaning the skill if used correctly will unlock potential that will make room for a professional and personal growth.

**Critical Thinking in the 21st Century**

In today’s society critical thinking skills are a hot commodity for organizations that are looking for fresh new talent. Organizations are looking for people that will think outside the box and create a solution that will be competitive and keep them relevant on the future as the world changes each day, as companies and individuals compete and win in the global economy, today’s current students which are striving to be tomorrow’s leaders, will need the critical thinking knowledge and skills to be the best of the best.

In today’s society teaching critical thinking skills is becoming extremely important, due to the constant change in today’s society. Individuals need to gain complex thinking skills to understand information they come access and learn to promote good decision making and problem solving skills as they solve real-world challenges (Dwyer, Hogan, & Stewart, 2014).

**Limitations to Critical Thinking**

There can always be limitations to anything with critical thinking, this valuable skill at times could allow for delving into something deeper than it should be. One could find themselves
questioning a variety of things like values, process or policies and procedures. When understanding the root cause of something and the deep inner workings of it, it will allow for deeper thoughts which could make anyone second guess themselves. For example, reading into much of a policy or procedure that is already outlined in detail why it is there and why it needs to be followed or second guessing a supervisor after a task has been given. Furthermore, the process of the thinking process is positioned as a notion that critical thinkers over think which causes them to be more stressed which can directly or indirectly impact the outcome, due to judgement. In closing, as a critical thinker the exposure of different things that would not require critical thinking. However, due to having this skill it will make us think we need to. A critical thinker must be able to distinguish, recognize and avoid the deception that we can come in contact with.
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Chapter 3

Emotional Intelligence

How Emotional Intelligence Makes Leaders Better Decision Makers?

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What is a Leader?

My definition of a leader is an individual that possess both innate and learned abilities capable of influencing others to make decisions they normally would not if it was left up to their own free will. It should go without saying, a leader must possess fundamental abilities, such as conceptual thinking, analytical thinking, and interpersonal skills. However, for a leader to inspire, persuade, listen, and motivate, he or she must understand that emotions and intellect share a dynamic relationship. For example, a leader who is capricious lacks self-awareness because he or she does not understand his or her feelings. Is that leader going to be able to successfully build effective relationships with others or make critical decisions when he cannot control his own emotions? Research suggests the more emotional individuals get, the more difficult it is for them to think both rationally and critically and without feeling we are ineffective decision makers (Larson, 2017).

Emotional Brain Versus Thinking Brain

To better understand how emotions, affect critical-thinking and the decision-making process let us first explore how the brain functions and then the concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI). Let us start by dividing the brain into the emotional brain and the thinking brain. This concept of duplexity comes from a book published in 1995 by Daniel Goleman titled Emotional Intelligence: Why it Can Matter more than IQ, as the emotional brain and the thinking brain. The emotional brain (i.e., the limbic system), is a network of interwoven synapses from where our emotions appear. Whereas, the thinking brain (i.e., the neocortex) is the area of the brain where reason and self-control lie. While both sides work in conjunction with each other, the emotional brain is the first to react in a time of crisis (i.e., fight-or-flight response) and the thinking brain supports the emotional brain by providing priority and context. A person that
cannot regulate the emotional brain can subject themselves to several unintentional consequences such as damage relationships, make misinformed decisions, take an unnecessary risk, or could potentially suffer self-inflicted damage.

**Emotional Hijacking**

To understand the emotional brain, we turn to research from an acclaimed neuroscientist, Joseph LeDoux. LeDoux (1996) revealed there are two distinct and essential areas to recognize and understand in the emotional brain: (a) the amygdala, and (b) the hippocampus. In the “interbrain” the thalamus is the first part to receive sensory (i.e., optic or auditory) information. The thalamus then transmits a signal to the amygdala (i.e., the emotional brain) first, after which, it sends a second signal to the neocortex (i.e., the thinking brain). That is why the emotional brain can respond before the thinking brain can fully comprehend the information received. Whereas, the hippocampus prefers to concentrate on registering and recognizing meaningful patterns, as opposed to focusing on emotional reactions. The significance of this finding becomes apparent to everyone if you try to think back to your memories. Typically, you associate emotional experiences or events positively or negatively and try to avoid negative associations and replicate positive associations. The difficult task is to alter preexisting negative associations because that requires rigorous conscious effort to remedy.

