

Decision Making

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PART I

Whether you are a professional leader, a parent, or neither of these, one thing is for sure and that is . . . *you will have to make decisions every day on a wide range of subjects and issues during your life.*

The quality of the decisions that you make will be the most important thing that determines how life turns out for you. A decision to drop out of school is a big one. A decision to use drugs is a big one. A decision to drive with no seat belt may be the last bad decision you make.

At the *Walt Disney World®* Resort, we have some important models and concepts that you can use when you are put in a position to make a decision. You can use these same concepts and methods in your personal life as well when you are faced with a decision.

One of my favorite decision-making filters is our *Disney Four Key Quality Standards* :

- ✓ Safety
- ✓ Courtesy
- ✓ Show
- ✓ Efficiency

I like to use these when I am called upon or approached to make a decision . . . or when I hear about a situation and may need to interject a decision upon the situations—whether I was asked or not.

You see, sometimes you learn something or are told something that triggers you into having to make a decision or override a decision that has already been made . . . Why? Because it is your responsibility to do so. When I am faced with decisions, I think about these four standards often.

Decision making can be stressful, and often you cannot make the perfect decision. Very often the final decision you make is the best decision you can make at the time . . . and often it is not perfect, and someone will still be unhappy with your decision. That is why they say, *"It's lonely at the top."* Many very good decisions are still not popular with some large numbers of people.

Even the President of the United States, when he is getting a 77 percent approval rating for his decisions, has 23 percent of the people disapproving and saying all kinds of negative things about him.

It is true that you have to get thick-skinned and not worry about it when you have critics who disapprove of the decision that you made.

One of the best things to do, by the way, is to *tell people when you can why you made the particular decision that you did.* Let them know how you came to your conclusion and what train of thought you used. This one thing of telling people "why" can gain you additional support or at least calm down your critics and keep them from making up their own stories as to why you made the decision you did.

Going back to our *Disney Four Key Quality Standards*, let me give you a couple of examples of how I have used them in the past when confronted with a decision.

One night about 6 p.m., I received a phone call informing me that a College Program Cast Member had received a threatening phone call from someone who said some pretty bad things about her nationality and her culture. The person calling me said, "Lee, this is what happened; and we plan to move her to another apartment tomorrow." I said, "Wait just a



minute.” (I had just finished doing some thinking about our *Disney Four Key Quality Standards* when I was writing about some other Disney tools and resources, so it was fresh on my mind.)

While studying these Disney concepts, it had struck me that they are great for decision making; so it was easy for me to say, “No, let’s move her tonight—right now.” If there is any chance that someone’s safety or security is at risk, you should be able to make the right decision without fail, immediately. I said to him that our *Disney Four Key Quality Standards* state that “Safety is always first,” so let’s move her tonight—no matter what we have to do—and we did.

Another time I got a call and was told that we had forgotten to budget the new nametags after the Millennium celebration. Since we had forgotten, one recommendation was that we just wear the nametags with the year 2000 on them for ten months until October of 2001, when we would have to have new nametags again anyway to start the *100 Years of Magic Celebration*.

I said, “Okay, let’s go through our *Disney Four Key Quality Standards*. This nametag issue is not a Safety problem, so let’s drop down to No. 2, Courtesy. Also, it is not a Courtesy issue, so let’s drop down to No. 3, Show.”

Bingo! It is a *Show issue* and will not fit with our *role* in the show. Wearing the year 2000 nametags was last year’s *show*, and this is 2001—a new *show*... so we have to go ahead and get our old-style nametags back for the next ten months until we switch to the *100 Years of Magic* nametags.

The real reason for the original recommendation to continue to wear the 2000 nametags was purely an efficiency issue, which is No. 4... and show comes before efficiency. So, we spent the \$75,000 to make the new nametags; and our Engraving Department worked day and night to make it happen on time. *Thanks, Engraving Department!*

Of course, all issues are not this clear, and often you will be faced with decisions that may be a very small show issue... and the cost may, in fact, outweigh taking care of the *show* issue. *The best way to evaluate a show issue is to look at the Guest Satisfaction Data and Guest Communications data to see if this is an issue with our Guests or if we are just too close to it.*

Sometimes it comes down to just plain-old judgment and common sense... but something like wearing a 2000 nametag in 2001 for ten months would have been right in the face of our Guests and impossible to explain. It would have clearly been bad show.

These are only two examples, and while not foolproof filters for *decision making*, they are very helpful. When faced with a safety decision, I have found them to be invaluable, especially as I continue to make Safety and Security recommendations and decisions since September 11.

Even at home, I can tell you that when you think safety first, you find a way to put a pool fence around your pool before any “wee” people ever come to your house for the first time—no matter what it costs. If you can’t afford a pool fence, you can’t afford a pool in my opinion. When the children are running around our pool decks at the *Walt Disney World®* Resort, we don’t think about courtesy first or efficiency first or even show. *We think safety, and the lifeguards are taught to enforce safety procedures.*

In this example, the lifeguards can implement a decision on safety with courtesy but also with firmness. Lifeguards don’t have to yell at the kids. They just need to be firm in what the consequences are for repeated running, and this can be done with courtesy.

If a child falls and gets injured while running, that is *both bad show and an efficiency problem*. Blood is the bad show element. Risk Management’s having to get involved is the efficiency issue. It may cost the family and us money depending upon the circumstances. More importantly, the child could be severely injured with a head injury or broken bones, so we enforce our policy using the *Disney Four Key Quality Standards*. In extreme examples, yelling would be okay if it stopped an injury, since *safety comes before courtesy*.

