OUR HIGHLY ACCOMPLISHED AND LEAD TEACHERS

From the Executive Director

Research has consistently shown the most significant in-school factor influencing student learning and achievement is the quality of teaching inside the classroom. It is disappointing that up until now, there has been little recognition, or rewarding, of highly performing teachers in the classroom.

It was with great pleasure that Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) recently celebrated twenty-five outstanding and committed teachers in Queensland independent schools becoming certified as Highly Accomplished or Lead Teachers (HALT) under a national certification process linked to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST).

These exemplary teachers are the first in Queensland to be recognised under the national process. They are congratulated for this significant achievement, as are the independent schools that have supported them through the rigorous 18-month assessment process. They join some 500 other teachers across Australian who to date have been certified as HALT.

THE ACHIEVEMENTS AND NEW STATUS OF THE FIRST TWENTY-FIVE HALT GRADUATES WERE RECOGNISED AT A CELEBRATORY EVENT HOSTED BY INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS QUEENSLAND IN EARLY SEPTEMBER.

HALT certification has been a long-time coming to Queensland given Education Ministers endorsed Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia in April 2012 at the Standing Council of School Education and Early Childhood[1]. Implementation of the national certification across Australia began in 2013[2].

Whilst some independent schools have rightly had in place for some time processes to identify and reward highly performing teachers, in 2015 ISQ commenced formal processes to assist schools in this area. This includes the highly successful Professional Review Service.

In 2017, ISQ sought, and was granted accreditation by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) as a certifying authority for HALT. AITSL has the national responsibility for the APST and the certification processes for HALT.

ISQ was the first organisation in

[1] Now the Education Council.
[2] At the time, Victoria, Tasmania and Queensland did not commit to the national certification process.

OUR HIGHLY ACCOMPLISHED AND LEAD TEACHERS CONTINUED

Queensland to be granted status as a certifying authority for HALT[3].

The Department of Education and the Queensland Catholic Education Commission are also moving towards implementation of National Certification processes for their respective teachers with the Queensland College of Teachers as the pilot certifying authority.

The Queensland Minister for Education, Grace Grace, recently announced that state school teachers would be able to apply to be certified as HALT from 2019. The Minister said, "it's about giving classroom teachers a genuine career pathway that will see our best teachers stay in the classroom".

She described the introduction of HALT as one of Queensland's biggest reforms to the teaching profession in decades. The Minister said the new classifications meant there had never been a better time to teach in Queensland and teachers "deserve to be recognised and acknowledged for their hard work and professionalism"[4].

National moderation is conducted annually by AITSL to ensure consistency of assessment by certifying authorities across the various jurisdictions and sectors making HALT recognition a truly national process. Teachers reaching HALT can be assured of its portability across states and territories and sectors.

The HALT process is extremely rigorous and is overseen by experienced assessors over an 18-month period. Each applicant must submit detailed evidence linked to the APST, classroom observations and professional discussions.

HALT is just one of a wide range of policy initiatives over the past decade focussed on improving the teaching profession. Its introduction in Queensland comes at a time when there has been much debate about the status and quality of teaching.

One of the key objectives of HALT is to keep high performing teachers in the classroom. This was clearly outlined in the Queensland Government's *Letting Teachers Teach* 2018 election commitment. It required the development and introduction of HALT; it further outlined that salaries be set to ensure enough rewards to keep good teachers in the classroom.

Similarly, the Federal Government's *Quality Schools, Quality Outcomes*[5] concluded that Australia's most capable and able teachers need to be in classrooms, with our most capable school leaders guiding them. It concluded that with the right incentives, teachers and school leaders would be more motivated to stay engaged in the teaching profession.

The former Federal Minister for Education, Julia Gillard also recognised the importance of rewarding highly performing teachers with her *Rewards for Great Teachers Program*. The program was never implemented in Queensland.

Historically, teachers have been recognised more for their length of service with pay progressions linked to rigid salary scales with automatic annual progressions. Teachers have reached the top of salary scale generally within ten years of entering the profession with no prospect of pay progression unless they entered leadership positions.

HALT recognises teachers for their competency and achievement, and now adds two pay progressions for classroom teachers linked to the APST providing an incentive for teachers to remain in the classroom.

