

## **Decision-making Made Easy**

Here is the second half of Decision-making Made Easy. This part is lifted from my book, *Making Life Easier, Simple Systems to Manage Your Time, Things, Money and Life*.

### **Strategies for Improving Decision-making**

\_\_\_ Evaluate the role of unconscious factors that might affect your decision and ways to objectively evaluate their proper role.

\_\_\_ Identify the decision-making tool most appropriate for your present situation.

\_\_\_ Develop an action plan that supports change.

### Pro's and Con's Analysis

Perhaps the simplest decision-making method, doing a pro's and con's analysis just means putting all the pluses of a decision on one side of a page, and the minuses on the other. Spending a few minutes honestly brainstorming what belongs in each column should produce a healthy list on both sides. Then you can evaluate the weighting each element should receive, such as, 'although there are more points on this side than the other, this one factor is three times more important than the corresponding factor on the other side.'

The benefit of this approach is that it encourages looking at a decision from multiple angles, helps reduce the role of emotion in decision-making, and slows down the process so that objectivity can overcome automatic reactions.

### Feature comparisons

Feature comparisons are mainly used for purchase or keep vs. discard decisions. Before purchasing a new and expensive piece of equipment or service, you might want to decide in advance which features you want, which ones are must-haves, and which ones are optional. This allows quickly ruling out offerings that do not have must-have features and places optional features in context so the more important features stand out more clearly. Where the purchase involves large amounts of money or a long-term commitment, such as buying a house, the best way to lay all this out and make comparisons might be with a spreadsheet.

### Study evaluative reports

Evaluative reports, such as *Consumer Reports*, can be a great help in making consumer decisions. The approach used by ratings organizations also serves as a model for how to go about making objective decisions. The caveat to using these ratings for equipment purchases is that manufacturers change models so quickly that the version used for the study is often no longer available by the time the report is published.

### Impacts analysis

This approach looks at potential decisions from the viewpoint of who and what would be affected by various actions. This allows looking at possible outcomes and ways of mitigating them. Using pre-determined criteria to evaluate

outcomes reduces the likelihood that adverse results will be overlooked.

### Scenarios

This is the 'what if' approach to decision-making – imagining the outcomes if various approaches were implemented. If the potential outcomes are objectively analyzed, scenarios can be a powerful tool for spotting problems and adapting one's strategy accordingly. The hazard of this approach is allowing wishful thinking to color one's view of the possibilities that derive from various actions.