An extreme example would be a Guest who decides to jump off of the Safari vehicle to get closer to some of the animals. This is a time to act fast, and it is okay to give up courtesy while you deal with such an extreme case. *Frankly, we are willing to give up Courtesy, Show, and Efficiency to maintain Safety.*

A subtle example would be if we decide to delay a show for several minutes because we are in the middle of bringing in many unexpected, disabled Guests who need a special spot so they can see properly. The area we are going to place them

in has a steep slope to get there, so we decide that we want a Cast Member to personally escort each one for safety reasons. We stay courteous during all of this and don't get annoyed with them for being late. We give up the show issue by delaying the show, and we give up efficiency even if something like this causes overtime or results in our not being able to perform the last show of the day later on. *We have made this decision in the right order. Safety first, Courtesy second or, when possible, at the same time as Safety, Show third, and Efficiency last.*

The wrong decision would sound like this: "Sorry! The show starts in five minutes, and we don't have time to get all of you in place. So just go ahead and roll yourselves down there in that corner (pointing), and make it snappy because this show has got to start on time; and if you don't like it, that is your problem. Now move it." *In this example we have it all backwards.* Efficiency and show are paramount; safety is last, and there is no courtesy at all. This would go in the bad-decision column.

The bottom line of all of this is for *YOU* to start to get some concepts in your mind about how you should think about decisions you are faced with.

The *Disney Four Key Quality Standards* also help you overcome some of your uncertainty when you are faced with a decision that makes you nervous because you are thinking about what will happen to you if you make the wrong decision. Using the *Disney Four Key Quality Standards* as one of the filters for the decisions you make keeps you on safe ground.

I think that if you use our *Disney Four Key Quality Standards* plus our *Four Guest Expectations* and our *Four Cast Expectations*, it would be very hard to not always make the right decision for our Guests and for your fellow Cast Members.

Our Four Guest Expectations are:

- ✍ Make me feel special,
- ✍ Treat me as an individual,
- ✍ Respect my children and me, and
- ✍ Have knowledgeable Cast Members.

Our Four Cast Expectations are:

- ✍ Make me feel special,
- ✍ Treat me as an individual,
- ✍ Respect me, and
- ✍ Make me knowledgeable, develop me, and know my role.

In Part II, I will review the *FIVE big questions* that you need to ask yourself when you are faced with a decision to make.

Until then, stay safe and keep our world safe and secure... and do it with courtesy, good show, and efficiency if possible.

A conversation between a leader and a Front-Line Manager might sound like the following: "John, would you please keep this floor dry all of the time. I would really appreciate it. As a professional, I need for you to make sure this is done each and every day... and that way we will have a safe environment for our fellow Cast Members to work in... and no one will get injured... which will be your fault if they slip on a wet floor that you were supposed to keep dry. Thank you very much for your attention to this important matter. I know you can and will do it." ... Lee

PART II

IF YOU DON'T MAKE A DECISION, YOU STILL HAVE MADE A DECISION!

In Part I, we examined three of the tools we have at Disney to use for *Decision Making*:

- ✍ Disney's Four Key Quality Standards,
- ✍ Four Guest Expectations, and
- ✍ Four Cast Expectations.

Now we will explore some management techniques you can learn to use when faced with a decision.

Walt Disney said, "Think, Believe, Dream, Dare!"

In decision making, this might translate to the following:

Think: Think about the decision—contemplate, and make it.

Believe: Be confident in your own ability—make it because you can.

Dream: Think about all of the possibilities—make the best decision you can.

Dare: Take a risk, a calculated risk—dare to make a controversial decision.

Decision Making—The Five Right Things to Think About Before Making a Decision!

- 1) Authority
- 2) Reversible or Nonreversible Decisions
- 3) Ground Rules
- 4) Impact
- 5) Time Investment

No. 1: AUTHORITY

Let's take authority first. You can't just own the passion. You have to own the business. You have to own the decisions you make.

Questions to Ask Yourself Around the Authority Issue:

- ✍ Do you have the right to make the decision?
- ✍ Are you going to be held accountable for the consequences?
- ✍ Do you know what you are not responsible for, and do you accept those things?
- ✍ If you don't have the authority to make the decision, can you support the person who has the right to make the decision?

Examples of Authority:

A Cast Member asks you for two weeks off to tend to some personal issues. The Cast Member reports to you. You have the authority to grant or deny this request. I hope you would say yes.

A Cast Member asks you for six months off to do some personal travel. The Cast Member reports to you. You do not have the authority to grant this request, even if you would like to, because there is a Company policy that allows you only to grant a 30-day leave of absence.

You are a new Chef in one of our specialty restaurants. You want to change several items on the menu that fit right into the concept. You have the authority to do this. You may want to gain the servers' and restaurant managers' opinions, so you can avoid taking something off the menu that is really loved by our Guests.

You see, the authority to make a decision is not the main point. **The main point is to make a good decision.**

I learned late in my career the value of involving others in *decision making*, especially big and difficult decisions. **One of the main concepts of Performance Excellence is to involve our fellow Cast Members in the decisions that will affect their roles.** A leader who learns to do this one thing will improve his or her leadership effectiveness tenfold.

The paradox of what I just told you is that there will be times when you have the vision for the outcome of a decision, and you will have to go ahead and make it even in the face of resistance. You see, **there is no concept that fits every decision you will be faced with in your life.**

When I decided to make an audiotape of *Disney Great Leader Strategies* years ago, I received a lot of grief for it. It was implied that I was way out of line; and frankly, I was made to feel that my motive for doing this was self-promotion versus my real reason . . . knowing that audiotapes are an excellent way to learn while you are driving in your car. I know this because I have used them for thirty years for my own development. Those same people who criticized me back then tell me today how good that concept is. Even more important is that the users report back that the audiotapes are a great tool.