Following a decision of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission, a lead teacher (LT) in a state school will receive an annual salary of $121,975 whilst a highly accomplished (HA) teacher will receive an annual salary of $111,725. This compares with the $101,000 annual salary for experienced senior teachers.

Queensland independent schools are staffed by committed and skilled teachers who are masters of their craft. Our advanced level teachers deserve professional and public recognition for their skills, expertise and commitment.

> *Historically, teachers have been recognised more for their length of service with pay progressions linked to rigid salary scales... HALT recognises teachers for their competency and achievement, and now adds two pay progressions for classroom teachers linked to the APST providing an incentive for teachers to remain in the classroom.*

[3] See https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/understand-certification-and-halt-status/find-your-certifying-authority
[4] Ministerial Media Release 28 August 2018 available at http://statements.qld.gov.au/Statement/2018/8/28/higher-pay-and-recognition-coming-for-queensland-teachers
[5] Released 1 May 2016.

Queensland independent schools are staffed by committed and skilled teachers who are masters of their craft. Our advanced level teachers deserve professional and public recognition for their skills, expertise and commitment.

Independent Schools Queensland as a recognised certifying body for HALT now provides that opportunity.

Congratulations to our first group of 25 Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers for their dedication to student learning and to leading quality teaching practice in their schools. A further 53 teachers are currently undertaking ISQ's HALT certification program. May there be many more.

DAVID ROBERTSON
Executive Director

Celebrating the independent sector's first HALTs

their heart's work

Meet our inspiring teachers

Inside classrooms across the state, Queensland independent school teachers are engaging, encouraging and challenging their students. Through their passion for their work and mastery of their subject areas, they are igniting the fire of ambition in their pupils and shaping their futures.

ISQ is shining a light on the 25 educators within the independent schooling sector who recently graduated from its Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) program - read their stories on the ISQ website.

For further information on Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers visit:

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/understand-certification-and-halt-status

Independent Schools Queensland
https://www.isq.qld.edu.au/members/highly-accomplished-and-lead-teacher-certification

Queensland College of Teachers
https://www.qct.edu.au/standards-and-conduct/certification

DECISION MAKING AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

JOSEPHINE WISE
Director (Education Services)

"The most urgent decisions are rarely the most important ones."

Dwight Eisenhower

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I – I took the one less travelled by, And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost

Decisions are the practical manifestation of leadership. How leaders make decisions is central to their leadership identity. Therefore, it is critical that leaders are conscious of the decision-making approaches they apply. Educational leaders who understand decision-making have a greater opportunity to mitigate bias and acknowledge unconscious defaults. This research briefing explores decision-making theories and frameworks that may be useful to apply in strategic, complex and unpredictable educational environments.

Decision-making in real contexts is more challenging than applying the theory of 'classical decision making'. In 'classical decision making' there are clearly defined problems, which manifest in a certain environment; where all the vital information is available to the decision maker and the decision maker will assess this information rationally. In reality, decision making is unpredictable, dynamic and affected by a combination of interacting mental models held by all stakeholders of a decision. Mental models can be used to describe the way a person understands and responds to the context of any decision and can also go some way to explain the reactions a leader may receive in response to a decision (Craik, 1943; Forrester, 1970; Munger, 1994).

Mental models emerge from economic, social, systems or scientific theory. A leader without some insight into their mental models may be unconsciously engaging in several

biased or intuitive behaviours while perceiving themselves as applying a rationale and objective process.

Schools are dynamic social networks containing the broadest range of decision making skills, experience and active mental models. All decisions in the system are contributing to the organisational culture. Educational leaders who can identify and apply a range of decision making approaches may be able to mitigate bias, shape the organisational culture with more intent, or be able to accept and commit to the culture with greater empathy and understanding.

Leaders and managers who engage in poor decision making risk the integrity of relationships and contribute to a dysfunctional culture. A culture of 'secrecy' is perpetuated and worsened through decisions made without a framework to make the decision making process transparent and informed (Moon and Adams, 2015, p. 29).

Mental models that influence decision making

The following are brief summaries from Shane Parrish's blog, Farnam Street (2018a). His online community makes 'theories about thinking' accessible to all. The summaries of mental models enable leaders to consider which models most influence their thinking and the thinking of their teams.

