



# Problem Solving and Decision Making

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## Emmet Ore

All right, well, hello, everyone, welcome to part two of our April webinar series. My name is Emmet. I'm a marketing specialist over here at Vensure, and I will be your host for the next hour. Today, we'll be talking about problem solving and decision making. But first, we'll do a bit of housekeeping here. There will be a Q&A session at the end. We'll do our best to answer all the questions you have. But if we don't get to your question, we will respond to you individually after we're done here. Just a reminder, this is being recorded and we'll share that recording along with the slide deck with you after we're done here. This webinar is brought to you, as always, by Vensure Employer Services Ventures, the leader of 20 plus PEO partners with clients in all 50 states. Today, Robin Paggi, our panelist, will be talking about some impediments to making good decisions, how people make decisions, the problem-solving model, ethics and decision making, avoiding groupthink, and we'll have our Q&A at the end.

So if you hear anything, that you'd like a little bit more clarity on, feel free to submit a follow up in the Q&A box, and we'll show you the instructions for that here. So when you logged in, you should have seen the control panel open. There's a little dropdown section in there for questions. It's titled Questions. Just type your questions and comments into that section and hit enter. If your client, please put "client" in your question so we can track that. All questions are private so you won't see the questions or comments of others. And we'll try to get to all the questions in the time that we do have. But if we don't, please contact [webinarHRhelp@vensure.com](mailto:webinarHRhelp@vensure.com). And as always, we're thrilled to have Robin Paggi joining us as our panelist today. She's a seasoned human resource practitioner specializing in training on topics such as harassment prevention, communication, team building, and supervisory skills. And she just published a book that is now available on Amazon. All right, over to you, Robin.

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## Robin Paggi

Hey, thanks for giving me that plug. We don't have as many people online today as we normally do and I'm thinking because they're probably thinking that this is a boring topic. And I am fascinated by why people make the decisions the way that we do. To a certain degree, our lives are the result of the decisions that we've made. And chances are you're like me and you've looked back on some of the decisions you've made and wondered how in the world you decided that was a good thing to do when it clearly was not. So today I'm going to tell you what influences our decision making and what we can do to make better decisions in the future. So let's go to our next slide.

First, what prevents us from making bad decisions, in addition to alcohol I'd like to add. Well, first of all, pressure. So as life would have it, a lot of times we are forced to make important decisions under pressure. However, one of the things that we have a tendency to do is put more pressure on ourselves than the situation actually calls for. Specifically, we put time pressure on ourselves. We think we don't have as much time to make a decision as we actually do. And so I'm going to give you a little bit more of what experts say about that. But I want to give you an example of what happens when we think we have less time than we actually do. And the example was the Kegworth Air Disaster. Now, this happened in nineteen eighty nine, so that's 30 something years ago. And so some of you might not have been alive at that time. But what happened in the Kegworth Air Disaster is that a passenger flight crashed onto a motorway embankment in the United Kingdom. And what had happened is that the pilot had two engines on the plane and he noticed that one of the engines was malfunctioning. And so he quickly went to shut down the malfunctioning engine. Unfortunately, he switched off the wrong engine and so he killed the functioning engine.

The plane crashed. And because it's called the Kegworth Air Disaster, that indicates that no one survived. So people who analyze the crash later said he made a quick decision in response to danger cues, which seems like a good thing. But he really had more time to establish which engine was failing and which one was still functioning. So he panicked. And people who are experienced at coping and all sorts of panicky situations said that often we've got more time than we think we have. Our brain, our adrenalin, everything is inspiring us to think we have to act more quickly than we actually do. And what we really need to do in those moments is to stop, pause, reflect, and then move. And sometimes that only takes a few seconds. But if we give ourselves a few seconds, we can avert disaster. Now, a great example of taking a few seconds and averting disaster is when Captain Chesley Sullenberger landed that plane on the Hudson River. So you might remember that that was in 2009. So if you don't remember exactly what happened, a whole bunch of birds caused both of his plane's engines to fail. So both engines are gone shortly after taking off from LaGuardia Airport. He had very little time to decide what to do and what the control tower was urging him to do was come back to the airport. But he didn't know that he would have time to do that.