Also, when I started **The Main Street Diary**, I received some subtle messages that this may not be a good idea. They were subtle because of my position. No one wanted to just say, "No, you can't do this." I held my breath every week for a long time thinking that I would be called in and told to stop this. After a few weeks, the tide turned; and today those same people praise the effectiveness of **The Main Street Diary**. When you have a vision that others don't understand, you stand alone with only your vision to cheer you on. Today the Archives department of The Walt Disney Company says that **The Main Street Diary** is the best Cast communication document in our Company in their opinion, and they see them all.

Sometimes you just have to stick your neck out and test your authority in life if you want to make a difference.

Remember the *Five Steps in the Levels of Freedom* concept. For more details on it, see the January 7-13, 2001, edition of **The Main Street Diary**.

- ✍ The first (lowest) Level of Freedom is: Wait until you are told.
- ✍ The second Level is: Ask what to do.
- ✍ The third Level is: Maintain the basic expectations of your leader.
- ✍ The fourth (next to highest) Level is: Ask for approval and then act.
- ✍ The fifth (highest) Level of Freedom is: Act on your own, and keep your leader informed.

If you can gain a total understanding and agreement from your leader about what kind of decisions you have the authority to make and what ones you need approval on, then you will know when to ask for approval... and when you can act on your own and keep your leader informed. *It is worth the time to get this straight from the beginning with your leader*... and to review it from time to time to see if you can be granted new and higher levels of authority, as you prove that you have good judgment, common sense, and a good batting average.

Ask your leader for things that you would like to have the authority to make decisions on. If your leader says no, recommend a test period like 30, 60 or 90 days; and then review the results with your leader again to gain approval to keep those items on your list of responsibilities.

Leaders have a safety net in that they can always reclaim the authority if they want to. Authority is a big timesaver for you, your leader, and your direct reports. It is worth pursuing greater and greater levels of authority, and it is worth your direct reports, approaching you for this same trust. Sometimes it may take some training before you are granted additional authority or before you grant it to your direct reports. Sometimes it may just take an agreement on how much experience and time you need in the position before some level of authority is granted to you.

One of the things I teach in Time Management is to ask yourself two questions:

- 1) What am I currently doing that others could be trained to do and given the authority to do?
- 2) What am I currently doing that I should stop doing and does not need to be done by anyone?

Always remember that even if you don't have the authority to make a decision, you still have the influence to get a decision made by pushing it out into the open! You are paid part of your salary for your opinion.

No. 2: REVERSIBLE OR NONREVERSIBLE

Let's now study the two kinds of decisions that you will be faced with. There are decisions that are reversible, and there are decisions that are not reversible. Always think about which of these two you are about to make. This will guide how you go about making those decisions.

One Question to Ask Yourself When You Are Faced With a Decision: Is this decision reversible? or nonreversible?

Reversible Decisions

Reversible: These are usually low-risk decisions that can be made quickly. When you make these kinds of decisions, communicate with those who have a need to know as soon as possible.

These are the easiest kinds of decisions to make because they are low risk and can be reversed if they do not work out to the level of your expectation... or just turn out to be wrong.

Often these are easy because you have been there before, and you just know it is the right decision. **Experience** helps build up this knowledge and confidence base, so many decisions become easy for you to make over time.

Ask yourself: What is the worst thing that can happen if I make this decision? If it is reversible, it is even easier to make.

Examples of Reversible Decisions:

A server says that we should have two fresh fish on the menu every night. It is low risk and can be reversed.

A Front Desk host says that we need more staffing between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. when people come back from the park. Decide what kind of results and measurable improvements you are going for... then try it for 30 to 90 days... and then evaluate the outcome. You can either continue it or stop it, depending on the results. **One thing for sure is that unless you try things, you will never know if they would have worked or not.**

This next example really happened years ago. I suggested not changing the sheets every day in our resorts, as they do in Europe. There was an outcry from many people who thought this was a terrible idea and that we should not pursue it. We did pursue it with a test of one property. It worked, and then we found out that our Guests did not care; and furthermore, they liked what it did for our environment by keeping water and chemicals from going down the drain.

If it had not worked, the worst thing that could have happened would have been to start changing the sheets again. **Sometimes there is no other way than deciding to try something** if you really want to know.

The reason this is so important to understand is that as a leader you will be asked to make many decisions every day... and the more you can say yes to the Cast Member or Guest who is asking, the more feedback and credibility you will gain from your followers... and the more successes you will discover by just trying things.

If you say no to every decision that is put in front of you, it will not be long before you lose your leadership reputation and credibility. People will quickly think that you have no authority or no courage. At this point you will be rendered an ineffective leader.

Continuous improvement relies on leaders who are open-minded, flexible, and calculated risk takers. Important improvements in the world have always been made by someone who said, "Let's keep going. Let's try it and see what happens." **Let's go to the moon** in the last century is a good example.

No is the word I dislike the most. You dislike it too, as do our Guests and fellow Cast Members. It is one of the first words children learn from their parents, and they use it the rest of their lives, usually until their demise. In fact, all research says not to say no to babies. Just pick them up and redirect them away from what they are doing that you don't want them to do; i.e., offer them an alternative. This works in business as well.

Say yes as much as you can! Encourage others to make decisions and try things.

- ✍ Give your coworkers more and more authority by training them, so they will be successful.
- ✍ Learn to give up control and to trust others.
- ✍ Learn to delegate.
- ✍ Learn to work at the two top levels of the Five Levels of Freedom.
- ✍ Learn to share your authority.

We cannot maintain world-class service for our Guests unless every Cast Member has some level of authority to make decisions on the spot.

These are the things that make leaders great. This is how they multiply themselves and get better and better results. **Know when to be a leader and when to be a follower. Lead as you would like to be led, and follow as you would like to be followed.**

Nonreversible Decisions

Nonreversible: These are higher-risk decisions that need discussion or study and probably need the involvement of a partner. In these types of decisions, take more time to make sure you are making a good, calculated decision.

