

CORPORATED MANAGEMENT / HUMAN RESOURCES

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This way or that way?

Emotions play an important role in making decisions, even the logical ones.

MANY people talk about being objective in the corporate world but I happen to think that most decisions are emotional ones, even those that seem logical.

Making a decision in itself is a choice between different alternatives.

When you attempt to be logical, you are in effect trying to block out emotions and use rational or quantifiable methods, perhaps even some mathematical formula or ranking.

But what helps you make a particular decision over another usually has to do with what you feel about the outcome. So whether you like it or not, it is an emotional decision.

I know people who think that they are very logical and take pride in not being "emotional". I actually think that one cannot be a good leader if he is not in touch with his emotions.

Many people choose to work for a leader because of how they feel about him. And often, these people choose to follow him, especially during tough times, because of the way he cares about them. Emotions again!

Logical versus emotional

People make many illogical decisions at work in the name of being logical.

How else do you explain corporate politics, which takes up so much energy and time in the work world?

Office politics has a lot to do with ego, position, power and games. Where does logic fit into any of this?

Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio studied people with injuries affecting the part of the brain where emotions are created.

He discovered that people with this type of brain injury lost their



The word 'emotion' gets a bad rap in the business world because people tend to mix it up with emotional outbursts. — Reuters

ability to feel emotions. More interestingly, they had great difficulty making everyday decisions, like what to eat or where to go.

This tells us that emotions are very important in making choices between different alternatives, even the logical ones.

I think the word "emotion" gets a bad rap in the business world because people tend to mix it up with emotional outbursts and the ranting and raving that sometimes get displayed in the workplace.

This type of behaviour is due to emotional immaturity; it has nothing to do with drawing upon appropriate emotions to serve as a guide in one's decision-making process.

I think the reluctance to accept

the fact that everyone makes emotional decisions has to do with the fear of making wrong decisions.

Often, people are quick to point out that it was a wrong decision because it was an "emotional" decision versus a logical one.

What about the many logical decisions made by some very smart people that plunged the world into the great financial crisis in 2008?

Perhaps the success of a decision should not be judged on whether it was a logical decision or an emotional one because it is possible to make really bad decisions based on facts and figures.

During my Master of Business Administration course, it struck me that if I had emulated all the models

I learnt about and done the feasibility studies before I started my business, I wouldn't have started my business at all!

Making good decisions

In my view, making good decisions requires certain considerations:

- Clarity on desired outcomes is key. With well-formed outcomes, you see the outcome and direction clearly.

- Getting all the facts and background information. Talk to all the relevant people with an open mind. If there is a chance that the decision may be coloured by personal bias,

bring in an objective party to help with this process.

- Weighing the options and simulating possibilities.

- Listening to your emotions/intuition/gut feel. Is there a nagging discomfort or is there a feeling of exhilaration? What are your emotions trying to tell you?

- Asking more questions. Sometimes the best answers and suggestions lie inside the company, a few layers down within the organisation. Get some fresh perspectives from people who do not have that much of a history with the organisation.

- Accepting that the decision you are going to make is the best you can make at that point in time. Most times, we try to avoid mistakes. Know that there is such a thing as timing and a bigger picture that you are not in control of.

A spiritual teacher once taught me to "give 100% and then give it up" to something bigger than me. To do this, I had to let go of the outcome once I had done my share of work. Usually, the outcomes never fail to amaze me, as they are often far better than I imagined.

Sometimes, a "wrong" decision with bad consequences may be exactly what is needed to create a new, much better outcome.

Instead of trying to make decision-making an exact science, why not take a more pragmatic approach and do what you feel is required for the business? — Singapore Straits Times/Asia News Network

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