

We Learn from History...



Simple Steps to Improve Decision-Making



2020

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NSW Forum

2 Sept 2010

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NASA Tragedy



Apollo 204

- 27 January 1967



Challenger

- 28 January 1986



Columbia

- 1 February 2003

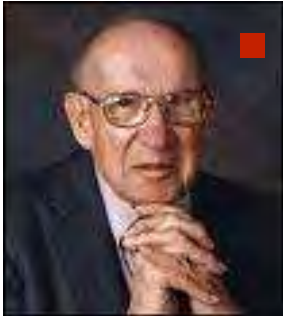




Why does it happen —
again
and again
and again
and again...



The Organisational Challenge



- The major obstacle to organizational growth is managers' inability to change their attitudes and behaviour as rapidly as their organisations require

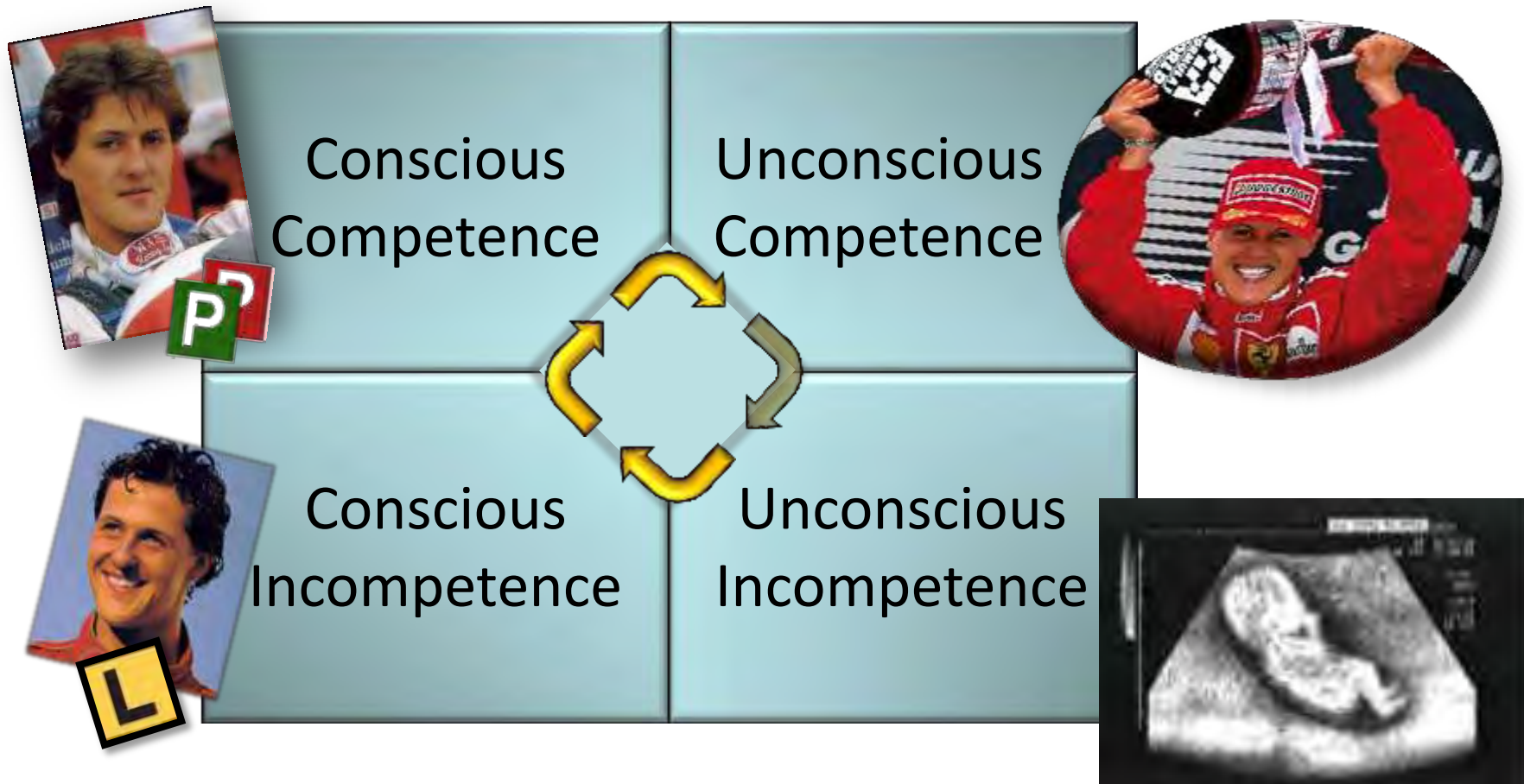
(Peter F. Drucker, *The Practice of Management*, Harper and Row, 1954)

