PAR
THE PAR GROUP

Cracking the Code: Chapter 3 – Decision Goals

Have you ever thought about those first few seconds when you start to interact with another person? Or about just how important those initial moments are to the outcome of a business conversation or meeting?

We believe that the first 15 seconds of any leadership interaction are critical because those initial seconds set you up for either success or failure. In this chapter, we will explain why those all important first seconds are significant, and then you can decide if using Decision Goals to initiate a leadership situation will help you be more successful.

In those first make-or-break seconds, the most effective leaders know that their potential followers need leaders who:

1. Show they are **CONFIDENT** in the goals they advocate

2. **INVITE OTHERS TO NEUTRAL** as they explain the strategy for achieving the goals, and

3. Acknowledge others (their followers) as **DECISION** makers.

These three actions are the basic criteria for establishing specific Decision Goals for an interaction. We even started this chapter with a Decision Goal. Go back and re-read the second paragraph. Did you notice our statement of confidence? *We believe that the first 15 seconds of any leadership interaction are critical because those initial seconds set you up for either success or failure.*

Then, did you find our invitation to neutral on the Decision Ladder? *We will explain why those all important first seconds….*

And finally, did you see how we acknowledged you, the reader, as the Decision Maker?

…then you can decide if this chapter on decision goals will help you be more successful.

Clearly, in just two short sentences, we accomplished our goal of showing you our confidence, inviting you to a neutral point, and, most importantly, acknowledging your role as Decision Maker. After all, you are the Decision Maker in this case. You decided to buy this book. You decided whether or not to buy into the concept of the Decision Ladder in the first two chapters.

Now, you are at your next decision point, deciding whether or not to buy into Decision Goals as a more effective way to start your leadership interactions. But before you make that decision, we want you to better understand what is behind our Decision Goal concept.

First, answer this: How many times have you been in a business meeting where a great deal of discussion took place, loads of questions were asked, and yet, after a couple of hours, no productive decision occurred? Or maybe the only decision reached was to continue the discussion at another meeting, which was destined to end with the same dismal results. Unfortunately, this happens all too often. Productivity experts believe that as much as one-third of a person's business day is spent in unproductive meetings.

This situation of un-productivity deteriorates even more in community organizations, non-profit groups or volunteer groups. Well intentioned people debate for hours the *whichness*

of what, while long, drawn-out meetings yield far fewer results than they are capable of ever producing.

Or how about frustrated parents with an unruly child? How often have you watched a parent threaten a child for the fourth or fifth time, saying, *This is the last time I'm going to tell you to stop hitting your sister…or stop whining…stop picking up that candy…stop standing on the furniture* …and the list goes on.

Unfortunately, in today's complicated busy world, most people just do not have enough hours in the day to accomplish everything needed to be done. Yet, people still attend business meetings that waste their time and community or volunteer groups that waste their talents. And, in too many cases, as with the frustrated parents, people invest time in meaningless threats that yield no behavioral changes and only add stress to their only safe-haven – their families.

Obviously, there has to be a better way, and there is. The answer is in the three criteria for creating effective Decision Goals – **Confidence**, **Inviting to Neutral**, and **Decision**.

1. CONFIDENCE

A leader cannot inspire anyone to a higher point of view than his own viewpoint. That is why it is absolutely essential you believe in the goal you advocate and why confidence is the first criteria of a good Decision Goal.

In the late 1980's, a little known Atlanta businessman, Billy Payne, dreamed of bringing the Olympics to his hometown. Privately he worked with his dream until he had transformed it into his belief. Only then did he take his idea public where he was greeted by smiles, polite nods and even by derision behind his back. Unshaken, he believed in his idea, and he continued to spread his vision of what could be to the movers and shakers in Atlanta, in the United States, and ultimately around the world to the International Olympic Committee. Billy Payne's confidence was rewarded with the 1996 Summer Olympics. Without that confidence, he would have long ago abandoned his Olympic idea and returned to his business pursuits.

Bernie Marcus and Arthur Blank believed they could succeed in the home improvement business in spite of having been fired from a leading home improvement retailer. Their confidence gave birth to Home Depot. Sam Walton's confidence created Wal-Mart and made him a billionaire many times over. Bill Gates, Donald Trump, Jack Welch, Lee Iacocca…the list of recognized leaders and their confidence is endless.

