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YOU'RE THE LEADER

**LEADERSHIP
LESSONS FROM
MAYO CLINIC**

NOW WHAT?

MAYO CLINIC PRESS

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PREFACE

Leadership is difficult. If you're like me and the leaders I coach, you're looking for clues on how to be more effective. I've written this book to provide ideas, tactics, and frameworks to help you deal with your most difficult challenges.

At Mayo Clinic, my colleagues and I care for patients with difficult medical problems. To accomplish our mission, we learn to lead as we face complex challenges. Our most effective leaders know when to quickly and expertly decide, and alternatively, when it's better to take a moment to consider and facilitate.

I suspect you also work in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and often ambiguous environment in which competition, regulations, workforce needs, technologies, and customer demands are in constant flux. In such an environment it is often not enough to simply rely on your own expertise to make decisions. Instead you need to facilitate a more effective approach. This can be learned, and it can be coached.

I am an emergency physician at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. I am also an executive coach for leaders at Mayo Clinic, and director of leadership development for the Mayo Clinic Care Network. I am a tiny star amid a constellation in a high-functioning organization.

I create development programs for Mayo Clinic leaders and the leaders of value-aligned organizations that have partnered with Mayo Clinic. We ask participants to bring their thorniest, most difficult, and emotionally charged problems, and then we provide the

framework to help them find their own solutions. It is in this spirit that I write this book for you, a leader, or one in the making.

Please question and challenge what you read. Please investigate and learn from the wise individuals I mention in the text. Please read this book to find the answers and the approaches that elevate your own organization. And have a bit of fun.

Richard Winters
Rochester, Minnesota

INTRODUCTION

Your colleagues are seated around the table, and all eyes are on you as you enter the conference room.

You face a complex challenge, and everyone has a different view of the key factors as well as how to proceed. Nevertheless, it's up to you to move things forward. How you make this decision will affect the way you and your colleagues work together, the success of your organization, and potentially whether you succeed or fail as a leader.

You take your seat and begin, projecting confidence and authority as you address the assembled team.

“Thank you for coming, everyone. We have a big challenge before us and limited time to discuss our options. I'd like to hear from everyone here. What do you think we should do?”

With that, the discussion begins to circle the table, with each person giving their best advice. Several of your colleagues make stirring, eloquent statements about the problem as they see it and their solution of choice. You make sure to keep your eyes on each speaker, nodding and acknowledging each contribution.

Then, finally, the meeting circles back to you. You pause for a moment, and say, “Thank you all for sharing your thoughts. I appreciate your experience, your different perspectives, and your insights. However, after careful consideration, I've come to the conclusion that you're all incorrect. We will proceed with my plan.”¹

You Are Not Alone

If this process for decision-making sounds familiar, rest assured, you're not alone. Perhaps you have made decisions like this. Perhaps you were a participant in a meeting where you volunteered your opinion, and your ideas were summarily shot down.

Leadership plays out this way every day, in every industry, in teams and organizations of every size. No matter what the problem at hand may be, the solution is usually driven by *fiat*—the decision and orders of the leader—or at most by a consensus of only a few.

A top-down process for decision-making by edict may work fine in predictable situations or during times of crisis. But when it comes to making strategic decisions in complex and unpredictable environments, the all-too-familiar method of reflexive decision-making breaks down and delivers poor results. Our expertise and our power to decide get in the way of optimal outcomes. This occurs not only when we lead groups of people, but also when we have one-to-one conversations with colleagues.

Complex Challenges

Think of the complex challenges you face:

- Perhaps you are the product manager. The technology team and the marketing team disagree on the key features for a new and innovative product. This project is vital to the future success of your organization. How do you bring the two sides together to establish a collaborative workflow that sets the strategy, road map, and feature definitions for the product?
- Perhaps you are the chief executive officer of a technology startup. Your colleagues look to you for advice and guidance

about promotion, burnout, career opportunities, disruptive interactions with colleagues, and a litany of other complex personal and organizational challenges. How do you approach your colleagues during these one-to-one conversations to help them achieve their best?

