

# **Leadership Lab Book**

**ACAP Leadership Academy  
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Edward O’Neil is the owner of O’Neil & Associates, a management consulting and leadership development firm focused on change and renewal in the health care system. He is also a Senior Fellow at Stanford University’s Center for Clinical Excellence Research Center and a Senior Advisor to the Blue Shield Foundation of California and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.

In June of 2012 he retired from his position as professor in the Departments of Family and Community Medicine, Preventive and Restorative Dental Sciences, and Social and Behavioral Sciences (School of Nursing) at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF). During his time at UCSF, he also served as the director of the Center for the Health Professions, a research, advocacy, and training institute that he created in 1992. The mission of the Center is to assist health care professionals, health professions schools, care delivery organizations, and public policy makers in understanding the challenges and opportunities of educating and managing a health care workforce capable of improving the health and well-being of people and their communities. His work has focused on change within the US health care system through improved policy and leadership.

In 2001 he created O’Neil & Associates with an aim to assist organizations in understanding the strategic challenges they face in a changing health care world and developing strategies and leadership competencies to succeed. His clients include foundations, academic health centers, public sector providers, policy makers, the pharmaceutical industry, and providers in health systems and professional practices.

He holds a bachelor’s and a master’s degree from the University of Alabama as well as a master’s degree in public administration and a doctorate in history from Syracuse University. In addition, he holds honorary degrees from New York Medical College, the Western University of Health Sciences, and two other universities. In 2003 he was elected to an honorary fellowship in the American Academy of Nursing.

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## **Program Introduction and Pre-Work**

I would like each session to be as participatory as possible, but also recognize that there is limited time for preparation these days.

To make best use of this time we are asking you to think about one question for each session and email the instructor, Ed O'Neil, with your answer no later than Sunday, September 6. The written answers do not need to be overly long, but please give each question some thought and share this beforehand. It will make for a better session.

### **Pre-Work Questions:**

**Executive Communication and Leading Up** – Answer these questions:

- What does it look like when you see someone successfully leading up?
- What do you think effective executive communication looks like?

Email your answer to this question to Ed O'Neil at [coneil@gmail.com](mailto:coneil@gmail.com).

## Leadership vs. Management

What do you think the key differences are between managing and leading?

Share these with a classmate. What do you agree on? Are there differences?

Much is made by some about this distinction, but they seem to be more a matter of degree or emphasis more than two different undertakings. John Kotter in a useful article made these distinctions:

<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Management</b>
Sets directions	Creates plans and budgets
Aligns people	Organizes and staffs
Motivates people	Controls and problem solves

## A General Leadership Model

For this leadership program we are going to use a simple leadership model:

$$\text{Leadership} = \text{V}ision + \text{T}ask + \text{R}elationship$$

In this formulation **vision** leadership is synonymous with purpose, knowledge of the changing environment, strategy and communication of a general nature and values. **Task** addresses the process considerations that vary from sector to sector and even organization, but there are some general task concerns such as running a meeting, providing project leadership, ensuring adequate oversight and technical communication. **Relationship** speaks to connections to other people, the personal insight needed to fully value these relationships and how to work effectively through and with the people that you lead. We sometimes call this emotional intelligence. Interpersonal communication is key to every one of these dimensions of leadership.

All of these elements are necessary and none are sufficient. Knowing your strengths and weaknesses in each area will help make you a more effective leader. A leadership challenge rarely comes across as “vision” problem or a “relationship” issue in an uncomplicated manner. They usually involve a host of elements from each of the big three categories. Your job as leader is to master them all and respond in the moment when the leadership issue presents itself. Synthesizing the particular skills into the demands of the moment is what leadership is truly about.

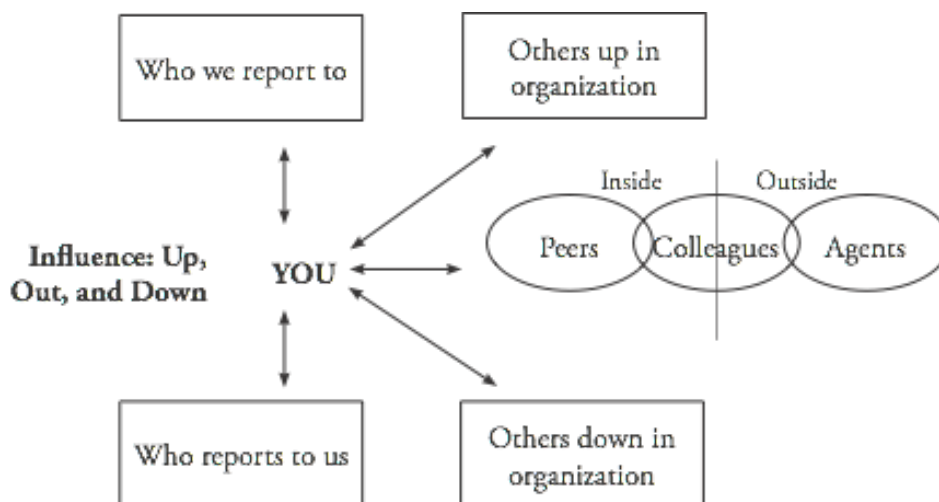
## Leadership in All Directions

It is easy to think of leadership of those people that report to you. But true leadership in an organization goes in three directions: **down, out and up.**

