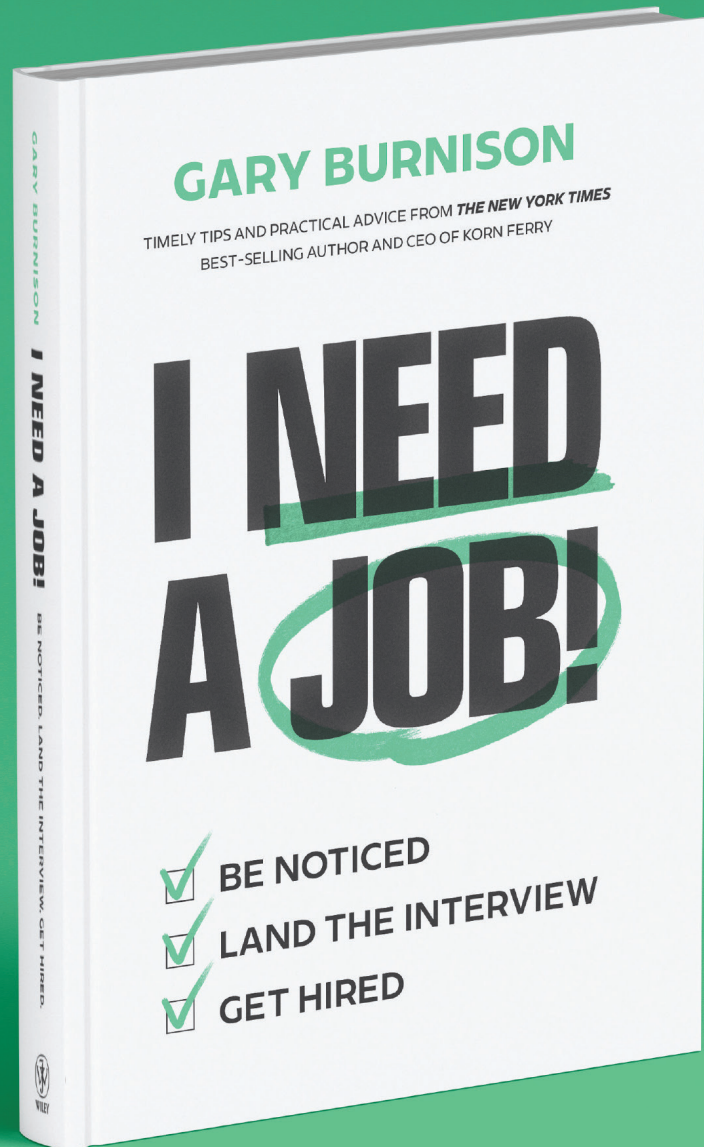


LEARN WHAT REALLY GETS YOU THE JOB

FROM AI AND ASSESSMENTS TO NETWORKING AND INTERVIEWING, HIRING HAS CHANGED – AND SO CAN YOU.



WILEY

BRIEFLY ON...

LEADERSHIP

“Organizations confuse having answers with making decisions.”



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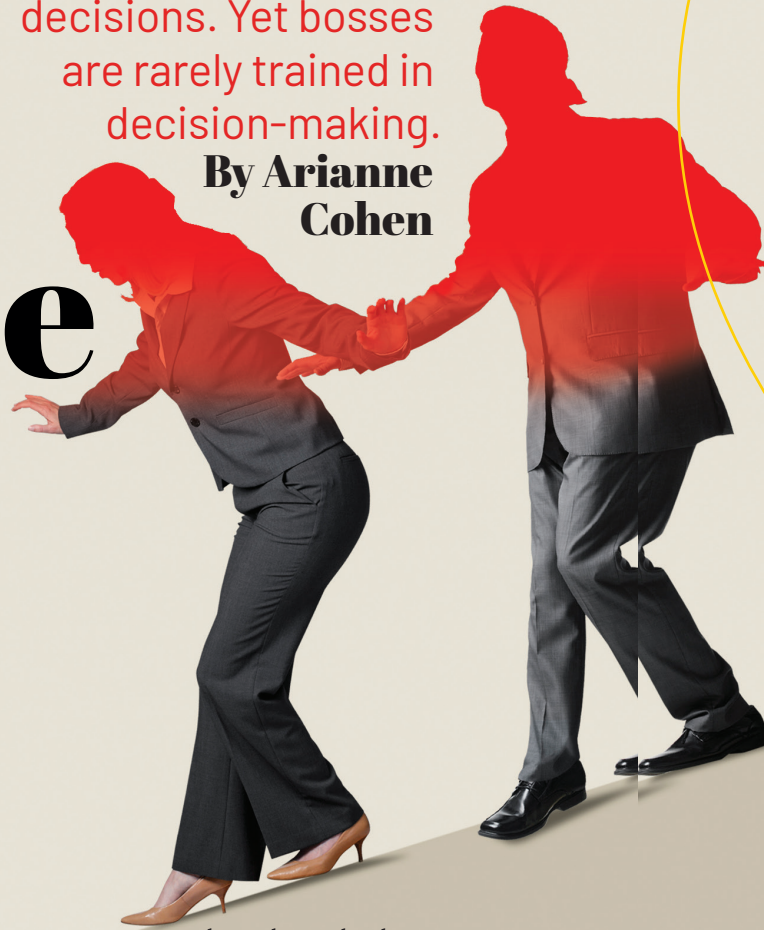
Insiders on today's top management issues.