He saw the Hudson River there, even though he never trained to land on water, he calculated the situation, the risks and the benefits from it. And he figured that he could land that plane safely on the Hudson River. And he did. And somebody took a photograph of it. That's an amazing photograph with all of the one hundred and fifty five passengers standing on the wings of the plane in the Hudson River. There were no fatalities. No one got badly hurt even. And he said he took a couple of seconds to just assess the situation before responding. And so that's what we need to do a lot of times. All right. So next up, the reason we make decisions, or bad decisions, is our politics. And I'm not talking about our political affiliation, per se, I'm talking about the original Greek meaning of the word politics, which is the set of activities that are associated with making decisions in groups. And that's what our political parties are sometimes, groups of people who think the same way, we like being a member of a group. Our body is designed, our psyche is designed, to be in groups. There is safety in numbers. And so that's why we'd like to have group affiliation, some of us more than others. And it's comfortable knowing that there are people who have the same beliefs, the same values, the same goals that you have.

There is comfort in knowing that. But some groups' beliefs, values, and goals are terrible. So how do they still have members of those groups? Well, one of the things that happens to us is once we become part of a group and it becomes part of our identity, we just overlook things that maybe we don't agree with. We become blinded by loyalty. And so we don't see how bad those ideas are that we're just going along with. Sometimes uncertainty causes people to make bad decisions, and we have different levels of comfort with ambiguity. Some people are very comfortable not knowing what's going to happen, and that's OK. And a whole lot more other people are really uncomfortable with ambiguity or uncertainty. So people who are really distressed by uncertainty that making a decision causes for them tend to rush into decisions. They might accept the first solution to a problem just to relieve the anxiety of having to make a decision and thus they make a bad decision. Oh, and here's one you're probably not going to want to hear much about, unfortunately, I've got a lot to tell you about, caffeine, as I'm sitting here drinking both hot tea and cold tea. So caffeine affects our decision making in numerous ways, first, because it stays in our system a long time.

So if you had your first cup of caffeine at 8 a.m., 25% of the caffeine is still going to be in your body at 8 p.m., and any amount of caffeine left in your body reduces your REM sleep. And that's the sleep that your body needs in order to recharge. Caffeine consumed six hours before bed, reduces sleep by at least one hour, and most of us can't afford to lose an hour of sleep. Additionally, caffeine triggers the release of adrenaline. Now adrenaline is released when we go into, we think something is threatening us and it makes us go into the fight or flight syndrome. And that's great if you need to fight someone or flee from them. But most of the time we don't get to do either one of those things. And so, for example, fight or flight is great when a bear is chasing you, but not so great when you're responding to an angry email from an angry client. So when adrenaline is released, your brain just goes into reaction mode and you circumvent rational thinking and you respond and then you look back on your response and go, oh, I shouldn't have done that. And then finally, caffeine can remove your ability to manage your emotions. Caffeine for some people makes them more irritable and anxious. And the reason for that is that large doses of caffeine raises our blood pressure, stimulates our heart, produces rapid shallow breathing-- that's all stuff that happens during the fight or flight center, too.

It deprives our brain of oxygen needed to remain calm and rational. And if you find yourself stressed out all the time, it might be because of how much caffeine that you're taking in on a daily basis. All right, next is high or low blood sugar level. Changes in blood sugar level can affect a person's mood and mental status and cause decision making difficulties. Fatigue. One of the things our brain consumes a lot of energy and we get tired when we're thinking. And people who make decisions for a long period of time begin to lose the mental energy they need to be able to make good decisions. And this is why sometimes they go into impulsive decision-making or decision avoidance mode. Lack of information and I'll add incorrect information as well. We read headlines and not much else, and we think we have all the information we need to make a decision, like on who to vote for. Also, we like to believe that the people we turn to for information are actually telling us the truth when sometimes they're not, or know what they're talking about, when sometimes they don't. And the conflicting information I'd like to add in here also is an example. I'm in Bakersfield, California. And if you're not aware, a lot of the gasoline that is consumed in our country comes from my hometown and the county I live in.

Now, one of the things that the governor here is trying to do is shut down oil production. And, of course, that's causing extreme stress in our counties since we all rely on oil production, directly or indirectly for our employment. But there's so much conflicting information. I mean, you might have heard of a term called fracking. That's where water is injected into the ground. And some people say that fracking is very safe and causes no problems. And then other people have created movies based upon how bad fracking is and causes earthquakes. So automobiles are the cause of poor air. But then there are other studies that say, no, it's not the automobiles it's something else. And so I have no idea what to believe about whether oil is a good thing or a bad thing and which side I need to fall on it. And that is true with a whole lot of issues that

we're presented with. And I want to add also too much information. We have an overwhelming flood of incoming data our brains just cannot absorb all of that information. And there's some new terms for overload of information, which I like. One is infobesity, you take information and obesity, put it together and infobesity. And here is my favorite infoxication. So instead of intoxication info, intoxication, infoxication. Yeah. So I don't know if you're going to use those or not, but I'm just happy to have new words. So all of those things and more are reasons that we make bad decisions. Let's go to our next slide and talk about some other things that impact our decision making.