- Perhaps you are the chief medical officer of a hospital. An influential physician approaches you in the hallway to confide that the cardiology group is considering leaving the hospital to work with the competition unless a new cardiac catheterization suite is built. Meanwhile, the existing suites are underutilized, and procedures aren't starting on time. How do you work with the cardiology group to strengthen the partnership and consider mutually beneficial options?
- Perhaps you are the incoming chair of an academic department. While traditional aspects of the department are thriving, new technology and changing environments threaten future success. How do you respect the current power structures and processes, yet move forward with bold and forward thinking?
- Perhaps you are a talented and busy executive sitting in yet another meeting, discussing important issues, though nothing ever seems to change. You feel burned out. How do you push for transformation?

Each strategic challenge involves different perspectives, volatile environments with high stakes, dynamic and ambiguous information, and unpredictable outcomes. These situations are complex. During these times your checklists are inadequate, and your organization will not fly with the smooth precision and predictable steps of an aircraft. These are times when your expertise and best practices are insufficient, and the problem to be solved is a challenge to even define.

What This Book Offers

Whether you are the boss and you call all the shots, a servant leader who empowers others to decide, or an individual without a “title” seeking to make a difference as you sit in yet another meeting, this book will provide you specific tactics to improve your effectiveness in one-to-one conversations and as you lead large teams and organizations.

You will learn the specific techniques I use when coaching leaders and facilitating teams at Mayo Clinic.² You will draw on the collective wisdom of colleagues, develop leaders, and achieve results. You will learn to lead in a way that decreases burnout, promotes individual well-being, and sparks engagement.

My hope is that this book both entertains you and helps you achieve results. I will introduce you to leadership thinkers, and I will share mistakes I’ve made and lessons learned while coaching effective leaders and facilitating effective teams.

Read this book through from start to finish, or pick it up to find a tactic or a process you can use as you face the specific challenges of the moment. The chapters of this book will give you frameworks to guide you and your colleagues through complex challenges. They will prompt you to action.

The first half of the book provides tactics for effective leadership, while the second half lays out the framework for addressing complex situations, as follows:

Part One: Effective Leadership Tactics

1. **Recognize the Limits of Your Expertise.** You are a decision-making machine. As you move throughout your day, you make quick decisions. This is both a feature and a

bug. We think of leaders as deciders who know what to do. But our best leaders recognize when they need to step outside their immediate perspectives to question their initial instincts. These leaders use a deliberate decision-making process to overcome the limitations of expert analysis.

2. **Map Your Decisions.** Your success as a leader depends on developing individual and organizational strategies that recognize and adapt to complexity. Decisions fall into one of five domains: clear, complicated, complex, chaotic, and confused. You will learn to quickly identify and tailor your decision-making process to the decision domain you're operating in.
3. **Step Up to the Balcony.** Each of us has blind spots in our perspective of the world. We are trapped within the biases of our own stories, our need to be right, our seeking of agreement, our sense of control, and our ego. You will learn how to "step off the dance floor" away from your reflexive reactions and "step up to the balcony" to broaden your perspective and make better, more informed decisions.
4. **Understand Burnout and Well-Being.** You will develop an understanding of the specific drivers of burnout and recognize burnout's negative effects on both the personal and professional lives of colleagues. You will learn specific individual, interpersonal, and organizational actions you can take to recognize and improve the Six Dimensions of Psychological Well-Being.
5. **Amplify Engagement.** There are eight specific leadership behaviors proven to decrease burnout and increase

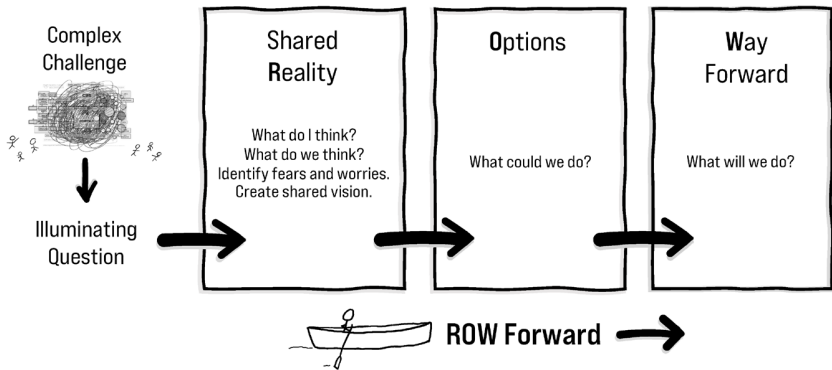
satisfaction in the workplace. You will learn specific behaviors—the DRIVERS of engagement—to more effectively develop, recognize, inform, value, engage, respect, and supervise colleagues. You will learn how to model the specific values-based behaviors that build organizational culture.

