SOCIETY OF DECISION PROFESSIONALS
Clarity & Insight for Decisive Action

NEWSLETTER

President's Message
by Ellen Coopersmith

Hi Folks,

The question has been asked, "How do the leaders of SDP view the future direction of decision analysis?" and while I cannot speak for other leaders, past and present, I can share my view and invite others to chime in. Please do! The power of SDP is the community we are all a part of and the shared mission that we are all working toward.

Crossing the Chasm – One Leader's View of the Future Direction of Decision Analysis

Years ago, I read a book, Crossing the Chasm: Marketing and Selling High-Tech Products to Mainstream Customers, by Geoffrey A. Moore, and it resonated with me as a leader attempting to implement decision analysis (in my mind a "high-tech" approach) inside of a company, and later as support to other companies navigating their own implementation efforts. The author suggests that in the Technology Adoption Life Cycle—which begins with innovators and moves to early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards—there is a vast chasm between the early adopters and the early majority. While early adopters are willing to sacrifice for the advantage of being first, the early majority waits until they know that the technology offers improvements and is relatively easy to use. The challenge for innovators and marketers is to narrow this chasm and ultimately accelerate adoption across every segment.

So, how do I translate this to the future direction of decision analysis? I see true headway in how well decision analysis is "crossing the chasm". I see a growing number of companies, organizations and universities imbedding elements of decision analysis and decision quality principles in their way of working and in the development of today's and tomorrow's leaders and professionals. I see more leaders than ever before championing DQ, or elements thereof, communicating its benefits and working to ensure its practical application. I see decision professionals working to make DA/DQ practical and easy to adopt, where possible. I see DP's being flexible with companies in what they call DQ and

In this issue

implement. Will there be a continued need for decision professionals? Yes. Will they be called decision professionals? Maybe, maybe not. Do we care? I hope not. It's the clarity and essence of what we bring, not the name it's called.

So, what is SDP's role in this future direction? In my mind, I see SDP building our strategic plan to include different mechanisms to bring these principles not only to big business, but to youth, communities and small businesses in our home cities. I see SDP instrumental in growing a global connected community so that SDP becomes a key conduit of thought leadership, process and tools to not only decision professionals, but to everyday people, professionals and leaders who want to apply the principles.

YOUR THOUGHTS??...Please share them.

Warm regards!

Your colleague, Ellen M. Coopersmith

SDP Interest Groups

The SDP Interest Group Scenario Analysis held its first meeting in August. The objective of this group, which has 17 members, is to exchange perspectives and experiences on the use of scenario planning for decision making. The intention is to have meetings once per month. The first presentation covered a historic perspective of scenario planning in Shell, the first company to apply this approach for business purposes. A recording of the presentation can be found here:
https://player.vimeo.com/video/231671044

SDP members who would like to join this group can send an e-mail to henk@navincerta.com.

Upcoming Events

SOCIETY OF DECISION
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SDP

SMDM
Society for Medical Decision Making
Better Health through Better Decisions.

39th Annual North American Meeting
October 22-25, 2017
Pittsburgh, PA

- DAAG 2018 – SAVE THE DATE
  Coast Coal Harbour Hotel
  Vancouver Canada
  April 11 - 13, 2018

- Houston Chapter – Operations Decisions October 5, 2017
  3:00-5:00 PM Central

- Webinar: Big Data – Little Thinking
  Wednesday, October 25, 2017, 8 am PT | 11 am ET. Registration details will be sent by email shortly.

- Houston Chapter - Speaker Rob Scott, "The Unity of Command on Mega Projects" : Thursday, October 26, 3 – 5 pm CT. See link for more details.

- SDP Strategic Plan Town Hall Webinar: Tuesday, December 5, 8 am PT | 11 am ET. Registration details will be sent by email shortly.

- *Save the Date!* SDM Summit: February, 5 – 7 at The Mohonk Mountain House in New Paltz, NY. More details to follow.