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LEADERSHIP

Can Bad Decision-Making Be Avoided?

Leaders have never had more information to make decisions. Yet bosses are rarely trained in decision-making.
By Arianne Cohen



It's safe to say that corporate success has always hinged on the decision-making of executives. Leadership is a constant fire hose of choices: which strategy to pursue, how to navigate risky markets, how to handle a delicate HR situation, what to say in a speech, what *not* to say in a speech. It's also safe to say that most people in corporate America struggle to make good decisions—but won't admit it.

Despite billions spent training leaders, 85 percent of mid- to senior- level professionals have never received training in decision-making, and 45 percent *still* do not have a structured way to make decisions (yes, you're supposed to have a framework), according to a new report from the Global Association of Applied Behavioural Scientists. "Decision-making is one of the least systematically taught skills in corporate life," says Usha Haley, a distinguished professor at Wichita State University, and she says this is a critical failing as AI complicates decisions with constant information overload.

Despite this, 91 percent of professionals consider

themselves to be above-average decision-makers, which further compounds the problem: People who think they're good at something don't seek training. Typical mid- to senior- level employees make hundreds of decisions every week, and believe that they're generally making good choices—which is classic outcome bias, i.e. judging by the results rather than decision quality. In reality, experts say, employees' complete lack of decision-making training prevents them from accurately assessing their own skills. Addressing this is "one of the challenges of performance management," says organizational strategist Maria Amato, senior client partner at Korn Ferry. When rated against other employees, "most people are going to feel unfairly rated, almost definitionally."

THE TAKEAWAY

Firms need to show managers how to deal with AI overload.



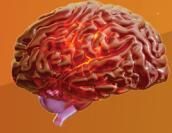







So what are workplace decision-makers doing wrong? A lot. Few use structured frameworks for analysis, and instead most rely on heuristics that oversimplify the situation, allowing them to fall prey to a suite of biases, such as making choices that align with their initial impressions, continuing strategies with high sunk costs, and maintaining the status quo. Most are fundamentally approaching decision-making as a task of deciding *what* to do, rather than a process of deciding how to achieve something. "Organizations confuse having answers with making decisions," says Joe Lalley, a workshop facilitator in design thinking, a problem-solving methodology. Companies reward speed and certainty, rather than the exploration, perspectives, and cognitive diversity that fuel smart decisions. Good decisions often involve curiosity and listening to frontline employees, Lalley says, but "too often, hierarchy and expertise get in the way."

In the world of AI, companies will need to train decision-makers to be ready to implement contingency decisions, which will be readily suggested by the technology. "Plan B is just as important as the initial decision," says Nicholas Grigoriou, a lecturer in marketing at Monash University. Yet all too often, especially during corporate crises, firms fail to test or put in place their "what to do if X happens" action plans. And let's not get started on group decision-making, which despite being rarely taught, makes up the majority of corporate decisions. (Individual decision-making receives the lion's share of academic research and theorizing.)

Experts advise that strong decision-makers gather frameworks for likely scenarios. For example, one popular approach, taught by the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University, walks decision-makers through 10 steps, including identifying the ethical issues at hand (e.g., "Could this decision be damaging to someone or some group, or unevenly beneficial?"), gathering the facts, evaluating alternatives, testing and implementing the leading choice, and reflecting on the outcome. Notably, post-decision steps, which usually fall by the wayside in corporate settings, are part of the process. The framework is not an algorithm: Rather than automatically selecting the best choice, it allows the decision-maker to do so, working from a strong base of information. And yes, make the excellent decision to get some training ASAP. //

The Styles Behind Decision-Making

These are five popular models commonly operating in corporate cultures.

