

The Art of Decision Making



THE SPOTLIGHT EFFECT



People tend to give too much weight to the information that is right in front of them while failing to consider the information “to the left and to the right”.

When we take the time to shift the spotlight from side to side the situation starts to look a lot different.

What is in the “spotlight” will rarely be everything we need to make a good decision, but too often we forget to “shift the light”.

Truth or confirmation...

- **We say we want the truth when what we're really seeking is reassurance and confirmation that our beliefs/assumptions are correct**



- **When we want something to be true...**

- This guy is not a good tradesman
- **He is an accident waiting to happen**
- He is disruptive and argumentative
- **We need to fire him**

...we will “spotlight” the things that support it, and then, when we draw conclusions from those things that we spotlight, we’ll congratulate ourselves on a reasoned decision based on research!



The typical 4 steps we take to arrive at a decision...

1. **You encounter a choice...** But spotlighting causes you to miss some of the options
2. **You then analyze your position...** But the need to confirm your opinion leads you to gather self serving information
3. **You make a choice...** But short term emotion often tempts you to make the wrong decision
4. **Then you live with your decision...** Too often we are overconfident about how the future will unfold - *"this will not be a problem"*

Changing the way we reach decisions

No one can *deactivate* their biases – they are part of who we are. However we can *counteract* them with new strategies...

- 1. You encounter a choice... Widen your options**
- 2. You analyze your options... Reality Test your assumptions**
- 3. You make a choice... Attain distance before deciding**
- 4. Then you live with it... Prepare to be wrong**

Not all decisions we arrive at will be correct – however if we use a “less biased” process we will have a higher likelihood of success.

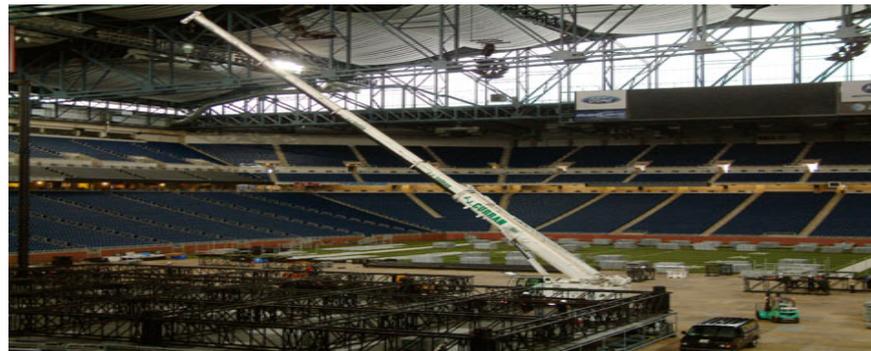
Something to ponder...

The rock band VAN HALEN had a clause in their contract that stated *“a bowl of M & M’s must be provided backstage and if any brown ones are found, the show could be cancelled”*. There were tales of David Lee Roth, the lead singer, walking back stage, finding a brown M & M in the bowl and freaking out.



And now for the rest of the story...

The tour would arrive at a venue with 18 tractor trailers full of equipment and lighting. They relied on the local venue staff to have everything prepared just as outlined in the contract. There was not time to go over all the pre-arrival set up – everything from electrical supply to cranes to pre-show meals had to be ready to go when the band arrived.



So where do the M& M's fit in...

The M & M's clause – article 126 in the contract - was buried in the middle of countless technical specifications. When the band arrived the first thing they did was check the M & M's bowl.



If they found brown M & M's they immediately demand a line check of the entire set up - and more times than not, they found errors because the promoter had not read the details in the contract.

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Not all decisions we arrive at will be correct – however if we are aware of how we arrive at our conclusions we can add skills to help us make better informed decisions

