

The Decision M a t r i x



*Tools to help you make choices without
the interference of emotion*

Bruce Wade

The Decision Matix

*and other tools to help make choices
without the interference of emotion*

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The Decision Matrix

Introduction to Decision-Making

When last did you have to decide between two or more things? How did you decide? Did you get it right?

Every day, we face hundreds, if not thousands of decisions. Most of these we make subconsciously or partly conscious and we get by. Yet, we often encounter important decisions that demand our undivided attention. And for these, we hope to do better than just get by.

As humans, we can choose between things in front of us because we're intelligent. To start, we gather all the content and remove any threats or dangers we find. We then eliminate all poor choices based on our experience and knowledge. Then, we use our strong thinking skills, what we've learned before, and the ability to reason to choose. And because we are an evolved, awesome intelligent species, we always get it right: **WRONG!**

We get it mostly wrong because we are also advanced intelligent emotional beings. We feel emotions because we have spent years focusing on ourselves, overcoming self-doubt, and building our ego. Now, all of these things

can easily make us choose poorly 80% of the time when we have to decide from three or more options.

But we then mix our emotions and intelligence to justify our choice. We have the insane need to tell as many people as possible what choice we made and why to help overrule the inner critic that is constantly nagging at us. We do this to make us feel better and hopefully help us think that what we think others may think about us is better because of our poor choices.

This is the topic we will dive into within this book. We will discuss the benefits and tools for making smart choices. Also, we'll explore the role of emotions and ways to create a balanced decision matrix. This will then give you the best chance at getting it right next time you are asked to make a big decision under pressure.

Choices and Consequences

Before we get into the tools, one more life lesson: Choices and Consequences. The good book says, "Everything is permissible"--but not everything is constructive". This is great news, we have the choice to do anything we like, anything we want to do. We can behave as we like, eat whatever we want and do whatever we want to do. So go wild, be free: eat drink and be merry for tomorrow we may die.

But. But everything we decide to do has a consequence. A bit part of growing up and adulting is knowing the difference between these consequences and then not blaming others for our choices.

When we are young, in years or mental age, we get to blame others. You told me to do this.... They said I must eat that... You know the words well because we have all used them to justify our position when we have been caught out. It is easy to redirect blame and hope to some concession in our punishment.

My mother had this saying (that I hated) when I was asking her to do something, I used to try justifying it by saying that everyone else was also doing it. She would come back with, "If everyone jumped into the fire, would you also do it?" It ended my conversation and any hope

of getting a favourable decision from her for my life. Through this, I think she saved me from disaster many times. Thank you, Mom.

As adults, we need to make our own decisions and then stand by the consequences of that decision. On the street, they say, “Do not do the crime, if you can’t do the time”. Another stupid but valid saying that seems to deliver life lessons even to the lowest forms of civil life.

We learn to first way up the options, to understand where the decision is going to lead and what the various outcomes and results will be. Then we make our move and as things unfold, we can adapt and adjust to the changes we begin to see. Always looking ahead, always making small adjustments along the way to get the best outcomes and the best result from our choices.

Life is like white-water rafting, where we must paddle hard and make countless decisions to navigate obstacles. Sometimes the water is calm, and we can relax. But soon, the river changes, and we must make important decisions once more.

Choices and consequences. As adults, we need to own both. No more excuses, no more blame. Own your own life and learn to make better choices to get to better destinations.

Lesson: Life is filled with choices. Choose well and choose based on the related consequences.

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Decision Tools 1 – Soft Skills

In the upcoming chapters, we will explore tools and tips for decision-making. These are abilities we possess but may not be aware of. Some you will be very familiar with, others not so. I encourage you to read through all of them and find the ones that fit your mindset and current decision logic. This will help gain courage and confidence in your ability. Then I want you to seek out some that you have not yet used and give them a bash the next time you need to decide for your life. Use the tool as prescribed and then adjust according to your needs.

Research indicates that most readers won't finish this short book, and my suggestions won't impact your life. We are animals of habit and have set our ways to best suit the life that we have. Even if life is not going as well as we had once hoped, we continue doing the stuff we do and therefore we will continue to get the stuff we get.

If you want to change your life, read this short book a few times. Take control over your choices and learn to make better decisions. It will change your future. A future that you desire, not deserve.

Each chapter is concluded by a short lesson as a take-home. You can if you want, just read these, and put the

book away. At least you would have gotten something out of this book and into your brain.

1.1 We Live and Learn

What is our default setting for living? According to evolutionists, we exist because our ancestors made smart choices to survive. The story begins with a tiny amoeba, then a fish, an ape, and cave dwellers. Later, people gathered in villages and then castles to protect themselves. All these choices have been made for us so that we can exist here today.

