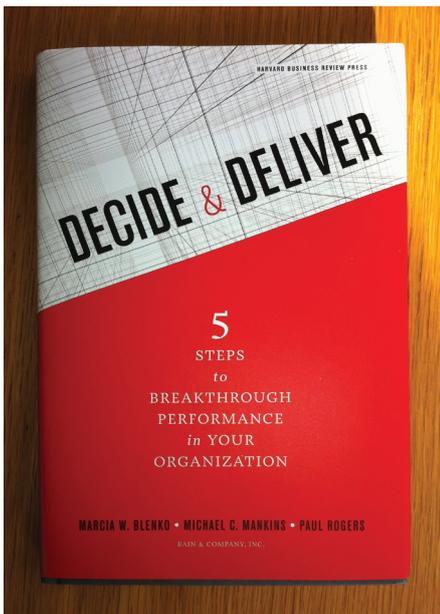


Summer 2011 Update

It's difficult to know where the time has gone since our first update in April. The business continues to develop and we are delighted that we have been able to work with some new organisations whilst continuing to service our established client base. I am also happy to report that the results of our on-going Quality Assurance Programme of Post Assignment Audits has generated plenty of positive feedback - both clients and candidates like what we deliver, which is very encouraging as we enjoy working with you! We hope you manage to have some rest and relaxation during the summer and might like to include this book as part of your holiday reading.



Book review

M W Blenko, M C Mankins and P Rogers, Decide & Deliver – 5 Steps to Breakthrough Performance in your Organization, Harvard Business Review Press (2010).

The three authors are all members of Bain and Company, an international consultancy firm. I was fortunate enough to meet one of them at an international conference of head-hunters in Paris at the end of last year.

Before I set off with my bargain Euro star ticket to that conference, I had asked my husband what he thought the collective noun for a group of head-hunters should be - his experience in academic, and now in church, circles has given his analysis on this a certain bite: a *misery* of vice chancellors, an *interference* of archdeacons. Rather to my relief his take on us was “a *seduction*”. My brother was much harder, but he’s in sales: without missing a beat he replied “a *percentage*”. That was what made Paul Rogers’ presentation the highlight of an already very useful conference, because it wasn’t about percentages and the arguments were clear and rational.

Rather to my relief his take on us was “a seduction”.

Getting decision making and delivery clearer will make a significant difference to handle organisation’s effectiveness. Rogers and his colleagues present a five step process:

- Assess your decision effectiveness, ie **what happens now.**
- Identify your critical decisions, ie **what really matters to the business.**
- Ensure success for individual critical decisions, ie **who does what, when and how.**
- Build an organisation that decides and delivers, ie **make sure that structure, process and culture and talent are all pointing in the same direction** and not fighting against each other.
- Embed decision capabilities in every day practices, ie ensure that good decisions and delivery are part of the organisation’s **DNA.**

The book is full of very useful case studies across a wide a range of sectors. It also gives a formula to help organisations find out how they score in a number of areas of decision making, and this in turn helps them determine how good their decision making is: (quality of the decision x speed of the decision x yield of the decision) minus the effort expended to deliver the decision. This allows organisations to manage the trade-offs between speed, quality and impact (yield), and it forces reflection on which decisions are worth spending most time on: it’s so easy to waste time on things that don’t actually matter.

The light bulb moment for me was the decision-making tool Bain have trademarked “**Rapid**”. It itemizes out at the beginning of any process who will have the various roles.

- Recommend: who leads the process, gathers the facts etc.
- Agree: who signs off the proposal in terms of legal or regulatory compliance.
- Perform: who delivers what has been decided
- Input: who provides facts and judgements without necessarily being deciders
- Decide: who takes the final decision.



Having been a CEO for fourteen years in two complex organisations, each with significant stakeholder interests, decision-making rarely was easy and it often seemed to take a long time. This was especially the case in the organisation that had a statutory duty to consult; but both of them reflected the varying and sometimes conflicting interests of widely different groups. On more than one occasion we found inputters under the impression that they were deciders, and agreeers who had not been properly consulted. The result could sometimes be poor decision making and delivery, and on top of that a measure of bad feeling – all because there had not been sufficient clarity at the beginning. I was left thinking that this book and its model would have been so very useful back then.

I recommend this book as a refreshing way to look at a perennial problem in a new light and hopefully offer some insight. By the way, Robert would like you to know that the corporate identity for Thewlis Graham was something he left up to me and our designers. The only thing I had to make sure was that it was not too large. It was an excellent example of using the “Rapid” tool! Happy decision making to you all.

Our team

We mentioned in the last update that we would introduce the team; in this edition it's Edwina Purcell who has been with the company since its inception.



Edwina is a key member of the busy Thewlis Graham office, working in a team of two to support Sarah and Robert in the management of assignments, clients and candidates. I asked Edwina for an insight into one aspect of her responsibilities, the candidate experience.

Edwina said “We represent clients throughout the course of an assignment and therefore it's critical that we manage candidates in a professional manner at all times. Often we are the first people candidates meet or speak to on the phone and we are extremely mindful of the relationship we are building from that initial contact. A candidate today could be a client tomorrow, which is another reason we ensure they have the best possible experience, whether or not they are successfully placed in a role”.

Edwina has a 2:1 in History & Politics from Newcastle University and, having taught English in China and lived in the Netherlands, Australia and the Czech Republic, she enjoys the international aspects of the business. With this comes the task of coordinating international meetings. “We frequently coordinate telecoms and meetings between consultants, clients and candidates on different continents and time zones, which can be a challenge, particularly when travel plans and meetings frequently change at short notice”.

What service can a candidate expect from Thewlis Graham? “We offer a highly professional, as well as a personal service. We are thorough and keep in contact with candidates at each stage of the process by telephone, email and formal letter and ensure that all parties are kept up-to-date with progress. If a candidate is unsuccessful, we offer feedback so they will be in a better position the next time a role arises. I enjoy working with people and am often surprised by the links between individuals and organisations. This is one reason it is essential we provide a high quality service and remain professional throughout the process”.

Thewlis Graham Associates takes the time to get to know candidates and clients to ensure there is a perfect fit. “It is important to fully understand the client's needs and the sector they operate in, so that we search for appropriate candidates who perhaps may not be looking to move. We also need to fully understand the candidate's experience and requirements to guarantee a good fit for both parties. We want every placement to be an unqualified success”.

Another team aim is to make everything as straightforward for the candidate as possible. “Before an interview a candidate is naturally nervous, so we ensure they have all the information required to make it as stress-free as possible. We act as a buffer and are always available, which is part of that personal service. If a candidate has an unexpected problem getting to an interview, we will do all we can to support them, keeping the client updated and resolving issues as quickly as possible. To do that you need to always be on-hand and fully aware of what is happening”.

“I thrive on the variety of challenges and working with people who enjoy their work.”

Edwina clearly enjoys working with Sarah, Robert and Michelle: “I thrive on the variety of challenges and working with people who enjoy their work. I am proud to have been part of this organisation from its foundation and share in its success; it has instilled a great sense of achievement. I genuinely enjoy coming to work but also understand the need to balance work with my outside interests. As well as socialising with friends, I attend pilates regularly and play tennis as often as I can. I have also rediscovered my love for travel and recently returned from two weeks travelling around South Africa”.

The phones are ringing and there are assignments to be managed. A sense of urgency prevails beneath the relaxed and friendly atmosphere when you visit Palace Street...

Since this interview, Sarah and Robert are delighted to announce that Edwina has been promoted to Associate and is assuming responsibility for developing a new Practice area, more of which in our next newsletter.

Sarah and Robert

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