**Down** to those that report to us or are levels below our position in the organization and need to be actively engaged in the work we are leading. **Out** to peers or near peers within our organizations or part of the organization most of whom we do not have direct authority over and must enlist them in our leadership work when they have a host of other interests and demands competing for their time. Out also reaches even more distantly out to colleagues and collaborators that may be outside of our part of the organization or even in another organization. Here the leader must align interests, develop relationships and push a leadership agenda where little conventional authority exists. Finally, all true leaders must lead **up**. This may seem like it should not be our job, but the reality is that the demands of leadership often mean effectively influencing the person we report to or pushing a leadership agenda up in the organization in decision making channels that exist outside the standard lines of authority.

The chart below captures the three basic directions of influence that any leader will need to manifest in order to be effective. Take a moment to think about which individuals and groups go into each domain for your leadership work.

## A Model for Influence



Influence is a complex undertaking, and each of the three basic directions has its own characteristics and qualities that we will explore over the course of this program. In general, however, influencing others involves the development of trust, but it is developed in different ways as we influence in different directions. While not exclusive to any one direction, trust is enhanced **upward by demonstrating performance, support, and loyalty**. Outwardly trust is increased as **transparency,**

**accountability, and collaboration** grow. And when working to improve the relationship and trust downward, leaders commit to **motivating, developing, and delegating** to those that they need to influence. Again, all actions work in all directions, but they are particularly effective in the directions indicated.

## Conclusion

Leadership is a complex undertaking and leaders continue to evolve their practice throughout their careers. The framework of vision, task and relationship should be useful for self-diagnosis, analysis of problems and in helping others with their own leadership development.

## Executive Communication and Influencing Up

### Executive Communication

There is, of course, no single best communication style for effective leaders. As a leader, your challenge is to balance the need for providing direction, securing the input of others, keeping the discussion moving, making progress, and bringing the conversation to a logical decision or break point. This high order task needs to be balanced with your leadership style and the style and needs of others.

Good executive communication in a matrix environment is good general communication. Some core principles follow.

### A General Approach to Communication

Whether the communication is one-on-one, in a small group, or to a large meeting, there are a few elements to examine to ensure that you are as effective as possible. Your communication style will change depending on what you bring as well as the setting, but each of these elements should have a place in everyone's approach to communication and should find voice regardless of the size or type of audience.

**Frame it** – When we start any sort of communication, it is a continuation of something that has gone on before and it is your job to get everyone on the same page. This can be as simple as telling a co-worker that you “have given a lot of thought to yesterday’s discussion and would like to pick it up again.” Or, the framing of a technical talk with the boundaries of what we now know about the field and how this knowledge developed.

The frames can be many things including the interests of an individual, shared values, shared context for work, or a common intellectual framework. The only requirement is that the frame has to have meaning for the listener.

Here are some useful frames for different settings. In each example, what is the frame that the speaker is alluding to?

**One-on-one when giving feedback:**

“I want to spend some time on a topic that I know is important to you.”

“I want you to be successful.”

**In a small group:**

“I want to build on the idea that Jeremy raised a few minutes ago.”

“I want to take us back to the three things we have been charged to do.”

**To a large group:**

“This is my sense of where our field stands today.”

“I believe that today we face three strategic challenges in our current environment.”

Frames can sound like a statement of the painfully obvious and that they may be, but they act to assure that there is shared understanding of what you are about to talk about and at least a little of the reason why the other should listen. It helps them focus by guiding them to your communication, rather than having their focus wander and search for what it is you are saying or about to say.

**Focus it** – Focusing is a bit like framing, but more specific to what you are going to say or accomplish in this communication. If you have successfully framed the communication, then you have their interest and attention. In effect, you have framed their interest and told them why they should listen. Now you want to get a specific communication across.

The temptation is to cover too much. There are always other things to say and what you say may not feel like it has done justice by the issue. It's best to focus on one to four issues, questions, considerations, or assessments in order to build engagement and understanding of what you are saying.

The items in your focus need to have a certain amount of similarity or parallel structure or they will not logically stick in the mind of the listener. For instance, you do not want to have one problem, one assessment, and one solution. Better to present the three problems you see and ask them to work with you to develop a priority for what needs to be addressed first. Then take that problem and offer two assessments of how you might think about the priority problem, asking them to offer perspective of the problem from where they sit. Finally, when the assessment is shared, take a pass at offering three possible solutions and ask them to pressure test each to see which one is most viable.

The steps seem simple, but you have done a lot. You have focused the communication within a common or shared framework. You have engaged them in setting priorities and suggesting solutions. And, last but not least, you have them invested in the pathway forward.

The same process works in a one-on-one communication or in a large group, more formal setting.