A school leader may use mental models when they are managing conflict between members of their leadership team. By supporting colleagues to consider their own

potential biases that might be triggering their responses, school leaders may enable stakeholders to understand different points of view regarding a decision or action. Equally, when a school leader is required to adjudicate on a professional code of conduct matter, by actively considering their mental models, they may avoid the bias that could leave a decision open to challenge. Intentional reflection on personal mental models can increase the confidence of a leader to make decisions that are more likely to result in natural justice for all concerned.

The following are summaries of mental models that may positively or negatively underpin the dynamic interactions occurring between people in schools.

Common models that can positively influence educational leadership

1. First Principles Thinking

First Principles Thinking can "clarify complicated problems by separating the underlying ideas or facts from any assumptions based on them" (Parrish, 2018a). If the first principles are shared and understood, then knowledge can be built around them to produce something new.

2. Second-Order Thinking

Second-Order Thinking is thinking farther ahead and thinking holistically. It requires decision makers to not only consider their actions and their immediate consequences but "the subsequent effects of those actions as well. Failing to consider the second and third order effects can lead to negative outcomes (Parrish, 2018a).

3. Circle of Competence

When ego and not competence drives what a leader undertakes, there are blind spots. If leaders are honest about where their knowledge is lacking, then they know where they are vulnerable and where they can improve. A leader's understanding of their Circle of Competence enhances decision making and outcomes (Parrish, 2018a).

4. Hanlon's Razor

Hanlon's Razor states that leaders "should not attribute to malice that which is more easily explained by a lack of knowledge or thought. In a complex world, using this model helps us avoid paranoia and ideology" (Parrish, 2018a). This model reminds us that people do make mistakes. It demands that leaders ask if there is another reasonable explanation for the events that have occurred. "The explanation most likely to be right is the one that contains the least amount of intent" (Parrish, 2018a).

Finally, Hanlon's Razor assists leaders to remember that confrontational or divergent interactions between staff are rarely malicious and more likely represent an unintended bias, can lead to a more compassionate response.

5. Backup Systems/Redundancy

A critical model of the engineering profession is that of backup systems (Parrish, 2018a). Engineers never assume the perfect reliability of the components of the system. Redundancies are developed to protect the integrity of the total system.

6. Complex Adaptive Systems

A complex adaptive system is "one that can understand itself and change based on that understanding" (Parrish, 2018a). Complex adaptive systems are social systems and are thus fundamentally not predictable. Culture can change with a shift in the shared beliefs or values within the system.

Assisting all staff to understand that a school is an example of a complex adaptive system and can, therefore, learn from itself despite its dynamic unpredictability, is a key to changing culture practice. It is also essential for school leaders to have redundancies in place to manage the inevitable breakdown of processes and systems.

Mental models that can impede educational leadership

1. First-Conclusion Bias

Charlie Munger (1971) suggested that the first idea gets in and then the mind shuts. This bias highlights people's tendency to settle on early conclusions and therefore accept erroneous results and cease asking questions.

2. Bias from Incentives

Humans are highly responsive to incentives however, they are "the most varied and hardest to understand set of incentives" of all animals (Parrish, 2018). Incentives cause people to distort their thinking when it is in their interest to do so.

3. Hindsight Bias

Once people know the outcome of a decision, a narrative instinct leads us to reason that we knew it all along when

> *If you can keep your head when all about you*
> *   Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,*
> *If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,*
> *   But make allowance for their doubting too;*
> *If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,*
> *   Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,*
> *Or being hated, don't give way to hating,*
> *   And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:*
>
> **Rudyard Kipling**

DECISION MAKING AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONTINUED

in fact people are "reasoning post-hoc with information not available to us before the event" (Parrish, 2018a).

The most significant risk to leaders who do not recognise, appreciate and manage their own bias is that they are inconsistent, unethical and unfair. Managing decision making bias will assist a leader's likelihood of achieving more realistic and positive change narratives in their schools. It is reassuring when a leader consciously reflects on their process to avoid subjecting their colleagues to biased decision making.

Models to help a leader think about the responses and engagement of their teams

1. Availability Heuristic

Kahneman and Tversky (1973, p. 208) defined the Availability Bias or Heuristic: that is, people "tend to most easily recall what is salient, important, frequent, and recent. The brain has its own energy-saving and inertial tendencies– the availability heuristic is likely one of them."

