

Developing Your Intuition: A Guide to Reflective Practice

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Leaders often have to make decisions without complete information, and those decisions are expected to be not only right but also timely. Using reflective techniques can help you learn to depend on your intuition for help in making good decisions quickly. Reflective practices may seem time-consuming at the beginning, but the time you put in on the front end is well worth the investment. It will pay you back both in time and in the quality of the decisions you make.

Executive Summary

Strategic and tactical choices can't always wait. Without the confidence to trust their intuition, less effective managers may analyze too long, second-guess their decisions, or change course midstream. Reflective techniques help managers understand that they have alternative ways of thinking about problems. Managers who are open-minded about using these reflective practices can boost their confidence in their intuitive thinking. They can learn to trust their instincts when critical situations demand quick decisions and when complex problems defy easy answers.

Reflective practices may be considered whole-brain activities. They work by connecting R-mode and L-mode thinking, and thereby provide access to data, facts, values, experiences, hunches, analysis, evaluation, intuition, different perspectives, and feelings. That connection and access make reflection a whole-brain activity.

One of the most helpful tools for reflective practice is a journal. Keeping a journal greatly improves the chances of remembering important experiences, and it also provides a place to reflect on them. You can use your journal for writing, drawing, pasting in photos and other visual images, and for recording your hunches. You can also combine journal writing with other tools for reflective practice: imaging, dreams, analysis, and emotions.

The paradox managers learn as they grow accustomed to using reflective practices is that even though these processes seem time-consuming at the beginning, they actually enable the savvy and seasoned leader to make decisions more quickly. The time you put in on the front end to strengthen your confidence in your hunches and gut feelings is well worth the investment, and it will pay you back in time and in the quality of the decisions you make and how effectively you solve problems.

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