**Own it** – Owning it means that you are completely comfortable with the communication and what is being discussed and that comfort is conveyed to the listener, which invites them into a more relaxed exchange. Such authenticity can be hard to achieve, but there are a few things that every communicator needs to bring to avoid looking like that authenticity has been practiced.

Know your stuff. This understanding needs to be so profound that you can be completely **open with your audience**. This does not mean that you know everything and have an answer to every question, but it does mean that you are familiar with the frameworks, the specifics, and the unanswered questions in such a way that you are comfortable with the communication unfolding in ways that you might not have anticipated.

Understand the biases, challenges, perspective, and pain of the audience. This is called **empathy** and it is essential if you are going to be authentic in your communication.

Authentic communication is **passionate communication**. This does not mean that you have to thump the table, raise your voice, or bring tears. It does mean that why this issue is important to you needs to come across in a powerful way. Part of this is the words, part of this is your body, and part is your willingness to engage those who are listening. All of this makes you comfortable and at ease which brings out the same in them.

Be comfortable with **dialogue with the listeners**. This is the ultimate test of knowing your stuff. You are willing and able to invite them into a process that allows you to expand your knowledge and understanding

**Connect it** – Framed and focused communication that feels real sets you up to take your listener to the place where they can connect it to their issues, problems, and challenges, because it has established trust by demonstrating that you see the big picture, can bring it into immediate focus, and are comfortable with them sharing your insights and passion. This creates the emotional space for you to tell a story of how this connects to your reality or their reality. This will make the communication stick with them in ways that data never will.

Stories can be conventional tales, examples of how the idea on the table could play out, reflections from your experience or the experiences of others, recounting a success from a time when a new set of tools was used, or taking a new perspective or horror stories of doing it the old way.

It is essential to have your objective in mind when you tell a story. The form, content, process, and size of the story should meet that objective.

An experienced storyteller will populate her overall communication with a variety of stories, anecdotes, and even jokes. Each one will have a different purpose and intent and they will, of course, vary from audience to audience.

In our data driven, objective, and rational world we don't have much time for stories and most of us are not accomplished at telling them. But hidden away in every person is a narrative understanding of what has happened and why. Reframing that reality with a story is an essential way of improving understanding.



**Use it** – We like to **act on things**. Communications that contain a “call to action” have more meaning and also connect the communication to your leadership agenda. If you have provided focus and framework, done it in a comfortable and engaging manner, and given a story to motivate and connect, all that is missing is the ask.

This ask should be brief and to the point. Depending on the group, situation, and your role, it might look more like a command, request, or suggestion. But in every instance, it should be clear what the pathway forward should look like. Here are some examples of introductions of action.

**You are the lead or have taken the lead in the discussion in which you have a good sense that there is agreement:** “Given the discussion today, I’m convinced that we need to take these three steps next. What do the rest of you think of these steps?”

**You are a team member or leader in which some issues remain:** “I have a better understanding of our shared concerns. They are (list them briefly). But I believe we need another hour together to discuss the following three issues and come to a decision. (List the three issues.) Are there any other issues that you believe we need to have on this agenda?”

**You are a participant and want to impact the direction of the action:** “This has been a very useful discussion because it has helped me see and understand the following (list those items). I am taking these points away from this session and I am going to do the following (list those items) as a part of my role on the team. I’d be curious to learn what have others taken away?”

**Sequence it** – One communication mistake that many speakers make is trying to **cover too much in a single instance** whether that instance is a comment in a meeting or a formal address. By trying to do too much, the desired message can become lost or confused.

To get around this it may be helpful to think about the communication as one point in a sequence of communications that all build toward the same desired outcome that the speaker wants to achieve with the listeners. It also allows the speaker to focus on what the audience is ready for or needs to hear in a particular instance.

Approaching communications as a sequenced undertaking requires the speaker to have a strategic awareness about the goal or end point that she wants the audience to move toward.

# Influencing Up

## A Big Challenge

One of the trickiest and most necessary of all tasks facing leaders is how to lead up. Many people do not even think of this as a leadership responsibility or, if it is, it's not theirs but their boss's. But leading up is critical in order to influence your boss and others that are "up" in the organization, and to properly position your work for organizational, team, and individual success.

Many shy away from this work because it strikes them as something that looks like self-promotion, feels a little slimy, or because they are just not good at it. If you are trying to lead by only influencing down or out, then you are a third less effective than if you effectively work the last dimension: influencing up.

Take a minute to think about what you believe holds you back from leading up more effectively. These may be things that you are doing or not doing, things your boss may or may not be doing, things you do not know such as expectations, or things you do not know how to do such as raising the topic of feedback. Do not hold back, just list as many as come to mind.

## What holds me back from leading up?

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Now take a few minutes to share your experience with a partner in the class. What do you have in common? How are the experiences different?

In becoming more influential in any relationship it is usually best to start with understanding yourself in that relationship first. The relationship with your boss is tricky because she has power directly over you, you are both responsible for getting work done, and she is key your success in the organization. All of these factors mean that she is there to promote you, but also to assess your progress and hold you accountable. If you both are unclear about these roles and uncomfortable in them, then the situation can make you uneasy or, worse, lead to wasted time, poor performance, and lack of success.