But you want to know how this applies to you. You are not trying to stage the next Olympics or build a better Wal-Mart. All you really want is budget approval to buy the new software for your financial system. All you really want is your colleagues' help on the new database project. All you really want is the sales vice president's approval for an additional sales person in your district.

The same confidence that delivered the 1996 Olympics to Atlanta and built Home Depot and Wal-Mart can deliver the software, cooperation or additional person you want. By using the three "All you really want" examples, mentioned before, we will show you how to demonstrate **CONFIDENCE**.

1. Software - I am <u>convinced </u>we can increase the speed and accuracy of our financial reporting system through the acquisition of a new software package.

2. Cooperation - I <u>believe</u> we can increase our customer service, decrease our current inventory levels by 10% and grow our business by 15% by improving the quality of our current database.

3. Sales Person - I <u>can deliver</u> 100% return on investment of an additional sales territory in my district within the next 18 months.

As you see, each statement opens with a strong statement of **CONFIDENCE.**

Before we go any further in talking about Decision Goals, we want to point out an important paradox of leadership, and that is the difference between goals and strategy. A goal is where you are going. Strategy is how you are going to get there. Unfortunately, many leadership initiatives fail because people become so locked on their strategies that they neglect to clearly articulate the goals.

In the first example we just gave, the goals are stated first – *speed and accuracy of financial reporting, increase customer service, decrease inventory and grow revenue;* and *100% return on investment.* The strategies on how to achieve the goals come next – *new software, improved database,* and *an additional sales territory*.

Why do you state goals separately from strategy? First, and foremost, by your keeping your goal and strategy separate, your followers are more included to buy into the potential value or benefits of your idea. Also, remember that as you state your goal, you should identify for your followers how they will benefit or what's in it for them.

The other reason goals and strategies should be separated has to do with another paradox of leadership. Leaders are simultaneously inflexible and flexible. They are absolutely inflexible when it comes to their goals, but they are extremely flexible regarding strategy.

A leader, presenting our three examples, could be flexible to alternatives to new software that could deliver more speed and accuracy. A leader could be open to other options for that improved database or additional sales territory. But a leader would not compromise on the goals.

When Jack Welch launched General Electric into its *First or second in your industry or you're sold goal*, he was absolutely inflexible. Yet, paradoxically, he showed he was incredibly flexible in how GE met that goal when he allowed each division to develop their own strategies for achieving his ultimate goal.

Again, using our examples, the vice president of sales is more likely to listen to your ideas if you lead with increased sales versus leading with adding a new sales territory. Your colleagues are much more likely to help with your database project if they think they can reduce inventory, increase revenues and improve customer service. And, finally, that CIO or CFO will be much more inclined to listen about your new software proposal when you open your discussion with the phrase *increased speed and accuracy*.

Each of the examples we have given you prove an essential truth regarding leadership: True leaders help people get where they want to go, and in the process, leaders acquire followers for their own goals.

2. INVITATION TO NEUTRAL

In an ideal world, every potential follower would enter a conversation totally committed to the leader's goal. But this is the real world where, during interactions, followers can take a variety of positions related to the leader's goal. Some people may be apprehensive while

others will be interested. Some may be opposed and others enthusiastic. Some may want more proof while others require more time to study the idea.

Leaders realize that differing points of view are natural, and, because of that, they see opposition not as a negative but as a positive and a way to strengthen those ideas. However, the one thing every leader wants is the opportunity to get his idea out for discussion, and the most effective way to accomplish that is by expressing an explicit **INVITATION TO NEUTRAL**.

How do you invite a person to neutral? Go back to the examples we used earlier when we discussed **Confidence**, and you will see that each example contains an *invitation* to the other person to a neutral, **LOOK/LISTEN** level:

1. *Software - Let me explain why I am advocating a new software package…*

2. *Cooperation - Let's discuss the database improvement project…*

3. *Sales person - I'd like to show you my projections based on a new territory…*

Inviting people to neutral sends a powerful message to potential followers. By doing so, you are saying you are so confident in your goal that you are willing to invite others into a no-hold barred, open discussion of pros and cons. As you undoubtedly have realized, this going to neutral approach is quite different from how most people operate, especially a lot of sales people.

How often have you encountered a sales person only interested in selling his idea, product or service? If you are like most people, you resisted that kind of approach. Unfortunately, what often happens is that when a sales person sees resistance like yours, he sells even harder. The result is a descending spiral that usually leads to resentment and broken relationships.

