

CSP E-Lesson 9, Fall 2008

Words of Wisdom: "Learning to make good decisions about my goals got my career on the fast track. I used to just let things happen; now, I'm in charge of my life!"

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I Can't Make Up My Mind

Kim lets out a frustrated groan as she plops down on a bench in the cafeteria next to her friends, Juan and Susan.

"What's up?" Juan looks up with a quizzical expression on his face.

Kim spears a juicy piece of tomato from her salad and answers, "I heard from Mr. James at Pack and Trek Sporting Goods. I can have the part-time job if I want it, starting this coming Saturday."

"That's good news, right?" asks Susan.

"Well, I need the money if I want to go to Wilderness camp this summer," Kim replies. "And I'll get a discount on camping equipment. I just hate to give up my weekends and miss out on the fun."

"Uh, how much would you really miss, Kim? We do the same thing every weekend—go for a run, hang out online and then watch movies," Juan asks. He checks his watch, polishes off his apple and gets ready to head to his next class. "Good luck on your decision, Kim."

What process do you follow to make decisions? Place a one (1) beside the decision-making technique below that you use most often, a two (2) by the technique you use next most often and so on. Place a zero by techniques you don't use at all.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weigh the pros and cons of a decision | <input type="checkbox"/> Go to a fortune teller |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Look at a decision from different points of view | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignore the decision until it's too late |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flip a coin | <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate the alternatives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ask an expert for advice | <input type="checkbox"/> Visualize the outcomes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assess the risks | <input type="checkbox"/> Let someone else decide |

Be the "Go To" Person

In employment situations, you will be judged by how well and how quickly you can make decisions. In any job at any level, making poor decisions or putting decisions off will cost your company money, and you will be held responsible.

What's the fastest way to boost your career quickly? Become known as the "Go To" person for smart decisions. How do you do this? Just practice the following six problem-solving steps until you become good at them.

Problem-Solving Steps

1. *Identify the problem.* Don't confuse a symptom with the problem itself. For example, a headache is a symptom. The problem may be poor eyesight, allergies, or something else.
2. *Gather information.* Your decision will not be good if your information is bad. Make sure you locate the most relevant and unbiased information available about the problem.
3. *Analyze the problem.* Weigh the pros and cons and evaluate the risks of different solutions.
4. *Summarize the problem.* Write down the problem as you see it and list ways you can solve it.
5. *Make the decision.* Evaluate your summary and decide on the best solution.
6. *Take action.* Taking effective action may not be easy, especially if other people are involved. The action may demand a lot of time and cause you frustration.

Derek Lombardi can tell you how he became a "Go To" person. Read Derek's story and answer the questions.

Derek's Assignment

"Derek, you're good at recognizing problems and finding solutions, and I need your help," Nick Keller, Derek's boss tells him. "Worker productivity is down at the company and absenteeism is growing. Our health insurance company is threatening to raise rates because so many employees are making medical claims." A deep frown creases Nick's forehead. "We need to turn things around," he says.

"I appreciate your confidence in me, Mr. Keller," Derek says. His mind is already shifting into gear as he considers the company's problems, "Let me think about what you've told me."

Be the "Go To" Person (Continued)

After leaving the office, Derek walks around the facility to watch the employees work. As he turns a corner, he sees a group of material handlers taking a cigarette break outside the door. On the loading dock, Tom Schaeffer is bending over and lifting cartons to load into a van.

"Hey, Tom, where's your back belt?" Derek yells over to the dock.

"Ah, it's hanging up over there. I don't need it," Tom yells back, then continues loading.

Returning to his office, Derek starts a conversation with Marisa Diehl as he passes her desk.

"Marisa, I've put on a few pounds, and I'm not happy about it. Do you know a place to work out?"

