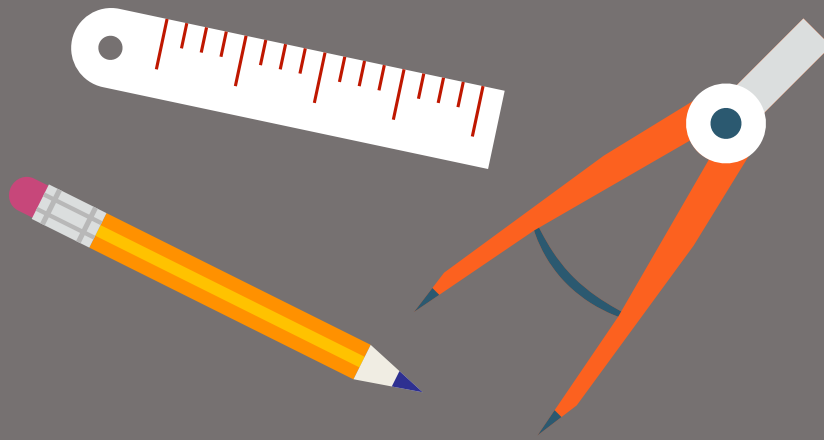


Intuition: 7 Ways To Improve This Decision- Making Skill



PRACTICAL TOOLS

Intuition: 7 Ways To Improve This Decision-Making Skill



Intuition is the most critical skill involved in sound decision making. A purely analytical approach to decision making doesn't work in reality. Real-life decisions are more complex, time is limited, and we rarely have complete and conclusive information for a foolproof analysis.

We have to fall back on a combination of analysis and intuition, in other words, our own gut instincts. Fortunately, intuition is not something that you're either born with or not. It's a skill that can be learned, practiced, improved and strengthened over the years of one's career.

Here are seven ways intuition can be improved (some of them from the book, *The Power of Intuition*, by Gary Klein):

1. Practice in a 'safe' environment

Practice making important decisions in a safe setting. Take a business class, join a nonprofit board and get some meaningful experience at making decisions that will condition your mind and improve your mental models. It will strengthen your ability to recognize patterns and select optimal solutions for action.

2. Similarity (and difference) recognition

To strengthen your intuition, it's important to be able to recognize similarities in various situations, to develop greater trust in tried-and-true decisions, as well as recognize possible differences, which could determine why trying a supposedly tried-and-true solution might NOT be the best decision in this case.

3. Manage your time

Don't waste time on routine decisions. Save your time for those decisions where the most analysis is required; on others, trust your gut and your experience more and more.

4. Pre-mortem exercises

All businesspeople are well versed in post-mortem exercises, finding out what went wrong to prevent recurrence of a disaster. Even more useful may be a pre-mortem exercise, to do a risk assessment on a problem and consider a worst-case scenario before you make a decision on how to avoid it.

5. Ignore background noise

In real-life situations, there is always a lot of background noise, extraneous information that can be a red herring and threaten to distract you from the real issue. Learn how to ignore the background noise.

6. Coach others to develop their intuition

It never hurts to have more people on your team who also have reliable intuitions. Involve them in decision making to train them, too.

7. Develop an attitude of wisdom

Organizational theorist Bob Sutton says that's what great leaders do and he defines an attitude of wisdom as follows: "Argue as if you're right; listen as if you might be wrong." Defend your intuition, but show the humility to recognize when your intuition might have been wrong and course-correct quickly.