Now, when both the emotional and the thinking brain work in unison, the neocortex has time to mitigate the emotional response. Although the response time is attenuated, the result becomes more astute. However, during certain situations such as real emergencies, the emotional brain dampers the thinking brain, thus emotionally hijacks the brain. During this *emotional hijacking*, rational thinking significantly diminishes, and the individual becomes driven by passion. Figure 1 illustrates an emotional hijacking.
Repercussions from an emotional hijacking can range from as simple as inefficient communication to as severe as becoming hyper-critical. There can be physical consequences as well, such as increased stress levels, frustration, a sense of being out-of-control, and could escalate to the point of being life-threatening. Furthermore, flooding can occur. Flooding is a term which refers to an individual feeling swamped by emotion, resulting in a person losing hope, becoming cold-hearted, or eventually becomes withdrawn. Flooding can occur from a person’s own emotions or the emotions of someone else (Coleman & Argue, 2017).

Four Domains of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a concept that refers to an individual’s ability to recognize, comprehend, manage, and amalgamate one’s own emotions as well as the emotions of others to facilitate the decision-making process (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). While Mayer and Salovey were the first to originate the term emotional intelligence in writing, this paper concentrates on Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2013) simplified model of EI, which divides EI into four domains with 18 associated competencies. It is important to note that each domain builds on the previous domain. The four domains of EI are (a) Self-Awareness, (b) Self-Management, (c)
Social Awareness, and (d) Relationship Management. Figure 2 illustrates the Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee’s Emotional Intelligence Model.

**Self-awareness**. Self-awareness refers to a profound understanding of one’s emotions, goals, motives, values, dreams, strengths, and weaknesses. A self-aware leader has a keen sense of purpose, direction, and is intrinsically motivated to get there. On the other hand, a leader that lacks self-awareness is triggered to make decisions more so on extrinsic rewards (e.g., monetarily or tangible) than intrinsic rewards (e.g., pleasure or intangible) which could potentially lead to inner turmoil and short-term satisfaction.

**Self-management**. Now that we understand our purpose and emotions, we are ready to enter the second domain: self-management. Self-management alludes to components of EI that allows us to identify, isolate, and liberate ourselves from the confines of disruptive emotions (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013). Also, self-management permits leaders the mental clarity necessary to focus their energy appropriately, creating an environment of trust, equity, and transparency. Whereas, a leader that cannot free themselves from disruptive emotions would
have difficulties focusing 100% of his or her energy and could potentially perturb others to the point they become emotionally hijacked. Thus, creating a counterproductive environment.

**Social awareness.** Now that we are self-aware and can dissociate disruptive emotions from clouding our decision-making process, we can move towards the third domain: social awareness. Social awareness in this context is synonymous with empathy. Thus, social consciousness is the ability to recognize how others are feeling by listening and comprehending people’s perspectives. By staying attuned to others, we can adjust our message to ensure everyone remains on the same page. Not to say, the leader should stifle what he or she feels, but convey the message appropriately.

**Relationship management.** The last domain emerges as a fusion of the previous three domains to produce: relationship management (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013). A couple of examples of relationship management are conflict management and persuasion. The underlining assumption is now that the leader understands his own emotions (i.e., self-aware); can maintain mental clarity by isolating disruptive emotions (i.e., self-management); is attuned with others (i.e., socially aware); he or she can now manage relationships with a purpose. That purpose is to inspire and motive others to progress to a collective mission and vision. Thus, putting emotional intelligence to work.

**Why EI Leaders Make Better Decision-Makers**

EI competencies can propel an excellent organization to become a great organization by increasing leadership efficiency and effectiveness which elevates cohesiveness, teamwork, and task performance (Burger, 2016). Mastering the ability to make quality decisions is a learned ability, anyone willing and motivated can become a better decision-maker. Although, to change an old habit requires time, hard work, and much practice.
What EI does is provide organizational leaders with the right tool for the job. Leaders that comprehensively understand how the emotional brain processes information and the four domains of EI they can avoid detrimental toxic work environments and maintain productive work environment. Two primary benefits emerge from grasping the concept of the four domains of EI. First, a leader understands their own emotions can restrain disruptive emotions to ensure adept, optimistic, adaptable decisions are made and can be at ease with innovative and creative choices (Durlofsky, 2018). Second, by being attuned and empathetic to how others feel leaders can create a personal connection to successfully and effectively manage relationships (Head & Freedman, 2014). Thus, leaders can assimilate information faster, increase their decision-making acumen, and identify and mitigate potentially adverse emotional outcomes before they occur because not every “solved” problem can avoid negative consequences.
References


Chapter Four

The Empowering Role of Leaders in the Organization
Creating Agents of Action

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What is the Role of a Leader?