Do you know of upcoming professional events that might be of interest to other SDP members? If so, please email the SDP newsletter at newsletter@decisionprofessionals.com

SDP

SDP Council in Focus: Web Strategy and Solutions Council
by Dave Charlesworth

Over the past four issues of the SDP Newsletter, we've had excellent updates from the Knowledge Sharing Council, the Program Council, the Outreach Council, and the Membership Development Council. Underpinning many aspects of all four of these councils together is the Web Strategy and Solutions Council (WSSC). The WSSC is focused on defining and maintaining the SDP brand and providing a solid foundation for the work each council is undertaking by managing the SDP website – a key vehicle to provide value for both current SDP members and potential future members.

To that end, the WSSC strategy is to integrate SDP strategy with IT/IS/Web technology, match technology to stated strategy, inform strategy based on technical functionality, and help define and maintain the SDP brand across website and other SDP activities. To do this, we partner with SDP councils, subcommittees, chapters, etc. to help enable them to accomplish their mission and objectives.

Several years ago, the SDP shifted to a web solution hosted by a platform called Captavi, which uses a database underneath the web server to integrate functionality across an enterprise. Captavi is designed so that this functionality can be developed with minimal coding – "one seamless, simple-to-use platform" (to quote Captavi's website). However, the devil is indeed in the details, which is where the WSSC comes in. Some things that the other SDP councils need to accomplish work well with the platform, but some require more work to implement. Therefore the WSSC has an ongoing (never ending?) portfolio of improvements and refinements designed to enhance the website and empower other council objectives.

The WSSC volunteer members are Hilda Cherekdjian (liaison with RH Award Council), Tim Nieman (liaison with Knowledge Sharing), Dan Hudson (liaison with Membership Development), Raymond Fonk (liaison with Program), Laura Keating (liaison with Outreach), Timothy Hong, Frank Markey, Tyler Ludlow, and Dave Charlesworth (council chair).

Spotlight on SDP Member Andrew Chanko
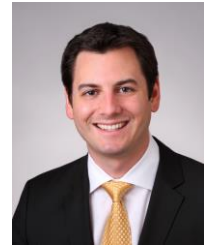
In every issue of this newsletter, we turn the spotlight on a randomly-selected member of the SDP to learn more about that member's life as a decision professional.

The editors

SDP member Andrew Chanko works for Exelon, a large energy company. His path to becoming a decision professional started in early 2015 when SDG did a decision project at Exelon that included two workshops to introduce the concepts and practice of decision analysis and decision quality (DA/DQ) to Exelon staff members. Andrew, then a member of the company's Risk Management team, found the workshops stimulating. Wanting to learn more about the DA/DQ approach, he attended in October 2015 SDG's two-week Decision Consulting Workshop (DCW). Upon his return from that course, he made a presentation to Exelon's Chief Risk Officer on how to integrate DA/DQ into the team's work practices. Andrew says that the value of having a proper decision analysis process was recognized because the company sent four more Risk Management team members to attend the DCW six months later. Working together, Andrew and these other four team members began educating staff members in other parts of Exelon on the ideas of DA/DQ and helping them make better decisions for the company, particularly those involving large capital investments in areas such as gas distribution, electricity distribution and transmission, environmental remediation, acquisitions, and cyber security. They integrated DA/DQ into their stated goal as a Risk Team "to enable better decisions by minimizing the unexpected in a world of uncertainty".

Andrew remembers particularly well one of the first big decisions that he facilitated, a very significant investment in the electric transmission grid that was characterized by high analytic and organizational complexity. By steadily working through the decision quality process that he learned in his coursework, he was able to bring a fresh perspective on the way the engineers involved would address the decision.

Andrew joined the SDP in early 2016 and was certified as a Practitioner later that year. He also completed the Stanford Strategic Decision and Risk Management Certification Program around the same time. Within Exelon, he was instrumental in establishing a streamlined decision quality checklist as part of the standard project evaluation process for relatively straight-forward decisions. He also helped to define an internal development program for high-potential members of the Risk Management team.

