

***1. Please share 1) some specific scenarios where you face difficulties to be decisive, or 2) some examples of decision-making practices (good or not good) in your company, organization, or community.***

Reply from Nathan Fisk

It is difficult to be decisive when I have a field group that asks my permission to begin a project, and we are still waiting for our engineering group to perform calculations for the project. I have to make the call before our engineering team has verified that the design will work for the conditions. This is tough for me because if I say no then everyone in the field is frustrated with me, but if I say yes and the design calculations are not acceptable then I have created rework.

Micah Mogle

[@Shankar Balasubramanian](#)

Firstly let me apologize for the lateness of my response to you in this discussion. One of the things you mentioned was about the difficulty around making choices when situations / data are ambiguous. I would like to say in my profession that we can quickly have all the data in front of us to act decisively, fully knowing the outcome. The reality is this is very rarely the case. What I find is that there is nothing better than having highly motivated, protected, knowledgeable, and "owner" teams make this kind of well informed decision making such a breeze in the face of ambiguity. You do not always get it right but you get it done together either way.

Micah

Micah Mogle

[@Zachary Baker](#)

Yikes! This is comfortable but can lead to some very scary ramifications. I think it is so important to form and gain trust with leaders up and down any hierarchy. I firmly believe that it is critical for good leaders to empower, protect, and support their folks. It should never be blindly though. I have seen some cases in my career where the best of intention has lead to some really horrible decision making that was bad for everyone involved. Simply taking a few minutes to review and sanity check things I think is ULTRA critical. Be that person that is in the moment and cares enough to ask the 5 why's or dive into the data a bit before just giving it the ol' thumbs up lets go!

Zachary Baker

[@Daniel Vigil](#)

For me the most helpful thing to do is sit down and do your best to quantify everything I possibly can, oftentimes in a excel sheet. I've always been bad at generating bids and worried that my proposal will be too high. Just seeing numbers on a screen takes away some of that concern.

Zachary Baker

[@Joey Fresquez](#)

I've found that for smaller decisions that have become trapped in an analysis paralysis loop, having less people involved can lead to results. Having too many cooks in the kitchen provides too many opportunities for conflicting opinions and sometimes any decision is better than no decision.

Zachary Baker

A bad decision making practice that I currently deal with in my role is my manager being more likely to pick a solution to a problem or pick a new direction based on how much he likes the person who is proposing the solution. This generally works in my favor as I am well liked by management, but when a non-preferred individual proposes what I think is a good idea and is ignored I will often circle back and propose the idea after a week or two has elapsed. That's not to say that I take credit for it, but good ideas deserve the chance to be tested regardless of where they come from.

George Sims

[@joeyfresquez](#)

I tend to notice that at LANL as well, what are some solutions that you have tried to help deviate analysis paralysis within your workplace? Something that I've noticed that helps with large projects that come up in my division, is breaking them down to the task level to ensure that deliverables are being met on a monthly basis.

[@Irma Rodriguez](#)

I can see why you would be frustrated, this type of decision made by upper management especially if communication was absent from the equation. Hopefully, the company provides you and your team with more insight next time they decide to implement some sort of a beta program!

George Sims

Hello,

1. Times where I find it hard to be decisive is when I know it will impact two parties, where I may have close relationships in. My indecisiveness I've noticed not only ranges within the work setting but also in my personal life as well. This is a big hurdle for me, since I obviously let my emotions and feelings dictate how challenges play out, which can be great at times but really does hinder progression at times especially when objective on a situation takes priority.
2. A good decision practice that I've noticed within my organization is implementing design fabricability prior to subcontractors implementing our designs in fabrication. This practice, while so simple, has been implemented by few projects within my organization and has been so helpful when saving schedule and taxpayer dollars.

Cheers,

George Sims

Leni Moore

Andrea,

Kid fund raisers are hard. I have had friends choose to avoid me during sales season. I wonder what would have to change for you to be willing to participate and not just buy your way out? I think it would require a fundamental change to the fundraising methodology.

Leni

Leni Moore

Irma,

That's super frustrating. Getting surprised like that is never fun. Was the team receptive to your requests to stay in the loop next time? Did you get a sense as to why they were so secretive?

Leni

Irma Rodriguez

A new tool rolled out for our Teams to use but since it was very new, our Business decided to roll it out as a pilot to a few of our regional managers and customers. No warning or heads up was given to any because of (development team) deadlines and tool was launched. My job is supporting all aspects of the business, internally and externally, provided trainings, etc. This tool launch was also new to me, and I was not happy because I feel like we (as a business)

should have prepped our internal teams for sure and most definitely given the external teams a heads up. I decided to have meetings with individuals who launched this and question them as to why this happened and please consider prepping the teams next time because I was flooded with questions and I did not know many of the answers since I learned about this tool when it was launched, I was caught off guard. Considering I was to help support the teams when this was launched, I should have known something about it.