- Managers are always at risk of being one-dimensional – and often blind to what they sacrifice as a consequence

(Kaplan & Kaiser, 2009)

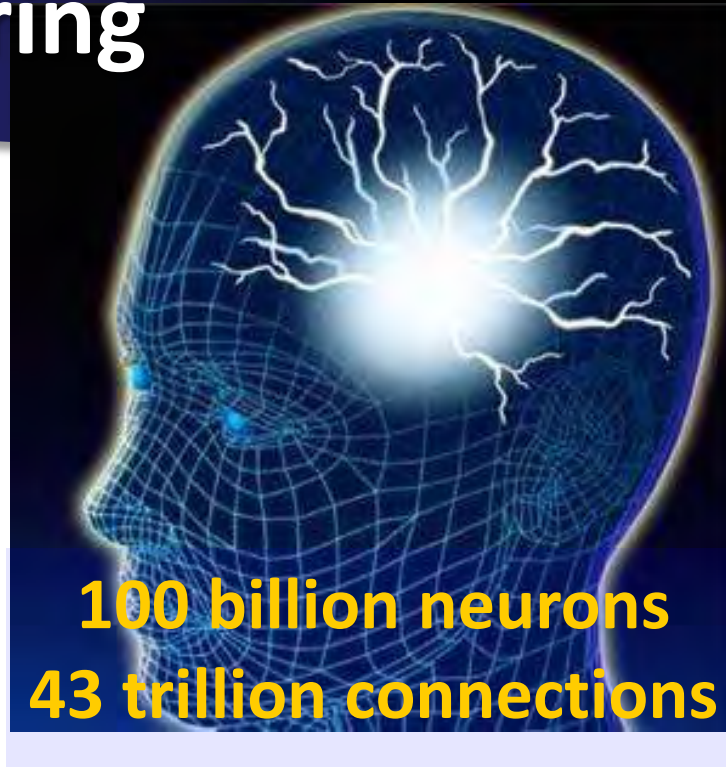


Pattern recognition (the learning cycle)





Brain Wiring



Prefrontal Cortex (working memory)

Used for:

- Understanding, deciding, remembering and inhibiting

Limitations:

- Energy intensive, serial, small, fussy

Basal ganglia ("hard-wiring")

Benefits:

- Parallel processing
 - Hard to distract
- Minimal effort and energy
- Massive storage capacity

Limitations:

- ✗ Generalise ✗ Distort ✗ Delete

Understanding Decision-making



- Decision-making is not a rational process
- 95% of persuasion is based on our subconscious reactions, which are driven largely by:
 - Our emotions, and
 - What we believe about ourselves

Logic gets us thinking
***eMOTION* gets us moving (or stuck!)**

Understanding Decision-making



(Campbell, Whitehead & Finkelstein,
"Why Good Leaders Make Bad Decisions",
Harvard Business Review, Feb 2009, p.62)



←
Pattern Recognition
(intuition)

→
Emotional Tagging

- These processes enable quick decisions – but can be distorted by:
 - ☠ self-interest
 - ☠ emotional attachments
 - ☠ misleading memories

Pattern Recognition



"... flawed decisions start with errors of judgment made by influential individuals."