There are many forces at work simultaneously when we make decisions that create our decision-making style. Yeah, did you know that you have a decision-making style? You might want to try to identify what it is. Our personality traits, in addition to values, needs, motivations, all these things come into play when we are trying to make decisions and creates the style that we have. And so styles help us approach decisions rationally or emotionally, impulsively or cautiously, spontaneously or deliberately. And so maybe you've been able to identify your style in that. But I'm going to give you a little bit more information here on the page so that you can identify it because it's important to be able to identify your style because that can help you understand why you make bad decisions. So what you're looking at here is one of my favorite personality profiles, which is the Myers Briggs type indicator. And these are the preferences within the Myers Briggs indicator. And now it was created by the mother-daughter team of Briggs and Myers, and based on the theory of psychological types created by Carl Jung. So at the heart of Myers Briggs are these four preferences, which I will explain to you.

Extroverts and introverts, this is where we get our energy and extroverts tend to be energized by being around people and talking to people and de-energized when they are alone and isolated. Introverts tend to get their energy by being alone and isolated and they become de-energized by being around people too much. So how does that impact our decision-making process? And by the way, yes, you can be right in the middle. That's called an ambivert, where you get your energy both by being around people and alone. We are all extroverts and we are all introverts. We tend to have a preference one side or the other, but this is how it impacts our decision-making. Extroverts want to talk about their ideas and that's really how they process information is by talking about it. And when they're talking about it, their ideas become clearer and they can start off by saying we really should do this and the more that they talk, they change their mind to say, no, we really should not do this. So extroverts talk about their ideas in order to get feedback from people, in order to determine whether they've made a good decision. But one of the things about extroverts is that they're very action-oriented. They need to do stuff. And so they make bad decisions sometimes because they act and then they think about it. Now introverts on the other side want to take time to think and clarify their ideas before they begin talking to anybody about them. And they're more concerned about what they think about their ideas versus what other people think about their ideas.

So all of that thinking can be a really good thing, prevent them from making bad decisions. However, sometimes they become paralyzed by their analysis. So paralysis by analysis is a phrase you might have heard of. And they need to think and think and think and think, which prevents them from acting quickly. So there are good things and bad things about our personality styles when it comes to making decisions. Now, sensing and intuition is how we take in information and the information that we trust. Sensors take in information through their senses, see, smell, taste, touch, and hear. Well, we all do that, but they're really in tune and really aware of what they see, smell, taste, touch, and hear. They're much more likely to pay attention to facts, details, reality, what's around them. And they want to collect as many facts and details as they possibly can to make good decisions, which is good. You need to collect facts. But one of the things is that they tend to trust what's tried and true. And so if a decision needs to be made, well, they look to, well, how have we made that decision in the past? And if it worked in the past, then let's do it again. They don't like to fix what's not broken in their eyes. And so a downside of having that preference is that they don't readily see new creative ways of solving problems. They prefer

what we've already done. They tend not to like to engage in brainstorming because brainstorming seems very far out and impractical things that people are coming up with. And so one of the things that sensors tend to do when brainstorming is they begin to tell people what's wrong with their ideas immediately. And that's not what you're supposed to do in brainstorming, and I'll talk about that a little bit more in a moment. Now, intuitives are much more likely to read in between the lines and find meaning and information. So they don't tend to take things at face value. And they want to see what's the relationship between the facts, and they see connections and they see possibilities on things that can be done. And they love to develop new original solutions to problems. The downside is that they're not very good at seeing details. And so sometimes they miss details when considering how to solve problems or make decisions. And the other thing is that they don't want to do what's tried and true. They don't want to do what they've done before. They want to do something new and fun and creative. And sometimes that's just not practical.

Thinking and feeling is how we make decisions and thinkers tend to use logic and analysis and they want to try to be as objective as possible, impersonal as possible, just stand back and evaluate the situation, detach emotionally so that they can see what is the logical course of action to take. And that sounds really good, except the thing that thinkers tend not to do is to determine the impact of their decisions on the people involved. And as a result, they sometimes make bad decisions that people don't like because they didn't consider how people will respond to it. And sometimes that response from people is going to derail the solution that they've come up with. Now, feelers are much more likely to consider the feelings of people involved or impacted by the decision. And that's good. And they want to make decisions based upon their values and how they would feel if the decision was being made about them. However, sometimes their decision-making is so subjective that it's not logical or practical. And then finally, judging and perceiving is our approach to the world. And judges tend to want to organize it, plan it, and stick to the plan. So they're more likely to prefer structure, organization and want any kind of decisions or problem solving to go step by step by step and then have closure.

