



ADEPT INSIGHT

Carpe Diem: A Decision-Making Strategy?

Recently I was working with a client who is by far one the more organized people I have ever met. He has folders neatly arranged on his desk; everything is in order in his inbox and outbox. His filing system is absolutely glorious – he can immediately pull records from years back. My thought, as I'm sure you are thinking, was "This guy has it together. Why would he need my coaching and consulting services?" His issue is that he had a difficult time making decisions. I was being brought in to help him in the one area that he didn't have completely in order. I told him that the best decision-making strategy was Carpe Diem.

Typically, when I'm brought in to address decision-making, I am usually conducting a full-day seminar on Decision-Making & Problem Solving in which I cover the principles of several problem solving models and spend some time working on root-cause analysis strategies such as the Ishikawa Diagram (Fishbone), the Five-Why Technique or the Pareto Analysis. For this gentleman, he just wanted a quick and easy strategy for helping him arrive at a decision. After listening to him tell me about the challenges he was facing, and getting an understanding of exactly what he needs to do, how it needs to be done and when it needs to be completed, I told him that I have something in mind that we can go over to help him with his decision-making challenges. My plan was to introduce him to a very easy 3-Step Process I call the *PDIE Process: Plan, Decide & Implement, Evaluate*.

Step 1: Planning for the Decision

This step lays the foundation for making the decision. This is the homework phase where you go through a Q&A session with yourself to get a solid understanding of what you're up against. There are seven questions to ask yourself, and if answered honestly, will point you in the right direction and move you into step two. Those questions are:

1. When does a decision need to be made?
2. What would happen if a decision wasn't made?
3. Does this decision have far-reaching effects?
4. What affects on the organization does the decision have? Long-term/Short-term?
5. Who are the key players involved?
6. What are the needed resources?
7. Can I make this decision on my own or should I enlist the help of someone else?



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After presenting this list of questions to him, it became apparent that this was one of the hurdles that he faced when attempting to make decisions. He did not have a platform for the decision-making process and without this groundwork he wandered aimlessly and became frustrated with his indecisiveness. I gave him a little worksheet so that he can work his way through step one of the process. I have found that writing things down helps to get the creative juices flowing and brings a degree of clarity to the situation.

Step 2: Decide & Implement

Now that you have worked your way through step one and have completed your homework, you are ready to begin identifying some possible options. The best strategy in this phase is to come up with as many reasonable possibilities as you can and begin weighing the pros and cons of each. As you go through this process, write down each possible option and on one side of the paper jot down the pros and on the other side jot down the cons. One thing that I will caution you on as you go through this process is to weigh the pros and cons. Just because one option has more pros than cons, that does not mean that it is the best option. Although there may only be one con, the weight of that con might be so heavy that it totally outweighs all of the pros. You have to measure this with some forward thinking; thinking about what would happen if you implemented this option. This is not a mathematical equation – you have to place value on everything. Once you have charted this out you are ready to choose the best option; essentially, make your decision and implement it.

Step 3: Evaluate

The final step in the process is to evaluate the effects of your decision. You will have to develop some sort of checklist for evaluating those results and ask yourself if you can measure the success of the decision and how. Also, ask yourself if the option is achieving its purpose. Basically, you want to take a step back and objectively evaluate the situation. As in most things, honesty is the best policy. So answer yourself honestly. If the decision is not working out according to plan, you may want to try implementing another option and observing how that one works out.

But as I mentioned to my client, Carpe Diem is the best strategy for decision-making. Start working your way through the decision-making process right away. In the words of the Blue-collar comedian, Larry the Cable Guy, "Get 'er done!" As always, I welcome your thoughts and feedback. Drop me a line at lhsan@adeptinsight.net .