

Hard nosed or clear headed?

Some considerations regarding decision making

I was mentoring a client last week about some important decisions she had to make in her business. 'Gosh' she said 'aren't you hard nosed?' This quite took me aback as I really would not view myself as a particularly tough operator. I have known far more ruthless. I simply saw an urgent need to agree her future direction and she thought my approach was really harsh.

So what was going on here? It was simple. She was living in a comfy world of grey and my questioning was forcing her to move into the clarity of black or white. This can feel extremely threatening, hence the 'hard nosed' comment. However, successful entrepreneurs know that making timely decisions is an essential part of building any profitable business.

Many people find it hard to make decisions. Maybe you are one of them? For example most of us have probably agonised in a relationship. Is this the right person for me should I go or should I stay? These situations can be literally life changing and the decision making quite agonising.

In business, decisions have to be made every day or more likely every hour. Do we hire this person? At what price do we offer the product? What should we focus on this month? Have we come to the end of the road with this project? Should we cancel this event now?

When I facilitate business workshops they seldom generate totally new ideas. More often than not they act as a forum for empowering those present to make the decisions which have lain around waiting for months or in some cases years. It is not surprising that after these sessions people often say how refreshing it was. With those decisions made and out of the way the team can literally breathe rather than being suffocated by so much uncertainty.

But what about those really hard decisions? More often than not the delay is about waiting for circumstances to change in your favour. However, if we faced up to reality rather than unrealistic expectations we would see that in many cases it was a classic case of wishful thinking. There is a great way to force these

decisions although this can be very confronting for some. The idea is to make the decision and then await developments. Let me give you a real example. A client was agonising over whether he should close his business, as sales were down, the debts were piling up and the cash was simply not flowing in. So we set a specific date and time by which the financial position had to meet some very precise criterion or else the enterprise would be wound up. I got him to post the decision criteria together with the date and time on his board so it was visible as he worked towards it. We also agreed a specific set of actions he would take immediately depending if the answer was to stay in business or let it go. So the decision had actually been made and it was just the circumstances that needed to match the requirements on the deadline date. The relief for my client as the decision was in fact made ahead of time was plain to see.

ACTION

Answer the following questions honestly:

1. What are the top three items on your business or life agenda which are outstanding and need a decision?
2. How will you feel when the decisions are made?
3. What more (if anything) do you really need to know in order to make these decisions?
4. Where are you going to get this information?
5. How long will it take?
6. Who could help you decide (assuming this will help)
7. Set a plan to decide on these things NOW – maybe even make one decision today

Maybe I can help you with a tricky business decision – if so why not send me the details?

**Chris Kaday
Business
Mentor**