

**'This book has become a vital part of my  
management toolkit. Read it and see why.'**

Gary Gale, Founder and Director of Malstow Geospatial

**THE LITTLE  
BOOK OF  
!BIG?  
DECISION  
MODELS**

**The 70 most useful models to  
help you say Yes or No**

**James McGrath**

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# THE LITTLE BOOK OF BIG DECISION MODELS

THE 70 MOST USEFUL MODELS  
TO HELP YOU SAY YES OR NO

PEARSON

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delegated decision has not been made and has now become urgent don't take the decision yourself. Insist that the person responsible for the decision deals with it immediately. There are a couple of exceptions to delegating unimportant decisions. You may wish to respond yourself to any requests from your manager or other influential stakeholder (see Model 14).

- **Urgent and important decisions.** These are probably the decisions that you spend most time on. Your aim should be to reduce the number of decisions that fall into this category. You can do this by prioritising all the important decisions that you have to make and keep track of where you are with each one.
- **Not urgent but important decisions.** This category is the most important for two reasons: 1) If you fail to deal with them they will eventually become urgent and important and 2) often these decisions deal with underlying problems within your team or area of responsibility. If you can remedy these faults you will reduce the number of problems arising in the future that will require a decision.
- To improve your decision-making efficiency you will initially have to invest time and effort in changing systems, procedures and staff attitudes. Decisions should be made at the lowest level possible and staff should not be allowed to push them up the line (see Model 1). Similarly monitoring and control systems should be in place to ensure that when a decision is delegated it is dealt with in a correct and timely fashion (see Model 68).
- Be assertive and refuse to deal with decisions that others should make.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- Which of the non-urgent but important decisions sitting in my in-tray would save me the most time in the long run if I were to tackle it today?
- Do I secretly encourage staff to pass all decisions to me because it makes me feel important/look good?

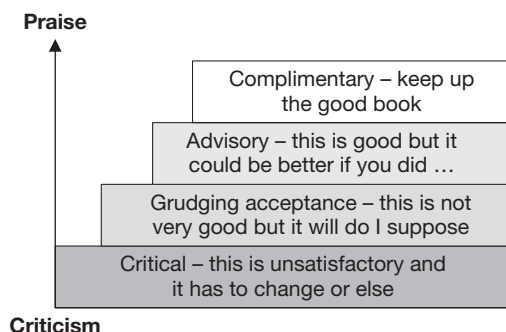
**A bad decision:** Western Union decided in 1876 to invest in telegrams as the communication tool of the future rather than telephones. (Maybe they were just ahead of their time. After all, what are texts if not telegrams?)

## MODEL 19

THE FEEDBACK AND  
CRITICISM CONTINUUM

**Use this** to remind you that you can't please all the people all of the time – so please yourself.

You need a thick skin to be a manager. Your staff, boss, customers, suppliers and a multitude of others will criticise you and call it feedback. So get used to it. But never allow negative feedback and criticism to undermine your confidence.



## HOW TO USE IT

- Read in conjunction with Model 41.
- Insist that the feedback is given to you in private and that sufficient time is allowed.
- Take notes of what is said.
- Remember that the person giving feedback is not criticising you, they are criticising your actions. Your actions are not you so don't take anything they say personally.
- Disengage your competitive streak and say nothing. Don't think about what you are going to say when the person stops talking. Just listen to what is being said.
- You have the right to reject feedback and criticism if you think it's unfair given the circumstances in which you acted or because it's based on factual error or misunderstanding. In such cases be assertive and state your case without anger or emotion.
- Listen to what's said and when you have the time allocate the comments received to one of the four categories outlined in the continuum above.

- **Compliments** don't come along every day. Accept them with good grace and think how you can improve your performance still further.
- **Advisory** feedback is intended to help you improve further. It is not criticism. The person is acknowledging that your work is good but they believe you are capable of even better. Unfortunately, the way they phrase their feedback may annoy you. Separate the advice from the tone and act upon it.
- **Grudging acceptance** from an over-demanding manager may mean more to you than gushing praise from another. Only you can know what the intent is behind your manager's feedback. But if it is genuinely the case that your performance in this instance was only acceptable, you need to take the criticism on-board and do something about it. Develop your own plan for improvement but if required speak to your manager and ask specific questions which will elicit precise answers on what you need to do.
- **Criticism** seems to be the only form of feedback that some managers are capable of giving. If you work for such a manager I suggest you start looking for a new job as over time your self-confidence will be undermined. However, if your manager is usually fair and reasonable then accept the criticism and act upon it. Take the initiative. Draw up a plan of action and discuss it with your manager and amend as required.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- How sensitive are you to criticism?
- If you are highly sensitive, what's the cause of this sensitivity and what can you do about it (see Model 24)?

