From the Director…

Due to the pandemic and DoD budget cuts, the two Institutes planned for 2020 were cancelled. Thanks to the strong lobbying efforts by the leadership of the Uniformed Services University the funding for the Interagency Institute, along with other programs, was recently restored.

This spring, it still was not possible to hold an in-person Institute because of the continuing requirements for social distancing and related public health protocols. For the first time in the long history of the Interagency Institute, the 136th iteration was held virtually for just one week and with only 22 participants rather than the usual 56.

I am most grateful to Dr. Dale Smith, Professor of Military History and Military Medicine at USU, the university's point of contact for me to direct the Institute, who arranged the technological and administrative support necessary for planning and delivering the Institute from the campus to our participants scattered across the United States, Germany and Japan.

Our faculty members were very cooperative in adapting to the virtual format, either coming to campus for their sessions or giving their presentations remotely.

The participants deserve a special 'thank you' for their dedication, commitment and participation throughout the week, especially those who were in different time zones. I understand that the coffee consumption increased significantly in Germany and Japan throughout the Institute!

As our society returns steadily to a 'new normal' we are planning to hold the 137th Interagency Institute in-person, on the USU campus from September 13 to 24, 2021. I hope that the program will be able to include an Institute Dinner as we have in the past when it will be possible for the participants to meet alumni/a and other distinguished guests in a relaxed social setting.

I sincerely hope that the remainder of 2021, and the years ahead, will be better for the world than it was in 2020.

Sincerely,

Richard F. Southby, Ph.D. (Med), F.F.P.H.M., F.R.S.P.H., F.C.L.M. (Hon)

USU
Uniformed
Services
University

FEDERAL HEALTH CARE EXECUTIVES INSTITUTE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION (https://www.fhceiaa.org)

Officers

President, CAPT Thad Sharp, USN; 1st Vice President, Col John Mammano, USAF, ; 2nd Vice President, Dr. Kathryn Sapnas, VHA; Secretary, Col Jim Kile, Canadian Forces; Treasurer, CAPT (Ret) Gayle Dolecek, USPHS.

Scholarships

Through the FHCEIAA Scholarship Program, three scholarships were awarded in November 2019. Brandon Mammano, Sean Munroe and Ann Whitaker were the recipients. At present, one scholarship application is pending.

Membership

To date, one of the 136th IAI class alumni has joined.

About **250 members' email addresses are not yet on file**. Your personal email address is needed to receive FHCEIAA notifications and your current USPS address is needed for the newsletter mailing list. Submit input to gjdolecek@verizon.net.

Membership information is available at https://www.fhceiaa.org/membership-1.

SMALL GROUP EXERCISES

The book selected for this Institute was Dr. Barry Wolcott's *Taming Your Stupid Monster.* The author shares personal experiences and professional understanding while presenting practical approaches for making appropriate decisions and responses in a deliberate manner whatever the circumstance.

A goal is to develop a skill set to recognize when a stupid decision is about to be make. Dr. Wolcott describes the "stupid monster" that lives within and then "but bites" (unintended consequence) when a less-than-desirable decision is made. Ways for readers to recognize their physical responses as a "pre-stupid warning" are identified as tells or warning barks of the guard dog.

Dr. Wolcott intends to help the reader avoid making a potentially stupid decision that could have unintended serious consequences or embarrassment—professional or personal.

For the small working group experience, Dr. Wolcott identified five aspects of decision-making for the participants to address among their classmates that he discussed with them on the first day of the Institute.

