Leading in Uncertain Times– How MPL Leaders Can Thrive in a New Market

Michael Roberto, Bryant University

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POLL QUESTION

If you did not know the answer to this trivia question, which of the following "lifelines" would you choose to employ?

A: Ask the audience

B: Consult with a trusted friend

"If you have a yes-man working for you, one of you is redundant."

Barry Rand, former CEO of Avis & AARP

MINDSETS THAT INHIBIT INNOVATION

Linear Mindset

Naysayer Mindset

Benchmarking Mindset

Prediction Mindset
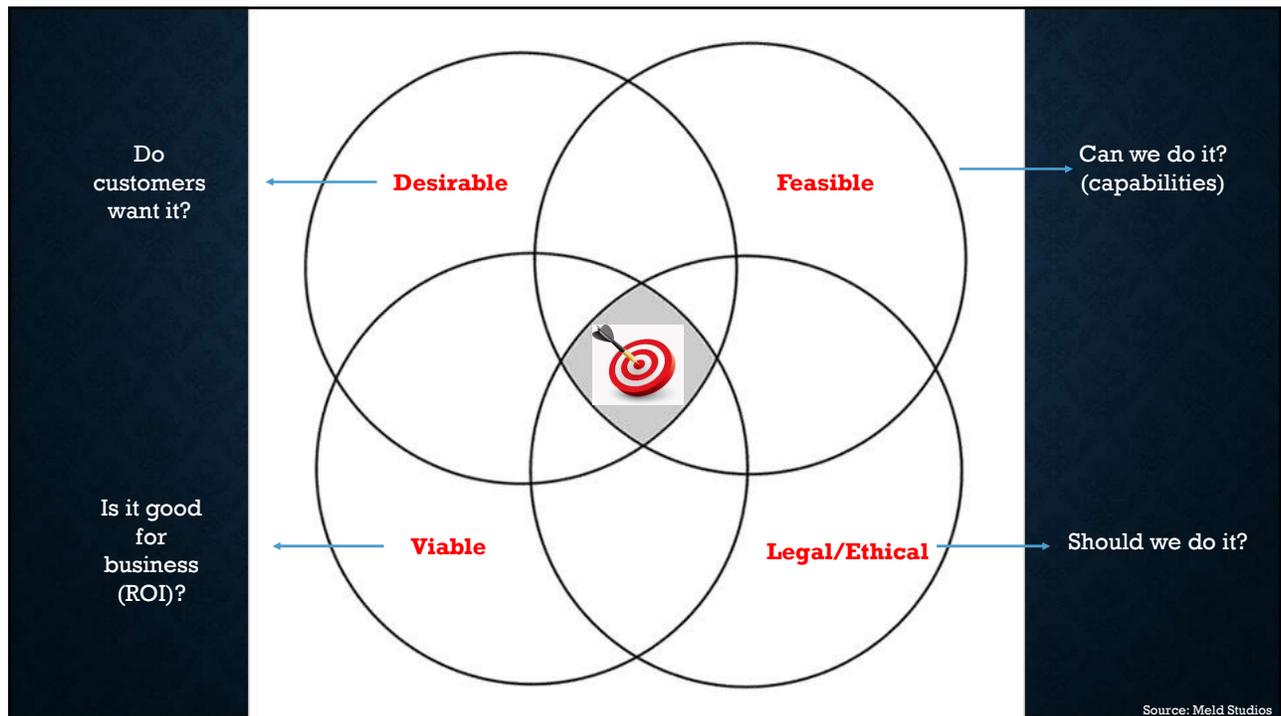
Do customers want it?

Desirable

Feasible

Can we do it? (capabilities)

Is it good for business (ROI)?

Viable

Legal/Ethical

Should we do it?

Source: Meld Studios

DRIVING INNOVATION THROUGH *CALCULATED RISK TAKING*
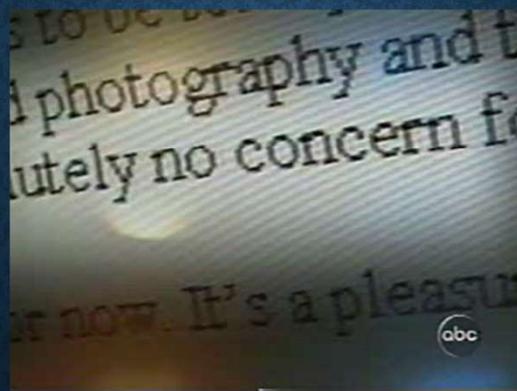
- Build a climate of candor
- Decide how to decide
- Cultivate constructive conflict
- Test, experiment, and prototype
- Reflect & learn systematically

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MISSION LEADER LINDA HAM

Investigator: As a manager, how do you seek out dissenting opinions?

MMT Chair: Well, when I hear about them.

Investigator: By their very nature you may not hear about them.

MMT Chair: Well, when somebody comes forward and tells me about them.

Investigator: But, what techniques do you use to *get* them?

Apparently, the MMT Chair did not have an answer to this final question.

SKETCHING EXERCISE

GOOGLE'S PROJECT ARISTOTLE

"Psychological safety was far and away the most important of the five dynamics we found – it's the underpinning of the other four."

Julia Rozovsky
Google People Operations

1 Psychological Safety
Team members feel safe to take risks and be vulnerable in front of each other.

2 Dependability
Team members get things done on time and meet Google's high bar for excellence.

3 Structure & Clarity
Team members have clear roles, plans, and goals.

4 Meaning
Work is personally important to team members.

5 Impact
Team members think their work matters and creates change.

re:Work

POLL QUESTION

Employees in my organization feel very comfortable sharing bad news, expressing dissenting views, and challenging the conventional wisdom.

1 = strongly agree
2 = agree
3 = neither agree nor disagree
4 = disagree
5 = strongly disagree

HOW TO BUILD PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Invite Input
- Ask for alternative points of view
- Encourage people to question the conventional wisdom
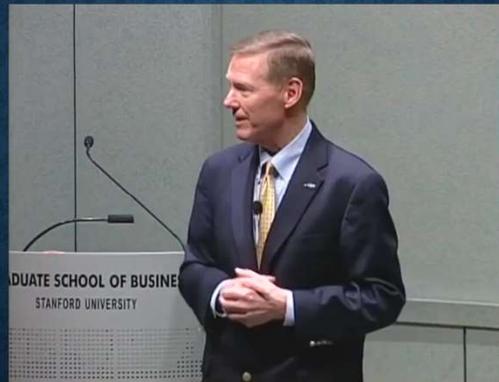- Stress that you want to learn from them

Discuss Mistakes
- Share stories of your own failures
- Describe the lessons learned
- Encourage people to experiment

Celebrate Candor
- Thank those that share bad news
- Share stories of how candid dialogue led to better solutions
- Explain how dissenting views have reshaped your thinking

I said, "Early, often, ugly. It's O.K. It doesn't have to be perfect because then I can course-correct much, much faster." No amount of ugly truth scares me. It's just information to make a decision.

Christa Quarles, CEO of Corel Corp.

THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

- **In the early morning of October 16, 1962, President Kennedy was told that evidence from spy plane missions indicated that the Soviet Union had begun to place missiles in Cuba.**

- **The group that met on October 16th to examine the photos met almost continuously through the next 12 days.**

- **Most believed that some action had to be taken, and they felt that an air strike "could be the only course."**
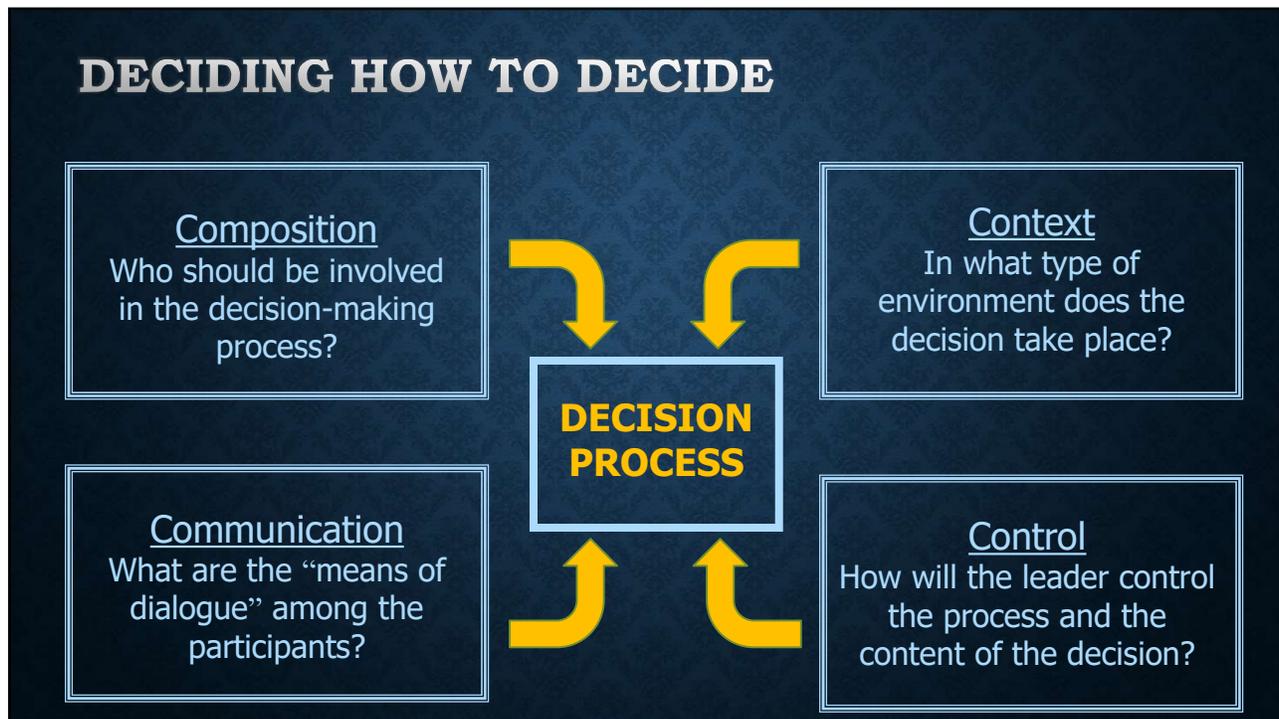
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DECIDING HOW TO DECIDE

- Get JFK out of the room

- Suspend the rules of protocol

- Skeptical generalists, not departmental spokespeople

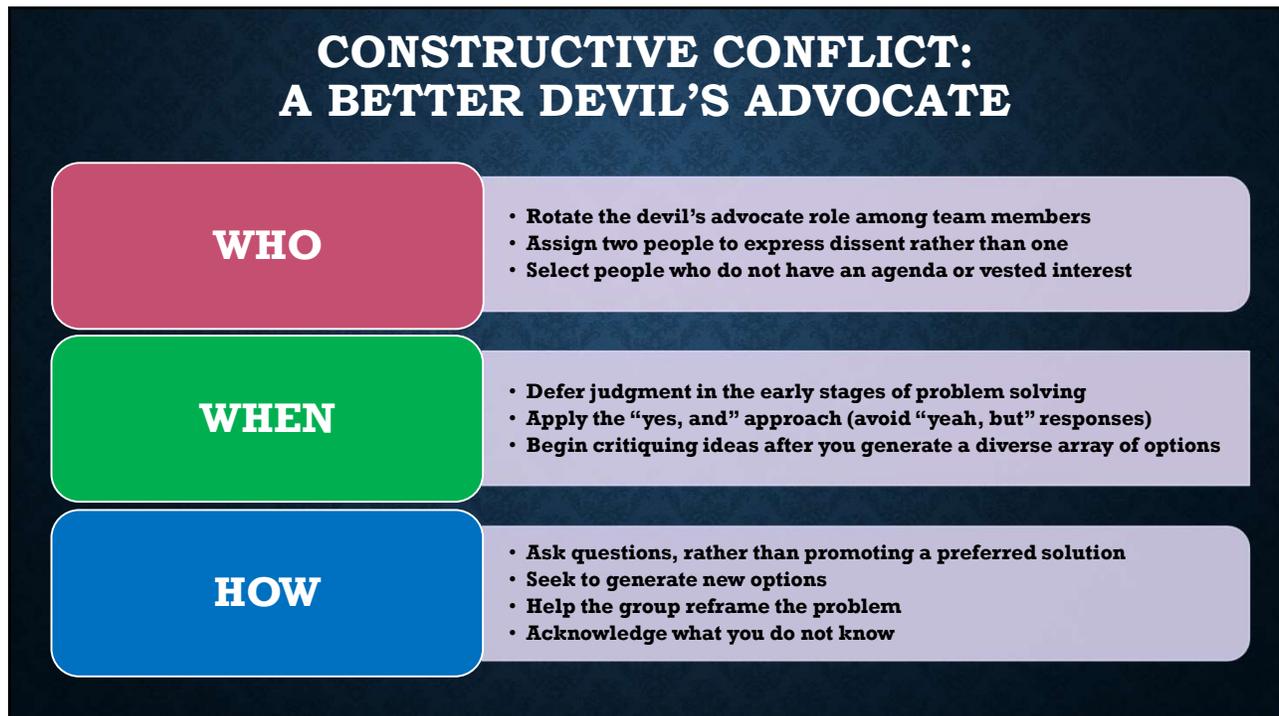- Split into subgroups, generate and debate alternatives

- Employ devil's advocates

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DECIDING HOW TO DECIDE

Composition
Who should be involved in the decision-making process?

Context
In what type of environment does the decision take place?

DECISION PROCESS

Communication
What are the "means of dialogue" among the participants?

Control
How will the leader control the process and the content of the decision?

CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT:
A BETTER DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

WHO
- Rotate the devil's advocate role among team members
- Assign two people to express dissent rather than one
- Select people who do not have an agenda or vested interest

WHEN
- Defer judgment in the early stages of problem solving
- Apply the "yes, and" approach (avoid "yeah, but" responses)
- Begin critiquing ideas after you generate a diverse array of options

HOW
- Ask questions, rather than promoting a preferred solution
- Seek to generate new options
- Help the group reframe the problem
- Acknowledge what you do not know

A BETTER DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

In our senior management meetings, we appoint a designated devil's advocate, as we call it. So if we're discussing a critical issue, we'll appoint someone — and the role rotates — to be the devil's advocate, no matter what their personal point of view is. That helps you avoid groupthink.

Kevin Lofton, CEO of Catholic Health Initiatives (Denver-based healthcare system)

TYPE OF QUESTION	SAMPLE PHRASING
OPTION GENERATION	What are some other options for solving this problem? Don't worry if it sounds foolish or infeasible…
CAUSE-EFFECT	Why might that action cause the outcome we desire? Help me understand the cause-effect relationship in more depth…
ASSUMPTION PROBING	What must be true for this plan to succeed? Let's try to list our implicit assumptions and distinguish them clearly from the facts in this case…
ROLE PLAY	What would a different set of people do if they were in our shoes? How might others approach this problem?
TEST & LEARN	How might we design a test or experiment to determine if this plan of action will succeed? What could we learn from an experiment?

Best Buy closing all stores, shifting to curbside pickup due to COVID-19

Chance Miller - Apr. 29th 2020 4:40 pm   @ChanceHMiller

Comments

Best Buy is the latest retailer to announce that it is closing all stores due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The company will instead offer curbside pickup and delivery, much like many other retailers have done over the last week as the coronavirus pandemic evolves.

TEST, EXPERIMENT, AND PROTOTYPE

Launch   Learn Quickly   Iterate

RENT THE RUNWAY

RAT: Riskiest Assumption Test
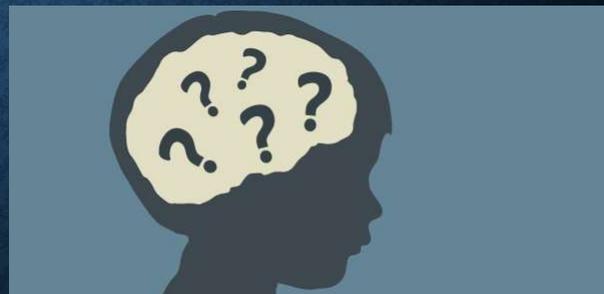
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TWO CONTRASTING APPROACHES

Testing to Validate   Testing to Learn

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REFLECT & LEARN SYSTEMATICALLY

- What did we set out to do?
- What actually happened?
- What went well? What did not go as expected? Why?
- What should we do differently moving forward?

The After-Action Review Process

THE PRE-MORTEM

WORKING BACKWARDS

Heading	Name the product in a way the reader (i.e., your target customers) will understand.
Subheading	Describe who the market for the product is and what benefit they get.
Summary	Give a summary of the product and the benefit. Problem: Describe the problem your product solves.
Solution	Describe how your product elegantly solves the problem.
Quote from You	A quote from a spokesperson in your company.
How to get Started	Describe how easy it is to get started.
Customer Quote	Provide a quote from a hypothetical customer that describes how they experienced the benefit.
Call to Action	Wrap it up and give pointers where the reader should go next

Source: https://www.inc.com/justin-bariso/amazon-uses-a-secret-process-for-launching-new-ideas-and-it-can-transform-way-you-work.html

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DRIVING INNOVATION THROUGH *CALCULATED RISK TAKING*

- **Build a climate of candor**
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