Who killed Common Sense?

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Common sense decision making has not been evident recently and appears to have been killed! Has common sense decision making been killed by the pressure to HURRY-UP and DO SOMETHING … anything? Has reactive decision making replaced common sense decision making?

Let's face it, hurry-up and do something aka *over reactive decision making* is resulting in much bigger problems that are even more complex and even tougher to resolve. Look at our reaction to rising gas prices. Weekly, daily and even hourly we see the price at the pump going up. What is our reaction? Well first we want to blame someone … it's the Presidents fault, or the oil companies or the oil producing countries… then we want the problem fixed immediately if not sooner. Seldom do you hear anyone asking thoughtful questions and discussing all the variables or factors that can cause gas prices to rise and sometimes even fall. We have no time for discussion, for common sense or even time to think. We have no time to think because even though we don't understand the problem we are too busy trying to fix it NOW, if not sooner.

Look at the reactive decisions in your own organization that were aimed to fix one problem, but instead ended up creating way too many unintended consequences and new problems. Worse yet, look at how many times we have quickly overreacted only to find that we are addressing the wrong problem. It has gotten crazy and costly. Why have so many leaders stopped thinking and are just in the "reactive mode". I know that is a complex question with many possible answers. But what I see so often is that the pressure to hurry-up and DO SOMETHING (almost anything) has replaced common sense thinking!

Like you, I have met a lot of very good leaders, smart folks, well intentioned, who have lots of experience. However, I have also seen these same very good leaders become over reactive and transactionally handicapped when it comes to making tough decisions on complex, interconnected, the "no easy answer" type problems. Think about how many of the problems and decisions that you face today are the result of yesterdays or last months or last year's over reactive decisions.

Don't get me wrong, we have all seen leaders make effective decisions when faced with simple (linear) problems. Problems where cause and effect are clearly related. Simple problems and opportunities where all of the variables or factors involved in the problem can be controlled. It is too bad that the world is so complex because since elementry school we have all been well trained to make effective 1+1=2 decisions on simple problems.

Unfortunately, I find that 95%+ of the problems and opportunities faced by today's leaders are not simple. They are complex, multidimensional, have time delays and multiple potential answers. The leaders I interact with are faced with tough complex

decisions such as how to foster a customer centric culture, how to achieve and sustain high product and service quality, hiring the right people, retaining and even delighting customers and employees, effectively dealing with organizational or individual performance issues, and the list goes on. These are the real world complex problems and opportunities most leaders face daily. These complex issues do not have easy answers and let's face it, we are ill prepared to deal with them.

Few leaders have been taught the skills and tools to effectively resolve complex business problems. It is a shame, because the ability to resolve complex problems is a skill and tool set that can be learned fairly easily. What we teach leaders in our *Resolving Complex Business Problems Seminar* is how to understand, objectively describe and resolve complex business problems. Over the course of two to three days, using their own specific complex problems, they learn how to distinguish the transactional symptoms of a problem from the real or systemic causes that create the very symptoms they have been reacting to. In short they learn a common sense approach that enables them to resolve complex business problems and be more effective thoughtful decision makers. They leave with specific skills and a tool that helps them be less reactive and more effective decision makers. As so many of them have told me … "resolving complex business problems means learning new decision making skills and tools and incorporating a lot of Common Sense.

What do you think? I invite you to join the conversation, pass this blog on to your colleagues and see what they think! Please let me know … **What is your common sense leadership point of view?**