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## INTRODUCTION

How many decisions have you made so far today? How about this week. Chances are there were quite a lot of them. Many of them are small decisions like what to wear, what to eat for breakfast, or what road to take to head to the store, and what project to work on first at work. Others are a lot harder like choosing what college to attend, or what house to buy.

Some decisions we make very fast, like grabbing a bowl of cereal for breakfast, while we agonize long and hard over others. Often, we're good at making quick choices for things we either consider unimportant or without long-reaching effects or things we decide frequently. It's easy to pick something to wear to work, or what to make for lunch.

When we feel that a decision is critical, hard to reverse, or has long-reaching consequences, we are more prone to think long and hard about them. That even applies to decisions we're usually able to make quickly without much agonizing or worry. Take picking what to wear for example. We're perfectly capable of making those decisions in no time. However, when we're dressing up for an exciting date, or a crucial interview for a new position, we put a lot more thought and effort into the decision. Often, we agonize for hours, trying on outfit after outfit. The task hasn't changed. We're still "just" getting dressed. What's changed is the potential outcome of a romantic relationship or a better job.

Putting more thought into important decisions isn't a bad thing. It's something we should do. The problem arises when we go too far and start to fear the decision making. In turn that can lead to procrastination. We simply don't decide at all.

Let me illustrate why that can become a problem.

Let's say you're offered a 401K plan at work and want to participate. You're excited about the option to start saving for your retirement, and you get all the applicable brochures and forms from your HR department. You're moving right

along filling out the application when you come to the part where you need to choose an investment fund. It's an important decision that can make a difference between having a little or having a lot of money to live on in your old age. So you agonize about it, and you study, and you ask advice, and you procrastinate. The bottom line is that you're not saving a single penny for retirement and it's not earning any interest while you're delaying. In short, you're much worse off than if you make a less than an ideal decision about your 401K.

Instead of fearing decisions and procrastinating on making them, I want you to get comfortable at gathering information, taking advice, and then using all that to make confident choices quickly. That's what this guide is all about. I promise this new skill will come in handy for more than deciding on your 401K fund or what outfit to wear to your next hot date. It's a skill that will serve you well time and again in both your personal life and your career. After all, making right decisions quickly and with confidence is one of the essential traits of a competent leader.

In this guide, we take a look at why confident decision making is such an important and powerful skill. Then we go over some tips and strategies for making better decisions before wrapping it up with some quick decision-making skills. Right now, I want you to make the smart decision to dive deeper and commit to studying the following pages and most importantly applying what you're learning right away.

## **THE POWER OF DECISION MAKING**

Take a guess. How many decisions does the average person make per day? It's about 70 of them. That's a lot of decision making and choices to be made, isn't it? Of course, that doesn't include all the little things we do on autopilot or make a habit, like deciding to brush our teeth twice a day. In short, we make a lot of decisions on a daily basis. You could say that they drive our lives.

We also make more decisions now than ever in the history of humankind. We have more choices than our ancestors did. It starts with simple things like the clothing and food available to us.

When we go back in time a couple of generations, most people had two or three outfits to choose from, one of them being their Sunday best. Today we have entire small rooms (aka walk-in closets) stuffed with an enormous choice of clothes and accessories.

Think about your food choices. We can pick from a vast variety of breakfast items at home, or head to Starbucks for a coffee and pastry. And that's only the beginning of our day.

We also have a lot more choices when it comes to the big decisions in life like where to go to school, what to study, what profession to work in and where to live. We are no longer limited to taking over from our parents. Instead, we can live where we want, when we want, and earn our living doing something we enjoy. When we change our mind, it's fairly easy to change course and do something else or move across the country.

We have a lot more disposable income and more time for the fun stuff. That brings with it an entirely different category of decisions and choices. Add to this the fact that we have more information at our fingertips than ever before, and it's no surprise that making choices and decisions can be a bit overwhelming.