Shankar Balasubramanian

Joey,

I completely agree, over analysis can be very daunting and does not produce the desired results. I have come across similar situations at my workplace in the past. Do you agree if we take a pause, revisit the main goals/objectives will redirect us and provide more clearer route?

Shankar Balasubramanian

Leni,

It is indeed everyone's challenge particularly planning vacation with family. we tend to research a lot and come to a conclusion, if kids or spouse are equally interested to research certain places or activities on the vacation, it will be best to allocate certain activities which they enjoy the most. This can ease your decision making process to some extent.

Shankar Balasubramanian

1.1) I face difficulties to be decisive when faced with time-pressured decisions particularly when there is a last-minute choice- facing a deadline with insufficient time to consider all options thoroughly. An example would be when two projects must be completed around the same deadline with limited resources.

1.2) Another scenario would be during an ambiguous situation when there is insufficient data to validate each option's consequences.

2.1 ) Two years ago was company-wide product lifecycle management system was rolled out across global sites. The decision maker who was also the person in charge of the implementation project was serving his/her notice period. There was no immediate successor to take over and obtain knowledge transfer on the process. A third-party company was engaged for post-implementation support. The service contract was not clear or communicated well to the end users/stakeholders. It took almost two years to get everything in place after that but it was a painful lesson for the organization to learn it at a very late stage. This is an example of a decision that was made without considering the balance of short-term and long-term value.

2.2) Recently our business unit struggled to get the right candidate to fill up a leadership role, this posed quite a challenge in the team management, clearing backlogs and on-time delivery. Our VP quickly merged our business unit under the leadership of the UK site who is very familiar with our product lines during the interim period. I see this as a good decision making which is timely as the issue heightened the sense of urgency.

Xiaomin Yang

There have been many genuine and generous class discussions, which reveal a strong collaborative learning culture. This is fantastic. I've noticed that many discussions focus on specific personal experiences at work.

I encourage you to also reflect on decision-making from a process perspective, whether personal or organizational. Consider why you prefer a particular approach, such as democratic, empathetic, or impulsive decision-making. Is it a conscious choice, your natural way of doing things, or perhaps following the example of other leaders?

Throughout the course, take the time to examine your decision-making 'habits.' Ask yourself what's working well and what might be missing. The goal is to develop a systematic decision-making process, supported by useful tools.

XY

Andrea Salazar-Gallegos

Micah Mogle - I also struggle with the short (and long) term impacts of downsizing and the impact of affected employees. Key skill sets should be retained, but good, well-trained employees have the gumption and skill set to recover and potentially seek other assignments. This assumes the company has done their "due diligence" to train and support individuals on a fundamental level which is probably a bad assumption. The communication plan and empathy training of the managers is key when delivering bad news and executing finalized decisions. Sharing timely messages to prepare employees for change is essential.

Andrea Salazar-Gallegos

Joey Fresquez, I think we have all made the mistake of making decisions based on intuition, especially in pressure situations, or times of chaos. This is typical human behavior. As for your statement about analysis paralysis, many personality types (C types from DiSC) tend to over-analyze situations, taking additional time to come to a decision, which impacts project performance thus affecting earned value analysis and reporting. I agree certain situations

require prescriptive decision-making processes, while others require descriptive decision-making processes.

Andrea Salazar-Gallegos

Scenario 1: When confronted with raising funds for my children's school activities, I don't like to ask others to purchase popcorn, buy clothing, etc. I would rather purchase the pre-established goal rather than asking than pressuring my family, friends, colleagues, or neighbors to purchase items. However, I prefer to donate my time at bake sales or concession stands because I do enjoy interacting with others. I think people are hungry and already committed to a purchase and have a choice which alleviates the pressure of having someone committing to a purchase they were not already planning. Can anyone relate to this situation?

Izzy Manzanares

Leni if your too indecisive, go to the airport and buy a ticket for which ever place is leaving in exactly 1 hour (or closest too). There is beauty in chaos.

I usually let my wife decide that stuff, I dont have the luxury of spontaneity with her, which is just her personality, she's very different than me.

Good luck with the vacation planning.

Joey Fresquez

Leni,

Sounds like we share a similar experience at Los Alamos with analysis paralysis. Have you noticed anything to improve this? For my team I've been trying to inspire more "testing of the answers" versus debating the solution. It's more work, but I've noticed it's help inspire quicker decision making.