6. **Lead During One-to-One Conversations.** Your colleagues are independent thinkers. During one-to-one conversations, effective leaders put aside their expertise. They focus on promoting the organization's strategy and on listening, understanding, and helping colleagues develop their own perspectives and solutions. You will learn the "five hats"—the different approaches of teacher, mentor, coach, supervisor, and sponsor. You will gain the conversational tactics that help colleagues develop the skills, behaviors, and reasoning needed for success. You will learn how to dynamically change your conversational approach to meet the needs of colleagues in the moment.

Part Two: Lead in Complex Situations

1. **ROW Forward.** This framework addresses complex challenges. You work with colleagues to develop a shared **reality** and vision, and then to generate multiple **options** for how to proceed; and then you lead the **way forward**. You may apply the ROW Forward framework in a matter of minutes or hours, or to facilitate multi-day retreats.
2. **Document Your Perspectives.** Effective leaders carve out time and space for uninterrupted thinking about complex challenges. They clarify their thinking and avoid proceeding

ROW Forward Framework



impulsively. You will learn a specific six-step process of recognizing and considering complex challenges.

3. **Create a Shared Reality.** Effective leaders bring colleagues together to help them look around blind spots. They tap into the experience of those inside and outside of the room as they seek to build collective wisdom. You will learn to use a predictable process to bring the diverse and at times contentious perspectives of colleagues together in a manner that adapts to the context, intensity, and time frame of your challenging decisions.
4. **Identify Fears and Worries.** You and each of your colleagues have fears and worries about what might occur as you face a complex challenge. Effective leaders shine light on these worries and bring them to the forefront of decision-making. They know that unacknowledged fears undermine efforts.
5. **Create a Shared Vision.** The mission and values of organizations are frequently stated but often disregarded or

forgotten. Effective leaders authentically infuse the mission and values of their organization into their decision-making. You will learn a process to clarify intention and mitigate perceived risks as you authentically energize and align your colleagues toward a common purpose.

6. **Generate Multiple Options.** After creating shared reality and vision, effective leaders and their colleagues brainstorm multiple options for how they might respond to their complex challenges. You will learn how to choose the best options for ways to move forward. You will also recognize how to predict and defuse the challenging situations that arise when individuals disagree, attempt to block forward movement, or when the decision is not unanimous.
7. **Champion the Way Forward.** The most dangerous moment in the decision-making process happens when everyone walks out of the room and heads back to their routine. Will the decision survive? You will learn several specific practices to ensure that tasks are completed, key learning is re-incorporated back into the decision-making process, and insights are channeled to create further success for yourself and your team in the evolving complex environment.
8. **Now What?** You will convert ideas to action as you identify specific steps you will take to become a more effective leader.

A Caveat

We need leaders who are independent thinkers. There are times when a leader needs to make decisions despite the perspectives of

colleagues. In these situations, a group's common sense may lack vision. A fear of the unknown may prevent a team from finding the fortitude needed to adapt to the changing environment. An effective leader provides the strength and the determination to nudge colleagues through the discomfort of change.

Whether you are a leader who prefers to make the final decision, or you favor collective decision-making, my goal is to help you figure out how to effectively leverage the different perspectives of your colleagues—to look behind your own blind spots—as you decide.

Why Lead?

This book is meant to be more than a collection of steps or boxes to check off in the leadership process. Instead, as you move through the pages, think not just about *how* to lead, but also *why* you lead.

Lead to align with a purpose. Lead to engage in a mission. Lead to bring your values to fruition. Seek to increase engagement and the success of those around you. You have an opportunity to improve the lives of your colleagues, your organization, and the people you serve.

Change and challenge are constant. Whether you face a corporate team, a group of investors, or your customers, a structured approach will help you to help them. Together you'll find the way forward and you will be the leader your team needs in the moment.

This book will guide you through those times when colleagues disagree, emotions run high, the environment is turbulent, and it's time to do something. It's for those times when you look at yourself in the mirror and you think, "You're the leader. Now what?"

