

MEMORANDUM

To: 2014 Purchasing Conference Attendees
Cc: JC Sales, Allan Alday/FCCC
From: Stephanie O'Brien
RE: Pre-Mortem Session Additional Notes
Date: 8 April 2014

The following is a list of a few additional points that I'd like to share following our session called ***Making Sound Decisions: Strategies to Achieve Success***.

According to the Harvard Business review article called Making Good Decisions, it is imperative that three factors are present: how well you understand the variables that will determine success; how well you can predict the range of possible outcomes; and how centralized the relevant information is.

Don't rely on just one single tool, especially when the decision is large! However, when selecting a decision support tool for a major investment, answer the following three questions: do I know what it will take to succeed?; can I predict the range of outcomes?; and do I need to aggregate information?

The Pre-Mortem technique was invented originally by Gary Klein, but referenced in the book *Scaling Up Excellence: Getting to More Without Settling for Less*, by Bob Sutton.

By doing a Pre-mortem exercise, you can challenge the illusion of consensus. Most times not everyone on a team agrees with the course of action. When there is enough cognitive diversity in the room, people might keep their mouths shut because people in power tend to reward people who agree with them while punishing those who have the courage to speak up with a dissenting view. The resulting corrosive conformity would become evident when people don't raise private doubts, known risks, and inconvenient facts. In contrast, a pre-mortem can create a competition where members feel accountable for raising obstacles that others haven't. The whole dynamic changes from trying to avoid anything that might disrupt the status quo to trying to surface potential problems.

If you uncover overwhelming and impassable roadblocks, go back to the drawing board with your plan. Once you have it updated, do the exercise again.

And finally, if anyone uses this technique in the coming year, please share with us the results (relative to its effectiveness in making you more successful in the complex decision making arena).