

# Decision Paradox



*No decision is a decision*

The paradox of decision making is that no decision is a decision, and always the worst one.

The difference between having others tell you what to do and being a leader is very much about making decisions. It's easy to do what you're instructed to do, but it takes leadership to make a decision. Leading comes with the burden of being responsible for both success and failure.

Human nature has thought us to avoid mistakes and failures; it's such a strong doctrine in our brain that it's become an integral part of our biology. We associate making wrong decisions with pain, which leads to fear of deciding unless we are entirely sure it will be right. The neocortex part of our brain that drives rational and analytical thinking represents our need for control. This part of our brain will try to convince us that if we have absolutely all the pieces of the puzzle, we can put together a perfect plan that will avoid pain. If we just do some more analysis, we will get it right, and avoid pain. We have to realize that this is just an illusion created in our minds.

The limbic brain on the other side drives human behavior and occupies with things such as trust and feelings. The limbic brain, therefore, is key to all decision making but has no capacity for language, numbers, facts and figures. As a result, even if you have all the pieces of the puzzle and know all the facts, it may still not feel right. The expression "gut decisions" relates to this feeling, and it most certainly does not happen in the stomach. The irony is that our rational neocortex wants more facts, while at some point we complicate the situation by adding more because our limbic brain has no capacity for facts. The result is often a negative spiral.

Let's realize that the only way to move forward, even at risk of wrong decisions, is to make a decision. The paradox is that the increased levels of cortisol, tension and negative stress (oxidative stress) we experience while not making a decision, is the exact same tension, stress and pain we are trying to avoid in making the wrong decision. Therefore, the worst decision you can ever make for yourself is not to decide at all.

"In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is to do nothing."

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ole K Sivertsen".

Ole Kristian Sivertsen