Dr. Southby assigned the group members as follows:

BLUE GROUP
Col Casey Campbell, USAF, DC
Ms. Jennifer Dietz, DHA
CAPT Dennis Flores, NC, USN
CAPT Greg Gorman, MC, USN, DHA
COL James Pairmore, SP, USA

YELLOW GROUP
LTC Margaret Berryman, AN, USA, VHA
Col Sean Brennan, ANG, MC
Col Rebecca Elliott, USAF, NC
LCol Carlo Rossi, MC, CF
CDR Jennifer Wallinger, MSC, USN

ORANGE GROUP
COL Andrew Baxter, AN, USA
CDR Cecilia Brown, DC, USN
Mr. Gregg Buckley, VHA
Col Erich Schroeder, USAF, MC

PURPLE GROUP
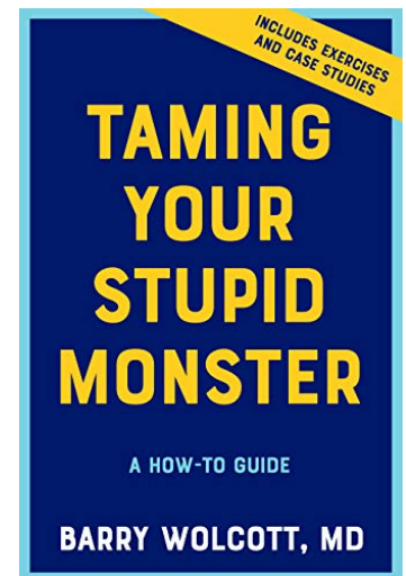CAPT(sel) Kenneth Basford, NC, USN
COL James Masterson, MS, USA
Col Ron Merchant, USAF, MSC
CAPT Carolyn Rice, MC, USN

GREEN GROUP
CDR Brian Guerrieri, DC, USN
COL Jay Dintaman, MC, USA, DHA
Col Heather Nelson, USAF, BSC
Mr. Greg Woskow, VHA

INCLUDES EXERCISES AND CASE STUDIES

TAMING YOUR STUPID MONSTER

A HOW-TO GUIDE

BARRY WOLCOTT, MD

On the final day, the groups presented a synopsis of their discussions to Drs. Southby and Wolcott.

A summary of each group's report is included on the following pages.

BLUE GROUP

Heuristics' Role in Decision-Making; Framing

Introduction

Subordinates commonly present information to their leaders for use in decision-making; unavoidably, that information will be influenced to some degree by the biases of the preparer. Understanding the effects, both subtle and profound, of these biases will improve your decision-making.

Decades of research demonstrating that personal (and often subconscious) biases contribute more to economic decision-making than does rational analysis of underlying economic facts was recognized when Daniel Kahneman, a Princeton psychologist, won the 2002 Nobel Prize in Economic Science (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Kahneman).

Kahneman's body of work described a wide range of mental shortcuts (heuristics) people utilize as they make decisions, and the heuristics' effects upon final decisions. Among these heuristics is "framing" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Framing_(social_sciences). His work views the problem statement as the frame through which a problem is to be interpreted and possible solutions evaluated; this frame will determine overall interpretation of the issues involved and of the relative likelihood and value of possible responses.

A common format for decision-making in the uniformed services contains these elements:

    Statement of the problem
    Facts bearing on the situation
    Possible courses of action
    Evaluation of courses of action
   Recommended course of action

Getting the problem correctly identified is not as easy as it might seem.

Group Response

The framing effect is the influence of perceptions and decisions by strategically altering the way information and options are   presented. Though the facts may be the same, two individuals will see the problem/ decision differently because of their own framing or bias. A simplified example is looking at the picture on the right and either seeing the glass half full or half empty.

Framing may overvalue *how* something is said, while undervaluing *what* is said and highlighting the positive, rather than the negative. Regarding cancer treatment options, for example, stating 90% chance of survival versus 10% chance of mortality accentuates the positive. Also, 75% lean beef is viewed more positively than 25% fat beef.

Another example of framing is viewing the same news story from three different news outlets (Politico, CNN, Fox News). While the facts may be the same, the various news outlets clearly demonstrate their framing based upon their beliefs – conservative, liberal, neutral. Preferences for or against a thing, person, or group compared to another is summarized on the next page.