PART ONE

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP TACTICS

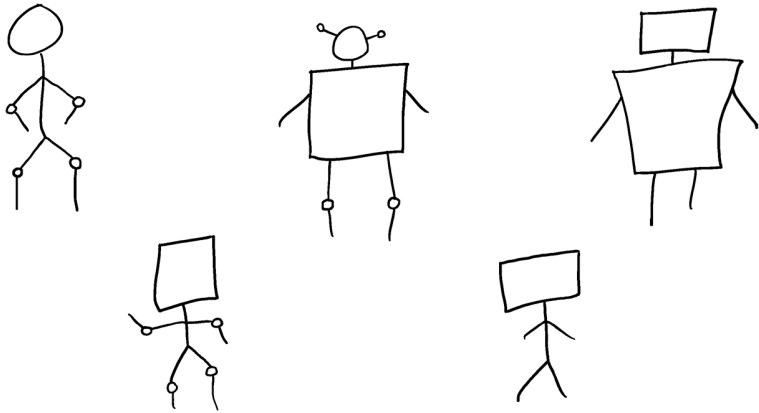
RECOGNIZE THE LIMITS OF YOUR EXPERTISE

Dalia has excelled as vice president of operations for a large multinational hospitality company. She's helped the hotelier grow from eight locations nationally to fifty-three locations worldwide. Recently, she's jumped at the opportunity to become the CEO of a boutique hotel company. She looks forward to leveraging her expertise to expand this hotelier, which has an irreverent, adventurous, and young-at-heart character.

Dalia is a no-nonsense, highly educated, and well-informed leader. Making decisions is usually easy for her. She knows what to do and she's rarely stumped. These qualities have served her well throughout her career. Among her friends she is known for her encyclopedic level of knowledge and her ability to bring forward obscure, but essential facts about critical areas of business. She reflexively knows what to do next. She is quick to decide, and has a bias for action.

However, difficulties await Dalia if she approaches her new role solely as a knowledgeable expert. There will certainly be times when she needs to decide quickly, based on her expertise and experience. But at other times Dalia needs a different approach. She should pause, quiet her judgment, and expand her perspective. Those are the moments when she needs to tap into the collective wisdom of her colleagues to collaboratively make sense of challenges. The

question is when, and under what circumstances, should she apply each approach? These first two chapters of this book will explore this conundrum: when should a leader simply decide, and when would a more inclusive method of decision-making be more effective?



Decision-Making Machines

We are decision-making machines. Like programmed robots, we respond instantly to input as we go about our daily lives.

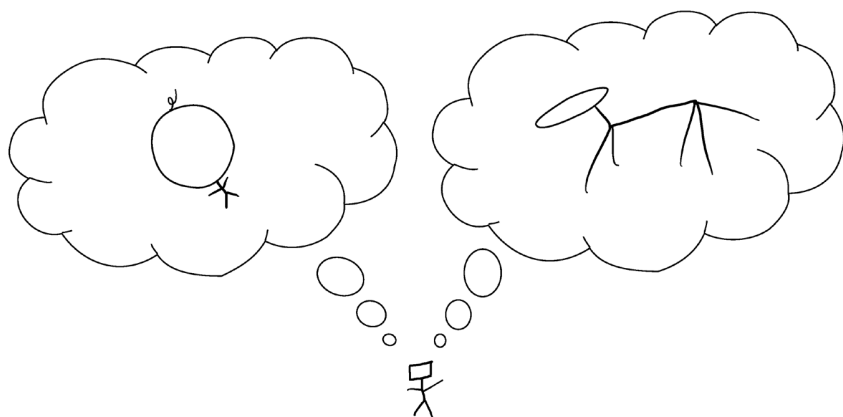
Consider a typical morning as an example.

You start making decisions the moment you wake up each day. You decide whether to get up or snooze a little longer. You decide what to eat for breakfast and what beverage to drink. If you work away from home, you decide whether you need an umbrella or a coat as you leave for the office. When you arrive at your workspace, you choose which tasks to prioritize, which meetings you'll attend, who needs to be involved. You make these decisions reflexively.

Now, imagine that you walk into the wrong meeting room, still a bit dull and not entirely awake, and you encounter the following

unexpected situation. On your left you see a baby; on your right you see an angry wolf. You need to quickly decide: which one is safest to pick up and move to safety?