Among the greatest satisfactions that Andrew has experienced as a decision professional is what he calls the "rare opportunity" to learn a powerful new skill set in his coursework, starting with DCW. He also vividly recalls the occasion while working on the electric transmission decision when a participant said to him, "See that guy over there? Before today, I would have told you that there is no way that he would move off his preconceived notions regarding this decision. But today you got him to change his mind." Powerful stuff, indeed.

And he has confronted challenges as a decision professional: Finding the right terminology that effectively bridges the gap between the language used within the company and that used in the DA/DQ world. Getting decision makers on-board with the new process, especially when they want decisions made quickly. And fitting the DA/DQ approach to existing approval processes within the company.

Andrew finds value in SDP membership mainly in the wealth of useful information provided by the Society, particularly via webinars, book recommendations, and staying connected to the latest development that others in the field are working on.

Dear SDP Fellows: I would like to learn more about the insight the Fellows have about how practitioners can advance the profession into new areas to keep innovating the practice so that it can remain relevant to people... especially given the current state of affairs regarding foreign trade.. in a messy messy world out there.
In summary, what can we do as DA Professionals do forge new inroads where DA might not have a significant footprint?

Our Fellows seem to agree that this seems to be an age old question "What are some new ways to deploy decision analysis?" Certainly if we knew, we'd all have work out to as far as the eye can see. Alas, the elixir remains elusive. The Fellows rallied on this one to bring us the following.

The success stories of industries (or government groups) that are regular users of DA seemed to start when it was a novel process with blue chip academic credentials. As a technical approach to a complex problem, it appealed to technically-minded customers, e.g. engineers and scientists, who liked the logic and could sell it as an exciting new approach to their senior management. The successes and sunk cost investment by those customers enabled it to reach a sustainable level within some organizations. The herd effect within their industries led to a few other players trying it. This halo effect can still convince some groups to use DA to solve their situation if they see it as similar.

But why didn't DA keep spreading out as a widely used methodology in business, and why is it so difficult to get groups interested in using DA today? We have all seen the benefits of helping groups frame and evaluate complex situations. And as the questioner implies, the number of messy problems in the world appears to be a growing market. The "product-market fit" looks obvious to DA professionals. There must be some other barrier(s) preventing the value proposition of DA from being a compelling reason for prospective customers to use it. A common argument is that they have the solution in-house, given all the MBAs they have hired in the last decade. Another is that DA takes too much time and energy. The nail in the coffin may be that they tried it before and didn't get anything of value. It's tough when a "brand" has a lot more history and not all of it was a positive experience for customers.

I like to view each prospective customer as a startup market rather than rely on the legacy of the DA brand. Many of the methods that entrepreneurs have found successful are described by Steve Blank, one of the key thinkers in this area. He tells entrepreneurs, "Just because you see a need and have a solution, don't assume that you have a customer or a successful business model."

Telling them more about your solution may get people to agree that it would be a "nice to have", but it is not likely to result in a lot of sales. In "The Startup Owner's Manual" by Steve Blank and Bob Dorf, a major focus is on "customer discovery and customer development", i.e. finding out what they actually are doing now to solve their problem and what it would take for them to consider a change.

So what are prospective customers doing now to address their situation? How is it working for them? What would they need in a different approach to consider changing? These are some questions to ask customers so you can understand their definition of a desired solution, rather than assuming you have the answer for them. What type of answers might we expect? I have found that each customer feels their situation is unique and not something you can fit into a structured methodology, nor do they have the time or money to spend on a difficult process. Countering these objections may be our instinctive response, but it will usually result in even stronger resistance by a customer. Acknowledging the uniqueness of their situation and asking them to describe it can shift the conversation from them trying to get rid of you to them seeing that you are interested in their problem, not in selling them a solution.

As you listen, it helps to start writing down their issues and asking a few questions of clarification. If you see they are focused on comparing solutions, ask about their objectives. How would they know which alternative would be better, what outcome would tell them that? If they describe risks, ask them what could be done to avoid or mitigate such risks. After 10-15 minutes, you can usually show them a high level frame of their situation and ask them if that captures what they are facing. They can fill in some blanks or modify some issues, but often it surprises them to see it in a single picture. They probably have been swirling around on each issue, hoping to solve each one separately.