At the same time, we are expected to consume more information than ever on a regular basis and make smart and confident decisions based on that information. I can't think of a single career that doesn't require you to keep up with trends and changes on a frequent basis. Quite a few of them involve digging through and filtering tons and tons of news and updates, drawing conclusions and making decisions based on what you've learned. There's a reason this is called the information age.

It should come as no surprise that in this day and age being able to make right decisions fast is becoming a more and more valuable skill. It's something you should focus on and improve. It will help you in all areas of your life, from preparing and saving for retirement and choosing a beautiful house in a friendly neighborhood to live in, to getting ahead in school and at work. Being able to make the right choices quickly and confidently is one of the most valuable leadership skills and something that will get you ahead faster than just about anything else. It's an essential skill to learn or improve.

## **Let's Talk About Bad Choices, Wrong Decisions, And Failures**

Don't be afraid to make choices and decisions. More importantly, don't be scared to make the wrong choice or a poor decision. The truth is that we all fail in this area at times. It's part of being a human. Making wrong decisions or choices isn't such a bad deal. Instead, it's usually a good thing. Contrary to what you may have heard, failing is a good thing too. It's how we learn. We learn from our mistakes, not from our successes. Achievements are born from failure and persistence.

Stop being afraid of making the wrong choices. Stop procrastinating on critical decisions. Instead, use the information and resources you have to arrive at the best result you can and do so confidently. When you fail (remember it's a when, not an if), embrace that failure and learn from it. Move on and do better. Don't beat yourself up over failures. They are part of life and to be celebrated as

learning opportunities. Some of the most respected minds of our time have done that and are doing that to this day.

Let me tell you a little story about one of the greatest inventors of all time – Thomas Edison. He’s the guy that came up with the light bulb, something that took a reported 1,000 tries to create. Here’s what he said when confronted with this large number of failures and wrong decisions: *“I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won't work”*.

That is the kind of attitude and mindset I want you to embrace when it comes to decision making. Thomas Edison didn’t spend days and days agonizing about what glass to use, what metal to try in the filaments, or what design to experiment with next. Instead, he picked something quickly and gave it a try. He obviously wasn’t worried about failure. He embraced failure and learned something from each failed attempt. Here’s another quote from him that illustrates this mindset perfectly. *“I didn’t fail 1,000 times. The light bulb was an invention with 1,000 steps.”*

Failure, wrong choices, and bad decisions are part of the process. The faster you fail, the sooner you’ll taste sweet success. Make that your motto and use it going forward. It will help you to get started with what I’m about to share with you next and will serve you well going forward.

## **Decision Making Is A Skill**

That’s right. Decision making is a skill, and like any other skill, you get better with practice. When you start to embrace the possibility of failure, it becomes easier to practice this decision-making skill. In future chapters of this report, we’ll go over some hands-on tips for making better decisions and for making them faster. For now, I want to spend a little time on mindset and part of that is to realize that decision making is a skill you can and should practice daily.

The further you move along in your education, in your job, and in your career, the more decisions you have to start to make for yourself. Think back to your school days. In elementary school, your teachers would make most, if not all, of the decisions for you regarding your schoolwork. They told you what chapters to read and what to do for homework. As you moved on in your education to high school and college, you started to have to make more of those decisions. Eventually, it was up to you to choose what courses to take, when and how much to study, and what to write about in your term paper. The further you moved along, the more responsible you become for your education.

The same holds true for the jobs in a corporation. You may start out at a lower level where you're told by your superiors what to do. As you move up the corporate ladder and start to take more of a leadership position, more and more of those decisions will be yours to make. When you start to have a team under you, you will be expected to make a lot of the decisions for them, not just yourself. As you continue to move up and become more and more of a leader, more decisions will fall to you. You'll be expected to make more of them and make them quickly. To top it all off the decisions will carry more and longer lasting consequences, the higher you move up.

During this process, you will get better at making right decisions fast. The better you get at this, the better you'll do in your job, in your career, and in life in general. You won't be one of those people who agonizes over critical decisions. You won't put off choosing the right 401K plan, but instead, you pick one, get the paperwork completed and start saving for your golden years. You pick the right house for you and your family and sign that purchase contract before someone else comes along and snatches it up from under your nose. You take the job offer and learn what you're supposed to be doing as you progress. In short, you live your life to the fullest.

