

By **ROBBIE STEINHOUSE**

➔ Coming to the 'correct' conclusion, and acting on it, is harder than it seems. Coaching has always been a useful clarifier here, but tools such as the decision simulator are helping clients find the right answers – faster

AS WE KNOW, coaching can lead to better decision-making simply by creating the space for people to take time and reflect. Often a client will talk about an option, then realise that it's not such a good idea, or they don't really want to do it that way, or a new alternative exists. However, there are also specific decision-making techniques that you can use, and teach your clients to use.

Here are two of a number of processes for decision-making I have created.

1. The decision simulator

This is a tool for making quick decisions, or for thinking (and feeling) one's way through a bigger decision.

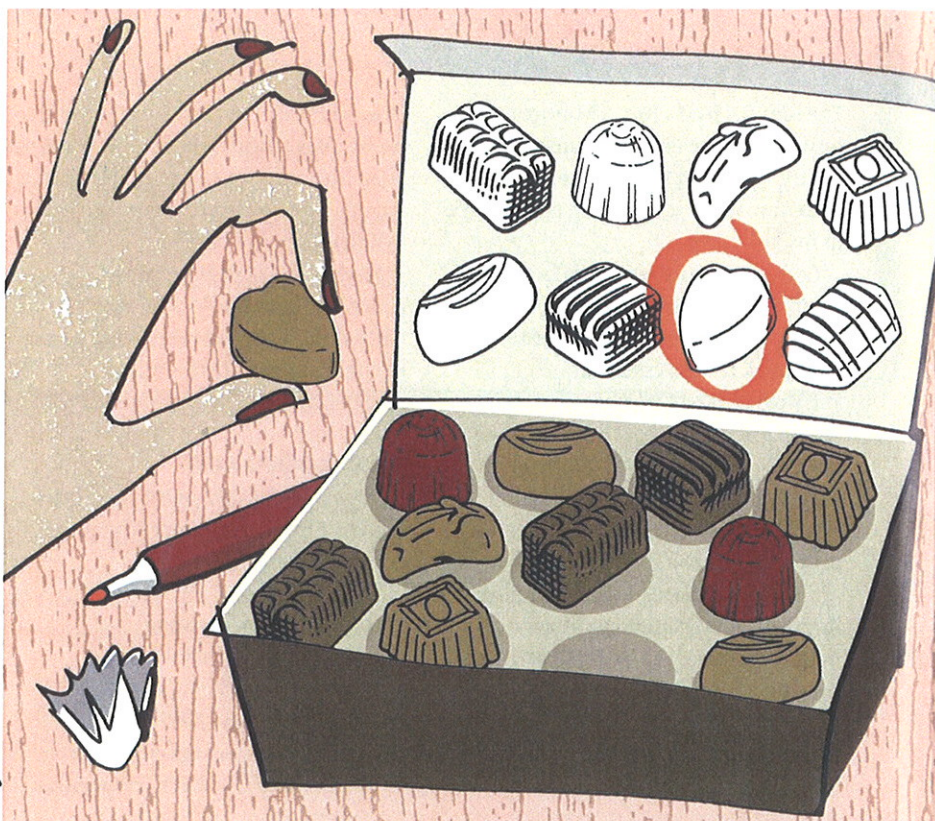
Flight simulators have radically reduced the number of air crashes caused by pilot error because they are so realistic. In this 'decision simulator' the process is run as if the decision has been made.

The client makes a 'trial decision', or several, so they can experiment before committing themselves to a course of action. The simulator is based on an NLP coaching process called the well-formed outcome.

The process

The questions are:

- 1. **What is the decision I face?**
- 2. **So, what am I going to do?** (Here, the client makes a 'trial decision')
- 3. **What do I want to have happen?**
– Towards a positive outcome, not away from problems.
- 4. **How will I know when these have happened?**
– What specifically will I SEE when I have these outcomes?



- What specifically will I HEAR when I have these outcomes?
- What specifically will I FEEL when I have these outcomes?

5. Why is the decision important to me?

- If I took that decision and it worked out, what would that do for me personally?
- Knowing that, what would that enable me to experience that is even more important or bigger?

6. What could go wrong? And what could I do about that?

- List four things that could go wrong.
- Sort out any irrational ones.

- To the rational fears, ask 'What am I going to do about this?'

7. OK, what are the first three steps?

8. Where have I got to now? Does it seem right at three levels: head, heart and gut?

- At the level of my head, thinking now, do I think that the decision has a realistic chance of working out? And if so, do I really have the time and money to commit to it now or soon?
- At the level of my heart, feeling now, is this something that I really want to do?
- At the level of my gut, do I really believe that I am the sort of person who is going to make this decision and follow it through?

“ Work on a blocked decision can sometimes lead to a client discovering what their true mission is, and this can be hugely motivating ”

*Am I allowed to do this kind of thing?
And do I deserve the outcomes?*

Make it work

- Watch for what NLP calls ‘congruence’. Does the client’s body language align with what they claim to want (or don’t want) to do?
- Help the client work through any blocks they find in the process. They can work on this in the session or in their own time.

Fatal flaw

- Clients sailing through the process till they hit a block at the last question. Often this turns out to be about ‘deservability’ – they just don’t think they are worthy of the outcome. Further coaching is needed here, and at a deep level (see below).

2. The troubleshooting guide

This is used when the client gets stuck in their decision-making, either on the simulator or during the longer process

About the author

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of making a big decision for real. It is based on Robert Dilts’ Logical Levels (see *Roadtest*, page 50), naming six levels at which an issue can exist for a client and at which intervention can be effected. For each there is an appropriate style of coaching (Dilts’ ‘Coach to Awakener’ model):

Level	Coaching approach
Purpose	Awakener
Identity	Sponsor
Beliefs & values	Mentor
Capability	Consultant
Behaviour	Performance coach
Environment	Guide

A client may discover that the issue that blocks them from making a decision is in their environment: friends, family, work and so on. An example at work would be a request that the client relocates, which would be good for their career, yet presents problems for their family.

Sometimes blocks are at the level of behaviour. These require a more traditional coaching approach involving mental rehearsal or new habit-building exercises.

Blocks can also appear at the level of capability, which would imply the need to learn new skills.

At the level of beliefs and values, more problematic blocks often appear around what the client believes is possible. Challenging a client’s beliefs using questions such as ‘What stops you?’ and ‘How do you know...?’ can

often reveal erroneous but previously hidden beliefs which the client is then willing to discard.

At the level of identity, issues around permission and deservability may emerge. These can mean referring the client to a therapist, if in the coaching situation the client cannot convince themselves that they are ‘allowed’ to achieve the outcome.

Decisions are unlikely to be blocked at the level of mission – if the decision runs counter to the client’s mission, it will not be taken – and probably should not be anyway.

However, work on a blocked decision can sometimes lead to a client discovering what their true mission is, and this can be hugely motivating.

Make it work

- Always be aware of the question: “Which level is the issue at?” The client will usually let you know, even if he or she was not aware of it before.
- Make yourself aware of the very different styles of coaching needed for the different levels. Essentially, the ‘higher’ up the levels, the more challenging – but more liberating – the coaching can be.

Fatal flaws

- Placing your focus on higher levels just because they seem inspirational.
- Jumping to conclusions about where clients can benefit most from change – sometimes it is simply where they live and work. ■