ship was seeing that staff were doing the right thing. Drucker compared the role as a leader to the role of a conductor in an orchestra. A conductor guided the professional orchestra, with minimal direction, leaving the players as masters of their own domain. Drucker said staff had a right to say *yes* daily to three questions: *Do people notice what you did? Are you treated with dignity and respect by everyone you encounter? Are you given things you need—education, training, encouragement and support?* If your staff can answer *Yes* to these questions, you have an exceptional culture. He talked often about achieving superior performance by embracing desirable values (e.g. Alcoa's zero accident value).

9. Outstanding performance is inconsistent with a fear of failure. Drucker knew that great leaders fail often, but that their successes are far greater and more frequent. Great leaders recognize failure earlier than their peers and are faster to press the *abandonment button*. In many organizations the fear of failure pervades all thinking. If an earlier decision was wrong, make corrective action or abandon the initiative. Those who make decisions and have more winners than unsuccessful initiatives should be championed as more valuable than the managers who only back a few winners. Monitor those projects that have failed and promote them as good learning experiences. Promote the notion that a decision made, even if wrong, is better than no decision.

10. Decision making requires an understanding of the decision making process. Drucker realized that decision making was subject to many pressures. He believed managers needed to be educated in the process to ensure they made enough decisions, were not afraid of failure, and knew when no decision was required. Drucker said an *unnecessary decision was the same as an unnecessary surgery*. He analyzed the decision-making process into a decision-making tree: *Action is needed; No action is required; Further investigation is required.*

Self Renewal/Safe Haven. In preaching *self-renewal* Drucker was saying: you need to have balance, other interests, passions, hobbies outside work as well as a hunger for new management concepts. You will be a better, more balanced leader if you *lead a full life*. Drucker realized the importance of balance. Leaders functioned better, were more positive and easier to work with if they had another passion outside work. LE

David Parmenter is speaker and author of Key Performance Indicators *(Wiley). Visit www.davidparmenter.com.*
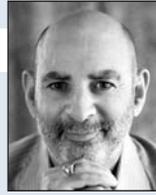
ACTION: Adopt regular abandonment.

Making Decisions
Get others to make some.

by Howard M. Guttman

DECISION MAKING, THE ability to choose the right path among competing alternatives, remains a quality of effective leadership. But, today, *not making decisions*—asking others to assume accountability for them—has become a sign of high-performance leadership.

Decision overload tires you out. Having one person make multiple daily decisions can lead to *decision fatigue*, since the more choices you make in a day, the harder each one becomes. The typical reaction is to shortcut the decision-making process by either acting impulsively or doing nothing.

Having others make decisions is smart. It leverages capabilities around you. Today's global enterprises are too vast and complex for one-person rule, and the *immense data flow* makes it impossible for any *one* person or team to intelligently make all calls.

As a high-performance leader, you can effectively pass the decision-making baton *without shirking your responsibilities* in five ways:

1. Create the right context. *Delegation fright* is understandable. If those below are not in sync with the strategy and capable of shouldering the burden of decision making, *delegation becomes a roll of the dice*. In high-performance cultures, decisions are not so much *delegated* as *distributed*, under *controlled conditions*, to teams. Leaders can be confident making decision handoffs when teams are: *tightly aligned with strategy, accountable for the team's success, clear on goals and responsibilities, agreed upon decision-making protocols*, and *transparent in relationships.*

2. Set decision-making ground rules. If you're planning to hand off decision-making responsibility to a team, your delegation *fright index* will rise if you know that there is confusion regarding *who* is going to make decisions and *how*. Such confusion reduces speed and efficiency, lessens accountability, and creates *decision waffle*, where team members spend more time bickering about who is the *decider* than thinking through *the nature of the decision* and *its implications.*

To increase the speed and efficiency of its decisions, teams must agree on *who* should be involved in making a decision. For example, which decisions will be made: *Unilaterally*—by one person, with no input? *Consultatively*—by one person, after soliciting input from a few people who will add value? *By consensus*—everyone has input and must live with the outcome? For each key decision, team members must agree on which of the three decision modes applies; otherwise, *confusion, hard feelings*, and *subterfuge* reign.

3. Use a common decision-making process. Decision making is a discipline that can be transferred. When distributing decision-making, ensure that those you involve all work off *the same script* and follow *the same systematic process*: first define the decision, then lay out the objectives, generate alternatives, and consider the benefits and risks of each. This will increase your confidence that every decision maker touches all the right bases before coming to a conclusion. It will also make it much easier to review others' decisions.

4. Streamline. Examine the *processes* for making decisions. What's the lag time between *asking teams to make decisions, having those decisions made and approved*, and *then implementing them*? Wherever there is a need for information sharing and handoffs, you'll find overlapping, competing systems, processes, procedures, layers, interface structures, coordination bodies, and decision approvals. Such complexity retards decision making and demotivates. *Distributing decisions* is one thing; *enabling implementation* is quite another.

5. Provide the right venues. Once decision-making protocol and process are in place, let teams attack real decisions that make a difference. Think of *intact teams* as platforms for decision making. *Are the teams aligned? Do team members know how to ask the right questions, process information, and test the integrity of their conclusions? Have you removed complexity, so there's a clear line of sight from start to end of the process?*

Once teams are aligned and members are equipped with the know-how, and once noise in the system has been removed, they relieve decision-making pressure up the line and create a powerhouse for making the decisions that will get you to *where you want to be.* LE

Howard M. Guttman is principal of Guttman Development Strategies and author of a new book, Coach Yourself to Win *(McGraw-Hill). Visit www.coachyourselftowin.com.*

ACTION: Delegate some decision making.