That brings up an important point about why making confident choices is such an important skill. Making decisions and being confident about them is an incredibly rewarding feeling. We feel like we make a difference and we're making progress.

In turn, that is the key to feeling fulfilled and living a rich life. In other words, the secret to fulfillment is to make confident choices.

In the next two chapters, we take a look at two different ways to make confident decisions. The first is to focus on well thought out decisions. That doesn't necessarily mean that you need to take a long time to make them, but speed isn't the main focus here. Instead, we look at getting faster at the process of decision making in the following chapter. Read through them both and remember to practice what you're learning. The more you practice decision making, the better you'll be at it when it counts.

## **MAKING BETTER DECISIONS**

I told you to practice your decision making as a way to get better at it. What I haven't told you is how to start making better and more confident choices. That's what this chapter is all about. Keep in mind that not all decisions need to be this involved. Most actually won't be. What I'm going to do is walk you through the individual steps of a decision-making progress. Feel free to skip most if not all the steps as needed. For bigger decisions, I encourage you to work through each step as applicable. Before long, you won't need to think about the individual steps anymore. They will become an integral part of your own decision-making progress.

### **Does This Decision Need Time?**

Let's talk about when you should go through the process outlined below. Not all decisions are complicated or involve a lot of information and thought. In fact, most decisions are rather quickly. You don't need to do a lot of research to decide on what to have for breakfast, or which report to wrap up first at work. There's no need to go through this whole process. Instead, you'll practice what you'll learn in the next chapter about making decisions quickly.

On the other hand, some decisions take time. Sometimes it's because there's a lot of information to digest or a lot of variables that you need to factor in. Another great reason to take your time and be a little more cautious about your decision is that the impact is important, it affects other people, or has long-reaching effects. Let me illustrate.

You don't need to contemplate the decision about what brand of copier paper to buy. You do however want to give a lot of thought and consideration to putting in a business bid that puts your entire operating budget on the line or can make or break your company. Of course, these examples are extremes, and most of your own decisions will fall somewhere in between. It's still good to start out by deciding whether or not the decision requires time, or can be a snap decision.

Get in the habit of answering that question each time in your decision-making progress. After a little practice, you can make that call instinctively and quickly.

## **Evaluate Your Alternatives**

Once you've determined that a choice needs a little more consideration, it's good to start by evaluating your alternatives. There are always alternatives. At the very least you have the choice of doing something or not doing it. Most of the time though, there are a couple of different options to choose. Sometimes you have to dig a little deeper and think a little more creatively to come up with the alternatives, but they are usually there.

Let's look back at the previous example of bidding on a job that could make or break your business. One of the alternatives may be to focus on a couple of smaller bids instead and wait until your operating budget is larger before considering the larger jobs. Or it could be to partner up with a fellow small business and share the risk and the profit potential.

This process will take a little time, but it is time well spent if you can find a better alternative that removes some of the risks or promises a better outcome. You can brainstorm these alternatives on your own, with your team, or with your family and friends.

It's helpful to get all the pertinent information and factors on paper so you can compare them.

## **Choosing The Best Option**

Once you know all your alternatives, it's time to make a decision. Yes, there's that word again. By choosing this route of decision making, you signed yourself up for making more of them. The good news is that these decisions will be easier to make.

To get some momentum, start by eliminating the worst option or even several that you don't think will work well. Then go through the list comparing and contrasting until you find a winner. Not all options are going to be great options, but you can usually find the one that will do best in your particular situation.

If you're working with a team, or are making a big decision that will impact the entire family, it can help to involve everyone in this decision-making process. They will feel like they are part of the initial choices, making it easier to have them on board for the execution.

### **Time To Take Action**

Once you've made your decision, it's time to take action. After all, the best decision making doesn't do you any good until you act on it. With your route choosing, it's simply a matter of breaking the task down into milestones and steps. This exercise can be as involved or simple as you need it to be. Larger tasks will have more milestones and steps than smaller ones.