Leaders who provide stability, have the ability to reduce people’s anxiety when an organization is going through reorganizational processes. Globalization and Technology have changed traditional way to make businesses across the world. Organizations need to respond to new challenges at a fast pace and creatively, opening innovative paths that were not seen before in order to attend diverse audiences from different age groups, nationalities or needs. These processes require employees to become problem solvers and creative thinkers who can design innovative solutions to help the organization adapt to changing conditions, show a commitment to learning in a trusting organizational climate. Employees need to be empowered to use their critical thinking skills to develop new products, services, offering the organizations flexibility not only to survive but to succeed. This chapter explains the transformational power behind leaders to guide employees responding promptly and effectively to adaptive challenges, show judgment assessing priorities, beliefs, habits, and discerning about taking risks for the greater good: the success of the business. Leadership also shows guidelines to apply interventions to tests new solutions, interpretations or experiments that take place in front of unique situations to assess the effectiveness of each action. Interventions institutionalize processes of reflection and continuous learning to foster communication across the organization. This chapters provides guidelines for organizations to develop a supportive environment and an adequate organizational climate, foundations of a creative organization of the 21st century.

Transforming Employees into Problem Solvers and Creative Thinkers

Under the Leader’s Initiative
Globalization and Technology have changed traditional way to make businesses across the world. Organizations need to respond to new challenges at a fast pace and creatively, opening innovative paths that were not seen before in order to attend diverse audiences from different age groups, nationalities or needs. These processes require employees to become problem solvers and creative thinkers who can design innovative solutions to help the organization adapt to changing conditions, show a commitment to learning in a trusting organizational climate.

Employees need to be empowered to use their critical thinking skills to develop new products, services, offering the organizations flexibility not only to survive but to succeed. This chapter offers my personal perspective about the role of leaders guiding employees to respond promptly and effectively to adaptive challenges proper of these times such as, mastering of new technologies, identification of changing market conditions and competitors, the creation of new products or services, and others. Employees of the 21st century find themselves in new situations that require them to show judgment while assessing priorities, beliefs, habits, discernment, and even taking risks for the greater good: the success of the business. Leadership can empower employees to intervene in unique scenarios with creative solutions, by providing them with guidelines to tests new solutions, interpretations or experiments that assess the effectiveness of each action. When an employee has to intervene and produce a unique solution for the sake of the business, he is applying interventions. Interventions institutionalize processes of reflection and continuous learning to foster communication, growth, and learning across the organization.
Creative leaders produce creative organizations. Creative leaders become role models for creativity and inspiration to the followers in the working place when they promote a creativity-supporting work climate. Individuals who display a unique set of qualities such as personality, cognitive style or ability create supportive and safe climate that promotes employee’s creativity (Mathisen, Eirnarsen, & Mykletun, 2012).

Powerful expectations. I have learned that organizational leaders have the power to boost employees’ performance when they set high expectations and communicate them from the start. High confidence and realistic goals are positive trends that benefit the employees and the organization on the long-run. Individuals or groups of people with high efficacy tend to believe in their abilities to resolve the task at hand. Transformational leadership skills can convert followers into leaders because they are empowering and inspirational appealing to higher levels of motivation (Hackman & Johnson, 2013).

Expectations must be communicated. The leader in an organization has the power to increase or decrease the follower’s performance when communicating its expectations. If expectations are not clearly communicated or stated from the start, they might not even exist. In view of this point, I have got to the conclusion that employees need to believe their leaders or supervisors hold high expectations for their performance. Expectations need to be communicated through four important channels: climate, input, output, and feedback (Hackman & Johnson, 2013).

Words convey the message; non-verbal cues are also perceived immediately by employees, and this surround the expectations with a light of credibility (climate, tied to the social and emotional atmosphere). The number and variety of tasks given to the employees confirm that leaders or supervisors hold high expectations for their performance. Receiving
additional responsibilities create a positive performance, known as spiral scenario (Input).