If you go back 10 generations and don't count your siblings, there would be 1024 successful parents. That is a whole bunch of hopefully good decisions.

If you're curious about how this relates to evolution, think about early humans 5000 years ago. The number of ancestors in your family tree would be huge, around 2,166 people.

Let's pause for a moment. We shouldn't assume that coming from good stock means we can just relax and rely on our ancestral wisdom for success. If all our ancestors were successful and made good decisions and lived healthy lives, the world population today would be around 7.5 to the power of 66. Let's think about this: there are currently 8.01 billion people on Earth. That means, on average, we are a tiny percentage of all the

people who could have been alive today if everyone made good choices.

Now, I know this is just a hypothetical argument. But I need you to understand how lucky you are to be alive based on this information. Our ancestors, although mostly unknown and unimportant to us, worked hard to survive in tough conditions.

Math is a way to show logic with numbers. Don't focus on the exact number, but enjoy life and take care of future generations.

We have learned a lot from our family and others who have tried and failed. We should not have to relearn lessons that have been passed down to us by others. Yet here we are still doing stupid things that risk our lives and the future of those who may depend on us for their lives and their futures.

We try things, fail, learn, retry and so the cycle goes on. Each time we try again, we change some parameters until we begin to see some change towards success. Then we learn from both the failures and the successes. This we call progress. Decision-making through experiential learning.

Lesson: Be prepared to experiment and learn as we fail. While suitable for some decisions, it may not be efficient for critical choices.

The Decision Matrix

1.2 Chicken or Beef

Airlines know it's hard to make quick decisions because they feed millions of customers each day. Through all this, they have learnt a thing or two about decisions. The common question of “Chicken or Beef” is properly the most quoted airline saying. Why do they only give us two choices? All airlines have more options on the trolley and a special-order menu.

If you're new to this, and you fly economy, I recommend pre-ordering your meal on international flights for better options. You will not be disappointed)

But for the rest of the passengers, these two options are easy to ask, select and serve. It removes any complexity of having to make complex decisions under pressure. You hear the question being asked as the stewardess comes down the aisle and you only have to choose between two options. It is easy and fast. But still, there is always someone who has trouble with the two and will stumble over their decision or begin to ask a range of unnecessary questions. We have all sat next to one of those.

Research says that two options are faster than three up to 60% better and faster. Giving the option of a vegetarian option to each passenger will slow the meal down up to two-thirds. So, they decided to reduce it to two choices

and wait for those wanting something different to ask for the third option, if they dared.

This balance between offering the best option for service while catering for the majority is a fine balance for any airline. I would love to see how they cope if the plane was full of vegan religious people who all rejected the chicken or beef options. This could make a great training video and would hit the trending list on TikTok.

Lesson: When making complex decisions, reduce your choices down to two. Then you only have a 50/50 decision. Less choice, less pressure. But you also have a 50% chance of getting it wrong.

1.3 Minimalist Thinking

Minimalist thinking is directly linked to the philosophy of minimalism. This method simplifies by removing extra parts, making the process more basic.

This helps avoid the overwhelming effect of new data that burden the system, in this case, our brains, that cloud the process. This approach can lead to more clarity, increased efficiency, and a focus on quality over quantity.

Minimalistic thinking is often used in scientific or mathematical processes. It starts with an assumption and a clear desired outcome. The goal is to reach that destination without any roadblocks or deviations.

In the legal world, minimality means only using necessary information in each specific case. The Prosecutor uses this to support their case. They only present facts that support a guilty verdict against the plaintiff. Any deviation from these leans towards reasonable doubt in the minds of the judge and jury. And this for a Prosecutor is not a good thing.

However, to think creatively and make decisions, it's crucial to gain new perspectives and learn unknown facts. This will help you develop a broader understanding of the situation and make informed choices.

Lesson: If you have a specific goal for your decision and don't want to consider other information, focus only on the facts that help your process.

1.4 Lists

The most common way people decide is through lists. Lists of words or phrases, sometimes in bright different colours using gel pens or post-it notes stuck to the wall. Lists of the different aspects and options and then lists of lists. For some, this is how our minds work. For others, it is not. I know people who stand on stage and condemn lists as being dictatorial and degrading to our minds and souls. For me, lists work. I am a list man. I make lists every Monday for the week. I have lists for every client I see. I make monthly lists. Annual lists. Activity lists. I even have a list to write this book. Lists and good for me. If they work for you too, awesome. If not, do something else. Your choice. (There it is again)

Lists are great because they clearly show what needs to be done. Sub-lists provide details to help you choose when and what to do. But better than that, I love to cross things off a list. Either because I have done it or because I have decided against it. Regardless of the method, crossing out an item or crumpling a Post-it note and throwing it away brings me joy and fulfilment. This motivates me to make new lists and continue to achieve and make good decisions.