Involve others to help you think about it, including those who may be affected, as well as your leader and other people whom you really trust the most. Think about other people who might have information or expertise concerning the

decision you are faced with and involve them.

Tough decisions are tough, and that is why they say, "misery loves company." All of us think differently, and that one person out there may give you just the point of view or piece of information that you would never have thought of. This may lead to an even better decision than you could have ever imagined. While we all like to do things fast in this day and age, *taking time to work out nonreversible decisions is prudent and the trait of a great leader.*

Examples of Nonreversible Decisions:

Hiring someone is a nonreversible decision or, at the very least, should be considered in this category.

For instance, several years ago I was looking for a Vice President to run *Downtown Disney*®. By now I had learned all about the value of using the Disney Profiling process to make a good decision. We learned this from the Gallup organization.

I hired a headhunter, and I also received recommendations from other executives, as well as resumes from Professional Staffing. The first person I talked with and flew in looked great on paper. I spent time with him. He said a lot of the right things about his talent and abilities. I had him profiled, and it was obvious that he did not have many of the leadership talents that we as a Company wanted. He had a lot of technical expertise and probably was a decent manager, but what I want in our top executives is strong leadership talent.

This went on for six months. Another candidate was recommended by one of our own executives. He said this man was great, and he could do everything. He said he was the best he had ever seen. This sounded really promising, so I flew him in. He too sounded good and had a lengthy resume full of experiences that fit into the position we were trying to fill. His profile was not too bad but not great. I did an extensive reference check on him by calling everyone I knew and checking, checking, and checking. It turned out that his real reputation was one with many questionable ethical and honesty issues.

I thought we would never find someone, and then one day I got a resume that looked great. I flew that man in. I liked his quiet self-assurance. He did not boast about what he could do. He too said a lot of things that I liked, but I was not falling for this... so I had him profiled, and it came back very strong. I was not falling for this either, so I did a very thorough reference check on him, and the references came back very strong. Everyone talked about his talent, but they talked most about his integrity and his ability to get the job done through people. I hired him. He is still with us six years later and very successful. This process took me six months, and I interviewed and profiled thirteen candidates. Was it worth it for this nonreversible decision? You bet it was!

Promoting people falls into this same category. Make sure you are just as careful with internal candidates. *Don't make the mistake of confusing personality with talent.*

Other examples of nonreversible decisions might be getting married, having children, and getting a divorce. Others are buying a house, putting in a new attraction or a new restaurant, building a new park, buying something very expensive, signing a long-term contract, and on and on. Making a mistake on a nonreversible decision can be very miserable and/or costly for you, so *take your time and use all of the resources at your disposal to make the best calculated decision you can that fulfills the expectation you have for the outcome of that decision.*

So, just start out with this one question: Is this decision easily reversed? When you answer this honestly, you are on your way to understanding the next step with the decision you are facing. Over the years and through experience, this will become instinctive.

No. 3: GROUND RULES

Questions to Ask Yourself Around the Ground Rules: Does This Decision Conform to Our Operating Guidelines or Well-Known Company Philosophy, Work Practices, or Policy?

Consider the ground rules on which all of your decisions are based, e.g.:

Performance Excellence: Read the February 25, 2001, Special Edition of *The Main Street Diary* to fully understand how we think about running our business. Don't only read this, but study it and totally understand it; and if you don't understand some part of it, get someone to explain what it means to you... and also to explain the implications of how we expect you to lead based on all of these Disney concepts.

Honesty and integrity are two ground rules you should always consider when making any decision. *One good question to ask yourself always is: Is this legal?*

Business Parameters

Who should be involved? The Executive Committee of the *Walt Disney World®* Resort, the Steering Committee of the *Walt Disney World®* Resort, Legal Department, Security Department, Human Resources Department, Finance, Marketing or Sales Department, Community Relations, Government Relations, someone in Burbank, the Line of Business, WDI, your team members, your leader, your peers, etc.

Understand the impact on our Brand Strategy, Vision Statement, Purpose and Role Statement, and Brand Essence. We have a unique reputation in the world. There are very high expectations and scrutiny about everything we do at Disney, and decisions can't be taken lightly. We have a huge responsibility to the world for our actions.

Use Guest Satisfaction Measurement and Cast Excellence Surveys to understand the potential value of your decisions and even if the decision needs to be made. Your Profit & Loss statement is another good place to find things that you need to be making decisions about.

Understand the impact on the Annual Operating Plan (AOP). What is the financial impact of this decision?

Does this decision have the appropriate financial return if a return is required on this issue? Think about the number of initiatives we are working on, if someone is already working on this one, or whether it needs to wait until later to be dealt with because of current workload.

Examples of Ground Rules:

We have many things that we do that are the "Disney Way," so *you really need to understand the "Disney Way"* as you are engaged in *decision making*. *Involving others* who have been around for a while can help you avoid the pitfall of making a decision that is in direct conflict with the way we do things.

An example would be if you don't understand our *Purpose and Role* concept very well, and you start telling your fellow Cast Members that you want to implement the purpose statement from the last place you worked, which was: "Be so nice to the Guests that they won't believe it." This would not only confuse your fellow Cast Members, but you would soon find yourself in my office explaining why you don't read *The Main Street Diary* every week where our *Purpose* is clearly stated in black and white. Your only hope would be to say that you can't read. *It is important that you as a leader find time to read these messages and pass them on to your teams.*

I read what Al says every week in his Cast Portal message. Years ago, I got out of my car at Team Disney and noticed a book on his front seat titled *The Games Leaders Play*. I promptly bought that book and read it. *We have got to continue to educate ourselves and our teams so that they have the knowledge to make the right decisions and to lead effectively.*

Remember our heritage, our culture, our operating guidelines, our Vision, our Purpose and Role, and all of the other things that have made us famous around the world when you are faced with a decision.