"Join the crowd, Derek! I've gained twelve pounds since I started working here." She laughs and points at a box, "It's those doughnuts we give people on their birthday!" She whispers, "Look around! We're all overweight. I don't get much exercise either, being at this desk eight hours a day. And the snacks in the vending machine are too much temptation for me, especially when I'm stressed."

"What are you stressed about?" Derek asks.

"Are you kidding? Mr. Keller has a fit if every report isn't perfect or if a load is delivered late. Haven't you heard him yell?" Marisa shakes her head. "Don't say anything, but last week I went home early two days because I had a splitting headache from listening to him."

A picture of the problem forms in Derek's mind. He's ready to make notes about what he's learned.

Help Derek prepare his suggestions for Mr. Keller. Use the six steps for decision making from page 2.

A. Identify the problem at Heron Manufacturing.

List three symptoms of the problem.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Be the "Go To" Person (Continued)

B. Gather information. List five pieces of relevant information Derek found on his walk.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

C. Analyze the problem. Answering these questions will help.

1. Can anything be done about the problem? _____
2. Who would benefit from a solution? _____

3. Who would need to be involved in a solution? _____

4. Who might resist a solution and why? _____

5. What are the chances of a successful solution? _____

D. Summarize the problem.

List three options for solving the problem.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

E. Make your decision. Describe the best solution Derek can present to his boss.

F. Take Action. List four actions needed to make the decision work.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Making Decisions about Your Life Goals

Scoring a goal in a game is rewarding. Achieving in your career can be even more rewarding. Success builds your confidence. It also motivates you to achieve more and helps you measure your progress.

One important part of goal setting is setting priorities, that is, making decisions about what you need to do and in what order. To help you get started, here are some guidelines to follow.

- Set realistic long-term and short-term goals for your career and your personal life.
- Establish a specific time frame for your goals and write the time frame down.
- List the actions you must take to achieve each goal.
- Adjust your goals when necessary.

Every journey starts with the first step

What do you want in the future? Deciding this is your first step toward getting what you want. Decide on a long-term goal for yourself in each of the following categories and include a time frame. Add one more category of your choice. For example, your career goal might be, "I want to be a law enforcement officer."

Career _____

Education _____

Physical health _____

Financial Future _____

Category of your choice _____

Decide How to Break the Goal Down

Large goals guide your life. However, they can only be achieved by breaking them down into smaller goals that you can start achieving right now. One person decided to break down his career goal into three levels. He could have broken the goal into several more levels.

- **Long-term goal.** "In 15 years I want to be an investigative reporter for a major news publication."
- **Medium-term goal.** "In 8 years I want to be a local news reporter."
- **Short term goal.** "This year I want to have at least one article published online or in a newspaper."

Making Decisions about Your Life Goals (Continued)

Using the six-step decision-making process from page 2 helps in prioritizing goals. Follow the high school senior who wants to make law enforcement her career.

Category: Career

Long-term goal: "I want to be a law enforcement officer."

- *Identify the problem:* Being a law enforcement officer takes training over many years.
- *Gather information:* After reading about jobs in the security field, I need to earn a two-year college degree minimum. Some jobs require a four-year or graduate degree.
- *Analyze the problem:* I don't have enough money for four years of college. I could work for a while and save money to go to school, but once I start earning money, I may lose interest in school and never go.
- *Summarize the problem.* I could work part time and go to community college nearby, or I could get a college loan and go full time to a state university further away. Paying back the loan would take a long time, but I'd finish college faster and earn a higher salary sooner, which would help with the loan. Paying back a big loan would be depressing, though.
- *Make the decision.* I need to start school now. I'll go two years to community college and work to save money. Then, if I need to borrow money for two years at the university, I'll get a loan.
- *Take action.* Choose a university with a good security services program. Learn what prerequisites are needed from community college, enroll in community college, find out what hours I'll be in school, find a part-time job that allows me to work when I'm not in class.

The decision-making process used in the example makes the job of setting intermediate-term and short-term goals easier. Write the intermediate- and short-term goal of this future law enforcement officer.