Lists can be displayed in a bulleted list or mind map or using columns to separate the pros and cons of the choices. Making a list get stuff out of your head and onto paper. It is a thought process. A visual list then gives you new input through your eyes back into your brain and thought centre. If you are working in a team, then using a list to explain yourself to others gives them a chance to participate in the decision process. Others should be allowed to add to the list and adjust. This is where Post-it notes come in handy as they can be moved around a lot before they are discarded or copied.

Lists are powerful tools. It begins with a few choices and can grow into a room filled with notes and processes. This speeds up innovation and discoveries.

Pro and Cons lists are taught and used by a lot of people. Some use them as a scoring system to count the number of pros versus cons and then select the side with the highest score. You can hopefully see the fault in this logic. If you are creating the list and have an emotional bias towards one way or the other, your lists will reflect that bias and hence your final choice. If you're using the list to justify a bad emotional choice, just stick with your initial decision and stop trying to justify it.

If you use the pros and cons list correctly, then use it to display and discuss each option until it is conclusive and final. It is not a score system, but a logical one. Even one

good pro can outweigh several cons. It is a thought process, not a sports scoreboard.

Lesson: Lists are a great way to gain perspective on a topic. They are also good for communication and collaboration when working with teams.

1.5 Cultural Precedents

Our cultural acclimatisation plays a bigger role than we first admit in our decision-making. We have bank accounts at the same bank as our parents. We shop at the same shops and make the same food. Well, maybe not the clothes, but you understand my point.

When we become parents, we often find ourselves saying the same things our parents said to us. We inherit what we live, and our family and culture follow us everywhere.

Our religion, cultural beliefs, family traditions, and personal preferences shape our decisions. My stepdaughter at almost 30 years old, still phones her mother to ask if she would like something before she orders it off a menu. We are today because of our past.

But are we able to break free from this learned behaviour? Most certainly, but not without stepping outside the area of comfort and familiarity. It is only outside this box that we get to try new things and reformat the preprogramme in our brain. We get to enjoy the vegetables we grew up hating and start to drink red wine, eat sushi and olives and maybe even foods that are so foreign to us.

I think it's fascinating how easily young people have embraced change without help from their parents. They can adapt to new foods, different tech, or different cereal for breakfast. But we often feel stuck in our past habits.

Lesson: Before continuing to do or buy something out of tradition, pause and consider alternatives. Try something new. You may just surprise yourself.

1.6 Phone a Friend

The famous quiz show 'Who wants to become a millionaire' has coined the phrase 'phone a friend'. It is an option for the contestant, when they are stuck on a question to call a prequalified friend for assistance. I have only watched a few episodes, and this option doesn't really help and often makes things more confusing.

Another option is to ask Mom. Asking Mom for advice was always the best option when we were in primary school. Moms know where everything is in the house. They know the answers to all the questions about schoolwork, peer pressure and general life matters. When we become teenagers, it seems like these special abilities disappear. Moms either act dumb or pretend they don't know the answers to our questions during tough times.

However, around the age of 24, when our brains are fully developed, Moms become wise again. We can ask them questions about relationships, money, and even where things are in our own homes. Moms are surely the best things ever.

But asking friends or Moms becomes a habit that some use as a crutch for a lack of self-development and thinking for themselves. It is easier to ask than to think,

so we default to the easy route and ask. I ask Mom where my socks are. I ask Mom if I should go to the movies or have dinner with my girlfriend. I ask Mom if I should propose to her. I ask Mom if I need to buy a new car. It's easy to ask and get an answer. But the answer we get is not our answer it is the answer of someone else living our lives for us.

The same becomes a habit with friends who cannot decide until we have all had a discussion. I believe in democracy and sharing ideas, but it becomes too much to ask friends for opinions on decisions that don't affect them. It shows emotional immaturity.

But maybe it also creates an easy out when things go as well as we hoped. And that is the blame game. Redirection and blame have been the backbone of human nature ever since Adam and Eve. When God asks Adam why he had eaten the apple, he blames Eve.

“She made me do it” he said with a spinless character.

Eve just looked blankly at both and passed the buck, “the snake told me to do it.”

And the poor snake did not have a leg to stand on. Ok a poor joke but you get the drift. We love to blame others to divert the punishment that we may incur if we had made the decision ourselves. I often wonder how life would be different if Adam had just stood his ground and manned up to his actions.

