

Girlie-man Management



With the year still young, a client recently asked what mistakes she should be particularly vigilant to avoid. I told her a better question is, What decisions do you know you should make but can't seem to pull the trigger on?

Success rests more on boldly *doing* things than it does avoiding decisions which might lead to mistakes. It's disheartening seeing senior executives, especially in our fluid and dynamic industry, keep their heads low hoping that no decision at all is the prudent path. If Hans and Franz were writing about this kind of self-sabotage they'd call it "girlie-man management."

Not making a decision is, of course, a decision itself and often the greater of several evils. Ours is a lively business predicated on dexterity - to survive you need fast reactions coupled with a fearless sense that no matter what, tomorrow will be better than today. Make a habit of hesitation and eventually you won't move at all. It's like staying in the starting gate to more carefully contemplate track conditions - by the time you look up the race is over.

Of course, decision making always appears easier when you're not the decision-maker.

Remember early in your career how the high muckety-mucks looked like doofusses because they didn't do what was so obvious? Then you got promoted to a manager-level job and suddenly saw hundreds of nettlesome subtleties dappling each decision - who'd be upset, how it would look to others, how YOU'D look. Not so easy any more, huh.

Maybe that's why some managers become comfortable squatters, sitting on decision eggs hoping they'll somehow hatch on their own. That's literally a chicken way to manage.

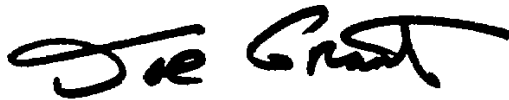
Abdicating decisions is gutless. When we're brought in to help untie knotty people issues, more than half the time the CEO knows exactly what needs to be done but is paralyzed with fear about doing it. The fear is fear of rejection. If I do this will everyone think I'm stupid? Will they stop liking me?

You've got to squelch this kind of thinking. Stop worrying about whether your decisions will be "popular." Forget trying to improve your poll numbers - you don't have to run for re-election. We've seen CEOs sweat bricks about releasing an incompetent player, freezing in their tracks because "...it might upset the staff." Come on.

Early some morning take a look around and if your place is static, stale or pretty much the same as it was last year, decide to *change something*. Make the tough decisions you know need to be made. Think of it like cooking: if the stew tastes bland it's gonna stay that way until you spice it up with new ingredients. Merely *hoping* it gets better on its own is, well, dumb.

Embrace the idea that business is nothing but a series of experiments. Look at your newspaper's business section and you'll see it simply reports on the outcomes of various business experiments. The companies which survive and grow are the ones nimbly jumping from sub-par results to innovative solutions.

They try something, see if it works, then move on. Because status quo is not an option - and usually a big mistake.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Grant". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.