Often leaders want to change things because they have not taken the time to understand deeply why we do something the way we do. I am not saying not to change things or recommend change, but do it with your eyes open and get approval before you do it.

An example might sound like this when someone comes to me with an idea for a change: "Lee, I know that we have the *Seven Service Guidelines*; but I think we should add an eighth one, which would be: 'Make every Guest feel special in your own unique way.' What do you think?"

This way your leader knows that you know what you are talking about and the debate can begin; and if the decision is finally made to change it, then it would be implemented across the *Walt Disney World®* Resort and not just in your area of responsibility. This leads us to . . .

No. 4: IMPACT

Questions to Ask Yourself Around the Impact of This Decision:

- ✍ **Global Impact?**
- ✍ **Local Impact Only?**

Does the decision affect only your local area, or is there a potential to impact the global arena? We are a campus of 56,000 Cast Members. How will your decision affect other areas when they hear about it? Sometimes local is defined as the *Walt Disney World*® Resort, while global might refer to our entire Company: The Walt Disney Company.

Always understand the impact and ramifications of any decision you are contemplating. It can become a can of worms if you don't think this through completely, and this is where asking the experts come in handy.

Human Resources is always a good source to get an opinion from. At the least, they can refer you to the right resource to check out the anticipated impact on something you might not have thought about. As an example, can someone in another location say: "What about me?" or "What about us?"

Depending on the answer, you know whom you have to involve or communicate with regarding the decision.

Examples of Global/Local Impact:

I will give you a very simple example of something that really happened right here at the *Walt Disney World*® Resort a few years ago. We had a brand-new General Manager in one of our resorts. This General Manager was extremely competent, an excellent leader, and was always coming up with new ideas on how to improve our Guest Service and Cast attitudes and training so they could perform at their peak level.

One day I got word that he had ordered 900 turkeys so he could give one to each one of his fellow Cast Members for Thanksgiving, as he had done back with his former employer. He had the funds available in his budget. This, no doubt, would be appreciated by his fellow Cast Members. The cost was about \$9000, which did not seem like much in the scheme of things to him. A nice note would go with each turkey, thanking each Cast Member for the good job he or she was doing and wishing a Happy Thanksgiving to all.

The only thing he forgot about, and even his own team who should have known better had not told him, was that this would create a huge global issue at the *Walt Disney World*® Resort, since we would immediately have 55,100 other Cast Members wanting to know where their turkey was.

It really does not matter whether it was a good idea or not. ***If it is going to have a global impact, then it needs a lot more discussion and agreement before the decision is made.*** The total cost for the entire property would have been a half million dollars, plus the logistics of distributing 50,000+ frozen turkeys, which would have created even more costs.

Another example is when I came to the *Walt Disney World*® Resort in 1993, we carried 27 different kinds of french fries in the warehouse. We told the Chefs to go into a room and not to come out until they picked only three. They did, and the vendor gave us an immediate \$500,000 cost reduction for not having to warehouse all of those different fries.

I could give you a hundred examples like this right here at the *Walt Disney World*® Resort, and that is why the Line of Business executives now are the ones who have the responsibility and authority to approve and track global usage of products, global operating guidelines, and other things where consistency is required. ***So make sure that you always ask yourself one question: How will my decision affect others?***

No. 5: TIME INVESTMENT**Questions to Ask Yourself About Time Investment:**

- ✍ Is the time you invest in researching and thinking about the decision equal to the risk?
- ✍ If the risk is high, spend the time. Start early enough so you have the time to consider all angles and to consult with others.
- ✍ If the decision is low risk, low cost, or reversible, make the decision without spending a lot of time on it.

Examples of Time Spent on a Decision:

Some things are obvious. If you are going to run a marathon for the first time, you need to start preparing a year in advance; and you need to understand that it is going to take a lot of your time every week, preparing yourself for the decision you made to run a marathon.

I think the main things to consider are:

- ✍ Is this decision I am faced with worth the time I will have to spend making the decision?
- ✍ Will the time I have to spend on implementing the decision really be worth it?
- ✍ Is the value there when I consider all of the responsibilities I have? all of the things I currently have on my plate? as well as, will I have the resources to get it done?
- ✍ What other things will I have to neglect temporarily or give up if I take this decision on?

When you make big decisions such as going back to school to get your MBA, running a marathon, or even taking on a new job, **you have to think about how much time this decision is going to take once you have made it.**

I knew when I accepted the position at Disneyland® Paris that my life was going to change a lot. The idea to join Disney and live in France was exciting. The big part of the decision was to think about whether I wanted to commit to all of those hours and the stress involved in such an undertaking.

When I made the decision to start publishing **The Main Street Diary** every week, I had to consider how much additional time I would have to allocate to this before I finalized that decision. The idea to do it was easy. The time needed to do it is where the harder part of the decision came in.

When you as a leader commit to the decision to spend one hour with your direct reports once a month discussing their performance and giving them some professional coaching and counseling, then you are stuck... because **it is better not to commit to a decision than to commit and then not follow through. Credibility is a leader's best friend.**

When you make a decision, it is not only your time and your situation that you need to consider. Many decisions we make affect others' time as well. Sometimes your family is deeply affected; and at work, a decision you make may take huge amounts of time of many others in the organization to get it accomplished. Often you want to make sure your team or family are on board with the decision you are about to make... since you probably can't get it accomplished without them.