2. Confirmation Bias

Confirmation bias is a deeply ingrained mental habit, both energy-conserving and comfortable, to look for confirmations of long-held wisdom rather than challenges (Parrish, 2018a).

Leaders should be willing to gently but consistently challenge the long-held views of a team. They need to recognise that decision makers, including themselves, may often remember the most recent information rather than reflecting on all the detail that is available or that has been

presented to them. School boards can benefit from clear and concise narratives when presented with a key strategic decision. This allows them to consider past decisions or critical information from upstream stakeholders appropriately. Boards are compelled to ask questions that uncover bias.

Models of effective decision making

The Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) describes decision making as a "cognitive process leading to the selection of a course of action from two or more options or choices. Every decision process produces a final choice: an action (or decision not to act) or an opinion" (Donovan, Skipper, Walton & Muth, 2016). They acknowledge that "a good decision is generally recognised with the benefit of hindsight when enough time has elapsed to allow the outcome to be judged as having met the desired objective." (Donovan, Skipper, Walton & Muth, 2016)

Decision making that can have the longest and most profound impact on a school are those decisions that underpin and operationalise strategic planning. The AICD specialise in providing advice to boards and councils about the ways they can maximise the efficacy of their decision making. They describe the 'tests' directors can apply to achieve greater accountability and execute a board's duty of care and due diligence.

To make an effective board decision, AICD recommends directors apply the 'tests' in Figure 1 to support decisions made at a strategic level.

Effective school boards, systems or councils draw on these tests through the discussions that contribute to a decision. The dialogue between board members, the chair and principal should range across these 'tests' before a decision is made. Strategic decision making at the board level is critical for the long-term success of a complex organisation.

Occasionally a school leader is faced with unthinkable, unexplainable events well beyond professional or personal experience. The following is a brief explanation of a decision making framework that enables a leader to make decisions according to context. It was developed to support a community leader to identify the operating environment and adjust their decision making accordingly.

The Cynefin Framework

When leaders are faced with an extraordinary weather event which dramatically effects the school, or a traumatic event associated with the wellbeing of staff and/or students, there may be no time for considered decisions: no personal experience to draw on, no relevant experts to consult with and a heightened expectation from the affected community of immediate and decisive leadership. School leaders may find a decision making framework useful to prepare for chaotic or complex times.

Cynefin (pronounced ku-nev-in) is a Welsh word that means people never fully understand the many ways their context is influencing their thinking. Snowden and Boone developed the Cynefin Framework (see Figure 2) to help leaders determine the current operating context so that they can make appropriate leadership choices to meet the challenges of that context. The surprising element within this framework is the acceptance that in the chaotic moment, the only option a leader has is to look at each part of a problem and make decisions that address each of the available