Problem is that they tend to make quick decisions and then they don't want to consider any new information that comes in because they've made their mind up and they just want to stick to what they've made their mind up about. Perceivers just kind of go with the flow and show up without a plan. But they're very flexible and good at coming up with a variety of solutions for when things don't go according to plan. But perceivers just don't want to make decisions before they have to make decisions. And so sometimes they put off making decisions that other people want them to make and then sometimes they'll make a decision, but they won't commit to it. And the reason for that is because new data comes in and so they'll say, OK, this is the solution or this is the decision. But then new data comes in and then they change their mind. So as you might imagine, these differences in decision-making and problem-solving can cause conflict between people. And an example of that is that if you had an introverted, sensor, thinker, judge, so an ISTJ in Myers Briggs speak, they will approach problem-solving by wanting a very clear idea of the problem, attacking it by looking for the facts, relying on a logical and personal step by step approach and reaching conclusions. And that sounds really good if you're an ISTJ. But in contrast, an extroverted, intuitive, feeler, perceiver will want to throw out all sorts of possibilities, they love brainstorming. They want to seek feedback from the environment to clarify the problem.

They are looking at the human aspects of the solution, and they want the flexibility to change their mind if new data comes in. So as a result, the ISTJ thinks the ENFP is irrational and scattered all over the place. And the ISTJ, to the opposite style, seems slow and imaginative, methodical and impersonal. So that's one of the things is that when we're making decisions with other people, we need to keep these things in mind because we tend to think how we make decisions is the right way to make decisions. And if people are making it differently, that's the wrong way to make decisions. And we have a lot of conflict between us. What we really need to do is to put our strengths together. And each one of these preferences has a strength when it comes to decision making. And so I'm going to focus especially on the sensing, intuition, and thinking,

feeling because those are really involved in decision making. So the strength of the sensor is that they're looking for facts, cost, benefits, details. You need those details. I'm an intuitive and I have made bad decisions because I have not had all of the details I just rushed right into. The decision-making. Fortunately, I'm married to a sensor. But intuitives, what they really bring to the decision-making process is seeing all sorts of possibilities that the sensor might not see. And so you need that too. Thinking ask what's the pros, the cons, the cause, the effects, what makes sense? And you need that. But you also need the feelers who are concerned about how will our decision affect people? So you take those preferences, you put them together and you've got some solid decision making. And so you can do that as an individual. You can do that as a couple. You can do that as a group. All right. So our personality style helps us make good decisions and it also inspires bad decisions. So what is helpful is to have a tried and true method to help us make sure that we're seeing everything we need to in order to make good decisions. So let's go to our next slide and talk about the Problem-Solving Model.

You are probably pretty familiar with this Problem-Solving Model. It is something that is used quite a bit, and one of the reasons is because it's so flexible, just about any kind of problem you have, if you go through these steps, then chances are you'll have all the info you need in order to make good decisions and solving problems. So let's just go through these steps first, identify the problem. And that sounds really easy. But I will tell you, identifying the problem is probably the most difficult of all of the steps. And one of the reasons for that is that a lot of times we are thinking the problem is really a symptom. And so we're trying to solve a symptom and we're not solving the problem. The other thing is that we tend to approach problem-solving, looking at the solution, thinking it's the problem when it's really not. So here's an example of that. Someone might say the problem is that we don't have a procedure for how to do this. Well, that's not really the problem. The problem is that employees are handling situations however they want to, and that's not working. The solution is the procedure. So the reason it is so important to clarify what the problem is, is that if you don't, you're going to create a solution that's not going to help solve your problem. And so how do you really find out what the problem is? Well, analyzing it and there are a couple of things that you can do to analyze what you think is the problem, to determine if it's actually the problem. Now, I like the little tool called the Five Whys. W.H.Y. Why.