POLITICO
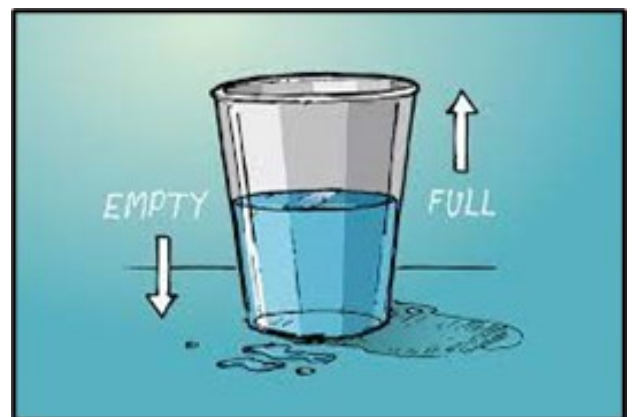
Biden shakes up vaccine strategy as he sets new goal

Expectations/Frame

Portrays decisive positive adjustment by the President

Specific Choice of Words

Biden, shakes up, strategy, sets, new, goal

Disparities of text & headline

Not much disparity.

Many numbers and descriptions of new initiatives. Biden emphasized (7x), strategy (4x), new (4x), goal (1x) out of 566 words

CNN

US shifts strategy as vaccinations slow

Implies strategy to date not working

US, shifts, slow, strategy

Text less measured than headline.

However, text still conveys difficulty with less aspirational language – such as calling the vaccine target 'a stretch goal'. Biden used (4x) out of 275 words

FOX NEWS

Biden's new COVID-19 vaccine goal aims for 160M fully inoculated by July 4

Using specific numbers and dates makes it sound more impressive

Biden, 160M, July 4, aims, new, goal, fully

Not much disparity.

Headline and text omit the word 'strategy', while the text covers the strategy components more than CNN & Politico. Biden used (5x) , new (4x), aim (3x), goal (2x) out of 323 words

May 4, 2021 articles

Recommendations for counteracting framing in decision-making:

- Disarming framing bias in decision-making and problem solving requires the decision maker take time to analyze, research and think before deciding.

- Playing the devil's advocate or creating a Red Team can help to further define the problem, challenge the facts, and offer differing opinions. This assists in simplifying the problem statement to identify the action problem.

- Another helpful tool for counteracting framing bias is SCAMPER (https://www.toolshero.com/creativity/scamper-technique-bob-eberle):

  > Substitute
  > Combine
  > Adapt
  > Modify (Magnify or Minify)
  > Eliminate
  > Rearrange (Reverse)

Reference: "How to Frame A Problem to Find The Right Solution"
https://www.forbes.com/sites/palomacanterogomez/2019/04/10/how-to-frame-a-problem-to-find-the-right-solution/?sh=1f3175b95993oblem-to-find-the-right-solution/?sh=1f3175b95993

ORANGE GROUP
Dealing with Subordinates' Framing of Your Options

Introduction

As identified by Kahneman, the manner in which the possible alternatives are presented (framed) will affect how they are interpreted by the decision-maker. A decision maker is unlikely to select an alternative whose framing created a highly negative interpretation.

Identify examples of framing fallacies likely to appear in options presented to leaders by subordinates and options for how to mitigate their effect.

Group Response

Background: The framing effect is a cognitive bias which affects decision-making when presented with two or more outcome options. Options are worded differently (framed) so that they appeal to our innate biases, which tend to value options that are framed positively. The framing effect typically takes the form of a named fallacy or flaw within the logic of an argument. Awareness of these fallacies allows leaders (and staff) to be critical thinkers and minimize the introduction of errors in decision-making.

Framing Fallacies: The following are five named fallacies that leaders need to be aware of in order to avert "The Stupid Monster:"

Straw Man Arguments: A flawed line of distorted, exaggerated, and oversimplified reasoning. The arguer sets up a wimpy version of the opponent's position and tries to score points by knocking it down.

Red Herring: Occurs when a speaker poses an irrelevant argument that distracts from the argument at hand.

Slippery Slope: Occurs when a person argues that one action will inevitably lead to a predictable series of other actions to get to the desired end.

Hasty Generalization: Occurs whenever one makes an inductive generalization based upon insufficient evidence, often choosing only a few key details that support the position.

Bandwagon: Assumes that the majority's opinion is always valid and used when there are no factual counter-arguments at hand.