Figure 2: The Cynefin Framework

(Snowden & Boone, 2007)
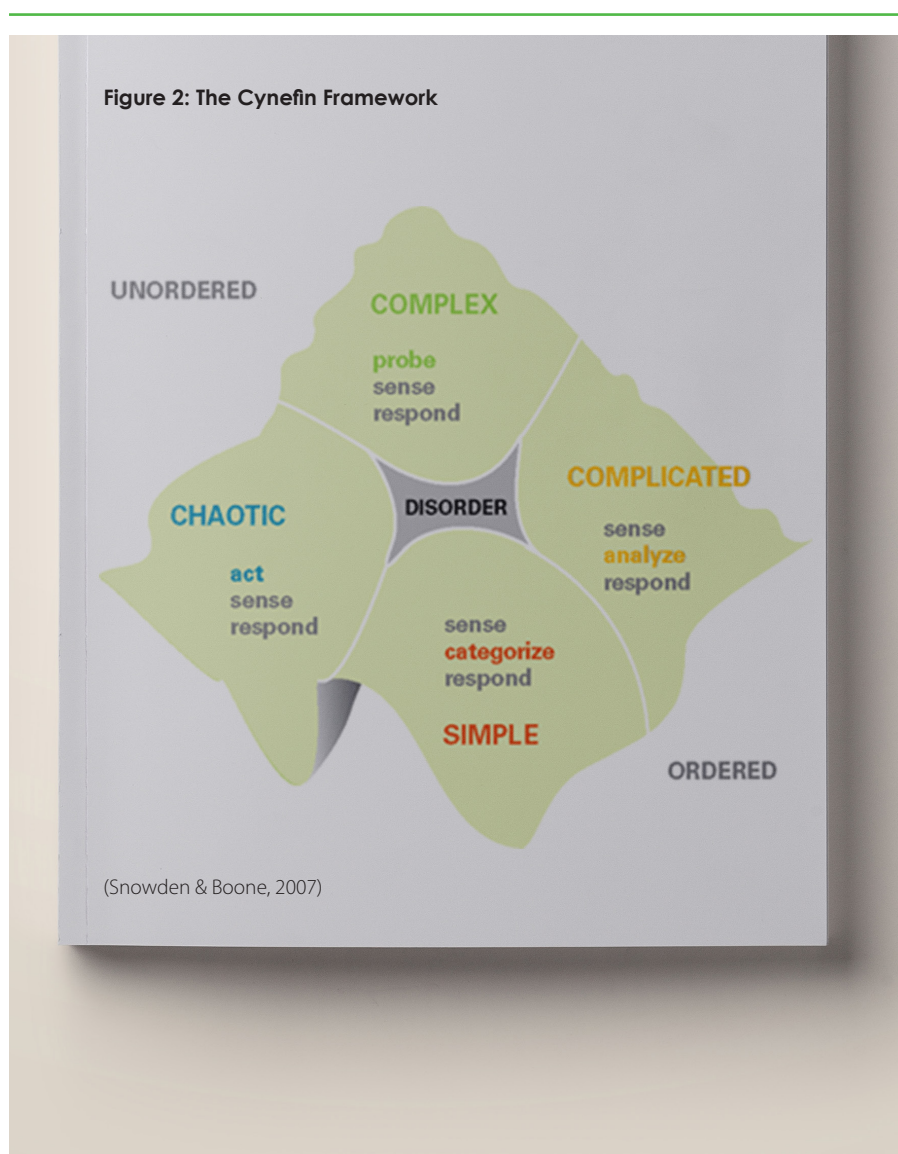
"Each domain requires different actions. Simple and complicated contexts assume an ordered universe, where cause-and-effect relationships are perceptible, and the right answers can be determined based on the facts. Complex and chaotic contexts are unordered—there is no immediately apparent relationship between cause and effect, and the way forward is determined based on emerging patterns. The ordered world is the world of fact-based management; the unordered world represents pattern-based management. The very nature of the fifth context—disorder—makes it particularly difficult to recognize when one is in it. The way out of this realm is to break down the situation into constituent parts and assign each to one of the other four realms. Leaders can then make decisions and intervene in contextually appropriate ways."
(Snowden & Boone, 2007 in Piscione, 2014, p. 169-170)

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constituent parts because trying to attend to the chaos or disorder leads to ineffective decisions. Decisions are required of a leader in a disordered and chaotic context, but the analysis is the first action.

This framework supports school leaders who are willing to identify the context they're working in at any given time but also have the adaptive strength to change their behaviour or approach so that the types of decisions they are making, are aligned with that context. Adaptive leaders who use this framework also prepare their organisation to understand the different contexts and approaches to decision making.

Anticipatory Thinking

School leaders may find anticipatory thinking a useful way to talk about decision making and coach their teams to examine their preferred, or most commonly used approaches to responding to people and situations.

Anticipatory thinking is "the process of recognising and preparing for difficult challenges, many of which may not be clearly understood until they are encountered" (Klein, Snowdon & Pin, 2007, p. 1). There are three common forms of anticipatory thinking: Pattern Matching, Trajectory Tracking, and Conditional Thinking (Klein, Snowdon and Pin, 2007, p. 2).

1. Pattern Matching

Pattern matching is comparing the circumstances of the present with similar events and clusters of similar experiences in the past. Experts

develop large pattern repertoires or as their experience increases their ability to predict outcomes of certain behaviours or actions and so can immediately respond if they notice something unexpected (Klein, Snowdon and Pin, 2007, p. 2).

2. Trajectory Tracking

Anticipatory thinking requires leaders to get ahead of the curve. "The curve is the trajectory of events and getting ahead of the curve means preparing for how the events are unfolding and how long it will take the organisation to react" (Klein, Snowdon and Pin, 2007, p. 2). It requires leaders to notice and consider trends before making decisions.

