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# The Problem with Making Choices

Over the past twenty one years I have worked with many people, in all manner of organisations with all manner of problems and issues, to help them resolve those issues and move them forward using the Theory of Constraints (TOC) approach. It might be reasonable to think that they were all very different, thus allowing me the opportunity to use the full range of the TOC Thinking Processes (TOC/TP) to best advantage, but you would be wrong! It was the recognition of this that led me to write my new book "*The Right Choice*" (see page 5) where I describe the process that can often help people to make better choices – but I am getting ahead of myself!

What my time researching the book showed was that many times the ability of people to help their organisation, their team or indeed themselves move towards the goal almost always came down to their ability to make *the right choice*.

What exactly do I mean by that? Well....almost all of the people I worked with were trying to work their way out of problems and issues – some were personal, some were related to the team they were working in, some were related to the organisation they were working in, and some were a combination of all three!

All were asking the question "Can we make the right choice?" but alas, the answer was usually "Not really"!

OK, so what to do?

Well, if you are faced with having to make a choice in your life, with your team or for your organisation, how are you going to approach it? Some people put off the time to make the choice; they would say "Come back when I have more control" or "I can't deal with what you have to offer right now, come back later."

What usually happened then was that by the time these people did actually ask me for help, it was too late, or at the very least the situation was much worse than when the first discussion took place!

So why the delay?

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When I started to examine this aspect in more detail I found the following:

- People were afraid to make the choice, any choice.
- They had no way of checking to see which is the right choice to make.
- They had no idea what the consequences might be, and no way of trying to analyse those consequences.
- They might not be at risk if they did nothing, but if they did something, anything, and it went wrong they would surely catch all of the blame.
- And anyway, the crisis might go away.....

But nevertheless, choices do have to be made, for a multitude of reasons - such as:

- Our performance is below that which we might have expected.
- We are not moving towards our goal (assuming we even have a goal).
- Our relationships are often broken, fractured, difficult, awkward etc....and we want to transform them.

Which begs the question, what is a choice? To my mind it is a decision we have to make between two competing entities or options, as a minimum! In most cases we are faced with a choice as a result of striving towards our goal. This might be for us as individuals, or as members of a team, or for our organisation. Whatever the context the same problem exists – “How do I make a good choice?” and what is a “good” choice anyway?

For me, the following is a working definition; a “good” choice is one that at least meets some of the following:

- ü It moves me towards my goal in life.
- ü It moves my team towards the team goal.
- ü It moves my organisation towards to the global goal.
- ü It does not negate any necessary conditions for the achievement of all the above.
- ü It transforms all my relationships to win-win.
- ü It has no significant negative consequences that can't be dealt with.

And remember: ***Change implies Choices! and Choices imply Change!***

Many senior people within organisations today are faced with having to make choices between competing options for direction towards the goal. Having chosen, they are then faced with a set of decisions related to that choice.

**Change the choice, change the decisions**

Then they find that not everyone is keen to implement the decisions mandated by the choice.

**This means that people find it very difficult to subordinate to the decisions even if they were involved in the original choice process!**

Therefore the demand for change forces choices, which in turn are subject to constraints and this typically results in the organisation being blocked. It also results in the team being blocked, and finally the individual also finds himself or herself blocked as well!

So here we are! Stay as we are or risk the change!! But what are the implications of staying as we are? And what are the implications of changing? In both cases there are pros and cons – so how to choose? And this assumes we know what to change to – so what happens if we don't? Often this is all about the conflict between growth and stability – we all want growth, but not at the expense of stability – but how to achieve both?

And anyway, what does it mean to be blocked at the individual level? Many individuals who feel are blocked from making progress cite the following:

- Life is difficult
- Stress is high
- Daily conflicts
- Priorities constantly changing
- Frustration is high
- Staff turnover is high
- Health and related problems occur regularly
- Life is out of balance
- Home issues affect work and vice versa
- Things may be tough, but at least they're "known" - better the devil you know than the devil you don't

What does it mean to be blocked at the team level? Many teams are blocked from making progress, especially in terms of relationships within the team and with those outside:

- Conflicts abound
- Projects fail
- Ideas get dropped, or stolen!
- Rules and procedures are not followed
- People think they know better
- Too many obstacles stand in the way of progress

What I am aiming for in our Effective Leadership Master-Class Programme and our supporting activities is to try to help people move forward in their life using the TOC/TP approach.