## Knowing yourself

Clarity begins with you. Here are some key questions about you and your relationship with anyone that is supervising you:

- What would the ideal relationship with a boss look like for you?
- What do you want and need from your particular boss?
- Are you carrying old baggage from a previous boss relationship?
- How are you with being in an authority role? How are you with authority over you?

There are other issues that are just about you that you also need to have a handle on, including:

- What do you do well? What are your strengths?
- What strength do you need to develop in your current position in order to succeed?
- What weaknesses do you have and which ones will be more glaring in your current role?
- How would you characterize your leadership style?
- Do you have a clear picture as to how others in your organization see you?

## **Knowing your boss**

You also need to be clear about many dimensions of your current boss and her role in the company. Here are just a few questions that you should not have to think too much about. If you do, you need a better picture of your boss and her challenges.

- How does your boss understand the strategic direction of the overall unit that you are a part of and that she leads? How does it fit into the overall business strategy of the company?
- How is your boss seen and valued by other executives in the company?
- What are the current pressures on your boss? How does she deal with these?
- How would you characterize her leadership style? How is this different or similar to yours?
- What are her strengths? What are her development needs? What does she like to do most? What does she avoid?
- How does she like to communicate? The F's are important here:

- Format – email, sit-downs, stand-ups, drive-bys
- Formality – agenda items only, whatever is on anyone’s mind
- Frequency – a lot, a little or highly variable

Finally, you need a clear picture of how your current boss understands you, your role, your performance, and your future direction and promise in the company and in the industry.

- Does your boss feel that you are loyal and supportive? (This does not mean that you agree on every issue and only say positive things to her. It does mean that she trusts your loyalty deeply enough to allow critical input on people and projects.)
- Does your boss take the time to keep you informed and are you modeling the same behavior for her?
- Do you have a relationship in which the expectations go both ways and are you both clear about what you need and want from the other?
- Have you and your boss created a development plan for you that takes into account performance on current tasks and responsibilities, needed areas of growth, and longer-term goals?

## **An essential thing to remember**

You may be thinking that these issues seem like ones that your boss should be helping you understand and engage with. While that may be true, bosses don’t always do what they need and it is in your best interests to make sure that matters on both sides of this issue get attended to.

Do not take this task on in a manner that is in anyway resentful. Yes, you are doing something that she should be doing for you, but it is in your interest and she will be glad for the help, but not if you snarl.

Also, while you are at it, how are you as a boss in clarifying things for people that report to you?

## **Develop yourself as a way to lead up**

A big part of your boss’s responsibility is managing you in a way that leads to success. This is in her interests and obviously yours. But most people are not very good at this because they don’t know how, are too busy with “the work,” and are uncomfortable with the topic in general.

You can help out by creating your own development plan and presenting it to your boss in DRAFT form and ask for input and redirection where needed. If you have taken the Developing and Motivating Others session, the development grid presented there is a great basis for your plan. The grid below presents to the two critical axis- task and relationship. Relationship has two meanings:

your interpersonal relationship with your boss and the relationship of your work to strategic business goals and overall direction of the company. You should use the grid first to assess ability in each of the three domains - tasks, interpersonal skills and strategic understanding- and then to make a conscious and deliberate plan with your boss for improvement.

Put a plan together in writing, share it with your boss, and then schedule a time for discussion. Revise as needed and share the final plan with her. It is also a good idea to get a commitment for a one-hour check-in on this every quarter. Keep a record of what you are working on, the ways in which you will measure success, and an overall scorecard of your progress. Be open to suggestions from your boss about new assignments that can help in your development. Make suggestions about delegations that could improve your skills while also helping her.

Improving your performance in this way reflects well on your boss and she will be grateful. It improves your chances for success and that is good. It also will strengthen your relationship with you boss and create an opportunity for her to broaden your understanding of larger issues within the company

## Communication with the Boss

Perhaps the most important and most straightforward thing to do to effectively lead up is to make sure that there is clear communication between you and your boss. This will require that, at the outset of the relationship, you ask the questions that you need answers to and are willing to acknowledge that there are things that you do not know. Asking for clarity and help at this point is hard to do, but it is much easier than the miscommunications that could emerge later. This will also strengthen the relationship and allow communication to become more efficient with time.

One good technique is to check in directly with your boss to make sure that she is receiving the communication she needs in a form that is efficient and effective for her. This will give you a chance to share what works best for you. But remember, she is the boss and her needs will be met first.

Sooner or later you will need to communicate bad news to your boss. **Do not wait around until she asks about it.** There are a few steps that are useful when this occurs. The same steps are useful when presenting a new idea that the boss may not have heard yet.

1. Give the framework or context for the news or new approach. Do not overdo it but explain what it is, how it connects to your work, and why it is important.
2. Give the possible steps to manage the problem or move on the idea. Present them as options but be clear about which one you think is best and why you think so. Do not oversell. You want the boss's input and engagement on the strategy, and she might have other opinions about the choice.
3. Take responsibility. If it is a problem, then indicate that you are responsible; do not push it off on to others. It is still your problem. If it is a new direction or opportunity, indicate what steps you will take to act on this once it is given a go ahead from the boss. Even if you have an aggressive plan, be ready with a more modest fallback approach for a boss that may be more risk averse than you.