Recommendations to avoid the Stupid Monster:

Straw Man: Be charitable and interpret the argument in the strongest way possible. Suspend your disbelief for a moment and try to believe what your arguer believes. Remind yourself that many claims are partially true. Seek truth, not victory.

Red Herring: Ask if the position is relevant to the discussion at hand, then decide on one of three courses of action: Accepting the new topic of discussion and continuing with it; disengaging from the argument; or call out the fallacy, re-state the original problem and continue on.

Slippery Slope: Remember the environment is complex and uncertain. Ask whether this one thing has led to another before or if this is conjecture and whether the chain of events can reasonably be predicted.

References:
Perdue University at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/logic_in_argumentative writing/allacies.html
Wikipedia at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_fallacies
Fallacy in Logic.com at https://fallacyinlogic.com/red-herring-fallacy-definition-and-examples/
Annenberg Public Policy Center (2008). Monty Python and the Quest for the Perfect Fallacy. Retrieved 10-1-08 from http://www.factchecked.org/LessonPlanDetails.aspx?myId=7.
Hacker, D. (1999). A Writer's Reference, 4th ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martins.
Mike, H. B. (1999). Language and Logic. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing, 1999.
Wheeler, K. (2008). Logical fallacies handlist. Retrieved 10-1-08 from http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/fallacies_list.html

YELLOW GROUP
The Send Button; Stupid's Enabler?

Introduction

Internet communications dramatically extends stupidity's potential reach and distribution velocity. The decision to click on the send button is fraught with butt-bite potential.

Recommend a question sequence (no more than three questions) to <u>rapidly and effectively</u> evaluate the risk of a decision to send a particular message.

Describe two work-related episodes where the decision to send a message turned out to be significantly stupid.

Group Response

SCREENING QUESTIONS:
   Is it True?
   Is it Necessary?
   Is it Time Sensitive?

SCENARIO 1:

I obtained an early copy of an EXORD that restricted access to COVID-19 vaccine to "Americans." Given the spotlight on COVID and my desire to take advantage of my privileged access for personal spotlight/gain, I forwarded to senior Canadian Armed Forces and Global Affairs Canada officials who I knew were seized with finding a solution to vaccinate Canadians working in the US. The SECDEF and Chair of Joint Staff equivalent were engaged. The issue ended up on the desk of the ASD(HA) [whom I work for directly]. He was not pleased to be woken up and disappointed that I had not engaged him directly on the issue. Especially given the fact that he was at the time (unknown to me) already working an exemption to the EXORD.

True: Yes
Necessary: No (lacked context, info incomplete, sending was emotional)
Time Sensitive: Yes

SCENARIO 2:

An email came for my signature requesting nurse manning to be forwarded to the Air Force Personnel Center. I was told our nursing levels would reach a critical shortage due to recent deployments and remain during the summer months. The justification provided showed between the authorized and on-hand staffing we were 80% most of the summer. We were projected only during July to be 50%. Based on my analysis of the justification, I instructed the Chief Nurse to complete another form to request manning assist for the specified time.

True: Yes
Necessary: No (document was not necessary based on the analysis of the data)
Time Sensitive: No (team had time to adjust course)

SCREENING QUESTIONS:
TNT
•Is it **T**rue?
•Is it **N**ecessary?
•Is it **T**ime sensitive?

PURPLE GROUP
Is There a Role for Humor and Sarcasm in Leadership?

Introduction

Attempts at being funny often fail miserably. Deciding to share humor or sarcasm via social media carries an even bigger risk of a poor outcome. What you see as humorous others may see as offensive; what may be humorous today may be defamatory tomorrow; what you intend for viewing by only a select few can be serially forwarded to millions.

Group Response

"Good humor is a tonic for mind and body. It is the best antidote for anxiety and depression. It is a business asset. It attracts and keeps friends. It lightens human burdens. It is the direct route to serenity and contentment."— Grenville Kleiser

Laughter reduces stress – it eases tension and increases your sense of well-being. If you can find some humor, even in difficult situations, you'll find it easier to cope with life's challenges at home and at work. Obviously, laughter can be a very powerful tool. It can change an attitude, and help relieve stress. And let's face it: most workplaces could do with a little brightening up.

