

The go / no-go decision

Once an organisation's strategic goal is set, arguably the most important **strategic decision** is, then, whether or not to undertake something that has been suggested. There are always opportunities to do things, but these must be assessed against the overall goal. In doing so, it is useful to consider the questions introduced below. Be you are a general pondering whether or not to capture a particular hill, a company wondering whether to bid for a particular tender, or simply confused about whether to go to your sister's wedding (instead of the football grand-final!), your underlying thought process should be about qualitatively similar things. You should even have considered similar questions in picking your BE program at UNSW. Did you? Note, too, that whether to continue with a project is also a go/no-go, simply with a different starting point. Don't think that continuing follows necessarily because it started. Continually re-assess.

1. **Do you want to do it?** really want to? i.e. on balance, is it worth it?

The following questions can help clarify this one.

- 1.1 What are the likely benefits (=measurable gains) and costs (=resources consumed)?
- 1.2 What will it do your reputation?
- 1.3 Will it strengthen (or weaken) important relationships? or begin a relationship?
- 1.4 Will it develop desirable skills, team morale, etc?

2. **Can you do it?** really do it? i.e. is it feasible?

The following questions can help clarify this one.

- 2.1 Do you have the capability? or are you confident that you can get the capability?
- 2.2 Do you have the time needed?
- 2.3 Do you have the resources (incl people & money) needed? or can you get them?
- 2.4 Do you have the organisational structures that will support such an undertaking?

3. **Risk assessment**

- 3.1 There must be risks. What are they?
- 3.2 How can you manage them?
- 3.3 Are there any unusual risks?

4. **Opportunity cost** i.e. what do you miss out on doing instead?

This is really asking about the 'opportunities lost' by doing the suggested activity, i.e. think about what you can't do as a 'cost.'

5. **How much do you really want to do it?**

In the end, for all the weighing of options, you will fail in any non-trivial undertaking if the team does not have the hunger and persistence to really want to succeed. I am sure you can think of examples of that.

Be warned: You will find that people often spend disproportionately too much time on the second group of questions, in part because they are more straightforward and seemingly objective. The others are equally important.