 At this point, it may feel like you should tell them how you would solve their problem with DA. That may kill the whole conversation. To continue in the "trusted advisor" role, it's better to help them step back and see their situation from a mezzanine view. Have them look at what they have described about their situation and ask "What is the strategic question that needs to be answered to resolve the situation?" This creates a clear definition of the problem for them to discuss internally. Then you can ask, how would they flesh out and compare their alternative pathways using the objectives they described while taking into account all the risks and uncertainties? What is preventing them from accomplishing this themselves? This helps them understand the value proposition you can offer.

If your conversation partner gets that far in their thinking, go with the flow to build the momentum on your "trusted advisor" relationship. You may have tunneled through the mountain of barriers and be working with them on the other side. If they aren't there yet, give them time to think about it and follow up to ask how things are going. It sometimes takes a while, but if you are on their mind and have created a level of trust, many prospects will become customers.

Additionally, here are four key points to think about as you forge ahead in DA

1) Don't call it DA or Decision Analysis. First, some organizations and people have heard of DA or tried it, and have a bad taste in their mouths regarding it. Second, the name emphasizes the analytical part, when the framing and the discussion are probably the parts that add the most value. I also sometimes say that I implement Behavioral Economics, rather than any sort of decision process. Behavioral Economics has had mostly good press.

2) Don't say, "We have a process..." People hate processes. They want solutions. One phrase I've started using is, "We can help you unwind complex situations so you can find good solutions or strategies." It's not great, but it seems to work pretty well.

3) Be aware of the fact that saying that you can help people make better decisions will be heard as, "You haven't been making as good of decisions as you could have or should have." This will trigger resentment and resistance. Emphasize the fact that we need their good business judgment; we're just supplementing it by providing clarity in an otherwise complex situation. They still own the decision.

4) Re: innovation, another area that is going to get a lot of attention at DAAG 2018 is Embedding DA - i.e., how do you coach/teach/mentor people so that good decision-making practices become how they think, how they do their job? The idea is to get people and organizations to where they don't need a decision professional around in order to make quality decisions.

It should be also mentioned that for DAAG 2018 plans are being made to hold a workshop to work on the issue of how to expand and grow SDP (and the profession) into new areas.

SDP Fellows Gerald Bush and Patrick Leach contributed to answering this month's question.

SDP Needs YOU!...Choose a SDP Council Which Resonates with You

It takes a village to fulfill our mission as an organization and that village needs you. As a predominately volunteer organization, the underbelly of all the work that SDP does is accomplished through its councils, many of which are lean and need more creative minds to move their goals forward.

The following is a brief on each SDP council and their needs. Please consider the council that resonates most with you personally. I speak from my own experience, when I suggest that you will be glad that you did. This is an important opportunity to not only help advance decision quality and SDP, but for you to enjoy closer ties to the broad SDP network of like-minded, interesting people who comprise it.

Join. Kind regards,

Ellen Coopersmith

Awards Council

The Awards Council is responsible for creating, maintaining, and continuously refining an awards portfolio established to recognize the outstanding contributions of its members and fellow practitioners, large and small. The awards portfolio includes the esteemed Raiffa-Howard Award for companies successfully implementing Organizational Decision Quality and numerous SDP-focused awards such as Council of the Year, Volunteer of the Year, and Recruiter of the Year.   The council is actively looking to expand its membership and would most welcome members interested in defining and implementing the 2018 awards portfolio. To join and learn more, please contact the council leader, Sandy Wrobel at sjwrobelconnect@gmail.com.

Certification Council

SDP Certification as Practitioner, Lead Practitioner, or Fellow is a rigorous, standardized process which includes recommendations, competency level evaluation, assessment of experience, review of industry involvement and published materials. The Certification Council administers the current process, implements process improvements, and explores how certification can support the strategic goals of SDP.   The council is seeking senior decision practitioners who are willing to assist with administration of the certification process, as well as have an interest in defining improvements and strategic opportunities related to certification. To join and learn more, please contact the council leader, Paul Wicker at PaulWicker@decisionframeworks.com.

