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5 STEPS TO MAKING BETTER DECISIONS

Turf managers are required to make crucial decisions. Unfortunately, the more information and the more choices we have, the more difficult decision-making is. When it comes to decision-making, common sense and experience are vital tools; however, they alone are not enough.

Before you make another decision, fine-tune your decision making process with the following steps:

1. Study the problem and define your objective

We often believe that we have a good idea of the problem at hand (the decision to make), but understanding the problem is not the same as understanding the objective. As you review the problem and decide your course of action, you need to determine what your ultimate goal is. By looking at the big picture, you

can devise an unambiguous objective and make your decision easier.

In order to uncover your objective, ask yourself the following questions:

- * What is the problem?
- * Is this a problem?
- * Why is a solution required?
- * Who is affected?
- * How does it manifest?
- * When did it first manifest?
- * What are the consequences?
- * Is it a transient or recurring problem?
- * Under what conditions does it occur?
- * Are there obvious causes?
- * Is a solution worth the cost/effort?

2. Identify all relevant factors that impact your problem

The criteria relating to your decision are all the circumstances that could be contributing to the problem. As you consider your criteria, pay attention to two main issues. The first is to select the most appropriate criteria. This is vital to making the best decision; too often decision-makers take a light-hearted view of this step and pay a very dear price later on. Too many or too few factors will compromise your decision.

Contrary to popular belief, all identified factors do not have the same significance or importance. Thus, the second issue is to determine how important each criterion is (assign weights) compared to the others. Since your final decision will depend heavily on the relative value you place on your factors, the weights you assign to each should truly represent your desires. Of course you can do this using common sense and experience, but that defeats the purpose. I recommend the "pairwise" comparison technique, which consists of comparing the criteria against each other, in pairs. This process will also help you identify prerequisites, obligatory criteria and desirable criteria.

3. Creatively identify all available options or solutions

After identifying criteria, list all your available options, from the ones that seem the most logical to those that seem ridiculous. Remember, you're not deciding at this point; you're simply listing your possibilities, so write down everything you can think of. Whatever you do, do not jump to conclusions and think, "My options are obvious." Don't limit your options. List and analyze everything.

4. Gather information pertaining to your options and include any new factors you may have discovered

Begin by looking at each of your proposed solutions and develop the pros and cons as they apply to each. Be descriptive in each of your pro/con judgments. Depending on the pros and cons you list, you may have to gather additional information. If so, question the information being provided to you. Questions to ask include:

- * Is the source of the information credible?
- * Is the source/person reliable?
- * Does the provider have a conflict of interest?
- * Will the information be valid for the period under consideration?

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* Is the problem serious enough to merit further verification of information?
 * Is the information relevant to the objective under consideration?
 * Beware of eyewitness accounts or "I heard this from a reliable source." Seek definitive proof wherever possible. Often during the information-gathering phase, you will identify new criteria that you need to consider. Add these to your original list. Finally, do not cut corners as you evaluate your options, especially if a bad decision is likely to have serious consequences.

5. Rank your options and make your decision

With your solutions spelled out on paper and the pros and cons of each listed, you can analyze your options and identify the best route to take. Use the pairwise technique, to rank your options: consider one criterion at a time, and then compare each candidate against the others, in pairs, and assign points. Once you have exhausted all criteria and candidates, multiply the points assigned to each candidate with the corresponding criteria weights to determine its rank. Once you make your final decision, based on the information you have uncovered, do not second-guess it. It is your decision and you need to develop faith in it and be in harmony with it.

As you execute your decision, keep in mind the timing of your decision. For example, if you decide to approach your supervisor for a favor, you would intuitively wait for a moment when he/she is not under pressure and is in a good mood. Yet, when it comes to implementing a well-thought-out strategy, many people completely forget how critical timing is. They become emotionally attached to the decision and try to execute it immediately.

It is also important to be aware that what is urgent might not necessarily be what is important. Urgency is time related; it requires immediate action. Importance is driven by values. If ignored, important items could turn into urgent items.

Just because today's world is complicated doesn't mean that decision-making must be complicated too. Take a systematic approach to all your daily decisions to ease the stress and frustration decision-making brings on. The optimum decision depends on how you assign weights to the criteria, and how you assign points to the candidates.

By following the process discussed above, you'll make more reliable and consistent decisions

that positively affect your company's growth and profitability.

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Dr. Errol Wirasinghe is the author of "The Art of Making Decisions—Expanding Common Sense & Experience." For more information go to www.XpertUS.com.



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