

The Power of Choice

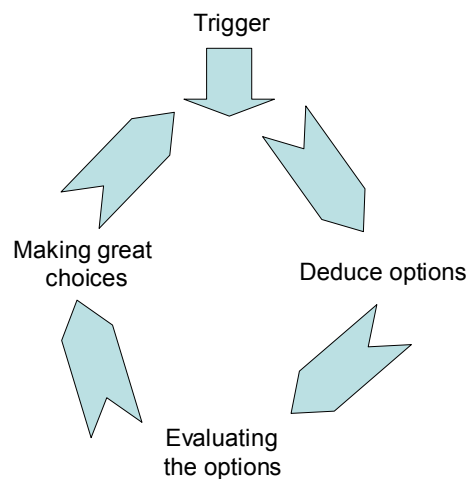
There are many leadership theories in the market place to help organisations and individuals improve. Some of these are new, others are old theories dressed as new and some others are words of wisdom from experts in their fields.

I would like to introduce a fundamental theory that is very powerful and easy to apply but often overlooked. I am talking about Choice.

Webster defines choice as, '*a selection, an alternative, the right or power to choose*'.

It comes down to a very simple step – to act or not to act on the choice. It represents a verb, an action, thereby giving the chooser the power to choose from a selection or if just two, an alternative. What it ultimately points to is that the power is with you.

The Power of Choice process



Deducing Options

To make a choice, we need options. There are times when we have no options and therefore the choice is automatic. But in most cases we do have options available to us and I want to work through the deduction process here.

Options are derived based on a stimulus. A stimulus is a trigger ; information or an event that requires an action from us. Stimuli present themselves to us everyday; and very quickly and sometimes automatically we know the options available to us based on the stimulus. From here we make our choice.

An example to explain

I was at a mall recently. Having parked my car, I walked towards the lift. To get to the lift required me to open a set of doors to the waiting area. As I opened the door, I noticed a lady walking some distance behind. She was not right behind me but I knew that within 4 steps she would be at the door too. I proceeded to wait with the door opened for her. I saw a little startled face looking back at me.

She said “Thank you, not many people bother these days.”

I responded by saying “You are welcome. You were not too far away, so I thought I would wait for you.”.

To which she then said, “Most of the time I have the total opposite experience.”

I had a couple of options – to hold the door open or to let it shut. I had the power of choice and **I** chose to **act** on it.

The result - a **SMALL** action on my part – but a **HUGE** impact on my recipient.

This is a simple example yet applicable to any situation. How many such incidents have we let pass in our organisations that led to revenue floating out the door? I see it all the time in the service industry because a staff member did not exercise his/her choice with regards to helping a customer, colleague, manager or department.

Evaluating the Options

No w that we have deduced options, what does evaluating our options involve? :

Common Sense

In the case of the lady at the car park, it seemed like pure common sense to treat the lady as a fellow human being and hold the door open for her. This required me giving her the respect that I wanted bestowed upon me.

Courage and Commitment

It requires courage and commitment to act on your choice. This is the 'locking in' step in the Power of Choice process.

There have been many instances where I have held the door open for others and not received any form of gratitude, let alone acknowledgement of the act. Sometimes the indifference of the offer is shown prior to the other person getting to the door. That is where courage comes in. That is, no matter what the response of the other, I still hold onto my original intent or choice - the courage to stand by my offering and the commitment to follow through no matter what the other's response is.

Information

Information or an event is the stimulus that makes us take action. There are various stimuli that present themselves everyday to us. Between the stimulus and our response, lies choice!

Attitude

Attitude is one's disposition. It is our 'way of being' or 'steady state'. Generally, we are all aware of our general attitude towards people and situations. Sometimes due to circumstances, like having a bad day, our attitude could vary from its natural 'steady state'.

Where information is the stimulus that helps us derive our options, attitude is the component that helps us make the choice from our options. Attitude is therefore an important ingredient in the choices we make. It has a huge impact in making our choice and its consequences.

Making Great Choices

We have all made unwise choices at some point in our lives. It is sometimes inevitable, sometimes intentional, sometimes regrettable and sometimes transformational.

Inevitable Choices are where the alternative is not a viable option. This is a case where an organisation needs to downsize, assuming all other avenues have been explored. In this instance the best thing one can do is to carry this out in the most humane manner with honesty and integrity.

Intentional Choices are where you know that the alternative option is the wisest option, yet you intentionally choose the alternative option. Again there are many instances of these. In organisations, this is when we may bypass a certain process or person intentionally for various reasons. Or where we circumvent a certain procedure because we have the power and privilege to do so. Corruption is a classic example of the latter

Regrettable Choices are where at the point of making the choice you are 'aware' of what the wisest choice is, however your steady state or way of being at that moment stops you from acting on it. These are usually choices made when emotions are running

high, where you regret your choice as soon as have you made it or regret the choice as the words have left your mouth.

How many of us have been in this situation in the workplace and personal life? The power is still in the chooser's hands to undo the wrong and recover the situation.

Transformational Choices are what we should all be aspiring to. In this instance, we take control and are accountable for making great choices. Accountability means taking responsibility for the choices you make. Even if you have made an unwise choice, you are in control to remedy it or to deal with the consequences. It is a big responsibility being accountable, however one with many rewards when executed.

Learning to make transformational choices gives us the power to be extraordinary, therefore directly impacting you as an individual and the organisation that you represent.

Choice is an active process. It is the difference between a customer continuing to do business with your organisation versus taking their business elsewhere. Use it wisely.

So, what is your choice?

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