“God, it was me. It is all on me. Eve came to me with this proposition, and I considered it long and hard and yes, I made the final call on this and then together we ate the apple. I am sorry for my actions, but I am willing to take the punishment.”

Zap! Maybe we would have had a planet full of just women. Who knows.

Lesson: Learn to take responsibility for your actions. Sure, consult friends and even Moms. But the final decision and outcome rests on your shoulders.

1.7 Wait to be Told

The deer in the headlights scenario is what I get to see a lot of when it comes to big decisions. We freeze and wait, often until it is too late or we end up as road meat.

Our lives have become dependent on stimuli to activate our actions. It is not the fault of our own. I am going to help you pass the buck here, so take notes. When we were young all our activities were taken care of us by our parents. They said when it was time to eat, sleep, wash, and everything else in between. We then get to attend mostly about 12 years of school. School is controlled by times, bells, lines, and discipline. We do not have to think much at school. In school, we are told what to do and what to learn. If we respond correctly, doing all the right things and remembering all the right information, we pass this phase in 12 years. If we cannot it may take a few years more. Then we get alarm clocks, cell phone reminders, smart devices and computers all preprogrammed to tell us when to wake up, where to drive, at what speed, when to turn, and how much exercise we need to do.

We get jobs and bosses, and the cycle continues. We are told when to get up, get to work, have a break, do meetings, stop talking, work some more, go home, make

supper, watch TV, and then go to bed. Again, and again and again. Then it is the weekend, and we fumble our way through that and then Monday comes around as we are content to do it all again, and again...

Then alone comes some crazy Consultant who says, "Think for yourself!" and we stop and stare and the oncoming lights until we get run over by opportunity and it passes us by. I think that a huge part of adulting is the ability to press pause on our lives and consider the situation before we take the next step. We do have all the faculties required to pump the brakes, pause, gather information, and then select the right choice for the improvement of ourselves and those we care most about. We just need to learn how to do it ourselves and not be told what to do and when to do it.

Lesson: Stop waiting to be told what to do. Wake up before the alarm clock and become proactive in your approach to life.

Decision Tools 2 – Techniques and Tips

The next set of chapters contains various technical tools that have been taught in various ways to people in various places. You may recognise their name, but not use them or just forgotten how they work. I thought it a good idea to dust them off and in some cases update them with my spin and some advice.

Read through them all, take what you can, and leave the others. Maybe one day you will come back to them or just give this book to someone else who may get some guidance in their lives.

Again, each chapter will have a short takeaway lesson to apply based on the described tool.

2.1 SWOT Analysis

The good old SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis is one of those strategic planning tools that will never die. Even though in most cases that I have seen it produced and used in different scenarios, it has been used incorrectly and is ineffective.

Use it to help individuals identify their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Then, develop a strategy based on these findings.

Ok, let's break it down and see if we can get this tool to become useful again and not just an admin exercise that produces a report that no one will look at again.

There are two halves of the SWOT. External and Internal. It is best to focus on the external first to record data mined from several different analysis tools such as PESTEL and Porter's 5 Forces. These tools uncover threats and opportunities outside the company that affect the planned focus area. The correct headings for these two columns should read:

1. What external Threats exist that we may need to mitigate against to minimise the effects on our project?

2. What external Opportunities exist that we may need to take advantage of to maximise the effect on our project?

You can begin to see how this is not just a brainstorming exercise that gets a group of people around a table to call out random ideas to add to these two blocks.

Once this is complete, we can move on to the internal side of the matrix: Strengths and Weaknesses. Once again, this is not a random shout-out and record. Several tools will help assess the team's strengths (Gallup Strength Finder and Standout). These will help identify areas of strength. Weaknesses are always an issue for inexperienced people. This is not the fault of theirs, it is how we were all brought up. I blame the schooling system.

We have been always told to identify our strengths and then work on them to get better. I call BS on this. If you know that there is an area of your life that you suck at, and yes, we all have these. Why would I want to work on that and then become less sucky and something I can't do? Areas of weakness are NOT areas of development. They are things to outsource and get others to do that fall within their strengths.

The two sentences for the internal factors now become:

1. What Strengths do we know of within the team that we can maximise to help realise the identified opportunities and mitigate the risks?
2. What are the team's weaknesses that we need to outsource to take advantage of opportunities and reduce risks?

We now have a type of intelligence that helps us make better decisions about project goals.

Lesson: Using the SWOT tool correctly to help weigh up the capability of a team to proceed or pause on an identified objective.