I find it helpful to move to the action part as soon as possible after making the final decision. That not only creates momentum, but it also keeps you from second-guessing your choice or changing your mind a few times before getting started. Decide, commit, and get to work.

### **Revise If Needed**

There will be times when you regret your decision. It happens, and it's part of life. We make mistakes, parameters change, or something completely outside of our control makes it not work out. When that happens, don't waste time fretting or beating yourself up over your decision.

Instead, learn from it and then start to revise and come up with a new game plan. You may choose to go back to the other alternatives you've found and start over from there, or scrap it and start from step one. Work through the process, make a new decision and start taking action again as soon as possible. That old saying about getting back on the horse holds a lot of truth.

## **Smart Decision-Making Tips**

Let's wrap this chapter up with a few handy tips to make your decisions smarter and better. Use them anytime you need a little extra help. Some will work well for small decisions while others are more helpful when you have a big or tough choice to make. Try them out and see what works well for you.

1. **Make a Pros and Cons List** – This works particularly well if you're trying to decide between two options that seem equally good. Get out a piece of paper or fire up the computer and make a list of what you like and don't like about each option. Having it in front of you in black and white and becoming clear about the advantages and disadvantages of each choice will make your decision making easier and take the guesswork out of it.
2. **What Happens If I Don't Choose?** – That is a great question to ask yourself when you're feeling stuck and don't want to choose. When the procrastination hits that we've talked about earlier, you must sit down and think through what happens if you don't make any choice. It will quickly move you to action.
3. **What's The Worst That Can Happen** – This is another helpful question that works well when you are agonizing about the consequences of your decision. We fear the unknown more than anything else. By picturing the worst-case scenario, we face our fears and are ready to move on and make the right choice, even if it seems a little daunting. Try it. It works better

than you may think.

4. **Compile All Relevant Information** – When you’re working on a complicated project, or have a hard decision to make that involves a lot of different variables, it’s hard to juggle all the different bits and pieces. To keep your head clear and give you a good overview of everything involved, it helps to compile all relevant information in one place. You can do this digitally or physically with a box, a drawer, or even a pile on the kitchen table. Once you have everything involved in front of you, it becomes easier for example to work on those pro and con lists. You’ll even find it helps you answer questions like “what’s the worst that could happen,” “what’s the better option here,” or “what would happen if I don’t choose.” It will also help you work through the decision-making process we discussed earlier in this chapter.
5. **Get Opinions** – As much as we’d like to pretend that we have all the answers, sometimes it’s better to ask for opinions and get some expert advice. There are two different types of people you want to ask for opinions. The first is those that are involved in the decision or affected by what you choose. Ask your kids about what’s important to them in a new house or what they think of a particular one. The second group is people who have been in a similar situation or who have more experience and more information than you do. Ask a mentor about his opinion on your thesis idea for example. Be cautious though. If you ask too many people their opinion, it will muddy the waters and make it harder for you to sift through the options and decide. Get opinions, but choose the people you listen to wisely.
6. **Make It A Team Effort** – I hinted at this already. Get the people directly affected by the decision involved in the choosing process. That makes them part of the process and gets them invested in the outcome. In turn, this will help you with the execution which should also be a team effort.

7. **Cut Down On Your Choices** – The more choices we have, the harder it becomes to choose. That’s why one of the best strategies, when you're feeling overwhelmed, is to cut down your choices. What options are definite “no’s”? Cut them out and focus on that smaller list as you work through the decision-making process.
  
8. **Realize That There Isn’t Always A Perfect Or Best Choice** – As much as we’d like to think otherwise, there isn’t always a “best choice.” Often, we are faced with two or more options that are equally good but in different ways. Let’s say you have two job offers. One job pays better, but the other has better benefits and has more flexible hours. They are both excellent offers, but the one you should choose depends on what’s more important to you. Make your decision based on what’s best for you right now and realize that it may not always be a perfect choice or even the best one on paper.
  