## Summary for influencing up to a boss

Here are the general principles for leading up to your supervisor:

1. Understand your job and perform.
2. Understand how your job fits into the strategic business strategies that your boss is responsible for.
3. Know yourself, your strengths and weaknesses, style, ambitions, blind spots, how you think about authority, and how others see you.
4. Know your boss's strengths, weaknesses, ambitions, blind spots, pressures, and how she needs to perform for her boss.
5. Know specifically how your boss makes decisions, deals with conflict, prefers communication, and likes to work.
6. Fit your style to your boss's.
7. Be responsible for your development and actively involve your boss in this undertaking.
8. Build the relationship with your boss in ways that she is comfortable with.

## **Influence and Executive Communication Homework (part 1):**

Even though communication is at a distance, these practices can still help your effectiveness. Here are some simple ways to improve your communication, just apply them to an on-line context.

### **Feedback**

How does the set of core principles above compare to your usual pattern of communication? If you don't know or want to improve, ask a trusted colleague to monitor your communication using these points and then give you feedback on ways to improve.

### **Practice**

Once you get some feedback and have a sense of what you would like to improve upon, take one item at a time and consciously practice it in groups or in one-on-one meetings.

### **Modeling**

Identify someone who you believe is an effective executive communicator. Assess their style using the list above. Take some part of their style that is drawn from the list and adapt it to your style. For instance, if the person you have identified uses metaphor to explain a point, then think about what you might use and frame your next point in a metaphorical way.

### **Assessing**

Once you are more aware of your style, using the list above as a beginning point, you can observe others to see if what you are doing is working. If not, then vary your approach in real-time and see if you don't get a different result.

## **Homework (part 2):**

One of the keys to improving your relationship with your boss or just setting it on the right track is to be clear how she sees the world. Here are just a few questions that you should not have to think too much about. If you do, you need a better picture of your boss and her challenges.

The homework is to answer these questions for yourself, then schedule time with your boss to ask her. This is too much for one session. Pick one or two to start with. Communications, priorities, style fit and pet peeves are good candidates for starters.

- What is the overall strategic direction of the unit that we are part of? How does it fit into the overall business strategy of the company?
- What are your current priorities?

- How do you think others see our unit and its role?
- What are the most important pressures on you?
- How would you characterize your leadership style? How do you think it fits with my style?
- What are your strengths? What do you like most about your work?
- How do you like to communicate?
  - Format – email, sit-downs, stand-ups, drive-by
  - Formality – agenda items only, whatever is on anyone’s mind
  - Frequency – a lot, a little or highly variable
- What are your pet peeves?

This is of course done best at the beginning of the relationship but is a useful guide for diagnosing and resetting when needed.



## Decision Making

“Take ambiguity away from leadership, and you take away tough decisions and responsibility. What you’re left with is overpaid administration.”

*Jason Seiden, American Writer*

“Although every man believes that his decisions and resolutions involve the most multifarious factors, in reality they are mere oscillation between flight and longing.”

*Herman Broch, Austrian Novelist*

“Good decisions come from experience.  
Experience comes from making bad decisions.”

*Mark Twain*

## Analytical frames for decisions

Like any intentional analytical process, a framework for decision making follows a certain temporal sequence of hypothesis generation, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation. Followed, of course, by another round of the same. For any decision process, the following steps are likely to be part of the process:

1. Establish or identify the desired outcome or objective.
2. If there are multiple outcomes, resolve priority and importance.
3. Identify constraints on course of action and their relative value.
4. Develop pathways for action to achieve the objective or outcome.
5. Assess each pathway against the objective, outcome, and costs (constraints).
6. Select the pathway that best achieves the outcomes within the constraints of action.
7. Evaluate the consequences of the selected pathway, particularly in the context of potency and probability and corresponding risk mitigation strategies.
8. Take action, monitor expected outcomes, deploy risk mitigation as needed, and evaluate the overall process.

This formal decision analysis is impossible to use with the myriad of decisions that a leader faces each day: which call to return first, how to balance the immediate needs of the group with the longer term needs of the company in the context of a dispute that must be settled now, or which direct report can be trusted with this delegation, but it can be a good general guide to keep in mind when decisions are made or when a difficult decision is taking time.

## Limits of Reason

Fifty years ago, Herb Simon first observed that access to information, time, and the natural bias of the decision maker created significant limits to the purely analytical approach toward the goal of optimization. His notion of bounded rationality emerged as a way of describing how decisions were actually made by most people. Rather than approaching the optimal solution anticipated in the highly rational steps above, Simon described what most decision makers achieve as a satisficing solution that lives within the boundaries of the cognitive resources of the decider and the limits of the environment.