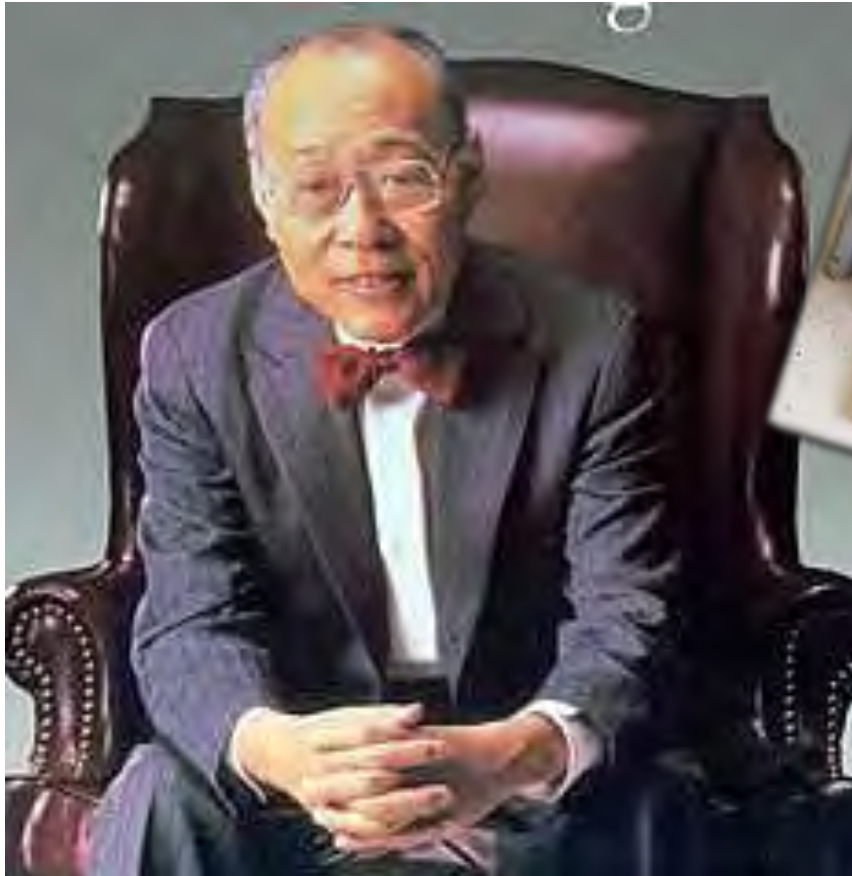
The levees seem to be holding

Brig. General Matthew Broderick
(Chief of the Homeland Security Operations Centre, New Orleans)
29 August 2005



Emotional Tagging

“... flawed decisions start with errors of judgment made by influential individuals.”



Dr An Wang
(1920-1990)

What's Your Reaction?



Fight

Flight

Freeze

Covey's 90/10 Rule



Frederick Langbridge
(1849 - 1923)

Two men look out through the same bars:

One sees the mud...



**10% is what
happens to you**

...and one the stars.



**90% is how you
choose to think about
it (your response)**



I think, therefore I am
(René Descartes)



Our life is what our thoughts
make it (Epictetus)



If you think you can do a thing
or think you can't do a thing,
you are right (Henry Ford)



We are what we repeatedly do
(Aristotle)