THE STYLE	AROUND SINCE	WHAT IT IS	WHO USES IT
Directive Decision-Making 	Sliced bread 	Leader makes decisions independently with minimal or no input from others.	Military or executive leaders handling a crisis, corporate honchos
Rational Decision-Making 	1950s-1960s 	A step-by-step approach: Define the problem, identify alternatives, and select a solution.	Analytical, strategic types in stable industries, or running operations
Intuitive Decision-Making 	1980s-1990s 	Rapid decisions based on pattern recognition, experience, and gut feelings.	Experienced leaders in emergency, time-pressured, or ambiguous situations
Garbage-Can Model 	1970s 	Chaotic and anarchic decision-making, where problems, solutions, and participants connect somewhat randomly.	Leaders in loose, complex environments with many competing interests, such as universities
Evidence-Based Management 	Early 2000s 	Systematic gathering of the best available evidence from research, stakeholders, and experts.	Managers in healthcare, academia, and progressive HR teams who want better outcomes and less bias

TECHNOLOGY BY PETER LAURIA

Whose Time Is It Anyway?

AS ONE OF THE MORE PROFICIENT AI users on the team, Sarah completed all of her weekly projects ahead of schedule. She even got a jump on some of her tasks for next week. She didn't think it would be a big deal if she asked to stay home on Friday, especially since her kids had the day off from school. Her boss had other ideas: Why not use the time to develop new skills, research competitors, or pitch in on a colleague's project?

As AI adoption continues at an amazing pace, a battle between leaders and employees is brewing over who owns the time the technology is saving and how it should be spent. A study from the London School of Economics found that employees who use AI for tasks at work save an average of 7.5 hours per week—basically, one full day. Leaders, obviously, believe that this time belongs to the firm; after all, the promise

of AI was to increase productivity and efficiency while allowing people to focus on more impactful and complex work.

But, as with nearly every aspect of business and work these days, it's more complicated than that. Employees say AI is overworking them by loading them up with data, and argue that the time off might improve their productivity in the long run. In one survey, nearly half of workers said the saved time should be theirs.

That's not likely to happen, says Brad Bell, director of the Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies at Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations. "Outside of the most enlightened leaders, firms clearly view AI as a way to get more work done, not less," he says. More work is coming employees' way, he says, as evidenced by the enormous

Douglas Sacha/Getty Images

staff-cutting firms have been making recently, while still maintaining revenue growth. But with burnout at record highs and engagement at historical lows, experts worry that leaders are looking too myopically at AI's efficiency gains for employees. Even if firms aren't likely to let people take four-day workweeks or Fridays off, says Korn Ferry senior client partner Cheryl D'Cruz-Young, giving employees some of the AI-related time savings—rather than making them absorb more work—could be beneficial. "It is clear people want more flexibility, and freeing them up can actually increase productivity in the long run," she says.

In the end, the issue may come down to how well

companies can actually track the time AI has saved—which can be especially difficult with knowledge workers, says Peter Cappelli, director of the Center for Human Resources at The Wharton School. "It's a lot of work to figure out how much time is really saved from any new practice," he says. "Most firms are just guessing right now." For her part, Shanda Mints, vice president of AI strategy and transformation at Korn Ferry, worries that the time AI saves employees will be wasted in the absence of a clear strategy. "Any extra time employees have is usually taken up by putting out whatever fires or emergency comes their way," she says. ▀

THE TAKEAWAY

Firms won't know how to handle this issue until they can track the time AI has saved knowledge workers.



Gerenne/Getty Images

TALENT BY RUSSELL PEARLMAN

When All Candidates Sound the Same

THE TALENT RECRUITER THOUGHT the candidate's cover letter, résumé, and interview were great, especially when he mentioned skills like "forecasting accuracy," "interpreting large datasets," and "building three-statement models." But the next day, another candidate sent in a résumé that used the same phrases. Then another. And another.

