

Time Pressure Decisions!

When under pressure that you MUST CHOOSE NOW, many situations may look like either: You have NO CHOICE, or your choice is limited to YES or NO. Feeling pressured can interfere with our ability to think well, if at all – blinding us to a broader range of viable alternatives.

Choose NOW!

There are some cases in which simply making a choice is more important than what is chosen. For instance, your spouse asks you to decide which vegetables you want with your fish dinner, carrots or green beans. When timeliness is more important than the choice itself, decisions can be made quickly and arbitrarily. But, failure to discern the difference between this type of decision and those in which the results matter will lead to pain. When outcomes matter, a decision should be given the consideration it requires and it does not necessarily need to take a long time to do this.

No Choice

Believing there is “no choice” may be more a matter of feeling than an accurate assessment of your current reality. Clearly, there are some situations in which you have no choice. These do not require a decision, only action. (Get out of the way of the oncoming truck.)

Yes or No

Yes/No choices hold a certain appeal because they’re simple – having only two alternatives should mean an easier and quicker analysis – although, sometimes we don’t like either choice. Our experience has shown that “no choice” or “yes/no” situations should be examined carefully. The range of viable alternatives is usually much broader than we first believe. By asking the following question, new – and sometimes better – alternatives can pop into your awareness.

“What is the purpose of this decision?”

Creating better options

Whenever you’re faced with a decision (especially a “no choice” or a “yes/no” decision), take a few seconds to identify the PURPOSE of the decision. With the purpose of the decision in mind, more alternatives can present

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themselves. It is usually immediately apparent or easy to evaluate which of these alternatives is best, based on their ability to accomplish your purpose.

A mundane example of “clarifying purpose”

Here’s a situation that a **BPI** Instructor shared with me. She was in Portland Oregon to teach a Critical Thinking class for one of our clients. She had flown in the night before, but was unable to gain access to the training room to set up the day before, as planned. On the morning of the class as she was putting on makeup, she realized that she had forgotten her mascara. No problem, she thought, she’ll finish getting dressed, leave early and find a drugstore where she can pick some up.

As she was driving to the client’s facility, she did not see a drugstore, or even a grocery. She begins to get a little anxious, thinking ‘if I keep looking I may not get the room set up in time, or I will at least be rushed to get it done and not relaxed and at my best when the class starts.’ She keeps looking at the clock as she continues driving, getting more anxious, the further she gets from the facility.

And then, she stops the churning and thinks. “Hey, wait a minute, what about this stuff I teach?! What’s the purpose of buying the mascara? Well, it’s to do what I normally do to get dressed. When I don’t wear mascara I feel like my eyes are pale and think I look odd. If I feel like I look good, then I feel more confident, and then I’ll do my best possible teaching job. So, the purpose is to do a good job teaching? Hmm, wait a minute, which is going to make me feel more comfortable – buy mascara, or get to the facility and be set up, relaxed and ready to teach?”

Of course, she stopped immediately and drove to the facility.

Summary

BPI has been teaching [Systematic Decision Making](#) for more than 30 years. Whether under pressure or in long term, strategic situations your company can benefit from making better and more timely decisions. [Contact](#) us for information about **BPI**’s [Critical Thinking Workshops](#).