Employees who receive opportunities to give their opinions feel valued and appreciated (Output). Constant feedback benefits the employees to feel as a value member of the organizational community. Selection of words when addressing to employees reveal intentions to share power. Disney calls employees “cast members” implying they are important for the company, and that they have an important role in the overall performance.

**Effective Guidelines to Respond to Adaptive Challenges**

Businesses in a global economy are carried out effectively through the access to technology. Colleges and Universities have also developed online programs to serve the educational needs of the future workforce. Employees have had to respond quickly by learning new ways to recruit students from abroad; faculty had had to design 100% online platforms to reach students, and in some instances come up with a new system: hybrid classes to give students a chance to experience the real experience at the educational setting (Hackman & Johnson, 2013). As I see it, in front of new and challenging situations, employees are encouraged to follow a set of actions to secure the best outcome for the business, as it is detailed in the following lines:

1. Assess the event from the start, keeping a record for further analysis and repetitive use through the observation of patterns, remaining as objective as possible.
2. Develop interpretations for the observations while developing hypothesis and data that reinforces the course of action.
3. Address the challenges through interventions that test their interpretations or data.
The constant application of this three-step guideline expands the adaptive capacity of the organization, while preparing the workforce to respond promptly and confidently to future challenges.

**Characteristics of Adaptive Organizations**

1. Name the elephants in the rooms: working force raises sensitive issues or crisis (elephants) and challenge authorities in public sessions.
2. Share responsibility for the organization’s future: members take ownership for the actions of the business, working with other departments, developing cross-functional teams, or through the creation of job shadowing programs.
3. Value Independent Judgment: in front of ambiguity or uncertainty, followers provide their insight to problems, while leaders pay attention to the claims or feedback of the lower levels of the organization.
4. Build Leadership capacity. Employees are given an opportunity through individualized leadership development plans with the support of the managers.
5. Reflection is institutionalized as a learning tool. The perspectives of frontline are welcome, along with the implementation of small experiments, and the positive outcome of risk decision making is rewarded.

**Empowered Employees Respond Effectively to Adaptive Challenges.**

Employees have the abilities to tackle new challenges. In my eyes, employees can learn new skills which in turn will provide them with greater fulfillment at the personal and professional level. The process of empowering employees includes the following components: modifying the environment (by eliminating powerlessness situations, redesigning a shift of decision-making authority towards followers), building intrinsic motivation (an active approach
or proactivity towards their job responsibilities is valued and encouraged), supplying resources (adequate training plus financial and performance data for actions of planning and assessment).

As I have learned, a leader is not afraid to share power. On the contrary, it frequently shifts leaders and roles, while giving everybody a chance for personal growth and learning (Hackman & Johnson, 2013). Mother Nature even provides an example of this behavior when we see a lead goose flying in a V-formation. It shifts roles and positions when migrating.

**Strategies to Promote Independent Thought and Action**

Self-discipline employees who find rewards in tasks, adopt positive thought patterns can learn to lead themselves if they are in a working environment that promotes independent thought and action, through the following strategies: change of organizational structures (reconfiguration of roles, functions and responsibilities to reduce hierarchy while creating self-managing teams), change of organizational processes (revamping of communicational flow and materials, decision-making is transferred to the lowest level, encouraging teams to resolve their own problems, etc.), change of interpersonal communication patterns (through the use of verbal and non-verbal cues to build confidence while complimenting initiative and developing trust). (Hackman & Johnson, 2013).
**Room to experimentation and failure.** To my eyes, when organizations use the three types of learning: Intelligence (collect and interpret data to identify trends or market growth), Experience (analyze successes and failures) and Experimentation (new services or products for new territories), they increase their adaptive learning by empowering their employees to grow with the process. When companies understand the challenges and opportunities, they increase their chances to succeed in unpredictable environments.

**Knowledge sharing.** The successful results or learning lessons must be shared for the continuous growth of the business. Committed employees share their experiences, integrating new information into daily operations, and making it useful to train the workforce.