Business Development (BD) Council

The Business Development Council explores and supports new ideas aimed at growing our Society. The council acts as advisors to the Board of Directors, the Executive Council, and general members on the merits of which new initiatives should be taken forward. The BD council is looking to fill subcommittees to work on chapter and local community strategies, as well as advance our 501c3 status. To join and learn more, please contact the BD council leader, Jim Driscoll at james.r.driscoll@intel.com.

Knowledge Sharing Council (KSC)

The Knowledge Sharing Council's focus is to promote the culture of sharing and attribution, create actual and virtual forums to facilitate sharing, and make the SDP content easier to find, while assisting the growth of the content. KSC has been working on the Decisionpedia, updating past DAAG talks on the SDP website, developing the quarterly fellows blog, enhancing the search library, and forming interest groups on topics to actively share and learn from members. The council is looking for both moderators to help facilitate new interest groups and new members who are excited to promote the sharing of decision quality and analysis knowledge. To join and learn more, please contact the council leader, Jim Weller at jamesweller@comcast.net.

Web Strategy Council

The Web Strategy Council integrates SDP strategy with information technology and systems solutions to help councils, chapters, interest groups and the board accomplish their mission and objectives. The council ensures a consistent SDP brand across our communication mediums of websites, webpages, email marketing, webinars, etc. The council currently focuses on delivering: 1) an integrated webinar/membership/email marketing solution to enable targeted communications to non-members who attend our webinars, 2) a polished and consistent web presence and marketing strategy for DAAG and other events to increase attendance, and 3) a self-service web reporting engine that will support several initiatives, including interest groups, membership reporting, The Speaker's Bureau, etc. While the council benefits from IT-savvy members, most importantly we're looking for creative and design-oriented individuals, with a knack for operationalizing strategy. To join or learn more, please contact the council leader, Dave Charlesworth at charledl@aol.com

Outreach and Communication Council

The Outreach Council's mission is to increase the breadth of SDP by connecting the society to the outside world and thereby spreading decision quality globally. The council's near-term objectives include: 1) launching the SDP Speaker's Bureau making renown DQ speakers available to businesses and communities; 2) developing a partnering strategy to connect SDP with like-minded societies, 3) developing a local community impact strategy to grow the practical application of DQ in cities worldwide, and 4) designing and implementing a compelling DQ social media strategy. The council needs strategically minded individuals interested in touching communities and businesses through activities and social media. To join and learn more, please contact the council leader, Craig McKnight at mcknica@comcast.net.

Program Council

The SDP Program Council leverages webinars and conferences to bring decision professionals together to share knowledge and ideas. The Program Council's key activities include: 1) organizing the logistics and content for the annual Decision Analysis Affinity Group (DAAG) conference, 2) organizing and running the SDP Learning Exchange Program (monthly webinars), and 3) working with other SDP Councils as appropriate on issues relating to SDP webinars and DAAG.   We welcome individuals interested in broadening the knowledge of SDP members and guests to join the Program Council; specifically, identifying and recruiting speakers for the SDP Webinar Series, assisting with DAAG conference planning and program development. To join or learn more, please contact the council leader, Josh Harrison at Joshua.Harrison@nexencnoocltd.com.

Membership Development Council

The Membership Development Council's mission is to understand member concerns, enhance membership value and grow membership base. The council's near term goals include: rolling out the Mentoring Program, establishing a network of internal DA groups to drive membership growth, identifying and implementing ideas to enhance the value of membership, facilitating increased networking among SDP members, and finding ways to better communicate the value of membership. The council is actively seeking members who are interested in working with us to grow the Society and expand the benefits of membership. To join and learn more, please contact the council leader, Dan Hudson at danhudson74@gmail.com.

Brain Teaser

Congratulations to Pat Leach

The correct answer to the brain teaser posed in the August issue is that Contestant A should intentionally miss on his first throw and that the resulting win probabilities for Contestants A, B, and C are 40%, 38%, and 22%, respectively.   A full explanation of the answer can be found by clicking here. Congratulations go to Pat Leach for being the first reader to submit the correct answer.