This approach provides the rigorous logic necessary for making confident choices, as well as effective mechanisms for gaining buy-in – crucial elements provided by few other decision-making models.

This is all about direction – knowing the goal and the necessary conditions for achieving that goal – and the need to make changes (choices) that take us towards our goal. It is about helping them to break free from where they are stuck, in whatever context. It is about helping them make *informed* choices, and using the TOC/TP to do so.

**Why? Because I have found it works.**

# Master-Class Programme in Effective Leadership: 2012 Dates

This intensive programme comprises 10 days over 8 weeks, with 2 consecutive days in the first week, and will be held at our training premises in Melton Mowbray, UK:

## LEADERSHIP MASTER-CLASS 1 – JANUARY START:

Module 1:	9th & 10th January	16th January	23rd January
Module 2:	30th January	6th February	13th February
Module 3:	20th February	27th February	12th March

## LEADERSHIP MASTER-CLASS 2 – MARCH START:

Module 1:	26th & 27th March	3rd April	11th April
Module 2:	17th April	24th April	8th May
Module 3:	15th May	22nd May	29th May

## LEADERSHIP MASTER-CLASS 3 – SEPTEMBER START:

Module 1:	4th & 5th September	12th September	19th September
Module 2:	26th September	3rd October	10th October
Module 3:	17th October	24th October	31st October

## LEADERSHIP MASTER-CLASS 4 – OCTOBER START:

Module 1:	8th & 9th October	15th October	22nd October
Module 2:	29th October	5th November	12th November
Module 3:	19th November	26th November	3rd December

The fee is £2,950 plus VAT per person.

For more information please visit our website:

[www.constraintmanagement.co.uk/Master-Class\\_Effective\\_Leadership.htm](http://www.constraintmanagement.co.uk/Master-Class_Effective_Leadership.htm)

or contact Ted Hutchin: [tedh@constraintmanagement.co.uk](mailto:tedh@constraintmanagement.co.uk)



## TOCICO Examinations—Spring 2012



The next exams will be held at our training centre in Melton Mowbray on the following dates:

Project Management.....	29th February / 1st March	8 hours
Thinking Process.....	29th February / 1st March	8 hours
Supply Chain Logistics.....	29th February / 1st March	8 hours
Financial Management .....	29th February / 1st March	8 hours
Fundamentals .....	29th February / 1st March	4 hours

For more information contact Diane Jeary on +44 (0)1664 502860 or email

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Further information can also be found on our website:

[www.toc-lean.com/TOCICO\\_Exams.htm](http://www.toc-lean.com/TOCICO_Exams.htm) and the TOCICO website: [www.tocico.org](http://www.tocico.org)

## Book Preview

Ted Hutchin's latest book 'The Right Choice - Using Theory of Constraints for Effective Leadership' will be published in Spring 2012.



Effective leadership is probably the most pressing requirement in all manner of organisations today; managers can maintain the status quo but leaders challenge assumptions and create new opportunities. This is a book for anyone seeking to develop their leadership skills and who wants to establish a team – a 'flight crew' - that is capable of leading throughout the whole of the organisation.

The book is based on over ten years of work in leading and implementing change. It also draws on many hours of coaching organisation leaders in order to help them create a better balance within their own life and thus become more effective in leading. This book introduces a powerful technique for helping leaders not only to make better choices, but also to develop leaders for the future.

Case studies are central to the book; they show what people have actually done, what they have struggled with, and the importance of understanding causal relationships. The development of strong relationships within a team or organisation is a crucial part of good leadership. The book shows how conflicts can be resolved and relationships restored through the use of the tools described, in particular the "cloud" technique from the Theory of Constraints Thinking Processes.

