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THE IMPORTANCE OF MAKING INFORMED DECISIONS

By Robert J. Tamasy

What kind of decision-maker are you? Are you impulsive, prone to make decisions with only a minimum of information – responding to feelings or intuition? Are you at the other extreme, analyzing and overanalyzing, even finding yourself suffering from “paralysis of analysis”? Or somewhere in between?

Some decisions are straight-forward and require little thought or preparation. “The crosswalk sign says ‘Walk,’ so should I cross?” But often the decisions we make during the course of a typical day, whether at work or in our non-working pursuits, are more complex: Deciding whether to expand a business or take it in a different direction. Deciding whether to accept a new job when one’s current job seems comfortable, if not very challenging. Deciding how best to formulate a proposal to attract a prospective client. Deciding what kind of car to buy when the old one is not worth repairing. You could add many others to the list.

So, how should we go about making those critical decisions, ones that potentially could make a huge difference in our lives, careers and businesses? Leadership consultant Tim Kight has observed, “The difference between average decisions and great decisions is the quality of information. Before you make a decision, do your homework. Measure twice, cut once.”

The last phrase, “Measure twice, cut once,” is a reference to a simple, yet common carpentry principle – when preparing to cut a board, measure and then double-check your measurement before putting the teeth of a saw to it. Better to be certain of your calculations than to cut off too much the board.

In a similar way, the more pertinent information we can gather before making and implementing an important decision, the better. What is the best way to do that? The Bible provides some helpful principles that can enable us to avoid making hasty or unwise decisions we will soon regret:

Diligence in gathering information ensures the best outcome. When an alternative seems appealing, it can be easy to proceed in determined haste. However, the wisdom of the adage, “Look before you leap,” is almost always sound guidance. Taking the time to gather as much pertinent information as possible increases the likelihood of success. “Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth” (Proverbs 10:4). “The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty” (Proverbs 21:5).

An important aspect of quality information is sound advice. When making complex decisions, there is a strong likelihood we do not have all the necessary information. By consulting with

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trusted individuals for advice, we can be more confident of getting enough information to proceed successfully. “For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure” (Proverbs 11:14). “The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice” (Proverbs 12:15). “Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed” (Proverbs 15:22).

Teamwork can broaden one’s perspective. By working together, we can take advantage of each other’s strengths, diverse experiences, and different points of view to evaluate challenging issues from as many angles as possible. “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17). “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work” (Ecclesiastes 4:9).

© 2021. Robert J. Tamasy has written Marketplace Ambassadors: CBMC’s Continuing Legacy of Evangelism and Discipleship; Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today’s Workplace; Pursuing Life With a Shepherd’s Heart, coauthored with Ken Johnson; and The Heart of Mentoring, coauthored with David A. Stoddard. Bob’s biweekly blog is: www.bobtamasy.blogspot.com.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. How would you describe your usual decision-making style – inclined to make quick, sometimes impulsive decisions; very deliberate and thorough in your analysis, or somewhere between the two extremes? Give an example.
2. Are you familiar with the carpentry comparison, “Measure twice, cut once”? How would you relate that to your own kind of work?
3. What, drawing from your experience, is the benefit of consulting with others for advice when making key decisions? Are there any pitfalls or disadvantages in doing this on a regular basis? Explain your answer.
4. When seeking to gather sufficient information to make a confident, well-considered decision, what other resources have you found helpful?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages: Proverbs 12:1, 13:14, 14:8,12, 17:24, 18:15, 19:20,27, 22:3, 24:5-6, 27:9,12

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