## **Cognitive bias and decision-making**

The shorthand or heuristics involved in experience based decision-making or problems solving are susceptible to bias that may help speed the decision, but deteriorate its overall quality. Some common biases have been observed in decision-making, negotiation, problem solving, and conflict resolution. These include:

### **Optimism Bias**

We tend to be overly optimistic about the outcome of a situation or our own skills and abilities. This leads to actions that may not be based on sound judgments.

When we overestimate the probability of positive occurrences and underestimate the likelihood of negative ones we are suffering from the heuristic that many characterize as **excessive optimism**. A related way to skew perception and decision making is to be **overconfident**. Here we overestimate our abilities, competence, and preparedness, particularly when compared to others. Smokers consistently see themselves as having less health risks than other smokers, even though objectively there is no difference. Project team leaders overestimate their skills in addressing the challenges of maneuvering a project around obstacles, sometimes called the **planning fallacy** and most of us have had the experience of making a decision about a new hire that may not have all of the requisite skills, but we believe we can change them.

### **Assessment Bias**

**Anchoring** – This common bias involves the continued focus on characteristic, fact, or dimension of the problem or decision to be made. The “anchor” might be shaped by disciplinary perspective, when information arrived, the person offering the perspective, or any quality that limits the fuller range of data.

**Availability** – This heuristic is driven by ready or imagined access to a limited field of knowledge within a larger population of events, data, or people by a decision maker, who then uses the meaning of the phenomena to extend judgment to the fuller field.

**Effort** – This heuristic comes into play when the actor uses the level of effort put into a project or work to determine its overall value to the process. For example, an extensive review of the literature is more likely to be valued than the immediate insight of the moment.

**Familiarity** – A refinement of the availability heuristic, this short-cut rewards those experiences that are more familiar with a higher value when they are applied to a new situation, problem, or decision than an approach that is unfamiliar.

### **Framing Bias**

**Escalation of commitment** – This heuristic is shaped by the weight of the cumulative investment in the decision process, even when the current gain is less than the cost. This is also known as the “sunk cost fallacy.”

**Stability bias** – We like the status quo, even when it does not always serve our interests; “the devil we know” is less risky than the one we don’t. Once we see a familiar pattern we are rewarded with a shot of dopamine and that is enough to keep us doing the same drill until there is pressure to change. Add in the anchoring bias, familiarity, an aversion to loss, and the fallacies of sunk costs and we tend to do the same thing over and over, sometimes expecting a different result.

### **Primal Redux**

The 1981 publication of Kahneman and Tversky’s article in *Science* on judgment in uncertain situations rebalanced the understanding of how humans reach decisions, opening up a deeper exploration of how options are weighed and acted upon.<sup>1</sup> The purely rational dominance of the frontal cortex over intuition and the “wisdom of the gut” gave way to a deeper understanding of two different decision pathways. Commonly called System 1 and 2, the thought processes emerge from different regions of the brain and produce dramatically different levels of consciousness on the part of the decider. System 1 is quick, integrative, has little conscious control, and seems to emerge from those regions of the brain more readily associated with emotion. System 2 is borne more out of the frontal cortex, is summoned more slowly, and works methodically on problems that are isolated in a manner to allow the use of deliberate analytical tools. Because System 2 insight is derived from a deliberate focus, it has the capacity to override the more tacit wisdom of System 1. Within this framework, there has been more active consideration of expert knowledge, heuristics, integration of memory, and neural response to pattern fulfillment and disruption. While these now appear to be two different ways of knowing and deciding, they are intimately intertwined. Making good decisions and making good use of time and resources seems to be a product of cultivating and using both systems of deciding.

### **Decision Making in a Constrained World**

There are an enormous variety of decision tools and frameworks including the Kepner-Tregoe Matrix, decision trees, cost-benefit, Pareto, and ROI. Different approaches seem to work better with different types of problems, decision environments, and depending on the type of outcome desired.

One simple framework is a force field. This approach asks that the problem or decision be refined and focused and the person making the decision to identify reasons to decide and reasons to delay. Once this has taken place then the decision process can continue or be redirected.

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<sup>1</sup> Tversky A, Kahneman D. The framing of decisions and the psychology of choice. *Science*. 1981;211(4881):453-458.

**Figure 3.2**  
**General Decision Model**

**Reasons to go Ahead:**

*Examples include:*

- Technical answers
- Speed of decision
- Patient demands
- Cost saving

**Plan, Problem or Decision:**

**Reasons to Delay:**

*Such as:*

- Need for input from others
- Ownership by others

Decisions affirm one pathway and, by default, deny another. Because of this, issues of political savvy always surround decisions. There are half a dozen considerations that are important to be mindful of if we are to improve the sophistication of decision making, managing conflict, or negotiation.

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**Power** – Who has the formal and informal power? How is it distributed? Whose power is likely to be spent and whose power will grow?

**Relationship** – What is the quality of the relationship of those involved? Will the relationship continue? Remember that, in any organization, relationships will invariably fluctuate.

**Quality of the decision or resolution** – Is there a knowable correct answer to the problem, question, or decision? Does one person have the technically correct answer or is it more a function of knitting together the perceptions of others into a new solution?

