

elbc
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Live Large Roadmap: The Five Pillars of Successful Decision-Making

The road to success is paved with good decisions. From whether to have a child to starting your own business, to quitting a job, to deciding which house to buy, we are constantly faced with decisions that can have huge implications for our futures. How we make those decisions affects the quality of our lives. If you have ever been at a loss for how to make the “right” decision, you are not alone. Difficulty making decisions is one of the top reasons CEOs and entrepreneurs come to me when they need to ensure success in their decision-making.

I have used this roadmap to successful decision-making time and again with my coaching clients. These great five pillars of good decision-making are some of the most powerful in the business world. They can help you quickly cut through the noise, identify your options and make decisions that will reap incredible rewards.

Use this as your lifelong resource whenever you are faced with a decision, no matter how big or small.

PILLAR #1: KNOW YOUR BOTTOM LINE

One of the first challenges of making a good decision is clarity about what we want as the outcome or result.

We are, essentially, herd animals, and the expectations or opinions of others can easily get in our way. Muddled “herd mentality” thinking often looks like this: *What do they think will be the right choice? What will they think of me if I do this? How will my boss/partner/parents respond? Will this decision mean I could be alone for the rest of my life? Will people like me more if I make this decision?*

In order to let go of the herd mentality voice, begin by asking yourself what you want from the situation you are facing.

- What do I want to have, be or accomplish?
- How do I want to feel after I make this decision?

Notice if you are giving weight to what others want you to do. Once you are clear on what you want, it will be easier to evaluate different options for getting there.

PILLAR #2: DECIDE IF THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY OR A DETOUR

“Throughout our lives, we will be presented with attractive, seductive offers,” my wise father used to say. “Your job is to decide which of these offers are really opportunities rather than detours. It’s only an opportunity if it takes you where you want to go. Otherwise? It’s a detour.”

How can you know if the offer you are considering is truly an opportunity or a detour? If you get very clear about how the offer affects your goals, you will be able to spot a detour. These questions help you identify opportunities:

- What goals am I striving for?
- How will this offer help me reach my goals?
- What will I have to give up to pursue this?
- What is the real payoff of doing it?
- What is the payoff of NOT doing it?

AND... there are times when taking a detour is actually the right decision. If you feel deep in your gut that the detour is right for you, then go ahead and say YES! Just make sure you are being honest with yourself. Don’t justify. Simply do it and be curious about where it leads.

PILLAR #3: SEPARATE THE EMOTIONAL STORY FROM THE FACTS

We all go through tough times. We lose jobs and big clients, go through a divorce or an illness, or are faced with something else we never saw coming. As we move through these storms, the world can feel like it is crumbling around us. Often we try to run from the emotions that arise rather than facing them.

Recognizing and feeling the feelings is a necessary step. When we can face the emotional storm, we are better able to separate the emotional story from the facts, an essential step to making strong decisions.

This inquiry helps you do just that:

- What is my emotional story around this decision? How do I feel about my situation? (It's OK to stomp, yell, cry, hit a pillow, or however the emotion shows up for you!)
- Once this storm is past, what outcome do I want?
- When I achieve my outcome, how will I feel? *Remember outcomes of revenge are not worth pursuing!*
- What are the brutal facts of my current situation?
- What are my resources? (talents, contacts, friends, time, access) that can help me change the situation?
- In order to achieve my desired outcome, what are the next steps in moving forward and how soon can I take them?

PILLAR #4: IDENTIFY ALL OF YOUR OPTIONS AND MORE

Often when we look at a situation, we see either *Option A* or *Option B*. I either leave or I stay. Take the job or don't take the job. Dichotomized thinking gives us very little choice in the matter and can make us feel powerless. Damned if you do, damned if you don't. If you find yourself looking at an either/or decision, then it may be time to pause and create more options.

- As you look at the situation you are facing, spend 3-5 minutes writing down as many new options as possible. Go wild! Don't edit or judge. Don't limit your creativity and imagination by negating your ideas too soon. Remember your goal is to create more choices, they don't have to be viable options. I like to brainstorm on sticky notes so I can move them around and play with combinations.
 - Take the job on a year-long contract.*
 - Negotiate more flexible hours or a different benefit package.*
 - Work at the job part time for 30 days while remaining employed.*
 - Ask your current employer to give you three weeks off to experiment.*
 - Look for other jobs that you think might be more interesting than the offer you have.*
 - And so on...*
- Once you have more options, consider each possibility separately:
 - Which option makes you laugh?*
 - Which option makes you feel tired?*
 - Where do you feel a sense of possibility?*
 - Which option gets you most excited?*
 - What additional information do you need?*
- Now write a list of viable options open for you. Notice how much better and more optimistic you feel when an either/or choice turns into a list of options.

Once you have a list of viable options, you can look at the risks and benefits of each. But don't let those stop you! Continue to have an awareness of which option gets you most excited - that's always a clue that you are heading in the right direction.

PILLAR #5: IMAGINE YOU HAVE MADE THE JUMP

You have gotten up on the diving board and are standing at the edge looking into the water at the decision you are about to make. You find yourself stuck and unable to jump. What will it take to get you to "jump"?

- Instead of backtracking and climbing down, take a moment to imagine that you have already made the leap. How do you feel? Let that feeling run through you. Immerse yourself in it fully.
- Now stop, tune in, turn inward, and listen to yourself, ask this question: *What do I really want and why?* Take the time to pause and get clear on your bottom line. Sometimes the answer can bubble up quickly. Other times you have to quiet your mind and ask yourself again. And maybe once again. When you are clear on what you want, and you let that drive your decision, you will have very few regrets.
- Now, open your eyes and ask yourself, "What are three small steps I can take?" Write them down. Begin taking that step. You are now moving toward an informed decision and on your way to fantastic success.

And most of all, do not forget: there are no mistakes or wrong turns in this road map toward life!