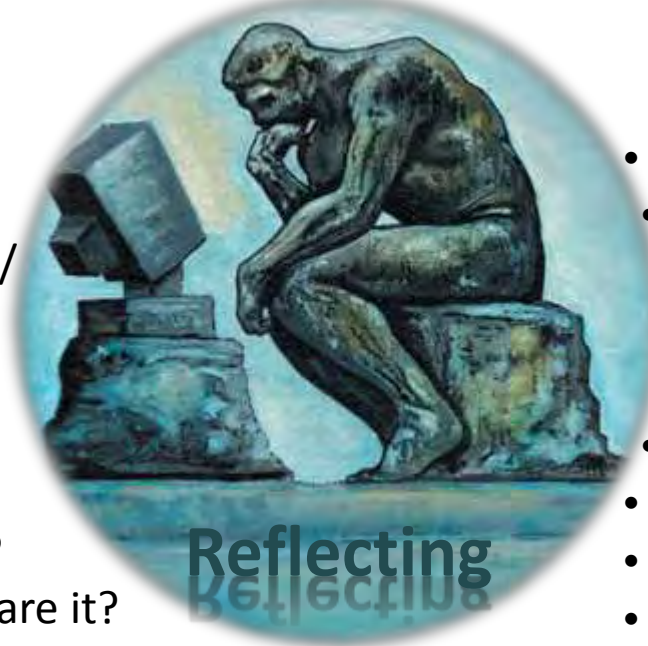
Learning from Experience



- Learning is the **creation of meaning** from past or current events that serves as a **guide for future behaviour**

Past Events

- What happened?
- How did I/others feel/experience it?
- What did I do well?
- What would I do differently?
- What have I learned?
- How can I apply it/share it?



Current Challenges

- What is the problem?
- Why is that the problem?
- What do I really want?
- What are the choices?
- What assumptions am I making?
- **How else can I think about this?**
- What am I missing or avoiding?
- What am I responsible for?
- What questions should I ask myself? Others?

Cmdr Mike Abrashoff's Approach



USS Benfold and Cmdr D Mike Abrashoff

His Method:

1. Initial interview (x 300+):
 - *What do you like best about this ship?*
 - *What do you like least?*
 - *What would you change if you could?*
2. Set the vision and trust the crew
3. Question every rule/process

Ask
Listen
Act

20 Month Scorecard

- direct savings: US\$1.4m (25% of budget)
- combat readiness: highest-ever in Pacific fleet
- staff promotion rate: 2.5 times above Navy avg
- pre-deployment training cycle: 19 d (normal: 52d)
- disciplinary cases: 5 (0 discharge); pred.: 28 (23)
- retention: 100% (average: 54%) – savings: \$1.6m

Next Steps to Improved Thinking



- Build a creative philosophy – personal/team



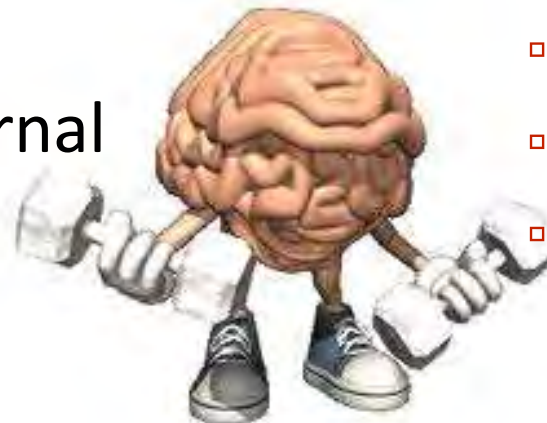
- Develop a “thinking council”
- Set aside daily *thinking* time (make it a habit starting today)
- Create a learning journal
- Make it a priority

- Cultivate an attitude of curiosity: observe, question and listen



- Challenge assumptions
- Have courage to persevere
- Look after your health

- Physical
- Mental
- Spiritual



What You Think...





WHAT MATTERS MOST
IS HOW YOU SEE YOURSELF.





“Knowing is not enough; we must apply Willing is not enough; we must do”

(Johann Goethe, 1749-1832)
German dramatist, poet and
novelist

- What three things have you learned?
- What are you going to do about it this week?

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**The quality of the question determines
the quality of the answer – and the
outcomes you ultimately achieve!**