

Spotlight: Making difficult decisions is never a pleasant task. Personal issues are challenging enough but when the decision affects the lives of others, magnifies the gravity of the decision. By the nature of an enterprise, all decisions extend beyond our person. The interrelations of the enterprise's stakeholders means that each decision ripples through the organisation quickly affecting every person whether or not they are aware of the decision.

One of the great opportunities of being in business is the sheer volume of decisions required. Through quantity, the quality of decisions tend to improve, as does the ability to arrive at a decision quickly. Even with this daily practise, there remains a class of decisions that never seem to get easier. For varying reasons, none of the available options are satisfying and you cannot envision a suitable compromise. Difficult decisions are mostly associated with situations where the impact of the decision is far reaching. Still, the same dilemma can be present in seemingly trivial issues so when this occurs, it is an opportunity to learn the nature of decisions making.

Decision making is not a thought process. There is no gathering of sufficient information or waiting until one is certain what the right decision is. We make our decision and then gather information that supports our decision because decisions come from our knowing rather than from our understanding. That our knowing is not rational or logical can cause us discomfort because we mostly believe that we think our way through decisions. Following one's instinct or gut feeling is not a course of action most people follow. We are admonished to not trust our feelings and to defer them to our intellect. There is no scientific basis for this direction as statistical studies show that not only is a person's knowing more accurate than his intellect, but also, decisions based on knowing are made more quickly and are less likely to be reversed.

Basing a decision on ones knowing is that much more important for decisions that affect others. Our intellect operates in a virtual vacuum as an agent of our ego. Our knowing connects us with our world and functions in relationship with the other people in our enterprise. Compassion is a key element in any difficult decision and it is something that our intellect cannot grasp.

It may be that we are never free from difficult decisions. If this is true, we can only become comfortable with making them.

Musings: While we West Coasters like to tell others that it rains here all the time, even we do on occasion need to water the lawn. For me, this task still involves dragging a hose around the yard and remembering to move the sprinkler at the prescribed interval. This year, I introduced a significant modification to my routine as I substituted a pulsating sprinkler for my traditional oscillating sprinkler.

My oscillating sprinkler had reached the end of its life and as I investigated replacing the sprinkler, I discovered that I had a limited number of choices; the proliferation of automatic underground water systems has reduced the demand for sprinklers. After visiting several stores, the only sprinkler I found that met my criteria was a pulsating sprinkler so with trepidation, I brought it home.

The issue with this sprinkler is the proverbial round peg in the square hole problem. I have always used oscillating sprinklers with their rectangular watering pattern. Based on this pattern, I divided my yard into a rectilinear patchwork within which I know the placement of the sprinkler. The circular pattern of the pulsating sprinkler required me to literally think outside the box.

Now, after resetting my brain circuitry, I am extremely pleased with my new tool. In addition to excelling at the intended task, it has introduced the audio element into my watering regime. The sound of its pulsations just says summer to me.

Facts & Figures: Deer populations in the United States have grown from around 500,00 at the turn of the 20th century to over 30 million today. The elimination of natural predators and limited hunting coupled with high birth rates (each doe fosters about twenty offspring) has resulted in unchecked growth. The population is mostly urban as developed land supports a deer population density that is three fold that which a mature forest will support. Deer eat well in suburbia!

Links: To get a feel for how pervasive a problem urban deer populations are, a Google search returns 185,000 pages. Suffix or prefix the phrase with your community name to learn about your local situation.

Quote: The twentieth century American mystic Thomas Merton provides the following quote:

"The whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all these living beings, which are all part of one another, and all involved in one another."