One last thing to consider is your intuition. If something sounds wrong or feels wrong to you, it probably is. If something sounds or feels right, it might be. **Don't ignore your intuition as one of your decision filters.**

The bottom line is that there is only so much time in a day, week, or year... and **time needs to be one of your primary considerations before you make a decision.**

Many of you may remember the song *Free Will* by the group Rush. One line in the song says, "If you decide not to choose, you still have made a choice." **This means that you can't escape making decisions... because even if you don't make a decision, you still have made a decision.**

So now you have eight tools to use when you are faced with a decision. You have the:

- ✍ **Five Right Things to Think About Before Making a Decision (the five big questions),**
- ✍ **Disney's Four Key Quality Standards,**
- ✍ **Four Guest Expectations, and**
- ✍ **Four Cast Expectations.**

Using these will improve your batting average dramatically when you have to make a decision.

In Part III, I will give you some other points of view and tools for *decision making*. I will show you how **Performance Excellence** and **Decision Making** fit nicely together. I will give you a tool called a *Decision Tree*, and I will give you a tool called the *Decision Checker*.

Until later, go out there and make... or suggest... some big decisions... and remember that **if you don't make a decision, you still have made a decision!** ... Lee

PART III

DECISION MAKING AND YOU!

When I decided to write a three-part series on decision making a few weeks ago, I did not realize at the time that it would come in handy for so many people.

I really did not realize that over 4,000 Office & Technical Cast Members, including the Disney Reservation Center, would be faced with a huge decision in the next few weeks.

The decision to have or not to have a union to represent the Office & Technical staff is pretty monumental since we all spend at least one-third of our day at work.

The environment is, I think, pretty good in most parts of the *Walt Disney World*® Resort; but obviously, we have some work to do in some parts as well since it appears that a lot of our fellow Cast Members signed union cards acknowledging that they think a union would be a good thing for them.

I am not going to rewrite all of my points of view on this subject, as I have sent them to you already in some other Special Editions.

The one thing that I would like you to do is to think carefully about how a decision to have a union represent *YOU* will affect your work environment where *YOU* spend so much of your time.

Take the time to review the three-part series on Decision Making that can be found in **The Main Street Diary** on July 1, 8, and 15, 2002.

I always ask myself one question when I make a big decision, and that question is as follows: ***What Is the Worst Thing That Can Happen if I Make This Decision?***

I also ask myself: ***Is This a Reversible Decision, or Is It a Nonreversible Decision?***

For decisions that are nonreversible, I always take a lot more time to make sure I have all of the facts and especially when the decision is going to make a major impact on my life. Think about it, and use all of the resources available to you to make a good decision on this one. . . . Lee

IF YOU DON'T MAKE A DECISION, YOU STILL HAVE MADE A DECISION!

In Part I of this three-part series, we reviewed some excellent tools to use when we are faced with making a decision. In Part II of this three-part series, we reviewed the five big questions you should learn to ask yourself when faced with a decision. In Part III, I want to review how **Performance Excellence** fits in with decision making, especially when you are making Disney decisions.

Performance Excellence summarizes our Disney Values, Empowerment and Partnership, Interpersonal and Communication skills, and Innovation and Change. If you have taken the time to study the Special Edition of **The Main Street Diary** dated February 25, 2001, in the Archives section of the Cast Portal, you will be very familiar with all aspects of what Performance Excellence means to you, to our Guests, and to our Company.

If you don't understand **Performance Excellence**, you will not be able to make the best decisions for your business. It is critical that you understand this and teach it to every single Cast Member. This understanding may be one of the most important and giganormous (pronounced g-nor-mous) things that you need to know before making a "Disney Decision" (DD). (Giganormous means "really big and important.")

We make decisions differently than the rest of the world, and that is why we are the best at what we do in the whole wide world. We continually make great, well thought-out, balanced, value-based decisions that consider Cast Excellence, Guest Satisfaction, and Business Results.

On pages 13 and 14, you will find a chart entitled **Decision Making and Performance Excellence**. This chart simply

makes some statements on decision making and compares that statement with the **Performance Excellence** leadership behavior that is expected at Disney.

The second thing that may be helpful to you is on page 15. It is called a **Decision Tree**. This tree takes the **Five Big Questions** to ask yourself when you are faced with a decision and helps you think about those questions in a logical order. Think of it as a map that takes you from the decision you are faced with to the decision that you make. This **Decision Tree**, when used in conjunction with **Performance Excellence**, will increase your odds dramatically of making a great decision.

The last tool I want to leave you with is called a **Decision Checker**. It is on pages 16 and 17. This simply gives you a quick checklist of the **Performance Excellence** behaviors that we have identified that not only ensure excellent decisions but ones that we find that **Great Leaders** use. Take the time to go through this Decision Checker and ask yourself the questions it poses to evaluate yourself on how well you are using all of the techniques that are available to you for great decision making.

Decision making comes in small and big ways to us every single day of our lives. Seemingly small, bad decisions like not brushing your teeth and flossing can become very serious problems downstream in your life. Big decisions that are made in haste without the proper thought can destroy many people's lives. Just look at Enron and WorldCom as examples of a few people's making bad decisions because they had the authority to do so; and this ended up destroying thousands of people's lives.

The decisions we make today may not show their negative impact for years and years, and sometimes even centuries, when it comes to things like our environment. Bad decisions about how to develop our children can come home to be a huge mess twenty years later and even affect several generations as one affects the next.

The bottom line is that decision making on all levels is a serious business for every single person on this earth. Leaders have a lot of authority to make decisions. Make sure that you have a reputation for making decisions and for making good, well thought-out decisions.