2.2 Cost Benefit Analysis

Cost-benefit is all about the Return on Investment (ROI) or the Return on Effort (ROE) for a specific decision. “What is in it for me?” is the question you will get from investors and the CFO in your business. Cost-benefit analysis is a helpful tool to evaluate business decisions by comparing costs and benefits. It can help you to choose the best option that maximizes the net benefit or minimizes the net cost for your business.

But it also has its flaws. This tool is only for finances and doesn't work for intangible things like customer satisfaction. It can't assign a value to brand loyalty or relationships. These items will skew the entire formula. This tool is perfect for money decisions, but not for other types of decisions.

To perform a cost-benefit analysis, the following steps are involved:

Make a list of all the associated cost items. These will need to be scoped to a fixed period and desired outcomes or deadlines.

Consider the benefits and costs, keeping in mind that there may be multiple benefits for each cost. Categorize

them as direct or indirect, fixed or variable, and tangible or intangible.

Assign a financial amount to each cost based on quotes and invoices.

Assign a financial amount to each benefit based on the estimated monetary value of each benefit.

Calculate the net benefit or net cost of each alternative, by subtracting the total costs from the total benefits.

Compare the net benefits or net costs of different alternatives, using ratios, indexes, or other measures.

The cost-benefit analysis gives you a rational and informed decision that maximizes the value of your business. It helps to communicate the results of your analysis to your stakeholders, using charts, tables, or reports.

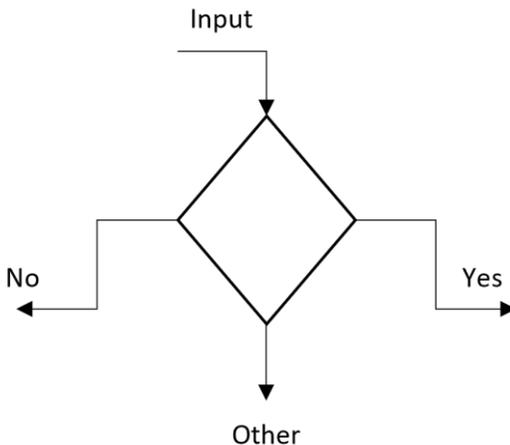
One example is buying stock in bulk to save money, but then paying for transportation and storage as the stock is used. The more attributes you add to the scenario the more complex it becomes and the harder it is to make the final decision based on this tool alone.

Lesson: The Cost Benefit Analysis is the perfect tool for pure financial decisions. This tool needs more info for decisions about intangible items to make a final choice.

2.3 Decision Trees

A Decision Tree diagram shows different outcomes based on questions and decisions. These are useful for complex decisions with multiple possible paths and outcomes.

To create a logical path, a mind map uses blocks and diamonds to map out the "If This - Then That" process. Questions are denoted by a diamond shape with the entry point at the top. You can find the question or decision point in the shape. The options are usually Yes or No, with a third option for the bottom corner. Keeping the same structure for the entire tree gives unity and makes it easy to follow.



Decision trees are not only great for helping develop solid decisions but also work very well as training manuals and standard operating procedures. These can be easily followed in a critical situation that requires decisions that may not be obvious in an emergency or a heightened-stress environment.

Some other applications of the decision tree methodology in business decisions are:

Project management: Decision trees can help project managers plan, execute, and control their projects by identifying the best course of action, the potential risks, and the expected returns of each project alternative. For example, a decision tree can help a project manager decide whether to outsource a project task, hire a new team member, or use a different technology.

Marketing: Decision trees can help marketers design and implement effective marketing strategies by segmenting the target market, evaluating customer behaviour, and predicting the response rate of each marketing campaign. For example, a decision tree can help a marketer decide whether to launch a new product, offer a discount, or use a different channel of communication.

Finance: Decision trees can help financial analysts and investors evaluate and select the best investment opportunities by estimating the cash flows, the probabilities, and the net present values of each investment option. For

example, a decision tree can help an investor decide whether to buy, sell, or hold a stock, a bond, or an option.

Operations: Decision trees can help operations managers and engineers optimize and improve the efficiency and quality of their processes by identifying the key factors, the possible outcomes, and the optimal solutions to each process problem. For example, a decision tree can help an operations manager decide whether to increase the production capacity, reduce the inventory level, or implement a quality control system.