The use of the 'coaching cycle' and the 'coaching quadrant' provide a strong platform/model for any leader wishing to formulate the right strategy for taking the organisation or team forward. This is all about bringing people with you, painting the compelling picture that engages with people and allows them to choose to engage rather than be forced to do so.

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## Project Management using Exepron™

An article by Exepron™ co-founder Danny Walsh

There has to be a better way of managing projects. After spending time with many companies across virtually every industry sector over the last twenty years, it was apparent most were experiencing remarkably poor performance results, failing to achieve their objectives in a timely manner. We concluded that it was not random in nature, rather, a systemic problem. So if we identified a powerful solution addressing the systemic reasons for lacklustre results, then this would lead to a powerful and universal solution.

There is two important parts of the solution; the first is the methodology, and the second is the delivery and the business model. The first part, the methodology, was

easy, we utilized the Critical Chain approach that Eliyahu Goldratt developed in 1997 when he published *The Goal*. The second was more challenging, much more challenging. How do you develop a software solution that addresses all of the systemic reasons and delivers it in a way that is easy to use, affordable, and becomes an integral part of the changes the company must undergo? In addition, how do you remove the major obstacles blocking a company from successfully implementing the solution? Quite simply a revolutionary approach challenging many of the current assumptions and by leveraging on the latest technology is required. In other words the methodology, technology and how it is seamlessly delivered to the users are inexorably tied together as an integral part of the change that must take place.

This can only be accomplished by leveraging the power of 'Cloud Computing'. Let me provide a few examples of why we believe this to be true. Up until now real time information on easy to read Dashboards was not available, now Exepron™ provides it within seconds after updates are made to the schedule(s). This is provided via a SaaS software as a solution model, which also means the user does not incur any additional IT investment or maintenance costs. You pay only for the service provided, at a very reasonable and affordable price point. And now for the first time Exepron™ provides the capability for the Project Team to plan, schedule and execute projects remotely, from anywhere in the world 24/7. This is only feasible by placing the data processing, data storage and software solution itself in the 'Cloud'; while providing access to real time actionable information conveniently with the click of a mouse on your own computer.

Exepron™ is the 21<sup>st</sup> Century solution for managing projects. Overcoming current limitations while leveraging on the latest emerging technologies are the basis of this new and very powerful approach. Informative and easy to interpret Dash Boards using Critical Chain methodology, instant global connectivity without any additional IT infrastructure requirement will allow finishing ALL projects on time. Whether you are a one-person operation or a large company with many hundreds of projects, Exepron™ is what you need.

Exepron™ is for the seasoned veteran or for someone who has never put a project together. How is this possible? By simply making the Planning, Scheduling and Execution phases of a project *user friendly, intuitive, while providing the visibility;* showing when and where action must be taken.

**PLANNING** – Starting with the end in mind, Wizards will walk you through every step that must be taken and in the proper sequence. There are many different ways to build a network of planned work, Exepron's built in intelligence will guide you in developing the shortest executable network. The projects are placed in a 'Project Pipeline' until a signal indicates it is should be started.

**SCHEDULING** – Exepron finally answers the questions: When should the next project start in order to finish on time with a high degree of confidence? How many projects can be worked on at the same time? How many additional projects can be started with currently available resources? How do you maximize the productivity of available resources?

**EXECUTION** – Highly informative real time Dash Boards will monitor the progress of all projects. With laser like accuracy users will able to assess a project's risk quotient and see where action must be taken. Of equal importance you

will know when no action is required. In other words, no longer manage the many (tasks), rather focusing on the few (tasks) that are jeopardizing the delivery of the portfolio of projects. This provides the necessary focusing – the key for finishing ALL of your projects on time.

Exepron™ provides real time collaboration, from project definition until project delivery, whether the Team is located in the same building or spread across the globe.



Daniel Walsh and his Exepron™ co-founder John Thompson are internationally recognized Theory of Constraints change management experts. To learn more about Exepron™ please take a few moments and visit <http://www.exepron.com> and click on the "Take a Tour".