Finally, remember that you really cannot escape making decisions because *if you don't make a decision, you still have made a decision*. . . Lee

Decision Making and Performance Excellence

DISNEY VALUES	Performance Excellence Leadership Behaviors Described
<p>My decisions exemplify the Disney <i>culture</i>.</p> <p>My decisions positively impact the quality service we provide to our <i>Guests</i>.</p> <p>My decisions have <i>integrity</i> because they are responsible and ethical.</p> <p>My decisions support the organization's <i>values and purpose</i>.</p>	<p>Modeling Disney Heritage Assesses skill in communicating and exemplifying the traditions and culture expectations that embody the Disney philosophy.</p> <p>Guest/Customer Focus Staying in tune with Guests/ Customers' expectations about quality service, seeking input from Guest/ Customers and acting on it.</p> <p>Integrity Measures extent to which a person exemplifies responsible, ethical, and honest behavior.</p> <p>Mission Skills Assesses how well a person creates a compelling picture of the organization's values and purpose in order to provide motivation and direction to others.</p>

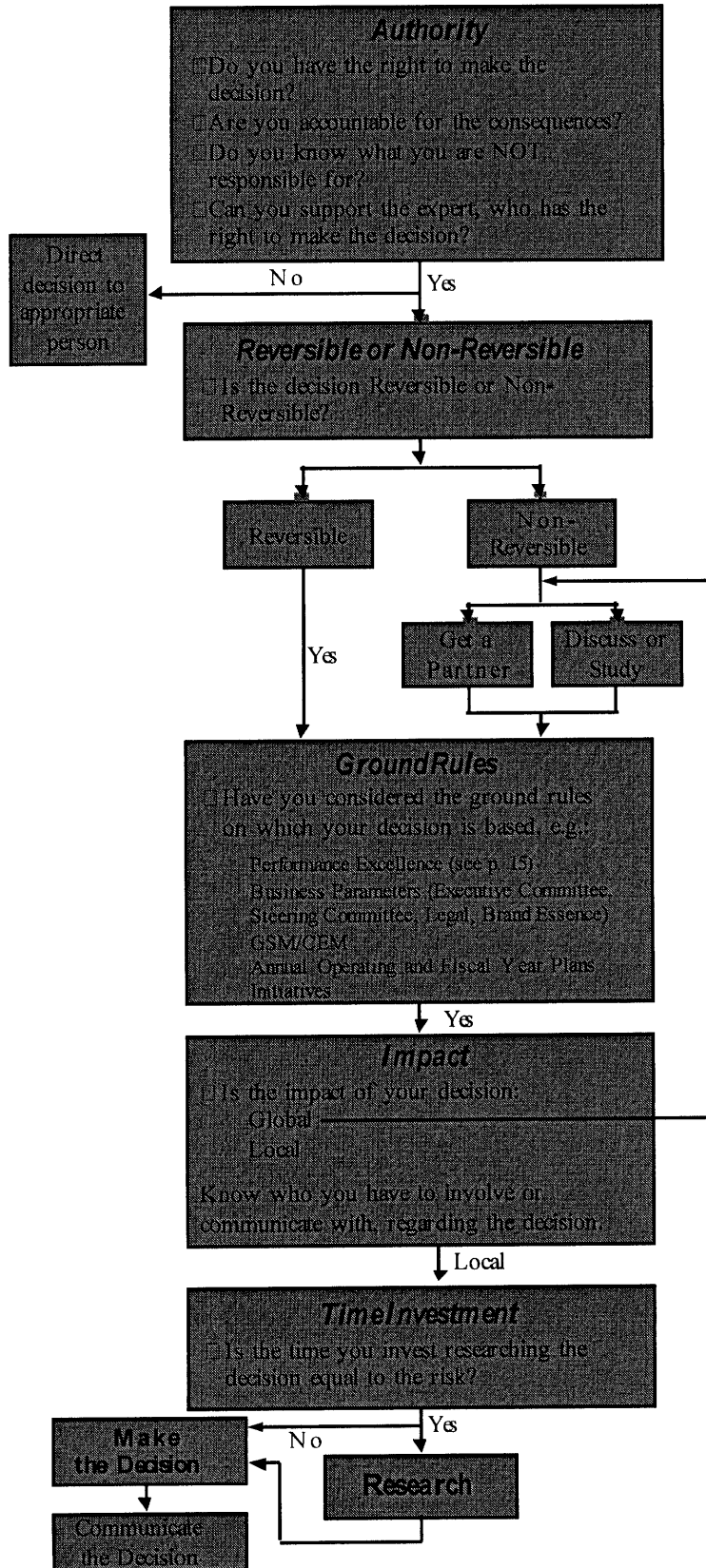
EMPOWERMENT/PARTNERSHIP	Performance Excellence Leadership Behaviors Described
<p>I <i>involve</i> the appropriate people in making decisions peers, team members, stakeholders, cross-functional partners, superiors.</p> <p>I demonstrate <i>initiative</i> by taking risks and making decisions.</p> <p>I <i>encourage</i> team members to work together to make decisions which impact the entire team.</p> <p>I <i>teach</i> my Cast Members the skills to make better decisions.</p> <p>I regularly <i>provide feedback</i> to my Cast Members on the decisions they make.</p> <p>I empower my staff by <i>delegating</i> decision-making authority.</p> <p>I <i>reward</i> my Cast Members for making decisions.</p>	<p>Cooperation Working cooperatively with peers and other teams to meet organizational goals.</p> <p>Partnering Cultivating useful contacts with a variety of people in diverse locations.</p> <p>Initiative Acting in a self-empowered way; able to proceed with minimum direction or guidance from others.</p> <p>Building a Team Leading members of a team to work together collaboratively and effectively.</p> <p>Staff Development Demonstrate an effort in training team members, improving their skills, and addressing their career development needs.</p> <p>Performance Feedback Evaluates the degree to which a person gives useful, informal feedback to team members to let them know how they are doing.</p> <p>Empowerment Actively pushes decision-making authority and responsibility downward, giving team members "ownership of work."</p> <p>Team Motivation Assesses skill of motivating others to work hard by making good performance rewarding and satisfying.</p>