3. Conditional Thinking

This type of anticipatory thinking requires leaders to see the connections between events. Instead of responding to patterns or imagining a trajectory, leaders need to appreciate the implications of different events and their interdependencies (Klein, Snowdon and Pin, 2007, p. 3).

Anticipatory thinking can highlight risk or deficits in organisational decision making. For example, people using pattern matching may have had inadequate time to gain the expertise required to understand the trends. There may also be organisational barriers that impede the flow of ideas, interpretations and information; and discourage people from voicing concerns or offering insight. High degrees of complexity can also challenge anticipatory thinking (Klein, Snowdon and Pin, 2007, p. 6).

For school leaders, the anticipatory thinking framework can assist them to assess if they have enough expertise or information to match patterns with past experiences. For example, does the team have the capability to analyse the educational data patterns and identify the appropriate response to emerging trends?

Leaders need to be probing situations and scenarios to ensure they understand the relationship between events to inform their decision making. For example, when responding to complaints from parents or staff, having processes that encourage a deep understanding the meaning or conditions of the event or interrelated events and relationships may increase the chances of a considered and appropriate decision.

The Eisenhower Matrix

Finally, a leader needs personal frameworks to prioritise and manage multiple decision making responsibilities every day. Using a matrix with an executive assistant or the board chair can help set the expectations for information flow or clarify the priorities of a board meeting agenda. This ensures the most important and urgent matters are always attended to in a timely way by the right people.

This Eisenhower Matrix (see figure 3) is a simple decision making triage model that enables leaders to review the urgency and importance of decisions. It is ascribed to Dwight D. Eisenhower who was a World War II General and the President of the United States of America, with a record of extraordinary accomplishments as a leader.

It is a simple framework that allows leaders to prioritise or triage decision making effectively. Less time is wasted and the most important and urgent matters are seen to immediately.

Conclusion

By studying and applying decision making frameworks, school leaders can improve the efficiency, consistency and intentionality of their decisions, enhancing a community's view of their leadership ability. Leaders will successfully utilise or develop decision making frameworks if they exercise their awareness of the mental models, and the conscious and unconscious bias, that can underpin their actions. Effective decision making improves the potential for commercially responsible and ethically defensible decisions, which are more likely to impact people and organisational culture positively.

Figure 3: The Eisenhower Matrix
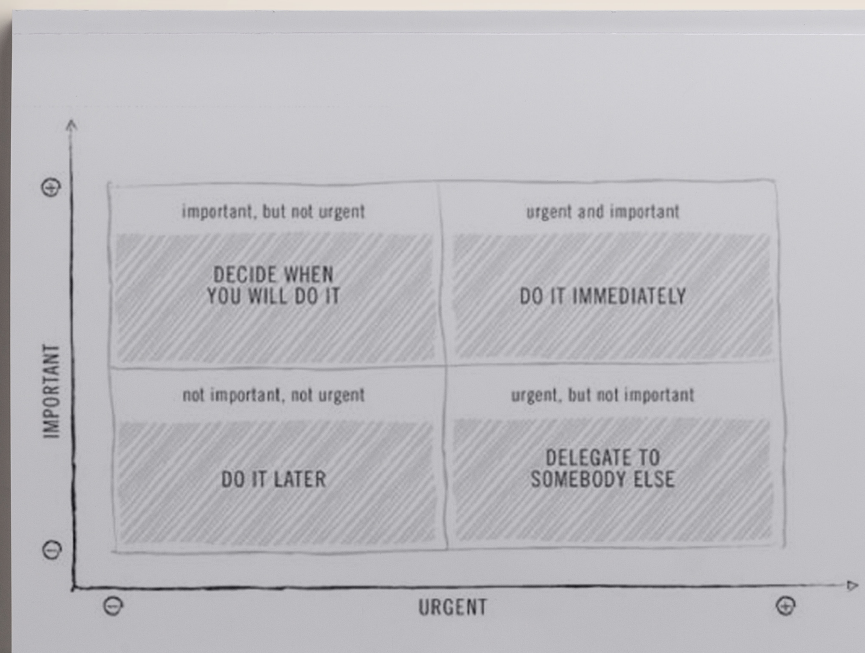
(Parrish, 2018b)

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