The Five Whys. And those of you who have young children, this will probably drive you crazy because you probably hear this all the time, "why, why, why?" But it's a good tool to have when you're trying to identify if we actually have the problem or not. So here's an example. Let's say I'm presented with the problem, the client refuses to pay their bill, and I think that's the problem. Well, then what am I going to do in response to that being the problem? Am I going to call the client up and demand that they pay the bill. Is that the solution? Am I going to refuse to do any work with the client again, if that's the solution? But maybe that's not the problem. So if somebody says the client's refusing to pay their bill, what questions should I ask? Why? "Our delivery was late." Oh, OK. Delivery was late and the client couldn't do what they were supposed to do with the things we were supposed to supply them. Oh, OK, that changes the situation a little bit. So what's the question, oh, why was our delivery late because we ran out of supplies. Well why did we run out of supplies? Because we had a big rush job and our vendor couldn't get us the supplies we needed. Well, we don't need to ask why the vendor doesn't have enough supplies in stock.

We need to ask why are we still using a vendor who can't give us the supplies we need when we need them? So the problem really isn't that the client refuses to pay the bill. The problem is that we're using a vendor who can't supply us with what we need in an emergency situation. The solution then is to look for a new vendor. So the Five Whys is one tool you can use to analyze the problem and also you can use a cause and effect diagram. You might be familiar with this, but a cause is something that produces the effect, result or consequence, or the problem. And so what you try to do is try to identify what has contributed to the situation, what people contributed, what actions contributed, what environment contributed, all of those types of things. Now, what happens often when people do this is that they begin pointing fingers

at people-- you're to blame. And that's not what the cause and effect diagram is supposed to do. It's supposed to just try again to get to the root cause of the problem. Now, once you've identified what the actual problem is, you want to explore alternatives. There are three ways to do this. One is brainstorming. And I already mentioned brainstorming, intuitives tend to love brainstorming. And one of the reasons for that is that their brain just lights up when they're doing it. Intuitives, their brain that functions best is the part that generates ideas. And when they are generating ideas, it ends up generating more and more and more and more ideas. And they get all excited about these ideas. One of the reasons, because it feels good when our brain lights up. So brainstorming is supposed to happen in two parts. The first part is that you put all these ideas out there, no matter how crazy they are and you're not even saying they're crazy because there is no judgment in this phase. But some people, and they're sensors, just automatically start seeing what is wrong with the idea and helpfully begins to tell people what is wrong with their idea.

That shuts down the brain and the brain then just goes dark and no more ideas can be generated. So brainstorming is in two parts. And it's really important that you keep these parts separate. You generate all these ideas and put them out there and write them down, get them out there, and then you begin to evaluate them. And if you try to do both at the same time, you won't get as many good ideas. Now, brainstorming like that is, it's annoying a bit to sensors, OK, I was trying to use or find a really nice word, but that's the best I can come up with. Because while people are stimulated by all of these ideas that the sensors know will not work, they're just supposed to sit there very politely with a little smile on their face and not say anything. And that's difficult to do. But it's an important part of the process. Then when the sensors begin to identify everything that's wrong with the ideas, it's very important for the intuitives not to get their feelings hurt because their ideas weren't nearly as great as they thought they were going to be. OK, so we all have to work in order to make that process successful. Another thing that you can do to explore alternatives besides brainstorming is survey people. So get as many ideas as possible from as many people as possible by presenting lots of people with a survey that says this is the problem.

These are alternatives that we have come up with. Can you think of anything that we haven't thought of? And then discussion groups are good, too, especially for extroverts, because that's where they can really get processed the information that's inside their head. But if you're going to have a discussion group, make sure that the people who are involved are people who can make decisions about the information or even make the decision that this is a good alternative that we will then take to someone else. So brainstorming, surveys, discussion groups are ways to explore alternatives. Then you need to select the best alternative. Now, how do you select the best alternative? Well, you've got to have some criteria in order to determine which alternative is best. So, our solution is going to need to be within our budget, if it cost more than what we have, then it's not going to work. It needs to be something that fits within the time frame that we need. And so there are various criteria that you need to come up with to determine what does all our alternative need to meet in order to be a solution to the problem. And when you are selecting the alternative, here are some things that you need to consider as well.

Developing an action plan. So you need to articulate who is going to do what, with what resources, by what time, toward what goal. Who needs to know about the decision. So it's very much a who, what, where, why, when, how kind of situation as far as selecting that alternative, it has to meet all of those criteria, too. And so you need to identify the objectives. You need to identify the resources. You need to create a plan of who will do what by when, where, how, and who do we need to communicate this with. And so you need to do all of that when you're selecting an alternative to make sure it is the right alternative and will actually solve your problem. So then implementing the solution. You actually follow the action plan that you have created and things are going to go wrong along the way. So you've got to have some flexibility. There are going to be some unintended consequences to the decision that you have made. There always are. And we can't think of these unintended consequences until they smack us in the face and we wonder why we didn't understand that that was going to

happen. So you've got to be flexible to be able to change course if you need to change course and evaluate the situation. So not only will you have unintended consequences, but the problem might change. And so has it changed and how does that affect our criteria, our resources, etc? How do we know if the problem actually worked? Will we get or the solution actually worked when we get feedback about it? Will the feedback be sufficient for us to know that the solution has worked? Is the solution achieving its purpose, etc. Now, I want to give you just a very brief example of that. I just finished up some executive coaching, working with the executive team. And problem was that five members of the team did not get along and it was badly interfering with the organization's success as you might imagine. Now some of the members got along with some of the other members. But when you only have five executives on your team, everybody needs to get along with each other.