THE OCTOBER BRAIN TEASER

*Instructions: You can win "bragging rights" by being the first to submit the correct answer of this brain teaser to the newsletter editors (**SDP Newsletter: Brain Teaser**). We will announce the winner in the next issue.*

Two Rectangles

The vertical rectangle below (solid lines) has area A and the tilted rectangle (dashed lines) has area B. Which of the following statements is true?

1. A must be less than B.
2. A must equal B.
3. A must be greater than B.
4. The relationship between A and B is indeterminate.
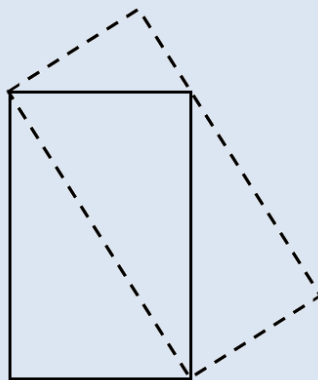
A Word From an SDP Sponsor

In every issue of this newsletter, we include a message from one of the SDP sponsors, whose support contributes significantly to the on-going success of the Society.

SDG
Strategic Decisions Group

Strategic Decisions Group:
We Stand By Decision Professionals

Strategic Decisions Group (SDG) is pleased to be a charter sponsor of the Society of Decision Professionals. Our firm shares SDP's mission of creating greater value for organizations, individuals, and stakeholders by bringing decision quality to important, complex decisions. We share DNA with the DQ champions of SDP who work every day to advance the adoption of DQ, expand the community of decision professionals, and safeguard the integrity of our profession.

For more than 35 years, motivated by the complex, real-world issues faced by our clients, our team of decision professionals has strived to find new value, deliver superior business results, and ensure organizational alignment. It is this combination that has resulted in enduring relationships with individual client sponsors and client organizations.

Equally important is extending the reach of decision quality by teaching and coaching students in the principles and application of decision analysis and decision quality. SDG's education staff has instructed many thousands of executives, decision makers, decision process leaders, and analysts -- including, in many cases, members of the Society -- over the past three-plus decades. The Strategic Decision and Risk Management certificate program, first offered at Stanford and now available at the University of Texas, is an example of how we have worked to extend the reach of DQ beyond our client engagements. Not everyone has the interest or desire to become a decision professional, but anyone can learn to appreciate the elements of decision quality and to demand it for their organization's decisions.

Our hope for the future is that DQ is seen as indispensable not only in business, but in important societal decisions. Our hope is that diverse organizations will apply for the Raiffa-Howard Award for Organizational Decision Quality, and in so doing will materially improve their prospects. Our hope is that every complex, important decision is made with the guidance of a decision professional, and that the profession itself grows in number -- and in stature.

At SDG, we are pleased to share insights with the broader community of decision professionals. We invite you to join SDG's email list to stay abreast of the latest thinking delivered in articles, blogs, webinars, videos, and courses. Subscribe at https://www.sdg.com/email-newsletter/

SDP

Reidar Bratvold Wins SPE Award

Congratulations to SDP Fellow Reidar Bratvold, who was named the recipient of the 2017 International Award for Management and Information by the Society of Petroleum Engineers. He will receive the award at a banquet to be held in October in San Antonio, Texas.

Useful Links

The SDP Board has posted the Society's Bylaws and Policy and Procedure Manual, which can be found at: http://www.decisionprofessionals.com/about/governance

The SDP Knowledge Sharing Council maintains a Fellows Blog at: http://www.decisionprofessionals.com/?scrollTo=blog-news#blog-news

A listing of courses in decision analysis available to SDP members is at: http://www.decisionprofessionals.com/courses/training-program

Note From the Editors

We hope that you enjoy this fifth issue of the SDP Newsletter. Please do not hesitate to send us constructive feedback. Click here to email the editors.

Matt Gorman and Steve Tani
SDP Newsletter Editors