Easy, right? You make a quick decision. You reach for the baby and dash out of the room. Your reflexive response keeps you and the baby safe. The same quick decision-making also keeps you from becoming overwhelmed by the multiple choices we encounter every day.



But what happens when circumstances are not as clear-cut? How do you resolve thorny situations entangled in the uncompromising perspectives of cantankerous colleagues during turbulent times? Do you alter the process of how you decide? Or do you simply make decisions reflexively, just as you did with the wolf and the baby?

As decision-making robots, we have a sentient flaw: we tend to overplay our expertise, and let our expertise guide our actions. But there are times when our robotic reflex to decide short-circuits optimal decision-making.

Think about the last meeting you attended. As you listened to each of your colleagues give their opinions about a novel situation,

did you reflexively think, “Yes, I agree.” or “No. You are incorrect.”? And during this meeting, did one of your colleagues reflexively respond to you?

We form instantaneous opinions based upon our emotions, experiences, and beliefs. And in a split second we may misjudge what a colleague has said. Despite the complexity of the situation, as decision-making robots we are rarely stumped.¹ But that doesn’t mean we are always correct or in any way knowledgeable about the circumstances.

The Expert Taskmaster

Victor, the chair of thoracic surgery, is at the top of his field. He’s an innovator in the surgical treatment of complex esophageal pathology. He’s a mentor to his colleagues. And he frightens the nurses with whom he works.

Each morning as he makes the rounds of his hospitalized patients, the hallways empty. The nurses scatter to safety. They hide in utility closets and they retreat to other hallways. They do anything to avoid interacting with Victor.

Victor firmly believes in a team-based approach to care. He knows that when nurses, social workers, pharmacists, and physicians work closely together, they share critical information, and this improves patient outcomes. Yet among the nurses, Victor is a team of one.

Victor envisions the perfect environment for his patients. He sees himself as the captain of the ship. He believes he bears the ultimate responsibility for life or death, and the voice in his head is a relentless taskmaster—brutally honest, opinionated, and unedited in speaking about what is right and wrong. It knows in a moment with surgical precision what should and what shouldn’t be done. When that internal voice becomes his outside voice, it can be ruthless. Its powerful

and patronizing tenor has embarrassed and admonished individuals in front of colleagues and even patients. It is a voice that destroys the psychological safety of the care team. A voice that impedes optimal care. A voice that needs further training.

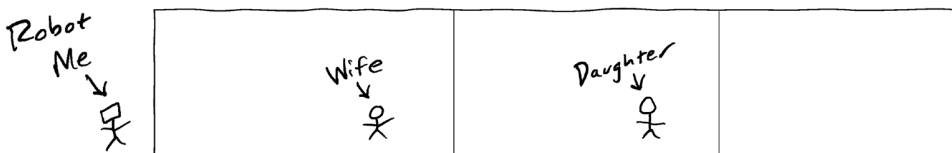
We Overplay Our Expertise

At times our expertise is helpful; at other times it is not.

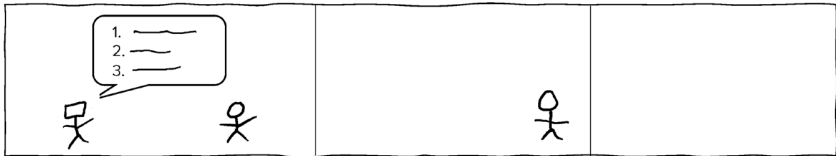
As an emergency physician, I was trained to walk into a room to care for someone I have never met. I take a brief history, perform a focused exam, and write orders for the care team to complete. After that, I move on to see the next patient. This process repeats itself twenty to thirty times during an average shift.

My ability to leverage expertise and make quick, informed decisions is key to my effectiveness as an emergency physician. I expect that success in your area of expertise also depends on quick decisions.

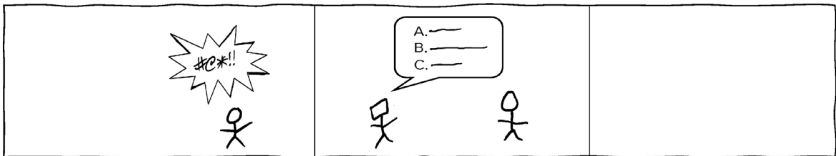
However, there are times when we overplay our expertise. I know I sometimes do, whether as an emergency physician, a leader, a coach, or a friend. Once I came home to my family after a busy shift. My body was at home, but my mind was still embedded in the rapid pace of the emergency department.