And they were not and they just couldn't figure out what the problem was. So they asked me to come in and help provide the solution. Now, the CEO in bringing me in, thought the solution was we need somebody to tell us about different personality styles and how they tend to conflict and how they can work better together and that type of thing. And so that's what I did. But while I was doing that, it was apparent that some people were just not really interested in different personality styles, etc. They wanted to talk about the issues they had with other members of the team. So we switched gears. And so we talked about those issues and got very direct, very honest, very uncomfortable. But it was a conversation that apparently needed to happen even though it wasn't planned. So based on that conversation, they created strategies on how they were going to work better together and they were supposed to put those strategies in place. And then I was supposed to come back two weeks later and see how they were doing.

And that's what I did last Monday. I went and saw them and said, how's it going? And they said things are better than they were. And so that's how we evaluated whether that was the solution or not. Now, if things hadn't been any better, obviously that was not the solution. And we thought it was a solution, but it wasn't. But fortunately, the situation was better. And so that's how, you know, whether you have identified the problem, you've identified the correct solution by evaluating the situation as you go along and at the end. All right. So that's the Problem-Solving Model. And the nice thing is that it's really adaptable, you can use this for your personal problems as well as your professional problems, and you might not need to spend a lot of time on every one of the steps. Just remember, it's critical that you identify the actual problem before you get started. Otherwise, you're going to waste time and money. All right. Let's go on.

Now, people should use ethical decision-making, and one of the things that amuses me sometimes is that everybody knows the difference between right or wrong. And when people say that everybody knows the difference between what's right and wrong, not necessarily. And the reason for that is the people who raised us have a lot to do with our moral code and our idea of what is ethical and unethical behavior. And so we have a lot of different ideas about raising children and instilling our ethics in them on purpose and on accident. I remember one time an employee of a client was upset about what a couple of her coworkers had done. And they played a joke on her and she thought it was really distasteful. And she said to me, "I just don't understand how they did that to me. My mother raised me to be polite," etc. etc.. And she said, "What's wrong with them?" And I said, "What's wrong with them is that your mother didn't raise them." So we get our idea of what's ethical and not ethical and what's OK and what's not OK and all of that in large part from our upbringing. And that's one of the reasons that we approach decision-making so differently.

So here are some problems with ethics in decision-making that people try to employ ethics, but it really doesn't end up being ethical. So here is one. If it's necessary, it's ethical, some people think. And this approach sometimes the ends justify the means. OK, maybe I had to steal, maybe I had to lie, maybe I had to do this. But it was necessary in order to get the result that we needed to get. And that's no good. And by the way, I have somebody in my life who frequently does

that, does some things that I consider to be unethical, but he thinks they're totally ethical because of the result that he's getting because of his actions. So here's somebody who I'm very close with. But we have different ethical viewpoints and that's what happens with people. If it's legal, then it's OK. And that's not necessarily the case either. One of the things you might not be aware of, of how many laws that allowed things or didn't allow things that are now not legal anymore. One is interracial marriage. Interracial marriage was against a law until 1960s. And then we have people who are in jail for doing things that were illegal, that are now legal. Smoking pot would be one of them. Again, I'm in California. Recreational marijuana is legal now. And so it was illegal and people were in jail for it. But now it's legal. So that's the thing. Just because something's legal doesn't mean it's ethical.

So we can't always rely upon that. It's just part of the job and my boss told me to do it, and so I did. Well, that's not a good excuse. It's for a good cause. I was just doing it for you. I have to fight fire with fire. It doesn't hurt anyone, so who cares? Everyone's doing it. It's OK if I don't gain personally. All of these types of things we tell ourselves that get in the way of ethical decision-making. So what can we do to make sure our decisions are ethical? Well, we need some help sometimes. Now I'm in Rotary, which is an international service organization, and we have an ethical code that every Rotarian around the world is supposed to use when making any kind of decisions, especially business decisions. And our code is this: in everything we do or say, we need to ask ourselves, is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build goodwill and better friendships? Will it be beneficial to all concerned? So we just need to ask ourselves those four questions and that will help guide our decision-making process. And the most important thing is, is it the truth? And so that's a guide. I used to work for the city government where I live, and one thing that I learned real fast is that public servants are held to a higher standard than private citizens, and we're supposed to be obeying all of the laws that the government provides because we are the government.