While sales people may be easy targets to relate to, this same *Buy this, Buy this* behavior is often exhibited by managers. Rather than open an idea for discussion, many managers use their positional or economic power to gain acceptance of their ideas. These managers end up with compliance, and, unfortunately, with a workforce that is not motivated and, more importantly, a workforce that takes no ownership of the company's, division's or department's goal.

A much better approach is the explicit **INVITATION TO NEUTRAL** which leads to a sincere and frank discussion of an idea. Bringing someone to neutral or **LOOK/LISTEN** is as critical a component in good decision goals as is Confidence.

3. FOR A DECISION

No doubt you have been in business meetings that consumed countless hours and yet produced few results. You probably have been in community or volunteer meetings that wandered around aimlessly wasting the collective talent of all those in attendance. And, more than likely you have encountered mothers and fathers arguing with their children in public.

What is happening in each of these cases is that no one clearly has articulated up front what the intended outcome of the interaction should be. Put in the simplest terms, what is lacking here is a **DECISION.**

Again, go back to the three examples we have been using and review the last portion of each one:

1. Software - Then <u>you can determine</u> if the purchase of the new software is in our best interest.

2. Cooperation - And then <u>you can decide</u> if you will be part of the database project team.

3. Sales Person - Then if it makes sense, <u>you can support</u> my request for an additional sales territory.

Look at the decisive words we used – you decide, you determine, you support. What we have done here is acknowledge the other person as the Decision Maker. This is a simple process and perhaps the reason why Decision Goals are so powerful.

An effective leader looks for his followers to reach a willing and committed decision at the end of any leadership interaction. By acknowledging that other people have the power of deciding, a leader implies that he is just as okay with a willing and committed **YES** as he is with a willing and committed **NO.** When you reach this same level of comfort, you will have tapped into one of the truly great sources of influencing power.

However, being okay with a **YES** or a **NO** is not easy for some people. If your goal is to make a sale, get your project funded, add a sales territory or buy the software, you start out from a position of weakness. Let us explain why that is. When you first make your pitch for a product or idea, you do not know if you can make the sale. If you do, you win, but if you don't, you could lose. What you have created for yourself is a classic win-lose scenario. When faced with a possible loss, if you are like most people, your reaction will be to sell harder until you do something stupid like give the product away or destroy the potential relationship.

A better way is to create a win-win situation. You do this by letting go of the need for a **YES** answer and being open to either **YES** or **NO**. This immediately delivers a win-win for both your and your potential follower. After all, what the follower wants to do is to *make a decision*, and if you want to *get a decision*, then you must create a common goal for the conversation. You become the Decision-Getter and your follower is the Decision Maker.

Keeping this in mind, start observing how leaders around you start their conversations. You should quickly notice that most leaders start their conversations differently than other people. Why? Because leaders know intuitively that everyone is a Decision Maker, regardless of a person's role…whether he is a subordinate, a team member, someone from another department or even a superior.

Think about kids cleaning up their rooms. Some do it right away while others need to be told 10 times. Some do it right; others pile everything in their closets. Then when the kids become adults and go to work, some show up for meetings early, some show up just in time, others are always 15 minutes late, and others just do not show up at all. Everyone is a Decision Maker and each decision varies.

So often the initial decision being made is not a full **YES** or **NO** decision, but rather how much effort to expend or how willing to take on the assignment or task. That willingness is in fact a decision and has a lot to do with the final outcome. Being in a position of authority will definitely get results, but not the results that full commitment and buy-in do.

Decision Goals will work for you whether you are in sales, customer service, supervision, management, or whether you are an individual contributor, part of a team, or an executive leading a major change initiative in your company.

In the next short paragraph, we use the three criteria as we wrap up this section on Decision Goals. Pay attention to how the **Confidence**, **Invite to Neutral**, and **Decision** are woven into our discussion.

We are convinced that establishing Decision Goals within the first 15 seconds of any leadership interaction will help you be more successful (**confidence**) Let us share a number of examples with you (**invite to neutral**) and then you can decide if Decision Goals have a place in your business and personal life (**for decision**).

Decision Goal Examples

Decision Goal Examples

CEO addressing the Board of Directors

I am convinced that we will continue our growth and protect our market position through an orderly succession process. Let me explain the succession plan in some depth, and then you can determine whether or not this proposal is in the best interest of the shareholders.