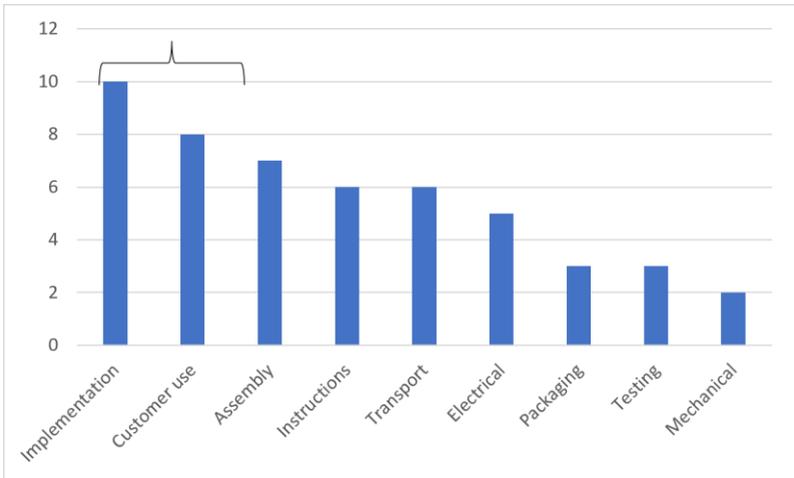
Lesson: Map out any complex decisions in your business using a decision tree to allow for clarity and ease of communication.

2.4 Pareto Analysis

Pareto analysis, also known as the 80/20 rule, is one of those so-called facts that people quote all the time in speeches and reports. The tool has some math value and can help with decision-making and managing a business process. It can prioritize efforts on important elements.

Pareto analysis is based on the Pareto principle, which states that 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes. For example, 80% of the sales come from 20% of the products, or 80% of the faults come from 20% of the manufacturing processes.

Pareto analysis is assessed using a simple bar or line chart to display figures from a set of gathered sources. These are then sorted from highest to lowest to display the frequency or the impact of each factor or problem. The chart indicates which factors or problems are the most significant and which ones are the least. By focusing on the top 20% of the factors or problems, you can achieve the maximum improvement or benefit with the minimum effort or cost.



By improving training or updating instructions, we can reduce the list of reported faults.

Lesson: Collect and analyse data connected to processes to be displayed using the Pareto analysis to better understand where focus and efforts should be directed to reduce risk or increase opportunity.

2.5 Scenario Planning

One of my favourite questions to ask is “What if?” What if this or what if that? It is a skill that as a narrative consultant I use to help expand the mindset of clients. The ‘What if’ question is something that removes all barriers and obstacles and opens up the mind and soul to new possibilities.

Developing Scenarios is all about the what-ifs. Starting with a single option – reality, we can expand this into various alternatives. Typically, in scenario planning, three options emerge: the High Road, the Low Road and the Middle Road. The high road is the best-case scenario that may happen if everything goes according to plan and exceeds expectations. This is also referred to as the ‘hopeful option’. But as for all good project management, we hope for the best and plan for the worst.

The low-road option is the worst-case scenario. What would it all look like if everything went wrong? This scenario is difficult to show, but still worth exploring. We should examine this dystopian option to make plans for dealing with it.

The last scenario is the middle road or normal option. This is what could happen if things continue as they are now, the current status quo.

With these three scenarios, we then begin to look for various indicators that would inform us of which road the project is taking. These may be internal or external indicators. We set up watchers for these and report back on them at key stages of the process.

We can control some indicators, while others, like election results or wars, are external. Some indicators are even as simple as a figure on a financial report. As we monitor these indicators, we can determine the path that the future is taking and which road we are travelling towards.

We can then make the right decisions to mitigate the known risks and threats or take advantage of the opportunities that lie ahead.

Lesson: Scenario planning is a skill best done with an experienced external consultant who can guide you through the process without being hindered by any current precedent or tradition.

2.6 Hyperbolic Indifference Curve

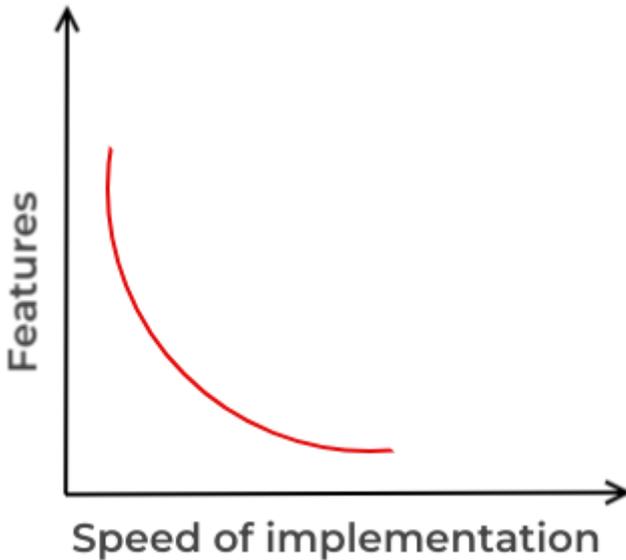
Economists use an indifference curve to explain the trade-offs customers think about when they have two choices to buy.