So one of the things my supervisor said to me once that stuck in my head, and that is kind of common advice is whenever you are deliberating on whether you should do something, ask yourself, how would I feel about this if it were in the news. Would I want it to be in the news or would I not want it to be in the news? And if you don't want it in the news, then don't do it. So that was a good guide for me. But here are the four things that you can do for yourself. Place the law and ethical principles above private gain. So, yes, I said the law is not always ethical, but that's the first thing to ask is, is what I want to do legal or illegal and are there any regulations, are there rules, are there policies that restrict my choices. Maybe I need to look in the employee handbook to see what it says there. How would my decision be perceived? Would most people look at it and think it's an ethical decision? What would a reasonable person do? In law, often the reasonable person is the standard to determine people's actions.

Would I be proud of the choice I made if my child knew about it or my parents knew about it? Could I rationally and honestly defend my decision and can I sleep at night based upon this decision? Now, there are some people who sleep just fine despite the things that they've done, but asking all of those questions might help. As far as acting impartially, decisions should be made upon objective criteria. Subjective is when we tend to favor people or we allow our biases and prejudices to interfere with our decision-making. And so objective is stepping back and just looking at the situation as impartially as possible. No feelings about it, just trying to make the rational choice. Also, we need to protect and conserve our employer's property. And the standard applies to both actions and actions that we see others take, such as fraud, waste, and abuse. And then finally, we need to put forth an honest effort when we are completing our jobs and if we feel that we are not doing what we should be doing because we're paid to do it, then maybe that will help us and our decision making.

All right, one more thing to tell you about before I open it up for questions, and that is avoiding groupthink. Groupthink is a phenomenon that occurs in a group when members let their need to agree with each other, get in the way of being critical about decisions. Now, three conditions usually lead to groupthink, and they are one overestimation of the group's ability and power. So we think the group is way better than it actually is. Two, an us versus them mentality. And so we tend to stereotype outsiders of the group and then it encourages the decisions or rationalizing the decisions that we've made because of those stereotypes. And then three, pressure toward conformity, peer pressure, people are encouraging us to go along with them and to not speak up about issues that we have with a decision that's made. Now, there are very two well-known examples of groupthink in action, and one is the Challenger space shuttle. And so, again, some of you might not have watched that shuttle blow up in space like I did. I was in college and the whole of the United States was watching the Challenger go up because it had a very special person on board. And that was Christa McAuliffe, who was a teacher.

And so lots of schoolchildren, perhaps you were in school and you were watching this on TV because it was televised because of a teacher being on the shuttle. And I mean, it was televised anyway, but a lot of schools televised it so the students could see a teacher going up in space. And you might remember after a few seconds of it going up in space, it exploded and there were no survivors. So it was determined afterwards that engineers of the space shuttle knew about some faulty parts months before takeoff, but they did not want negative press. And so they went along with the launch anyway. So another example was the Bay of Pigs Invasion, where President Kennedy made a decision and the people around him supported it despite their concerns. And that's what happens sometimes if you are at the top of the food chain, you want people to disagree with you and tell you what's wrong with your ideas. And that's one of the things when I was younger, I would come up with these ideas and I had a coworker named Bob and Bob would always shoot my ideas down. And man, I did not like Bob and I did not like him shooting my ideas down.

Now, 25 years later, I understand all of my ideas are not nearly as brilliant as I think they are. And so that's one of the things that I have learned to do, is when I come up with a brilliant idea to tell, to ask people, tell me what's wrong with this idea, tell me what I'm not seeing because I know I'm not going to see details. I know I'm not going to see things that are wrong with it. So tell me. And so you want to have people around you who will tell you the truth about your ideas and not just go along with them. So this is how to avoid groupthink. Oh, by the way, groupthink was a term or created by a guy named Irving L. Janis. And his findings came from research that he published into a book. And what he studied was why a group can make an excellent decision in one instance and then a terrible decision in another. And what he found was that lack of conflict, lack of opposing viewpoints, people not wanting to disagree with each other often led to bad decision making. So what we need to do is encourage everyone to air their objections and doubts and to accept criticism. And that's a really important point. When people tell you why your idea is not a good idea, don't get defensive about it. Thank them for bringing whatever to your attention.