CIO to potential project members

Our current database no longer efficiently serves the changing needs of our business model. Since each of your areas depends on the database, I have selected you as potential members of the database project management team. Let me review your respective roles and responsibilities, and then each of you can decide if you can commit to being part of this project team.

Sales Vice President to Operations Vice President

We have a $20 million opportunity with our key customer if we can double pack our X-47 widgets. Let me show you what we need to have, and then you can determine if it's feasible to alter the process.

Sales District Manager to Director of Sales

I can sign the university regents to a long term contract if I can include a specialized application to meet their RFP requirements. Let me review the requirements, and then we can decide it the specialized application is feasible and then secondly if it is in our best interests.

Individual Contributor to Project Leader

I believe we can improve our communications and reduce the number of reworks by conducting a monthly on site visit with our primary suppliers. Let me review the proposed checklists for each visit as well as the estimated travel costs. Then you can decide if the savings will justify the added travel time and costs.

Meeting Leader with a focused agenda

I believe we have all the marketing information we need to determine if the X26 prototype should go into limited production. So our mission today is to do a final review and then determine if it is a go or no go.

Meeting Leader recruiting participants for a brainstorming session

Our customer service initiative is going no place. You guys are closest to the issue, and I believe if we get together for a brainstorming sessions our options will be clear. Let me

explain why I want your participation and how the meeting will be conducted so that you can determine if you want to be included.

<u>Supervisor providing corrective feedback to employee</u>

As you are well aware, we have a very clear dress code in this organization and the current attire is in violation. Let's review the policy so that you can decide whether or not you are able to comply.

<u>Supervisor coaching session with average performing employee</u>

Your current level of performance is certainly meeting the basic standards for customer service and that is commendable. My sense is that you definitely have the capacity to do even better and become part of the President's Club. I like to share a few ideas I have and would be interested in hearing your ideas also. In the end, you can decide whether the extra effort is worth the rewards and recognition that goes along with becoming a member of the club.

<u>Salesperson prospecting for new business</u>

Our proprietary content and coaching methodology has helped many businesses similar to yours increase revenue and decrease expenses. I not sure we can help your organization because I don't have an in-depth knowledge of your situation. So a brief conversation about your needs and our capabilities would be the recommended next step. Then you can determine if a face to face meeting is appropriate

<u>Community or non-profit leader opening a meeting</u>

I am convinced we can generate the funds to underwrite our programs by sponsoring a Book Festival. Let's discuss the pros and cons of this type of fund-raiser, and then we can decide it this is something we can all support

<u>Dad working out a problem with his teenage daughter</u>

I believe you can make good on your commitment to Mom and still go to the party on Friday evening. Let me share a couple of ideas that will resolve the scheduling conflict and then you can decide if they are workable.

Now that you have the criteria and a number of varied examples of Decision Goals at work, we are confident you can use these to create real Decision Goals for you and your specific situations. Decision Goals do work as our PAR clients will tell you.

Many times in our PAR training sessions, we hear sales people complain about not being able to get appointments with the right decision makers. Assuming the sales people have done their homework on their prospects, those same sales people get results when they use the Decision Goal criteria and our coaching to frame a prospect call that works. Usually more than 50% are able to make appointments right there during the training session. Of the rest, another 50% obtain appointments within one week of the PAR session.

One of our clients, an executive from Hewlett Packard, recounted how his professional service group was bogged down in long and seemingly endless client meetings. After his team attended our PAR training, they were able to reduce their meeting time by as much as one-third and increase their actionable items by a similar amount. By starting their client meetings with Decision Goals, they were able to compress the decision making cycle.

Another PAR client David Solberg, an executive for a major manufacturer, credits Decision Goals with helping boost his company's overall sales numbers. According to David, using Decision Goals enabled the company's sales personnel to get a fair hearing for their products.

We also had a client in Germany that used Decision Goals in an entirely different way. Working in a highly structured environment, the Decision Goals gave the people there a way to present their ideas to their managers without usurping their managers' powers.

We could go on and on. After working with half a million people for almost three decades, we have a lot of success stories to share. But now the time has come for you to write your own success story. Adding Decision Goals to your intuitive leadership skills will dramatically improve your results. Try it. Find out for yourself what so many already know. Decision Goals work.

For more information about *Cracking the Code* or to purchase a copy, please <u>contact us</u>.