**Importance of the decision or resolution to you** – Regardless of whether or not you know the answer, is this issue one that you desire to have resolved in your favor? Your reasons may be political, driven by values, or drawn from your past experience. Whatever the case, you just want it this way.

**Buy-in** – Do the participants in this situation need to buy-in to the decision or resolution or will they adequately comply with the path that is chosen? This is like the importance issue for you, but it is how important the other party considers the decision.

**Time** – All situations that need resolution have some time parameters. Engagement of others and the development of collaborative solutions take time. How much do you have and how does it balance with the need for others to help design the technical solution or gain some buy-in.

We will be revisiting these considerations throughout the course and using them to practice decision making as well as other challenges.

1. Of these six considerations, are there one or two that seem to be more important to you as you make a decision?
2. Are there one or two that cause you the most difficulty in the decision-making process?

Share your answers with a partner and compare and contrast how the two of you go about approaching decisions.

### **Decision-Making Considerations**

In homing in on your decision-making style as a leader, we must consider your perspective and others that are involved in the decision process. We will think of them as followers, but this really means just those that are following your decision lead. They can, in fact, be peers or even superiors; just remember that they will have different assessments regarding the factors above, particularly the power and relationship concerns.

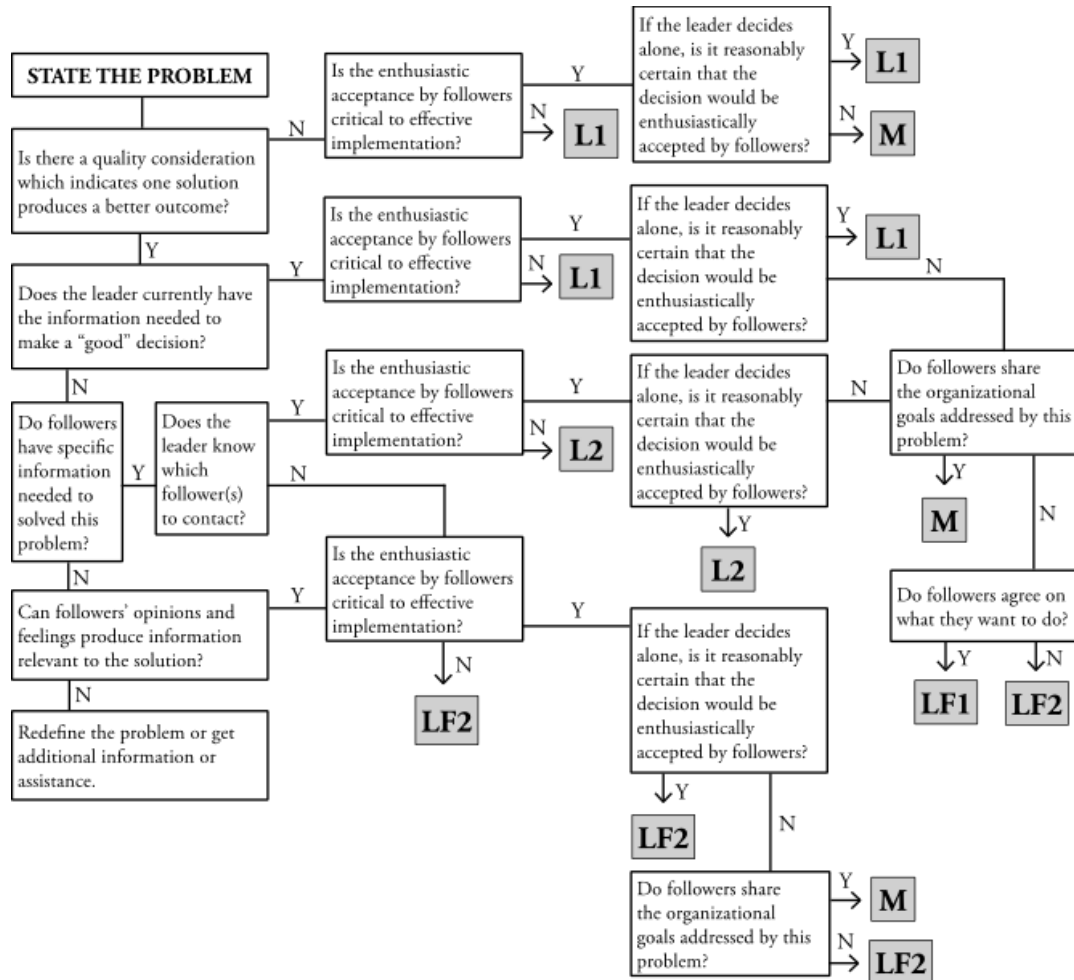
Here are five decision-making styles you could choose from when presented a situation that demands action.

<b>L1</b>	<b>You decide alone.</b>
<b>L2</b>	<b>You seek information and then decide alone.</b>
<b>LF1</b>	<b>You consult with individuals and then decide alone.</b>
<b>LF2</b>	<b>You consult with the group and then decide alone.</b>
<b>M</b>	<b>You share the problem with the group and all of you mutually decide what to do.</b>

Given the situation and the desired outcome, you will want to choose one or another of these approaches to reaching a decision.