Describe the problem without revealing your preferred solution. And so, especially if you are the leader of the pack, don't tell people what you think you want to have happen. Ask for their opinion so they're not swayed by your opinion. Assign the group into subgroups and ask each to evaluate the problem. And that way you have different people working with each other. And then when you all come back together again, you can see if you all agree, invite outside experts to challenge the group's decisions. And so that's one of the things I get to do sometimes is go into groups like this executive team and tell them what I see from my perspective. And that's exactly what I did not tell you. A couple of them really didn't like what I had to say, but that was my role. And then finally ask members to take turns playing devil's advocate. Now, some of us just take the devil advocate role naturally, because we just like to challenge people. Even when we agree with them, we still like to challenge them. Some people, they don't like doing that whatsoever. And so encourage and ask members

to play the role of devil's advocate, tell me what's wrong with this idea and then that will help people get used to having those conversations. And when people have those conversations, then usually you have better decisions. So I will finish where I started. Our lives are sometimes created based upon the decisions that we make, and we've made some probably really good decisions along the way and some really bad decisions along the way. What's really important is not to beat ourselves up about the bad decisions that we have made, but to learn from them, to grow, and to share our experience with others so they can make better decisions, too. All right. That's all I have for you. Do you have any questions for me?

### **Emmet Ore**

All right. Thank you, Robin. Looks like you have a question here. Should workplaces have ethical codes of conduct? Workplaces frequently have codes of conduct, and it might not be termed an ethical code of conduct, but when you go through employee handbooks, there frequently is a whole code of conduct there and it tells employees what they should do and what they can't do and all of that kind of stuff. But I like ethical codes of conduct because it ramps it up a notch and it really looks at specific ethical behavior. Many professions have codes of conduct. Human resources has a code of conduct. I know accounting has a code of conduct because I'm married to an accountant. And so, so I like it when that code of conduct really looks at ethics and even calls it an ethical code of conduct, because then people will really understand this behavior is ethical behavior. And if I think of it that way, I might be a little bit more conscientious about my conduct and the decisions I make.

### **Emmet Ore**

All right. How should you deal with ethics and GenZ because they see the world differently?

### **Robin Paggi**

Well, I think it's the same thing with GenZ as it is with everyone else. I mean, yes, they do see the world differently based upon their experiences. And I will tell you something that happened for some GenZs that you're probably all very, very well aware of something that called Varsity Blues. And this is when you had people like Lori Loughlin and her husband paid somebody to get their kids into college when their kids weren't accepted into college, and then they did some jail time. And that's one of the things when you're thinking of how did you make that decision to do that and the fact that it was such a bad decision that it land you in jail.

But the point I'm trying to make here is that one thing I read in putting my book together about GenZ that you already played was that there might not be as ethical as some of the older generations. And there was a lot of dispute about that because that whole bribe somebody to get our kid into school that a whole lot of people did, that was not GenZ. Who did it? That was their parents who did it. And so it's not GenZ that necessarily needs to be taught ethics it's their parents. So having said that, I think an ethical code of conduct applies to everyone. And therefore, you don't need to invent something new just for GenZ. As a matter of fact, you shouldn't, because then that implies that they need more guidance than everybody else. And that's simply not the case.

### **Emmet Ore**

Thank you. How do you recommend employees present alternate viewpoints to leadership if the person or people at the top are not very receptive to devil's advocate ideas?

### **Robin Paggi**

Well, one of the things that I think is important, and this goes back to the DISC personality profile that I rely upon a lot, dominant personality styles are usually at the top of the food chain and they don't like being challenged. But that doesn't mean that presenting alternatives is something that they would necessarily not like. The important thing is don't disagree with the person, disagree with the idea. Or don't even disagree with the idea, just present a different idea. And so if they throw out a solution instead of saying, "Well, I don't think your idea will work," that disagrees with the person. So disagree with the idea. "Well, I'm not sure about that idea. I think maybe this idea would be something better," or don't even do the first part. "I'm not sure about that idea," but then throw out a solution and you think, "I'm thinking that maybe we could do this." So it really depersonalizes the whole thing. And so that's one of the things, unfortunately, some people, especially dominants, they don't want to be told that they're wrong and they will argue with you until you finally give up. So don't tell them they're wrong. Just present differing ideas.

### **Emmet Ore**

All right, well, I think that's it for today. Thanks for the questions, everyone. Thank you all for tuning in today. And I hope you'll join us next week for part three. We'll be talking about increasing motivation and performance. We'll see you there.