Facing a deluge of competition in a tough job market, candidates have made AI a go-to source for crafting the perfect pitch to win over hiring managers. The only problem is that the tech tends to spit out the same advice and keywords to every applicant for a given role. "AI has commoditized résumés, cover letters, and even interview answers," laments Malvika Jethmalani, a talent consultant who has spent most of the last decade leading recruiting efforts for companies around Chicago. Ask the technology itself why so many AI-infused job applications sound the same, and it will answer

candidly: Two popular platforms, ChatGPT and Gemini, say that AI tools are trained on large datasets that include common phrasing and best-practice advice, and that this leads to standardized language and an overreliance on keywords.

The problem might only get worse, because hiring on most jobsites has become a brutal numbers game, with hundreds, if not thousands, of candidates applying for a single job in some cases. That forces candidates to use the remarkable skills of AI to craft job applications by the hundreds. Not surprisingly, about two-thirds of job candidates say they use AI in one form or another when applying for jobs, according to the 2025 Market Trend Report by Career Group Companies, a talent market-research group. As the numbers game balloons, experts say, that percentage will go up and up. “Many résumés and cover letters are generated by AI; that’s just reality now,” says Ali Gohar, CHRO at the business consultancy Software Finder.

To some degree, hiring managers should have seen this problem coming. After all, firms led the way when they deployed AI to filter out candidates by keywords and experience. But the problem now is that **it’s slowing down hiring by inundating firms with look-alike applications for a decreasing number of open roles.** “Companies are having to go through hundreds of résumés to find one qualified candidate,” says Brittney Molitor, a Korn Ferry managing consultant in the firm’s Human Resources practice.

For now, experts say the only answer to all this high-tech jostling may be decidedly analog. Simply checking references, a measure some overtaxed HR departments have been quietly skipping, can help. Conducting job interviews face-to-face, and asking questions about the type of culture they thrive in, negates a candidate’s ability to use AI to come up with answers in real time. Recruiters should also be watching a candidate’s reactions, body language, and comfort level. “Watch to see how a candidate reacts to a curveball,” Gohar says. Some recruiters recommend that candidates “audition” for the role: While the candidate is on-site, ask them to code something, pitch a product, solve a math problem, or take a writing test. In the AI era, “auditions let employers evaluate the work itself, rather than the words around it,”

THE TAKEAWAY

Firms can’t afford to let AI look-alikes impede prospects for strong staffing.

DATA

AI ADOPTION RATES VARY ACROSS THE GLOBE

Here is how some countries stack up—and rank globally—on the share of people using a generative AI product.



UNITED STATES

28.3% Adoption Rate

2% Growth Rate in H2 2025



CANADA

35% Adoption Rate

1.5% Growth Rate in H2 2025



UNITED KINGDOM

38.9% Adoption Rate

2.5% Growth Rate in H2 2025



UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

64% Adoption Rate

4.8% Growth Rate in H2 2025



ARGENTINA

19.6% Adoption Rate

1.8% Growth Rate in H2 2025



SOUTH KOREA

30.7% Adoption Rate

4.8% Growth Rate in H2 2025



CHINA

16.3% Adoption Rate

0.9% Growth Rate in H2 2025



SPAIN

41.8% Adoption Rate

2.1% Growth Rate in H2 2025



MEXICO

17.8% Adoption Rate

1.1% Growth Rate in H2 2025



AUSTRALIA

38.9% Adoption Rate

2.4% Growth Rate in H2 2025



RUSSIA

8% Adoption Rate

0.4% Growth Rate in H2 2025

Vector, Stock Ninja Studio/Getty Images

Source: Microsoft AI Diffusion Report

STRATEGY BY ARIANNE COHEN

Buy Now, Pay Later (Maybe)



AS A CONCEPT, buy-now, pay-later plans seemed like a godsend. Following in the hallowed footsteps of layaway plans and credit cards, they arrived on the scene just as inflation was rising, as a way for consumers to buy more in a struggling economy. But depending on your perspective, BNPL may be either a boon or grave threat to retailers.

Purchasing with BNPL is frictionless: At the register, rather than tapping “cash” or “credit,” buyers

THE TAKEAWAY

Leaders can't forget that boosting business can come with a price.

simply tap the name of the buy-now, pay-later company, a financial institution. Moments later, the item is theirs... sort of. The retailer has been paid in full by the institution, so the buyer walks. Later, installment payments kick in. The transaction is interest-free unless the buyer misses a payment, in which case significant interest incurs. Unlike credit cards, BNPL is typically not used for groceries or jeans, but for big-ticket items, such as a fridge or exercise bike. "It's people who are used to certain appliances, and all of a sudden the washing machine doesn't work," says Paco Underhill, founder of market-research company Envirosell, and author of *Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping*.