I greeted my wife and she brought up a problem she was working through. After listening to a brief history, and without any further discussion or reflection, I knew what she should do, and I told her.



Then I walked into the next room and my daughter brought up an issue she encountered in high school. I was not stumped. I've been to high school. I knew what she should do, and I gave her a list of actions to take care of her issue.



But in both cases I received immediate negative feedback. It quickly became apparent that my expertise and quick decisions were not helpful in this case. My family believed that their issues required an approach different from the process I used in caring for a patient with a kidney stone or a heart attack.



While neither my wife's nor my daughter's problems stumped me, my family's aversion to my input made sense. I did not seek their perspectives. I did not consider the complex dynamics of their own existence. My quick-deciding emergency medicine approach did not translate to the home environment. While I thought I was being helpful, I was not.

In these situations a part of me wants to respond, "Do you know who I am? I'm kind of a big deal around here." But then I imagine my daughter quickly retorting, "Yes. And, no you're not." And she's right, I'm no bigger deal than she is. If my goal is to help my family, I must keep the distorted thoughts of grandeur to myself.

Similarly, I see the decision reflex get overplayed by some of the leaders I coach. These leaders make difficult decisions. Sometimes they face simple "pick up the baby or wolf" scenarios (see page 20), but oftentimes they deal with situations and relationships that are complex, messy, and difficult to understand. Their reflexive decisions as leaders don't incorporate the informed perspectives and experiences of their colleagues. The research chair, the education chair, and the chair of clinical practice have different experiences and perspectives. If one of those chairs responds like a reflexive robot in a shared meeting, they risk disrespecting the perspectives of others. They create an atmosphere that limits opportunities for team success. And if they are fortunate, they get direct feedback about their problematic behavior from their colleagues.

Dalia, the CEO of the boutique hotel, is a knowledgeable expert. Yet her perspectives may differ from her VP of marketing or her VP of operations. Her conversations with these colleagues need to consider their different perspectives. They may help her look around blind spots and spot other opportunities. Dalia must pay attention to not overplay her expertise. She needs to work to be less reflexive, less robotic in her decision-making.

Victor, the thoracic surgeon, is well-intentioned. He truly wants the best for his patients. But he needs to examine how his expertise has created blind spots in his thinking, and how his style of blunt, reflexive communication limits the effectiveness of the healthcare team.

A Snapple Decision

Consider a reflexive decision from the competitive world of consumer products.^{2,3} In 1983, the CEO of Quaker Oats Company decided to purchase Gatorade.⁴ The CEO liked Gatorade, and he was a respected expert in the food business. He directed his team to make the acquisition, and it was a success—Gatorade's sales rose from a few hundred million dollars annually to more than a billion dollars per year. Eleven years later, when the same CEO decided he liked Snapple, he leaned again on his expertise and made a similarly quick decision. But that time, his expertise failed.

The CEO drew on his extensive experience and assumptions. During this process, he and his team failed to consider several crucial things: Snapple's distributors held contracts in perpetuity, and they would resist key aspects of the Quaker Oats distribution plan; the bottling volumes for a sports drink differed from those of a meal-time drink and would affect sales projections; and Snapple's quirky culture—a big draw for the brand—would clash with Quaker Oats' suit-and-tie approach.⁵ Additionally, the executive team decided to drop several Snapple spokespersons who had large groups of followers in favor of polished mass marketing campaigns.

Each decision Quaker Oats made seemed rational and obvious to their leadership, but failed to incorporate the perspectives of key customers, distributors, and promoters. This hobbled the acquisition from the start. In response to being dropped, one of the spokespersons, the influential radio personality Howard Stern,

who had previously been highly effective in advertising the brand, rechristened the product “Crapple” and made the struggling brand a prized topic for frequent on-air rants.

Within a few years, Snapple’s sales cratered. In 1997 Quaker Oats sold it off at a loss of \$1.4 billion.⁶ What followed was an easy decision for Quaker’s board: find a new CEO.