**A good decision:** Tata Group of India's decision to build a car for the working classes costing less than £2,000. Their decision was criticised by industry as unworkable but against expectation was a huge success.

## MODEL 20

## LEARNING TO THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

**Use this** to remind you that without innovation you will be overtaken by competitors.

There is no sure fire way to come up with a great new idea. Many of the best just ‘pop’ into the person’s mind as if by magic. But it’s seldom magic. Just as seeds won’t grow on unprepared ground, ideas generally only come to those with prepared minds. To develop such a mind you need to be learning, thinking, observing, experimenting, trying and failing all the time.

New ideas are sparked when people are encouraged to question and challenge existing practice and ways of thinking, acting and behaving. It is also essential to allow people to dream and speculate about what might or could exist. For example, in the 1960s you couldn’t pick up a science fiction magazine without mention of an all-powerful computer and/or driverless cars. Well computers have been with us for a while and the driverless car is only a few years away.

However, dreaming and speculating aren’t enough. Managers must have the courage to experiment, implement and even fail. Initial failure is often the bridge to eventual success.

## HOW TO USE IT

- Start by building up your creative muscles. For example challenge yourself to identify 20 to 50 uses for a range of mundane objects such as a paperclip or brick.
- Look at those quiz magazines that have sections on creativity. Search Amazon for books that deal specifically with developing creativity. You’ll find many of the best under education.
- Learn all you can about the area of work which you want to innovate in. For example let’s say you want to develop a totally new approach to the production of widgets. Talk to the managers, production engineers and supervisors in charge of production. Speak to the suppliers of your equipment. Then speak to the real experts, the workers who produce the widgets and who have to make the existing process work, and your customers.
- Use SCAMPER (see Model 16) to play around with what you currently do.

- Keep your eyes and ears open when you are out and about, socialising, watching a film or vegging out in front of the TV or games console. New ideas often come from the most unlikely of sources and the trick is to be constantly on the lookout for such opportunities and recognise them for what they are when they arise.
- When the idea or part of the idea comes to you **write it down immediately**. Don't think 'I'll remember it', I guarantee you won't.
- Ideas often arise when you are relaxed. When you are just about to fall asleep or upon waking. So keep a pad and pencil beside the bed.
- Don't discuss your idea with anyone until you have worked it up into a decent proposal. If you announce it too soon the idea will be shot down and you'll probably lose confidence in it. Or someone else will pinch it. Something writers know all about.

### QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- Do I believe that I'm responsible for innovation within my area of work?
- What have I done recently to get my creative juices going?

**A bad decision:** For 19 years Ford failed to update/improve the Model T Ford. During that time competitors were innovating and responding to customers' demands. The result: Ford's market share shrank alarmingly.

## MODEL 21

## GOLEMAN: USING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TO MAKE BETTER DECISIONS

**Use this** to help you understand better the likely reaction of stakeholders to your decisions.

Daniel Goleman's work on emotional intelligence (EI) resides very much on the right of Tannenbaum and Schmidt's (see Model 5) continuum of decision-making styles.

### GOLEMAN'S FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT LEADERS AND EFFECTIVE DECISION MAKERS:

**Self-awareness:** Strong managers know their strengths and weaknesses, what they stand for and how others perceive and react to them. This knowledge provides the bedrock for their self-confidence which is essential for decision makers.

**Self-regulation:** Managers must be aware of what triggers irrational responses in them and be ready to control their destructive emotions and impulses during the decision-making process.

**Motivation:** Emotionally intelligent managers are motivated by the work they do. They do not require external praise/validation. A vital quality in any decision maker as it's impossible to please everyone all the time.

**Empathy:** Good managers understand the emotional make-up of their staff and are able to predict how they and other stakeholders will respond to specific decisions and act to minimise adverse reactions.

**Social skills:** Managers require strong relationships with staff, colleagues, management and all stakeholders if they are to influence people and win their support.

### HOW TO USE IT

- EI is about your attitudes, empathy and feelings. You can read about its principles in a book but intellectual knowledge is not enough. You have to apply what you have learnt. It is through daily practice that EI develops and changes your thinking and becomes second nature.