Joey Fresquez

Consuelo, the fear of the unknown is definitely relatable with decision making. I've personally found that trying to think critically as best as you can about a decision before making it can be helpful to alleviate that fear. I know in cases that isn't always possible. Trusting yourself and the data that you do have available to you is paramount in my opinion. Owning that decision and being accountable goes a long way too.

Joey Fresquez

Hello everyone,

After reflecting, I've realized that sometimes I make too many decisions on intuition (system 1 in the reading). For example, there's been a few times where I've invested into something without leaning more into analytics and I think that has reduced the quality of some of my decisions overall. In my company, I think that there is a problem by residing too much into system 2. There is a lot of analysis paralysis in my company. This over-analysis has caused a lot of stagnation in various projects. Rather than just being decisive and testing solutions.

Joey

Leni Moore

The place I struggle most with being decisive is when planning vacations with my wife. I don't know why but when presented with options I want to hold off making a decision and research each option myself. I don't behave this way at work, at work I make decisions more intuitively.

At work, as an organization, we struggle to make a decision. We love to have meetings and debate options but then leave the meeting without making a final decision on what should be done. We are constantly looking for the perfect answer, afraid to make a mistake with the decision and get called out for it. This paralyzes us and we end up making no decision.

Angelita Sweat

Micha,

The decision that you had to make is very difficult. I feel deeply for you having to be the one to make the decision on who stays and who goes. Relying on data, and factual information is helpful. However, the human element makes the process hard for leadership. So sorry you went through this.

Angelita Sweat

Kyra,

I can understand how that can be frustrating. It is important to make decisions based on a process when the opportunities are there. But in some instances, they may deviate from the plan and will cause issues down the line because of the hasty decision. How did you handle the risks your team incurred?

Angelita Sweat

I had a scenario at a company where I needed to decide to improve a process and automate it for our contract processing system. I had the option to use the tools that we already had and the knowledge that I had of programming to build the solution myself or I had an option to spend upwards of \$30,000 on a software solution that was still going to take about the same

amount of time for me to build it that it would before the company to deploy the product. My resources were limited. I chose to build the solution myself. We saved around \$20,000 and that project still gave us a solution that automated our process.

Kyra Cracchiola

Consuelo, I agree with your post *completely*! I am currently dealing with this exact dilemma, do I let someone go because of an integrity violation even though they bring a lot to the team? Or do I keep them in their position to ensure the project is a success? This is a shared experience for all of us who lead teams, and for us trying to become more empathetic leaders - it is SO hard!

Kyra Cracchiola

A recent example from work this week on being decisive - my leadership has been struggling to maintain the pace of our deployment and has often made decisive decisions that were not beneficial to our unit. I have been asked to incur risk when licensing people who operate heavy equipment because we are behind schedule. However, the leadership in my unit do make good, safe, hasty decisions, in which I often support vigorously! When leadership works through their decision making process, I often try to be a part of the process to ensure I can support the project/mission.

Consuelo Salazar

Daniel,

I 100% understand what you are talking about. Not only do you lose time when you outsource you also lose on your confidence level. As you do work in house your already aware of what your team can do as well as the estimated time to complete the project. Where as utilizing and outside vendor you have verify that the facility has proper capabilities, the resources are qualified to perform the work, the scope is communicated clearly, communication becomes a challenge, there are so many variables that come into play making the decision as to what route to take quite the process.

Consuelo Salazar

Izzy,

It seems like that is the has become a normal practice among the line item projects. Its very hard to push back when upper management is driving the change that you may not be on board with. As a CAM you have a better understanding of what is taking place as you monitor cost and schedule, the visibility of the impacts downstream they are not interested in and that makes decision such as these a huge challenge.



Consuelo Salazar

Everyday there are decisions to be made, I find the most difficult are those that have an unknown result. What I mean by unknown result is when you cannot quantify a certain outcome. For example: when you must decide on whether letting someone go from your team can result in. Could you possibly be helping the team or hurting the team. How will this impact the individual and their personal life. Regardless of the reason behind letting them go (unless there is a serious offense or threat) these are the concerns I go over when making a decision that can be detrimental on both side of removing a key player from the team.

Izzy Manzanares

Nathaniel if you need help we can talk outside of this forum. I'm fairly strong in EV at least for some of the tools we used to use at lanl. Being a CAM is a tough job and the training never really gets you there, and there are less people to ask.