A customer may be constrained by their budget but wants more features or more reliability and after-sales service. goods that they wish to buy. Their choice is always constrained to a trade-off between affordability and features. Using an indifference curve, a customer can compare the **marginal rate of substitution (MRS)** of one choice for another. The MRS indicates the slope of the indifference curve. The MRS indicates how much of one choice the customer is willing to give up getting one more of the other while keeping the same level of utility.

This same curve becomes very useful when deciding on, what may seem conflicting issues, to find a compromise on the MRS curve.

An example could be your next office management software purchase. Yes, you want the best on the market with all the features and benefits, but it comes at a cost. Not only financial but the speed of implementation to gain the benefits for the team and the company. The

more features the greater the learning and the gained benefits. Now you have a problem of finding the best solution that will give you the benefits you need quickly. This can be represented in a hyperbolic indifference curve similar to below



When conflicting elements arise, you can map out the curve on the X and Y graph. It may not always be a perfect $y=1/x$ curve, but this exercise helps you find the ideal compromise point for your decision.

Lesson: When working with opposing issues for a decision, using an indifference curve can assist in finding the perfect point of compromise between the two issues.

2.7 Decision Matrix

A decision matrix is a tool that helps you make choices by listing options, giving them weights, and scoring them. It's particularly useful for comparing multiple alternatives without any interference of emotion.

It is the perfect tool to use in a final decision once some of the other tools mentioned in this book have proven to be inconclusive.

This tool is the sole reason I started writing down some notes that have now resulted in this book. This tool is one of my favourites and has assisted not only me, but many of my clients to make some life-changing decisions. While it does require some math, we will guide you through the process in easy steps. This will help you use the tool, even if math isn't your strongest skill.

It is also important to involve a selected team when compiling the decision matrix to gain an agreed scope of factors and figures. This will help remove any bias or subconscious manipulation.

- Write out the decision that needs to be made.
- List all the various factors that inform this decision. These should be as detailed as possible and all be directly linked to the final decision.

- Using numbers between 1 and 5. 1 being the least important and 5 being most important, rate each factor as to how important it is in the decision. This is now called the weighted factor. You should carefully assess each factor separately and then together to ensure that you have ranked them in order of importance. It is perfectly ok if some factors have the same score.
- Now you have your table ready for input.
- For each selection or option that you are considering, score them against each factor out of 10. 0 being the lowest and 10 being the highest score.
- Then for each score, multiply the score with the weighted factor to get a total.
- Add up the totals for each option and then you can compare these scores to inform your decision.

The example below is to help decide between a new utility vehicle for a business.

The selected factors were cost, reliability, fuel-efficient, load bearing, and load space

The weighted factors for these were:

Reliability 5

Load Space 5

Fuel efficient 4

Load bearing 3

Cost 3

Then in a table with our 5 choices of vehicles, we get

	weighted factor	Vehicle 1		Vehicle 2		Vehicle 3	
		score	total	score	total	score	total
Reliability	5	7	35	6	30	5	25
Load Space	5	5	25	8	40	6	30
Fuel efficient	4	3	12	5	20	4	16
Load bearing	3	6	18	7	21	5	15
Cost	3	5	15	3	9	9	27
			105		120		113

Vehicle option 2 is the best choice, even though our values may appear confusing in other formats.

This tool is a winner for all decisions when emotion needs to be removed from the decision process. The numbers do not lie and cannot be compromised.

Lesson: When faced with a decision where there are many factors to consider and emotion needs to be minimised or removed from the process, a well-

constructed Decision Matrix will deliver the right answer that you need, maybe not the one you wanted.

Intuition

Just go with your gut. Have you ever been told that and then left feeling disempowered and unable to move, let alone being able to make a decision?

But your gut needs to get a lot more credit than you may think. It is more than just a set of pipes to process food. Your gut has intelligence and more specific decision-making intelligence. What! Let me explain.

Recent research has shown that the muscles of your heart contain similar cells found in your brain related to emotion. We have always associated emotion with our hearts. We love you with all our hearts. We are heartbroken when we end a relationship. Now science has proven that all the poets and writers were correct all along.

When people have difficult relationships, their heart muscles can have dark spots where emotional cells die.

More recent studies have shown similar cell clusters within our gut giving rise to the gut feeling we get when we are nervous or excited. Those butterflies we feel when we are expecting something exciting to happen. Those are real and we need to learn to listen to them and believe in what our bodies are designed to do.