9. **Make the Best Decision And Move On** – Finally, I want to encourage you to get in the habit of deciding to the best of your abilities and then moving on. Don’t second guess yourself. Don’t go back and rethink. Don’t agonize over the choice you made. Most importantly, don’t beat yourself up when it turns out that the decision wasn’t that great. Instead, own your choice and stick with it. See where it takes you. Focus all your energy on making the decision work and making things happen.

I hope you’ve found these tips helpful and start putting them to good use when you have a tough decision to make. Let’s wrap up this chapter on making better decisions and move on to talk about making quicker ones in the next section.

## **MAKING QUICKER DECISIONS**

We live in a fast-paced world where we are bombarded by information 24/7 and are expected to make more decisions than ever before. As a result, we've had to adapt. We're better at skimming and consuming lots of information quickly. Because of this, we need to be able to make decisions more quickly.

Earlier we talked about strategies for making better hard decisions. Now we're focusing on speed. The tips and ideas in this chapter won't apply for all types of decisions. For example, you don't want to flip a coin when it comes to deciding if you're going to propose and to who. If on the other hand you're stuck between choosing one of two shirts to wear for school, the coin toss is a perfectly acceptable and quick decision-making tool.

I know I've already mentioned a few times in this report that you should practice decision. I want to bring it up again here, to encourage you about fast decision making. You may be a little slower than you would like in the beginning, but with a little practice and the help of the strategies I'm about to share with you, your speed will increase. Also, the ideas will help you stop overthinking and doubting yourself as you make your choices. Let's dive right in.

### **Go With Your Gut**

Our subconscious mind processes a lot of information we aren't aware of and pulls from past experiences and memories. The result might well be a gut feeling one way or another. Start trusting that gut feeling and use it as a way to quickly make a decision, even on something that feels somewhat complex. Going with your gut feeling is a great way to make choices quickly and more often than not the decision will serve you well.

The more experience you gain, the better you'll get at both listening to and trusting your gut. As with much of what we talked about thus far, practice makes perfect.

## **Put A Timer On It**

We've all agonized over simple decisions and often spent way more time choosing than we should. Whenever you find yourself in that situation, or when you simply want to work on getting yourself in the habit of making decisions quickly, put a timer on it.

That's right. Get out your watch, use an app on your phone, or simply keep an eye on the clock and force yourself to make a final decision in less than a minute. Of course, your time frame will change depending on the decision and what information you may need to review. For most simple decisions though, a conclusion should be possible in less than a minute. If you feel up to the challenge, make it 30 seconds.

After a little practice, you won't need the timer anymore, and you should be able to make decisions quickly without having to think too much. Don't be afraid to pull out that timer anytime you find yourself procrastinating on a choice though.

## **Avoid Decision Fatigue**

There's a phenomenon called decision fatigue. The basic idea is that we each get a set number of decisions we're capable of making each day. Think of it as a bucket full of them. Each time we make a choice, we drain a little out of the bucket. By the end of the day, that level can be quite low, or we may even run out of decision-making ability before the day ends. Thankfully the next morning the bucket is filled to the brim again.

Keep this in mind as you move through your day. Don't put important decisions off until late in the day. Instead, make them in the morning. Use your decision-making ability wisely and don't "waste" it on unimportant choices. Instead, start cutting back on choices.

Great examples of this are tech giants Mark Zuckerberg and Steve Jobs. Both men had a very simple “uniform.” Wearing the same type of clothes each day cuts back on the potentially agonizing decisions of what to wear.

Think about your day and the types of decisions you can cut out of your life so that you can save up for the important stuff.

## **Flip A Coin**

The idea may sound silly, but sometimes the best and quickest thing to do is to let luck decide. If you have to decide between two perfectly good choices that are equally appealing (like having a Sundae or a Banana Split for dessert), flipping a coin is an appropriate way to arrive at a winner.

Should you use this for every decision? Of course not, but there are a time and a place for this simple method. It’s particularly useful when you need to get yourself out of that dreaded procrastination hole and move on with your day.