**Organizational climate.** Organizational Climate promotes open communication between individuals and departments to share knowledge of value for the organization. An organizational climate that nurtures open communication, considers the following elements:

1. **Physical environment.** Creation of quiet spaces for reflection, record insights and share of ideas.
2. **Direction.** Guides the knowledge-sharing process by creating guidelines, processes, action steps for analysis and reflection.
3. **Measurement.** Individual and group knowledge-sharing behaviors are encouraged through online discussions or submissions of databases.
4. **Means.** Facilitates knowledge sharing through an array of technologies mediums.
5. **Ability.** Values employees attempts to reflect on their learning while sharing their reflections.
6. **Motivation.** Values intrinsic rewards when sharing data since it saves time and money, while developing pride being considered as an expert. External rewards can be put in
place too. Incentives promote employee creativity; they also reveal the mechanisms that affect creative performance (Putwain et al. as cited in Yoon & Sung 2015). Rewards for creativity send the message to employees that the organization values and encourages creativity (Yoon & Sung, 2015). It is my understanding that the implementation of rewards for creativity at the workplace takes away the fear or taking social risks. Additionally, it infuses the working setting with an air of a psychologically safe environment for creativity (Byron & Khazanchi as cited in Yoon & Sung 2015).

**Common values to reach unique goals.** The way I personally see it, leaders have the ability to bring people together as a family by emphasizing common values and integrating them into the business. When a team is lifted up by the energy and enthusiasm of each other, a cohesive team is formed, and they all move together to target their common goal. Teams that care for the well-being of each other end up doing more than just working together (Wilson, 2018).

**Supportive environment.** In my opinion, a supportive environment for creativity improves the bottom line when it treats employees as human beings and not resources, celebrates the fulfillment of goals, and gives employees autonomy to make decisions that will make the company efficient. Additionally, when employees are given the opportunity to attend their personal or family-related needs, they feel more engaged to the company since balancing life and family can be challenging at different times of their lives. A family environment can be recreated in the organizational setting since it empowers-long term employees. A supportive environment is key to empower employees to be problem solvers and creative thinkers since it removes the fear of trying and failing (William, 2017).
Characteristics of Creative Organizations

1. Balance focus between problems and solutions. When employees engage in meaningful exchanges of experiences to analyze common problems, solutions see the light since creativity emerges from the problem.

2. Creative action is the result of interaction between members of the organization. The exchange of ideas motivates the team to cooperate with each other.

3. Periods of play time provide employees opportunities to deal with ambiguity, complexity and improvisation by promoting creativity.

4. Time for exploration is incorporated in the working schedule to optimize creative talents to engage innovation.

5. Curiosity is welcome. It gives employees opportunities to learn about other areas and to others the change to be considered experts.

6. Group Creativity is valued since it promotes the creation of prototypes and sharing expertise while making connections.

7. A child’s mindset where looking at new and creative ideas is highly praised since there are not existing comparisons (Ruger, 2012).
References


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Conclusion

Having collectively studied the subject of Critical Thinking and Decision Making as a group; however, from varied perspectives; we have successfully compiled this handbook. Within this handbook we have firmly concluded that Critical Thinking and Decision Making is fundamentally essential to the success of any organization. Both Critical Thinking and Decision Making should never be seen as separate entities. Instead, they should be embraced as conjoined entities; like Siamese twins. Policy making decisions by every informed executive know this fact too well. For instance, they are thought to ask some critical thinking questions before they take the proverbial plunge: For example, do I have all the necessary data? Is there any dissidence in the presented evidence? Am I prepared to rigorously test the original story by creating an alternative? (Sieck, 2013). We agree that Critical Thinking and Decision-Making touches every strata of any administration from top, middle, and bottom management processes (Shapiro & Others, 1994). Furthermore, we are well informed as a result of this study that thoughtful deliberation and aggressive mental inquiry, which are components of critical thinking forces us to ask probing and prudent questions of others and ourselves before a decision is shrewdly made.

In addition, under the rubric of this wide subject matter Critical Thinking and Decision Making have been able to examine, articulate and integrate jointly the following modules in this single handbook: Critical Thinking and Why Is It One of The Most Important Skills Needed Into Today’s Workforce; Emotional Intelligence: A Vital Concept to Enhance Critical Thinking During the Decision-Making Process; The Empowering Role of Leaders in the Organization Creating Agents of Action and The Processes, Challenges and How to Improve Decision-Making Process. Moreover, we are confident that each person who has the chance to read this handbook
will leave with copious and relevant data relative to the critical nature and dynamics of Critical Thinking and Decision Making.
References