Those directors can tell you this: Sometimes expertise is helpful, but sometimes it’s woefully ill-suited to the decision at hand. Our own analyses and gut instincts can get in the way of effective deciding.

Process versus Analysis

What is most important when making a decision: process or expert analysis?⁷

If you’re like many people I’ve worked with, you’re probably thinking, “they both are,” but I’m asking you to pick just one. Which one is most important in improving the effectiveness of decisions?

A study published in the *McKinsey Quarterly* examined 1,048 complex decisions made by managers within large organizations about such things as major acquisitions, investment in new products, and choices of key technologies.⁸ First, the researchers asked the managers involved in each decision to estimate their application of various practices of analysis and process. Then they asked the same managers to assess the outcomes of their decisions based upon metrics such as revenue, profitability, market share, and productivity.

The authors found that process is six times more important than analysis in improving decision-making effectiveness. Yes, a leader’s analysis—detailed financial modeling, sensitivity analysis, and predictions of the market’s reaction—was important. But far

more important was the process used to make the decision. Did it include perspectives that contradicted the leader's point of view? Did it capture the input of individuals with varied experiences and skills without regard to their formal rank within the organization?

The fact that process trumps analysis makes sense, doesn't it? Our individual analysis is obscured by blind spots in our expertise. We can create intricate spreadsheets, explore subtle nuances, and deeply consider the possibilities, but still lack the essential data that lurks beyond our own perspective. A decision process that helps us see around blind corners will result in better decisions.

Re-evaluating and improving decisions is essential for advancing medical care. In the past, despite extensive expert analysis, medication errors were alarmingly common. The wrong drug, given to the wrong patient, at the wrong dose, at the wrong time.

For example, previously when a patient presented to the critical care unit with pneumonia, treatment decisions came from the expert analysis of a single physician during a busy shift. The physician would scan through the patient's past medical history, list of allergies, and test results, and then compare a list of local bacteria susceptibilities with the published opinions of experts—all to figure out the antibiotic and dose for treatment. You can imagine that such detailed analysis in a dynamic critical care unit could occasionally result in error, despite best intentions.

In modern critical care units, the electronic health record, clinical pharmacists, and bar code scanners help the care team see through blind spots of individual analysis. The electronic health record (EHR) identifies pertinent allergies, potential medication interactions, and appropriate antibiotic choices. Clinical pharmacists perform independent bedside analysis of each patient's treatment plan. They recognize important variables that the physician, nurse, and electronic health record might miss. Nurses use bar code administration systems

to scan each medication and the patient's wristband to ensure that the correct drug is infused. Such improvements help care teams leverage the expert analysis of several professionals to identify the right medication, for the right patient, at the right dose, at the right time.

The Pitfalls of Analysis

In the emergency department I treat patients based upon my expert judgment. I can explain to you the sensitivities and specificities of the tests I order, I can detail the physiology and pathology involved in my differential diagnoses, and I can explain the rationale for each part of my treatment plan. But despite my expert analysis, I can still miss important details.

Did I get input from the family or the paramedics? The pharmacist noticed something in the past medical records that might be important, and the nurse thinks something else might be going on. Did I invite their opinions and listen to them?

When I block out the perspectives and analyses of others as part of my process of caring for patients, no matter how on-point my own siloed analysis is, I am less effective.

The executive team at Quaker Oats performed detailed analysis, no doubt, before each of their actions. But did they seek out the insights of key customers, distributors, and promoters before making their decision? And if they got those perspectives, did they incorporate them into the decision process? Or did they reflexively think, "No. We disagree. We've come to the conclusion that they are all incorrect, and we will proceed with our plan"?

We've all worked with individuals who are deeply analytical—armed with spreadsheets and diagrams and facts—but just don't seem to get the big picture.

When I talk to leaders, I frequently hear about the pitfalls that

occur when they rely on their own expert analyses—and it's often a shock to them when it happens. Soon after rising to an executive level at his company, one leader I coached got a question from the CEO about changing the employee health plan. The company needed to cut expenses without jeopardizing care for employees. The leader was new in his role but had been in the industry for more than a decade and felt secure in his expertise. He compared the two health plans using a spreadsheet and saw that there was a 98 percent crossover in approved primary care providers. The new list captured all of the preferred specialists and nearly all of the primary care physicians. This high number resonated with him, and he gave a confident decision to make the switch to the new, cheaper plan.