## **Cut Your Choices**

The more choices we have, the harder it gets to decide. That’s why my first step, when faced with too many options to choose from, is to cut that list. Cut out anything that isn’t your favorite or that doesn’t seem like a good or even perfect fit.

Be ruthless and whittle it down to just a handful of choices. You’ll be able to make your decision much quicker this way.

## **Delegate Some Decisions**

The quickest way to make a decision is not to make it at all. No, I'm not suggesting that you procrastinate. Quite the opposite. I want to encourage you to delegate some of the decision making you need to do. Encourage your assistant or your team members to make small choices they are quite capable of making without you. The same goes for your spouse and even your kids. Have them pick the movie for Saturday night. It's one less decision you have to make, helping you stay away from decision fatigue.

## **Remind Yourself That This Isn't Permanent**

Here's another great tip to help you decide faster. It's important to remind yourself that your choice isn't usually permanent and it isn't the end of the world to change your mind later.

If you're having a hard time picking what to eat for lunch today, remember that you'll get another chance to pick something different tomorrow. The same concept holds true in other situations. Pick a project to work on and make some progress. Don't worry if it's not the most urgent task or the best thing to work on now. Just start making progress. It will move you forward, and you can always stop and work on something more urgent as the need arises.

## **Visualize The Consequences Of Inaction**

Top athletes and entrepreneurs frequently use visualization to help them reach their goals. Why not put this exercise to good use in our decision making too. Take a few seconds to visualize and imagine what will happen when you don't make a decision. Usually, the outcome is much worse than picking something and running with it. Use it as motivation to decide quickly and move on.

## **Practice Makes You Better And Quicker At Decision Making**

I know... I know... I've been preaching practicing decision making throughout this guide, so I'll keep this short. The more you practice making quick decisions, the fast you'll get at it. Grab that timer and practice speed with small decisions to get better at making quick decisions anytime anywhere.

Don't think this will work? If you're a parent, you have experienced this first hand. In the beginning, you agonize over every little decision from what brand of diaper to buy to what to feed your child, or how long you should let them nap. You consult books, call your mom, etc. By the time your little one reaches the toddler years, you're a pro at making snap decisions regarding anything but the most difficult situations and choices. By the time your second and third child comes around, you're a pro, and frankly, you don't have time to agonize about choices.

## **Own Your Choices**

The biggest waste of time when it comes to decision making is to agonize over your choices after the fact and second guess yourself. Stop it and get in the habit of owning your choices as soon as you make them. Does this mean you should never backtrack and change your mind as things change? Of course not. But it does mean that you should take your pick and then stay your course unless there's a good reason to change your mind.

Pick an outfit and head to that interview on time. Choose a burger for lunch and then enjoy every single bite. Pick a task to work on and see it through until quitting time. Own your choices and use your time and energy to make progress, no matter in what area of life.

I hope these simple tips and strategies help you get faster at making decisions. Just think about how much time you'll save on any given day. What fun activities will you have time for when you get into the habit of making decisions quickly?

## **CONCLUSION**

We covered a lot of ground about decision making in the previous pages, and it's time to wrap things up.

We started out by talking about the importance of decision making and what it means to get better at it. I'm sure it didn't take you long to realize the far-reaching impact that making prompt confident choices has in all areas of your life. It's a crucial life skill and something we should all strive to get better at going forward.

Next, we took a closer look at what we can do to start making better decisions. I shared my strategy and step-by-step processes for decision making with you along with some helpful tips. We also talked about when it is appropriate to go through this process.

In the third chapter, we tackled quick decision-making skills. I hope you've had time to put the tips and ideas I shared with you there to good use and started practicing fast decision making. If you only use one strategy from that entire chapter, I suggest you make it the timer idea.

Above all, I hope this eBook has helped you become more aware and intentional about your choices. Above all, I hope that what you've learned here helps you catch yourself when you try to put off making the decision altogether and start to procrastinate.

Use this guide as a resource and come back to it again and again. It will be a helpful companion anytime you have a tough decision to make, but also as a reminder that there are times when speed matters. Pick it back up anytime you need a reminder and continue to practice making confident choices and improving the speed of your everyday decision making.