

Decisiveness (Decision Making) Competency Development Activities

Competency Definition

Makes well-informed, effective and timely decisions, even when data are limited or solutions produce unpleasant consequences; perceives the impact and implications of decisions.

Developmental Activity Levels

All (A)

Applies to all competency levels

Beginner-Basic Knowledge (B)

A person at the Beginner-Basic Knowledge level has limited experience applying the competency. He/she applies general knowledge in common situations but has limited practical experience in applying the competency in a work environment presenting more complex situations.

Mid-level (M)

A person with mid-level proficiency has applied the competency repeatedly and successfully in the performance of his/her job but still has much to learn about the advanced aspects or behaviors associated with the competency. A person at this level can usually apply the competency on his/her own.

High (H)

A person at the High level has extensive knowledge of and experience with this competency and can apply the competency exceptionally well on the job without assistance. At this level one is an expert and has enough experience to teach the competency to others.

Articles, Books, and Websites

A Gladwell, Malcolm, Little, Brown, Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking, January, 2005.

This book looks at how we make snap judgments. The author uses examples to illustrate how people make instant decisions and demonstrates that we can make better instant judgments by training our mind and senses to focus only on the most relevant facts.

A Klien, Gary Klien, The Power of Intuition: How to Use Your Gut Feelings to Make Better Decisions at Work, Currency, June, 2004.

Based on interviews with senior executives who make important judgments swiftly, as well as firefighters, emergency medical staff, soldiers, and others who often face decisions with immediate life-and-death implications, the author demonstrates that the expertise to recognize

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patterns and other cues that enable us - intuitively - to make the right decisions - is a natural extension of experience. Through a process called the "Excelleration Program," the book provides readers the tools needed to build intuitive skills that will help you make tough choices, spot potential problems, manage uncertainty, and size up situations quickly.

A Multiple authors, Make Better Decisions—Faster, Harvard Business Review On Point, April, 2003. HBR 3361

Crises are facts of life. Some disasters are unavoidable; others, quite preventable--if we systematically anticipate and respond to threats. Crisis-prepared companies suffer fewer disasters and recover more quickly than crisis-prone firms. When the unavoidable strikes, admit you're in trouble. Then contain the crisis by acting decisively and quickly. The three articles in this collection: "Predictable Surprises: The Disasters You Should Have Seen Coming", "Preparing for Evil", and "Managing the Crisis You Tried to Prevent."

A Williams, Steve, Making Better Business Decisions, Sage Publications, December, 2001.

This book will help you to analyze options more clearly and creatively; reduce decision time; recognize and focus on priority decisions; and understand why and how others make the decisions they do.

A Russo, J. Edward, Shoemaker, Paul J.H., and Hittleman, Margo, Winning Decisions: Getting It Right the First Time, Doubleday, December, 2001.

This book focuses on how to make decisions "with the head, not the gut." The decision making model presented is divided into four phases, each fully explained in its own section of the book: Framing, Gathering Intelligence, Coming to Conclusions, and Learning from Experience.

M Hutchinson, J. Wesley, Alba, Joseph W., When Business Is a Confidence Game, Harvard Business Review, July, 2001. HBR F0106A

When it comes to making business decisions, being over confident about your choices can actually be more harmful than just guessing. Here's how managers can calibrate their confidence levels--and avoid being too sure in the wrong situations.

M Greenwood, Robin & White, Lucy, Decision Trees, Harvard Business School Press, December, 2004. HBSP: 0471423289

This article is a case study which introduces decision analysis. Using a simple example, it illustrates the use of probability trees and decision trees as tools for solving business problems.

M Russo, J. Edward, Schoemaker, Paul J. H., Decision Traps: The Ten Barriers to Brilliant Decision-Making and How to Overcome Them, Doubleday, 1989.

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Two experts in business management show how to avoid the ten common pitfalls that ensnare decision makers. Research in the fields of business and psychology has been distilled into practical training methods that will save readers from ever making a bad decision again.

Activities

B Take the initiative to ask others for input on your past performance when having to address difficult situations. Focus on what you could do to handle them more effectively. Volunteer for "brainstorming" sessions where you must generate ideas quickly in limited amount of time.

B Use a factual approach to decision-making by systematically collecting valid and reliable data. Rely on these data rather than on emotions, even if the decision is unpopular. In turn, explain decisions in terms of data, not emotions. If you tend to rely on your superiors for decision-making, force yourself to formulate alternatives and then present recommendations instead of the problem to your superior.

H Seek opportunities to serve in "acting" capacity for higher level positions to gain experience making higher level decisions.

Ask others for their perceptions of your decisiveness; if the feedback is that you procrastinate in decision-making, or that you are too conservative, consider involving respected others, who can help move you to a decision in the decision process. Ask your supervisor to let you make some of the decisions for your work group in his/her absence.

H Observe experienced colleagues or supervisors who are particularly effective at handling challenging situations and people. Review own analysis, conclusions and/or recommendations in challenging situations with your supervisor to reality test them and gain his/her support for them.

H Take responsibility for responding to a difficult person or internal customer (e.g., a senior manager from another office or region).

Coaching Suggestions for Managers

H Ask the person to plan how they will deal with people who hold opposing views in a meeting on a specific issue or decision. Have them plan how they will elicit, acknowledge and utilize their views on the issue, and how they will communicate their own ideas candidly in the same situation. Help them build a preference for candor by asking them what their opponents think and how they addressed those concerns.

H Have staff members describe their personal experiences in making tough decisions, emphasizing those elements that they find most difficult to deal with (e.g., the personal toll and weighing the risks). Open the stories up for discussion, so that others can share similar experiences and how they dealt with them. Have them brainstorm ways of handling them more effectively.

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H Put your colleague or direct report in a position where he or she has to make a tough decision and be held accountable for it. Many employees fail to develop this competency because they avoid responsibility and push the decision up to their manager or a senior member within their work group. Help think through the issues and options, and provide coaching support, but encourage them to make the actual decision.