

Reserve judgment

Make the call

“Not to decide is to decide,” a theologian named Harvey Cox once said.

If you fail to make a decision, you decide by default. You also abandon your role as leader and turn the fate of your project over to the prevailing wind or the strongest personality in the group.

Get input, involve your employees in the process from the beginning, and take them with you every step of the way.

But, when it comes time to make the call, there can only be one arbiter, and you're it.

Deciding not to act may be a valid choice. Sometimes doing nothing is the most effective strategy. And empowering one of your employees to make the decision is also perfectly valid. But, failing to decide at all is never a good call. Get as much information and input as you can. Weigh possible courses of action carefully. Then, make the call.

Haste makes waste? Sure, sometimes. But waiting makes nothing, and failing to decide may create a real mess.

Make your decision. Don't look back. If you need to modify your course later, do it. No ship sails across the ocean in a straight line. It makes a series of tacking maneuvers.

If you find yourself hesitant or unwilling to make a decision, these three observations about decision-making can help you.

You don't have to know everything: Good thing, because you never will. Make yourself as well informed as possible; then, make the best decision you can, based on what you know.

You don't have to be sure: Decisions feel a whole lot better when they come with a sense of certainty. But, you can't afford to wait until you're certain. And, remember, sometimes when you're dead-certain, you can still be dead-wrong.

You don't even have to be right: The number-one fear when making a decision is being wrong (especially if you're in a position where your mistakes are quite visible).

“The percentage of mistakes in quick decisions is no greater than in long-drawn-out vacillations, and the effect of decisiveness itself makes things go and creates confidence.”

—Anne O’Hare McCormick