As senior leaders it is important that we think twice—or even three times—before you tell a joke at work, or send a cartoon via e-mail. If you think a joke may offend someone, don't tell or send it. At the very least, ALWAYS avoid racial and ethnic jokes, including those involving religious or cultural background. The guard dog should be barking loudly if your humor or sarcasm has one or more of the following overtones:

- Cruel or sarcastic jokes about yourself or others
- Sexist jokes or jokes about sexual orientation
- Jokes making fun of physical or mental disabilities or someone's age
- Profanity and overtly sexual jokes
- Alienates and/or singles out a particular staff member or division
- Being a bully

Most importantly, if you think you may have offended someone, talk to him or her as soon as possible, and, if necessary, apologize.

There are effective, appropriate methods to use humor and/or sarcasm in the workplace that could improve your effectiveness or sphere of influence as a leader in the organization. We would all agree that laughter reduces stress and tension and makes life much more pleasant. Humor, used appropriately, can make a long workday seem shorter or a routine meeting livelier. There are many ways to incorporate humor into workplace activities:

- Start a meeting with a smile; tell a story about a past foible. It will make you more human. Show your staff that everyone makes mistakes and everyone gets past them.

- When training a new person, include an example of a mistake you once made and how you learned from it.

- Anytime: keep a cartoon/comic strip file. Work-related humor, such as praising Mr. Coffee for his continuing contribution to productivity can enliven a workspace or the refrigerator in the lunchroom. Cathy and Dilbert frequently have work-appropriate humor. Humorous, cute, or odd animal pictures can also add levity (avoid scatological ones!).

In conclusion, leaders must always remember that although they may believe or find a particular joke or sarcastic remark humorous or lighthearted, others in the workplace may find it offensive. If you are ever in doubt, do not deliver the joke or sarcastic response as it is most likely a butt-bite. In addition to verbal communication with peers and/or employees, it is important to have trusted guard dogs in your private office and not to write anything derogatory against a person's religion, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation. With that said, if you do find an appropriate joke or cartoon, you may brighten up your workday and that of your employees and co-workers as well.

GREEN GROUP

Is There Really Always Time to Think?

Introduction

Leaders are continually pressured, by forces both external and internal, to make decisions quickly. Decisiveness is generally viewed as a highly desirable leadership quality. Decisions made without appropriate consideration, however, are at risk for being stupid.

Group Response

Decision-making is based upon knowledge, experience, recognition and instinct. We pull upon all of these assets for split second decisions, like a car sliding on an icy patch, or deciding high path to take to achieve a goal or arrive at a destination. Through training, experience and studying past and current events, we can form our quick and deliberate decision-making process. (CDR Brian Guerrieri)

Leaders that make decisions without thinking often fail to select readily available alternatives that would result in better outcomes. Decisions made without thinking often miss some of the root causes of the problem. For example, decisions made regarding department and building closures during COVID-19 and evacuations during security threats have been made without accurately tackling the underlying safely risks. (Mr. Gregory Woskow)

As COVID-19 spread to Spokane, WA, decisions were made quickly to change clinic operations to protect staff and patients. The implementation of outdoor patient screening and COVID-19 testing in March 2020 was not sustainable with colder weather starting in October 2020. This required a new plan to move screening and testing indoors. The March 2020 plans were impacted by COVID-related communication challenges and decisions were made without consulting all parties involved in the processes. (Col Heather Nelson)

Under pressure to be decisive, the appropriate decision-delaying tactic depends significantly on the specific nature of the issue as life-threatening concerns and critical safety matters may demand immediate attention. In situations where additional decision space is warranted, potential options include requesting additional information, seeking additional perspectives, or simply requesting additional time for deliberation on par with the complexity of issue.
(COL Jay Dintaman)

Washington DC 20016
5325 MacArthur Blvd NW
Director
Dr. Richard F. Southby

INTERAGENCY INSTITUTE FOR FEDERAL HEALTH LEADERS

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED