

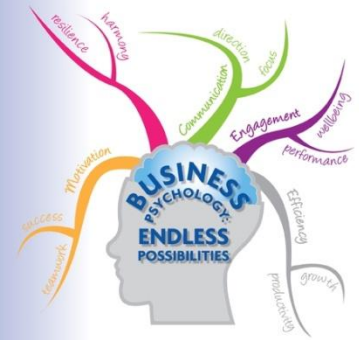


10th Annual Conference

6th - 8th May 2010

Robinson Executive Centre Wyboston MK44 3AL

www.theabp.org.uk



Paralysed by fear and alight with excitement:
How good decision making is noisy, slow,
imprecise, and awash with emotion



Sarah Lewis

Appreciating Change



Making a Decision

- Getting married
- Having children
- Buying a house, taking on a mortgage
- Buying a horse
- Agreeing to be Conference Dean
- Going self-employed
- Going to Relate



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Harvey



- What is this about?
- How did I make the decision?
- How does what we know about effective and efficient decision making help us help organisations with their decision-making challenges?

Myth Busting: The Myth

Decision making as

‘...the supposedly clear process of deriving logical consequences from assumed premises, the business of making reliable inferences, which, unencumbered by passion, allow us to choose the best possible option leading to the best possible outcome...’

(Damasio 1994, p167)



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Myth Busting

Which leads to an understanding of decision making as ‘A deficit (or problem solving) approach is characterised by, first, identifying the key problems and challenges: second, generating alternative solutions to these problems that are based on the identification of the root causes of these problems; third, evaluating and then choosing the most optimal of these different solutions; and fourth, putting this chosen solution into practice...’

(Linley 2010, p4)



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The experience



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So...

- The role of emotion in decision-making
- The computational brain process of decision-making
- What might this mean for organisational decision-making processes?



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Emotions in decision making

Losada and Heaphy 2004

Positive to Negative
comments

6:1

Connectivity

Generativity

Synchronism

Creativity



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Somatic Markers

- Internal feelings
- Not necessarily conscious
- Bodily sensations
- Accompany fleeting scenarios of future states
- Micro-second images
- Summation
- Transform the decision-making landscape. Act as a biasing device
- Much discounting takes place before consciousness

Damasio 1994



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Positive Emotions

- Greater creativity
- Flexible thinking and problem solving
- More motivated to achieve goals
- More open to new information
- Able to consider many aspects of situations simultaneously
- Work with complex information better
- Evaluate risks and make good judgements



Isen, Fredrickson and others



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Positivity not PollyAnna

- Enables people to respond flexibly and creatively when faced with challenges or complex situations
- Not because causes people to downplay, distort or ignore negative information
- Don't get stuck on the difficulties
- Both/and thinking
- Less attached to initial ideas
- Can switch attention
- Dopamine



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Emotions in decision making – what we have learnt

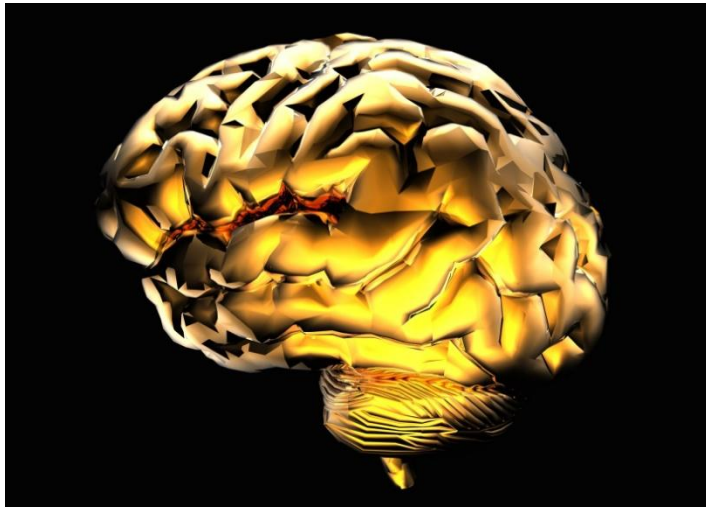
- Emotions are necessary to decision making. Decision making is not an emotionless activity
- Critical evaluation is not an emotion free activity.
- Positive comments must exceed critical comments by some margin for positivity to flourish
- Efficient decision-making is dependent on bias. Unbiased, unemotional decision making is a myth and a chimera
- Positive emotions are an aid to effective decision-making



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Cognitive processing



- Life is a compilation of billions of choice points
- Choice is about value
- Brains have goals
- Can assign values to options
- Which means we can perform valuations
- We can perform computations of options
- Goals allow us, in times of uncertainty, to keep the system from flailing about (saving energy, efficiency)
- Brains make decisions much more efficiently than computers

What does this mean for organisational decision-making?

- Discussion groups
- Bearing all this in mind how might you work with an organisation to help improve decision-making?
- What would you advise as general principles?
- What would you do if they wanted your help making decisions?
- How might it affect your coaching practice?
- What might an efficient decision making culture look like?



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My thoughts

- Emotions – encourage positivity through positive experiences, positive leadership, appreciative practices etc.
- Team building to raise ratio to 6:1
- Drain batteries slowly. – devolved, local decision making and continuous evolution. Empowerment. Relational coordination
- Save space – networks not pyramid
- Save Bandwidth – local, contextualise, opportunistic communication
- Have goals – view of destination, imprecise instructions for journey, use local knowledge, emergent plans and paths

Whole system, emergent processes, CAS, sense-making



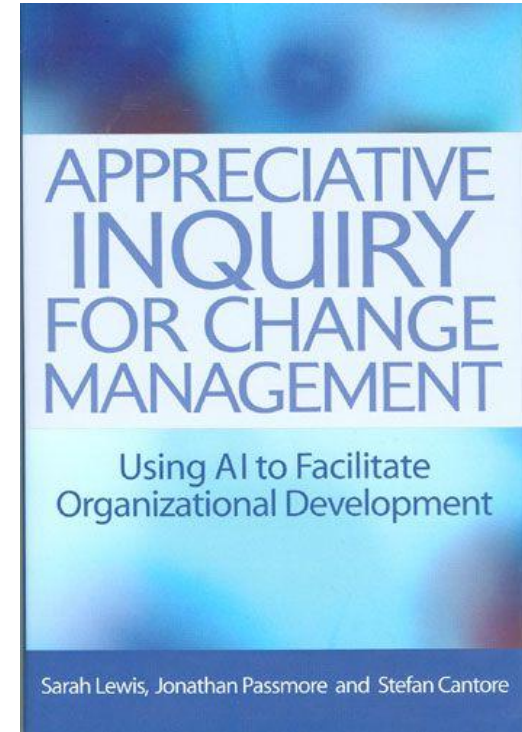
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Thank you

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Contact me for copy of slides, or to learn more about my services



Forthcoming publication
Positive Psychology at Work

Blackwell - Wiley



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