Intermediate-term goal _____

Short-term goal _____

Making Decisions about Your Life Goals (Continued)

Select one of your long-term goals and decide how to break it down into an intermediate-term and short-term goal. Use the six-step decision-making process from page 2. Follow the law enforcement example.

Category: _____

Long-term goal: _____

- *Identify the problem:* _____

- *Gather information:* _____

- *Analyze the problem:* _____

- *Summarize the problem.* _____

- *Make the decision.* _____

- *Take action.* _____

Write your intermediate-term and short-term goal in this category. Use plain paper to make decisions about your intermediate-term and short-term goals in the other categories.

Intermediate-term goal _____

Short-term goal _____

I Think I Can, I Think I Can

Making good decisions that help you reach your goals builds your self-esteem. Think of a time when you did something important after making tough decisions. How did you feel? Excited? Relieved? There's an old saying that "Success breeds success." By reaching one success, you'll be motivated to try harder to reach the next success, and you'll feel better about yourself.

Caution! "Feeling good about yourself" happens only if you follow the two important rules given below. Don't forget these or you may sabotage yourself.

- *Set realistic goals that you know you can achieve with hard work.* Don't set your goals so high that they are impossible to reach. For example, even though you might like to own a high-priced, fancy car by age 25, that is an unattainable goal for many young people. Can you own a good used car by age 25? Probably. That's an intermediate goal you can work toward.
- *Review and adjust your goals regularly.* Your goals can change! And, sometimes, they should. For example, maybe you'd like to stay home to raise your children, but, if the economy is bad, you may have to work just to feed the family. This goal can be adjusted to part-time work with part-time day care for the children. If you adjust a goal, apply the six-step decision making process to the new goal so you expect to reach it successfully.

What Makes You Tick?

What motivates you? Free time? Helping other people? Money? Cars? Clothes? Caring for the environment? You can't achieve goals without motivation, so recognizing what motivates you will help you become successful.

Think of goals you've reached by this time. Are you a good athlete? Are you physically fit? Do you have a high grade-point average? Have you purchased a car with money you earned in a summer job? How did you reach this goal? What kept you motivated from day to day to reach the goal?

I Think I Can, I Think I Can (Continued)

List the strongest motivators in your life and describe why they motivate you. Two examples are given, though these may be different from your motivators.

Example Motivator 1: Competition

Why this is a motivator: I like to win. Wanting to win makes me try harder.

Example Motivator 2: Attention and respect of others

When people recognize me for something special I've done, I like it. If my name gets in the school paper or is announced over the loud speaker for an achievement, I like the feeling it gives me. It motivates me to keep being special.

My motivator: _____

Why this is a motivator: _____

My motivator: _____

Why this is a motivator: _____

How can you use your motivations to help you achieve your goals in the future? If you are motivated by competition, can you be motivated by competing with yourself? If you are motivated by money, will thinking about a promotion and an increase in salary keep you on track?

Describe how you can use your past motivations to achieve your goals in the future.

I Think I Can, I Think I Can (Continued)

Make Goal Setting a Habit

Setting goals is one thing. Keeping them in mind when you get caught up in day-to-day activities is another.

To make keeping your goals a habit, you'll have to practice. Some experts say it takes 21 days to form a habit. So, if you want to improve your physical condition, you need to do certain things each day for 21 days.

List three things a person can do each day for 21 days to achieve a new physical fitness goal. For example, you might walk one mile a day for three weeks or eat one fruit and one vegetable each day for 21 days.

Goal to reach: Improve my physical fitness.

Activity 1: _____

Activity 2: _____

Activity 3: _____

Choose your personal short-term goal from page seven and list three things you can do each day for 21 days to achieve the goal.

Goal to reach: _____

Activity 1: _____

Activity 2: _____

Activity 3: _____

Print your list and tape it to the top of your computer. Check off your accomplishments at the end of each day.