



HOW TO MAKE AN ENLIGHTENED DECISION

The best decisions are made by leaders who recognize that they have conscious and unconscious biases – perspectives shaped by experiences, perceptions or beliefs. In fact, everyone sees reality through their unique lens which limits our perception – what Douglas Abrams refers to as “perspectival myopia.”

To make enlightened decisions for ourselves and our organization, we have to recognize that our perception of reality is incomplete, and that we must take the means to correct this. When understanding the impact of a decision you’ve made, have you ever thought: *I never considered this could be a consequence for our clients or I wish I’d sought your opinion before! It would have influenced how things unfolded.* Here is an efficient method to help you make enlightened decisions from now on, while minimizing how your personal biases can affect them.

Don’t worry: every human being has at least one of the 188 identified cognitive biases, and the majority of them are unconscious.

WHEN?

- Before making a decision that will have an impact on people and the organization.
- When a management committee, a project team or a person wishes to improve the quality of their decisions.

HOW?

- Alone, armed with humility, by applying the three suggested steps and by considering several points to help counter personal biases.
- As a team, to envision different ways to make more enlightened decisions.

TO LEARN MORE

- <https://hbr.org/2017/03/root-out-bias-from-your-decision-making-process>
- The Book of Joy, Lasting Happiness in a Changing World, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, with Douglas Abrams
- <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/cognitive-bias-infographic.html>

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PERSPECTIVES

1 ASSESS THROUGH SEVERAL POINTS OF VIEW

To make an enlightened decision, one should consider the situation through several points of view – up, down, front, back, and side to side. When seeking different perspectives, you should aim for at least six different angles!

Gather additional data and consult with different people. In order to do so, find people with a profile different from your own (gender, age, position, field, etc.) and listen to their opinion with an open mind. Make note of all this additional data and compare it with your initial arguments.

Did you integrate enough different perspectives?

POINTS TO CONSIDER

- What would the following people do in your situation:
 - Your clients?
 - The people impacted by this decision?
 - Your opponents within the organization?
 - Shareholders?
 - The Dalai Lama?
 - Your mother?
 - Etc.
- Would you be able to defend your point of view to these people?

HUMILITY

2 ELIMINATE CONFIRMATION BIAS

Time for humility: did you mostly choose to consider information that confirms your own opinion? Did you, consciously or not, avoid considering contradictory viewpoints? This is what we call confirmation bias. It's a natural tendency to seek information that confirms what we already believe.

Are you influenced by confirmation bias?

POINTS TO CONSIDER

- If you chose to go ahead with a decision completely at odds with your current position, which arguments could you use to support that decision?
- Which of those arguments can you use in your current analysis?
- In light of this, how can you amend or improve your standpoint?

DECISION

3 PUT IT TO THE TEST

Armed with a more balanced perspective, you can now test your decision with a few people around you, before making it official.

If this confirms that your decision takes several perspectives into account, go ahead! You can communicate your decision, and will be comfortable explaining and defending it as needed.

Can you defend your decision?

POINTS TO CONSIDER

- Did you test your decision with people who are just like you? Be careful not to get caught in another confirmation bias!
- Did these people ever tell you in the past that your analysis of the situation is incomplete, and that you may be wrong?
- In light of this, how can you amend or improve your standpoint?

SHORT ON TIME?

Not enough time to consult several people to receive their point of view? Pressed to decide on the spot? Go through at least steps 1 and 2, and make sure to bring your humility along for the ride.