INTERPERSONAL/COMMUNICATION SKILLS	Performance Excellence Leadership Behaviors Described
<p>I <i>trust</i> other people's ability to make decisions.</p> <p>I am <i>sensitive</i> to the impact of my decisions on others.</p> <p>I <i>communicate</i> my decisions in a <i>timely</i> manner.</p>	<p>Relationship Skills Demonstrating the ability to develop warm and friendly relationships at work. ⇒ Makes others feel that they are trusted ⇒ Shows sensitivity to others' feelings</p> <p>Sharing Information Assuring a consistent, timely flow of information to co-workers, keeping other Cast Members updated.</p>

Decision Making and Performance Excellence

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS (CONTINUED)	Performance Excellence Leadership Behaviors Described
<p>I <i>persuade</i> others to support my decisions</p> <p>I communicate my decisions in an <i>easy to understand</i> manner, to <u>all</u> levels</p> <p>I <i>encourage questions</i> about the decisions I make.</p> <p>I <i>listen to understand</i> concerns about the decisions I make.</p> <p>I handle <i>disagreements</i> about my decisions in a non-defensive manner.</p>	<p>Influence Persuading others; expressing ideas in a way which leads others to share his/her perspective and reach agreement.</p> <p>Communicating Clearly Expressing ideas loudly and concisely; ensuring clear understanding.</p> <p>Asking Questions Asking questions to clarify own understanding of others; seeking additional information, exploring implications, and querying the reasons behind others' decisions in ways that are productive and non-confrontational.</p> <p>Listening Paying attention and remembering what others in the organization have said; enhancing understanding and empathy through "reflective" listening – paraphrasing the factual and emotional content of what others are saying. ⇒ Listens without interrupting ⇒ Is a good listener, makes others feel they are truly heard</p> <p>Handling Disagreement Finding ways to reach agreement in conflict situations; dealing with disagreement openly and productively.</p>
INNOVATION/CHANGE	Performance Excellence Leadership Behaviors Described
<p>I maintain <i>focus</i> on what is critical in making decisions and do not get distracted by irrelevant data.</p> <p>I do not <i>delay</i> making decisions</p> <p>I analyze decisions I make that do not turn out as anticipated, in order to <i>learn</i> from my mistakes</p> <p>I make decisions in ways that <i>balance</i> financial and non-financial issues</p> <p>I follow-up to determine the <i>effectiveness</i> (i.e., <i>quality</i>) of my decisions</p> <p>I ask questions that help my Cast Members to see <i>innovative</i> and <i>unconventional</i> possibilities when I am coaching them on decision making.</p> <p>I am <i>open-minded</i> and <i>supportive</i> of my Cast Member's decisions allowing them to learn from their mistakes</p> <p>I am comfortable with my decisions and do not continually <i>revisit</i> decisions</p> <p>I have a <i>process</i> in place for my Cast Members to get the <i>support</i> necessary to improve their decision-making ability.</p>	<p>Organizing Work Using time and resources efficiently in a goal-oriented way; structuring work productively. ⇒ Does not get distracted by unimportant issues</p> <p>Decision Making Using appropriate information and input from others to make good decisions; acting decisively. ⇒ Does not delay decisions too long</p> <p>Professional Expertise Mastering the technical aspects required by the work. ⇒ Learns from mistakes</p> <p>Problem Solving Assessing problems and find solutions. ⇒ Makes decisions in ways that balance financial and non-financial issues</p> <p>Quality Improvement Emphasizing high quality and taking action to improve it; producing high quality work.</p> <p>Promoting Innovation Generating and implementing innovative ways to accomplish work; creating useful, new ideas. ⇒ Asks questions that make people see things differently ⇒ Encourages unconventional ideas</p> <p>Welcoming Change Promoting and supporting change being open-minded and responding flexibly.</p> <p>Efficiency Demonstrating the ability to provide information about effectiveness by using time and resources to deal with important issues at hand. ⇒ Does not duplicate or waste efforts</p> <p>Planning The degree to which a person organizes the work, sets priorities, and provides structure for tasks</p>

Decision Tree



Decision Checker

Disney Values

Does the decision I'm about to make:

- exemplify the Disney *culture*?
- positively impact our *Guests*?
- appear *ethical and honest* ?
- support the organization's *values and purpose*?

Empowerment/Partnership

In making this decision, am I:

- involving* the appropriate people demonstrating *initiative* ?
- encouraging* team members to work together?
- teaching* my team members the skills to make better decisions?
- regularly *providing feedback* to my Cast Members on the decisions they make?
- empowering my staff by *delegating* decision-making authority?
- rewarding* my Cast Members for making decisions?

Decision Checker

Interpersonal/Communication Skills

In making this decision, am I:

- trusting* other people's ability to make decisions?
- sensitive* to the impact of my decision on others?
- able to *communicate* my decision in a *timely* manner?
- persuading* others to support my decision?
- communicating* my decision in an *easy to understand* manner?
- encouraging* questions?
- listening to understand* concerns about the decision?
- handling *disagreements* about my decision in a non-defensive manner?

Innovation/Change

In making this decision, am I:

- maintaining a *focus* on what is critical in making this decision?
- delaying* making this decision? Why?
- learning* from my mistakes?
- balancing* financial and non-financial issues?
- following up to determine the *effectiveness* (i.e., quality) of my decision?
- asking questions that help my Cast Members to see *innovative* and *unconventional* possibilities, when I am coaching them on decision making?
- open-minded* and *supportive* of my Cast Member's decisions, allowing them to learn from their mistakes?
- comfortable with my decision and not *revisiting* it?