Intuition has always been accredited to women. I am not sure why or who first came up with the term women's intuition. Maybe it is because women have less ego and testosterone occupying their brains to be more able to tune into the rest of their bodies.

But learning to know that you know because you just know is an important skill. Malcolm Gladwell dedicated a whole book 'Blink' to this very subject. How do we know that we know? When can we begin to trust our intuition and then rely on that decision to be the correct one?

In this discussion, I would like to contribute by suggesting that we focus on the output of life instead of the input of our own lives. We should learn to understand ourselves completely. To tune into true intuition, we must confront our ego without putting ourselves down. Then we can start to make better gut decisions and believe that what we decide is the correct decision.

My good friend Ian Hatton, also known as Morpheus, runs various conscious leadership programmes for teams. One of his well-known sayings is "You know because you know in your inner Knower". This is true in so many ways, but unless you have removed all the other noise of confusion, we will never be able to hear our inner knower.

Lesson: Instinct or gut feeling is true; we just need to put aside all the other voices before we can hear the true decision-maker that lies within us.

Conclusion

Decision-making is and should be our everyday activity. But each decision we make, whether it is for ourselves or others, has consequences. Consequences that could be life-changing in both a positive and negative way. I've seen lives change instantly because of bad choices: risky driving, lying, and agreeing to wrongdoing. All these decisions have had negative consequences.

However, I've also witnessed brave individuals who stepped up, stood tall, and faced their fears. These actions have consequences, but they are the future leaders.

Decisions are not easy, but this book has offered both some soft and hard tools to use to make your next decision that little easier. With the tools you have chosen and your new intuition, make your next decision confidently.

May they continue to develop both you and those with whom you associate.

Lessons List

Here is a list of each chapter's lesson

1. Life is filled with choices. Choose well and choose based on the related consequences.
2. Be prepared to experiment and learn as we fail. While suitable for some decisions, it may not be efficient for critical choices.
3. When making complex decisions, reduce your choices down to two. Then you only have a 50/50 decision. Less choice, less pressure. But you also have a 50% chance of getting it wrong.
4. If you have a desired destination or outcome for your decision and you are not willing to deviate from that, then eliminate all other information sources and only entertain the facts that support your process.
5. Lists are a great way to gain perspective on a topic. They are also good for communication and collaboration when working with teams.
6. When you do or buy something that you have always done, for no other reason than tradition, pause and ask yourself if an alternative may be better or just different and make the switch to try. You may just surprise yourself.

7. Learn to take responsibility for your actions. Sure, consult friends and even Moms. But the final decision and outcome rests on your shoulders.
8. Stop waiting to be told what to do. Wake up before the alarm clock and become proactive in your approach to life.
9. Using the SWOT tool correctly to help weigh up the capability of a team to proceed or pause on an identified objective.
10. The Cost Benefit Analysis is the perfect tool for pure financial decisions. For decisions that involve intangible items, this tool would require additional information to support the final decision.
11. Map out any complex decisions in your business using a decision tree to allow for clarity and ease of communication.
12. Collect and analyse data connected to processes to be displayed using the Pareto analysis to better understand where focus and efforts should be directed to reduce risk or increase opportunity.
13. Scenario planning is a skill best done with an experienced external consultant who can guide you through the process without being hindered by any current precedent or tradition.

14. When working with opposing issues for a decision, using an indifference curve can assist in finding the perfect point of compromise between the two issues.
15. When faced with a decision where there are many factors to consider and emotion needs to be minimised or removed from the process, a well-constructed Decision Matrix will deliver the right answer that you need, maybe not the one you wanted.
16. Instinct or gut feeling is true; we just need to put aside all the other voices before we can hear the true decision-maker that lies within us.

About EM Solutions



EM Solutions helps non-profit organizations by offering strategic consulting, guidance, and advice. They specialize in helping these organizations diversify their funding through innovative income-generation strategies.

Our methodology focuses on **Review**, **Strategy** and **Implementation** to develop a co-created sustainable solution for both Non-Profit organisations and Businesses.

Bruce Wade speaks and coaches on the Strategic Narrative Methodology based on the 7 Principles of Sustainable Innovation to engineer stories that develop sustainable and profitable relationships with all stakeholders.

He is an author of a library of books, a Professional Speaker and the past Association President of the Professional Speaking Association of Southern Africa.

Bruce is a company founder and director at EM Solutions / Gallant Accounting / Voices into Africa and director at Sustainable African Strategies npc.

Together they provide strategic consulting, mentoring and coaching as well as accompaniment and advisory to both business and non-profit sectors, with a specific focus on sustainability and funding diversification through innovative income generation.

For more information about us or to contact our team, please visit

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