Nathaniel Johnson

Matthew Chapman –

This sounds a lot like how we bid subcontractors when I was working for a big GC. We would have a panel evaluate large contracts based on objective criteria. What I liked was the inclusion of an interview with more subjective criteria, where after the interview the scores were combined and evaluated and the panel would have to agree on the “winner”. The panel could then decide to agree with or reject the hard metric data. Either decision, by being a result of the group usually eliminated the ambiguity and reinforced the idea that the decision was correct.

Nathaniel Johnson

Izzy -

I'd like to pick your brain sometime about your experience as a CAM. I am doing CAM work presently, and still consider myself new to it. I am having some frustration "falling into line" with how success is measured. I'd like to get your perspective.

Nathaniel Johnson

Our work is measured heavily by data as it applies to Earned Value. The overseeing organization relies heavily on Earned Value techniques to measure project success and health particularly where it applies to schedule and cost. A common decision-making practice is to focus on meeting short term metrics, so the project looks successful to those overseeing it. I have noticed that this has a tendency to hide other underlying issues, particularly where it deals with quality. It also creates a false sense of complacency or failure depending on where the metrics compare to expectations.

Matthew Chapman

I'm generally a decisive person, but I often find that the challenge lies more in reaching consensus than in making decisions. The most difficult decisions to achieve consensus on are usually those where the metrics measured don't clearly indicate the best option.

For example, in a recent vendor selection process I was involved in, we narrowed it down to two vendors whose products were nearly identical in capabilities and had very similar pricing structures. Ultimately, it almost felt like a coin toss to choose between them.

This scenario highlights a weakness in what is otherwise a strong metrics-based selection mechanism. While we had a list of objective criteria, we scored them on a subjective scale. For instance, if Vendor A had a feature associated with a particular criterion, each person would rate how well it implemented that feature on a subjective scale. This led to an ambiguous result for two similarly featured offerings.

Xiaomin Yang

Izzy, after we complete module 3 (decision-making in negotiation), you will gain more insights about dealing with the situations (with vendor and customer). Then, you will also have new perspectives to coach your engineer.

Daniel Vigil

Izzy,

I generate orders to send to procurement based on project needs regularly and I find that many times people take advantage and use an order to create a wish list of items however like you said the current equipment passed. If the equipment is out of scope, it is difficult to justify.

Daniel Vigil

Micah,

Having had to let people go in the past I can understand your thought process however in my case it was one person here and one person there I could only imagine the thought process when it is multiple people, that must be difficult on a much higher level.

Izzy Manzanares

Micah, I imagine this was a difficult situation. While at Raytheon (RMS), when RIFs occurred, first terminations were PIPs, then volunteers, before the decision of who to let go. My only

concern with data driven decisions is the human factor; there are people that make teams better with lower stats.

- Izzy Manzanares
- Daniel Vigil, I always look at bids in terms of risk. I assign Fixed price for things you know well, and are confident that you have material, equipment, tools, expertise, etc. Hourly bids are when higher uncertainty exists. I've not written like what your doing, kudos for the entrepreneurship.
- Izzy Manzanares
- One of my engineers lost his temper with the vendor (teleconference). There was high pressure hit target dates. I heard him yelling and accusing the vendor of lying to him. The engineer was difficult but essential. The decision was what to do immediately and long term.
- While serving as Manager/CAM, the customer reps asked if they could procure a ~\$1 million vibration pad for a mass spectrometer. This request was out of scope and vibration testing passed. Their rationale was the test was performed may not be representative of daily vibration. I was under-running cost and schedule.
- Xiaomin Yang
- Daniel, the nature of your bidding challenge is making decisions under uncertainty (time spent on driving/communication). Probability-based analysis, decision trees/simulation may help. You will learn these tools in this course. We can discuss the topic and your case later. XY
- Daniel Vigil
- 1) A scenario when I face difficulties being decisive is during project bidding. I currently do fabrication as a side business and second-guess my choice to bid on a project hourly or provide a fixed price. I find this difficult because of location, material, and project scale. If a project is in my shop, it can be done quicker so I tend to bid by project however, in the field I may spend much of my time behind the wheel commuting in rural areas which can quickly lower my profit margins if I underbid.
- Xiaomin Yang
- Micah, while data analytics enhances decision making, human judgement still plays a large (unreplaceable) role in the high-impact decisions. Human understands the impacts of these decisions that deeply affect individuals' lives and the social justice.

- Micah Mogle
- Throughout my career, I've faced situations requiring difficult, decisive choices. One such instance involved managing a department of 150 engineers. After our group lost a key pursuit, we had to downsize. The decision of who would stay or go fell on me and my managers. Although we relied on data like skill matrices and performance reviews, it was challenging knowing these decisions would deeply affect the employees' lives, families, and livelihoods. We did everything possible to support them while fulfilling our responsibilities to the company.