BNPL numbers are both enormous and alarming. US consumer debt broke the \$18 trillion mark in 2025. Nearly half (45 percent) of consumers planned to use BNPL for at least one holiday purchase, an increase of 13 percent YOY, for an estimated \$20 billion in holiday spending alone, according to figures from Adobe Analytics. But unlike credit cards, most BNPL services never run a credit check, so a consumer might hold a half dozen payment plans simultaneously. And—critically—BNPL debts are

not centrally tracked, leading to no clear picture of consumer use.

Thus far, BNPL has been a boon for retailers and consumer-goods firms: Stores moved over \$120 billion worth of products in 2025 that they might not have sold otherwise. "It's good for retailers, especially in good times," says retail expert Craig Rowley, senior client partner at Korn Ferry. But in the future? **The doomsday scenario comes when the economy contracts** and people are laid off—many of whom have recently bought appliances and dresses and cruises on BNPL. That's the \$120 billion question: Will they have enough money to pay the bill later?

It's not looking great. A quarter of BNPL users have already made at least one late payment in 2025, up from 18 percent in 2023, according to the Federal Reserve. "It's a testament to the number of lower- and middle-class families that are living paycheck to paycheck," says Underhill. The question is how big those consumer debts can get before they stop people from shopping and drag down the industries that depend on consumer spending, like retail, restaurants, hospitality, and automotive. Only time—and the consumer-debt ceiling—will tell. ▀

WHAT'S ON THE NEXT BOARD AGENDA

1

DIRECTOR EXITS

Nearly three times as many directors—391 versus 111—resigned in 2025 compared to the year before.

2

SHAREHOLDER PROPOSALS

A potential move away from proxy advisors could impact how large investors vote on shareholder proposals.

3

GLOBAL POLITICS

Heightened geopolitical tensions raise mounting concerns about supply-chain disruption, cyberattacks, and other risks.

HISTORY LESSON

BY GLENN RIFKIN

The End of *Life*

The high cost of great photography, along with the advent of TV, eventually spelled doom for the legendary magazine.

WHEN THE FIRST ISSUE of *Life* magazine appeared on November 23, 1936, amid the Great Depression, its impact was immediate and unprecedented. The US public had never seen the likes of this kind of weekly news magazine, focused heavily on photography and long-form storylines, which offered a vivid portrayal of the American experience. Its first issue alone, costing ten cents each, sold an astounding 466,000

copies. And that's without a cover featuring a celebrity, but rather the newly completed Fort Peck Dam in Montana.

Life quickly became a staple of American households, its stark red-and-white logo as familiar as that of any major brand in the world. Its eclectic mix of stories and picture essays, often featuring celebrities and world leaders, demanded attention and made it the most popular weekly magazine in history. At its peak, in the late 1960s, *Life* boasted a weekly circulation of 8.5 million, with a pass-along readership estimated at around 40 million.

Judy Garland during the making of *The Wizard of Oz* on December 23, 1938.



Incredibly, just a few years later, in December of 1972, Time Inc. ceased publication of *Life*. This was years before the internet would wipe out print, but the magazine had failed to adjust to the shifting interests of advertisers—or to move on from the high-quality paper stock that made it so expensive to produce. Charles Fountain, professor emeritus of journalism at Northeastern University, says advertisers had started shifting ads for mass-market products, which were the magazine's lifeblood, to television. "It was a unique and singular magazine, but ultimately, it wasn't immune to the pressure of the time."

Could *Life*, with its trademark high-quality imagery and storytelling, make a comeback? Six years after closing, *Life* was revived, first as a monthly, then as a Sunday newspaper supplement, but it never achieved the cachet of the original version. Then, in March 2024, Bedford Media, a holding company, announced it would revive the *Life* brand yet again, praising how its legacy "lies in its ability to blend culture, current events, and everyday life—highlighting the triumphs, challenges and unique perspectives that define us." But the magazine hadn't reappeared as of late last year. (The company didn't respond to a request for comment.)

The innovator's dilemma—the inability of successful companies to respond to new technologies and business strategies—spelled the end for *Life*. According to William McKeen, journalism professor at Boston University, a full-page ad in *Life* used to cost the same as a minute of prime-time television. "Sure, the magazine could stay on the coffee table for months and be read by scores of eyes in barber shops," he says. "But it could not compete with the dynamo that was television." ▀