The grid on the next page is a formal flow chart for decisions. Most decisions are not made with such formality. Nonetheless, it can be a useful tool to think through a decision. The instructor will give you the steps to use in the exercise.

**Figure 3.3**  
**Decision Styles Flow Chart**



Which decision styles are most appropriate or inappropriate in these situations?

<b>Decision-Making Choices</b>		
<b>Situation</b>	<b>Consider</b>	<b>Avoid</b>
Leader lacks the knowledge to ensure the best decision or even one of acceptable quality.		
Followers do not share either the long-term or short-term goals of the organization.		
Issue to be decided is ill-defined, unstructured, or involves a great deal of unknown factors.		
Followers are likely to reject the decision and their commitment is necessary to successful implementation.		
Followers are likely to disagree on the appropriate solution, and they are likely to reject the decision and their commitment is necessary to implement it effectively.		
All solutions are equally good so that the quality is not an issue, and the followers are likely to reject the decision and their commitment is necessary to implement it effectively.		
Leader and followers share the same organizational goals, and the followers are likely to reject the decision, and their commitment is necessary to implement it effectively.		

To help us see how to use these factors, let's look at several situations and the range of decision choices that might be explored. Working with your POD/group, decide which styles seem to fit with each of these situations. Look back at the six criteria to help you with this process.

## **Exercise: Decision Cases**

### **Case Number One**

#### **Big State University**

#### **Your Position: Research Manager**

You are the research manager for a MCB department at a major state university. In your position, you supervise the work of the technicians in 12 labs. One of the labs needs to carry out a special audit and needs the help of three techs from other labs.

The work of each tech is similar across all labs and no new skills or training will be needed. Any one of the techs could do the work. You have a good sense of which labs are busy and which have some excess capacity. You also have a sense about the level of stress you will get from each PI if you take away their techs.

You know your staff well, are an experienced manager, and have the support of the chair and most PIs. The work load in each lab can be easily adjusted to allow the three chosen workers to be absent for a few days.

Which decision-making style will work best?



## **Case Number Two**

### **City School System**

#### **Your Position: Speech Pathologist**

During your 10 years as a speech pathologist for the eight schools in the city school system, you have earned the respect and admiration of both the administration and the staff of speech teachers. They have come to rely on your judgment and professional expertise to solve problems related to speech training.

Now, for the first time, funds are available to your school system to establish a comprehensive program of speech diagnosis and remedial training using existing speech staff for the screening and remedial training involved.

You have carefully studied a large number of similar programs which have been successful in other schools and have identified six options that could best handle your situation. The best options depend on technical information, such as the number of students in each speech class and the physical facilities at each school.

Knowing that the success of any program will depend upon hard work and full support of the speech teachers, you now face the choice of which program to implement.

What is your decision strategy?

## **Case Number Three**

### **Home Health Agency**

#### **Your Position: Visiting Nurse Supervisor**

You are the supervisor of a unit at the Home Health Agency which is a part of a larger clinic system. Your unit consists of 12 nurses. Your team's performance in quality, efficiency, and patient satisfaction scores are slightly, but consistently, above average when compared to other units at the agency. Each of the nurses in your team is highly professional and each has an individual style. There is friendly competition among them for achieving the highest performance scores.

The president of the clinic system has approached you with a concern. It seems that immediately following the morning orientation and assignments, your team gathers at the neighborhood Starbucks for coffee before going to see their first patients. He has asked you to put an immediate stop to this practice and to come up with some way of preventing similar occurrences in the future. The president is not against coffee breaks, but is disturbed that so many of the company-owned Prius's, emblazoned with the clinic system logo, are seen parked in front of the Starbucks every morning, giving the agency a poor image.

You know that the in-office employees are given 10 minutes for coffee breaks, but no such arrangements is commonplace for visiting nurses. However these RNs have always taken breaks during the day between visits, and you did so yourself when you saw patients. You would like to come up with a plan that would satisfy your team and, at the same time, please your boss.

In informal conversations with your team you have heard many reasons expressed as to why they stop for coffee in the morning. There is no definite pattern or reason why they stop for coffee at that particular time and place. They tend to review the work with their patients from the previous day and share information that might be helpful for the day's patients. They see themselves as independent professionals with greater obligations to their patients than the agency.

What is your decision strategy?

**The level of commitment varies with what you need as an outcome.**

## Levels of Commitment

1. Opposition – Participants automatically take the opposing side of anything you say.
2. Disagreement – Participants honestly disagree with a particular stand you are taking.
3. Malicious Obedience – Participants do what you say in such a way that they ensure it won't work.
4. Grudging Obedience – Participants do what you say, thinking it won't work, but they aren't purposely trying to sabotage you.
5. Compliance – Participants do just what is asked of them, and no more.
6. Enrollment – Participants believe in what you are trying to accomplish, and they will exercise initiative and creativity to help you accomplish it.
7. Commitment – Participants have made “your” vision “our” vision and they feel personally responsible for doing whatever is necessary to make it happen.

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