Turns out he should have been more concerned with that outlying 2 percent.

When the health plan was switched it became clear that the outlying 2 percent represented an influential group of primary care physicians who were now excluded from the options employees could choose. The leader now had a stream of angry employees complaining that the switch had forced them to move from long-term, trusted local providers and specialist physicians. Who cared about the 98 percent overlap? They missed the 2 percent no longer part of their insurance coverage. The leader spent the next two years unraveling his mistake and rebuilding trust.

He had overplayed his expertise. His confidence in his own background led him to see the decision as an easier and more direct choice than it really was. He was partially blinded by all that he knew. And he couldn't have been more shocked by this outcome. The damage he did and the time it took to fix came to him as a surprise. After all, he was an expert—who expected such a nightmare?

Put the Brakes on Expertise

You have experience, and knowledge, and opinions, no doubt. But when do you need to put the brakes on your reflexive analysis and adopt a slower, more deliberative process?

Remember Dalia? Will she decide to outsource housekeeping for the boutique hotels? Will she change vendors for the food provided to guests? Where will they locate employee parking? Which ad agency will they choose?

Dalia has instincts for what to do about each question; in a sense, she *knows* what to do. But are her instincts correct? These are not simple questions. Each query contemplates a complex challenge that cannot easily be resolved. Smart people will disagree about what to consider, how to decide, and what the best outcomes might be. During these times Dalia needs to open up the decision process to others. She needs to reframe the way she makes sense of opportunities as she ponders alternative perspectives and scenarios. If, on the other hand, she makes these decisions in the same reflexive way that would lead her to “pick up the baby and not the angry wolf,” she will be less effective.

Remember Victor, the intimidating thoracic surgeon? His name is Victor Trastek and he is now an esteemed emeritus professor at Mayo Clinic. With the help of specific feedback from a nurse manager, he gained perspective and changed both his thinking and his approach. He became a champion of professionalism and inter-disciplinary teamwork. A video interview between Dr. Trastek and nurse manager Shelly Olson is shared with new physicians and scientists during their orientation to Mayo Clinic.⁹

Dr. Trastek went on to become the CEO of Mayo Clinic in Arizona and a member of the Mayo Clinic Board of Governors. After

an illustrious career, he retired from patient care. He currently serves as an executive coach for Mayo Clinic department chairs.

NOW WHAT?

Think of a decision you are making right now where you might want to put the brakes on your reflexive decision-making and adopt a slower, more deliberate process.

Write down how you might approach the decision in a different manner.

What's Next?

The next chapter will help you map the specific kinds of decisions you make. There are times when your reflexive instinct to decide serves you well, and times when you need to call in other experts. And sometimes you need to slow down the decision process altogether and seek the perspectives of others so that you and your team better address the complexity of the situation.

Executive Summary

- We are decision-making machines. We make decisions reflexively even when situations call for a more considered approach.
- We form instantaneous opinions based upon our emotions, experiences, expertise, and beliefs. And we are rarely stumped.
- We overplay our expertise. Our confidence in our own experience leads us to overestimate our ability to make reasoned decisions in complex environments.

- Working on a professional goal can help us identify areas in which our quick decisions may get in the way of our effectiveness.
- For complex decisions, process is six times more important than analysis when examining decision-making effectiveness.
- Our expert analysis is clouded by our inevitable blind spots. Effective decision processes in complex environments include perspectives that contradict the leader's point of view and seek the input of individuals with varied experiences and skills despite their formal rank within the organization.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Richard Winters is a practicing emergency physician at the Mayo Clinic. As medical director of Professional Leadership Development for the Mayo Clinic Care Network, Dr. Winters delivers leadership development programs that train leaders at all levels of healthcare organizations worldwide. As a professional certified coach, Dr. Winters provides executive coaching for Mayo Clinic leaders.

Dr. Winters graduated from the Mayo Clinic Alix School of Medicine in 1994 and returned to Mayo Clinic in 2015. Prior to returning to Mayo Clinic, Dr. Winters served as managing partner of a democratic physician group, department chair of an emergency department, president of an 800-physician medical staff, and CEO/founder of a startup managed care organization that struggled to survive amidst the complex relationships among hospital, physician, patient, competitors, and insurance providers. He lives in Rochester, Minnesota, with his family.