

New & Aspiring Consultants Programme Episode 7:

Getting Decisions Made & Delivered

BCS Consultancy Specialist Group Event

Dr Alan Warr

About the presentation

Agenda

Discussion

**How do we really
make decisions?**

**Organisational decision-making
adds complexity?**

**How Do Consultants
Get Decisions Delivered**

**Why are Consultants
Important for Decision Making?**



Dr Alan Warr

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Digital Transformation Consultant (DS/ML)

PA; BT; Kings Fund; Capita; KPMG; Metanoia



Chair of BCS Consultancy Specialist Group

Formerly Vice Chair of Council of IBC



Researcher in Organisational Transformation

Doctorate LBS, Post-Doc @ Wave Lab at Uni of Aegean



Former Lecturer in IT/Digital Strategy

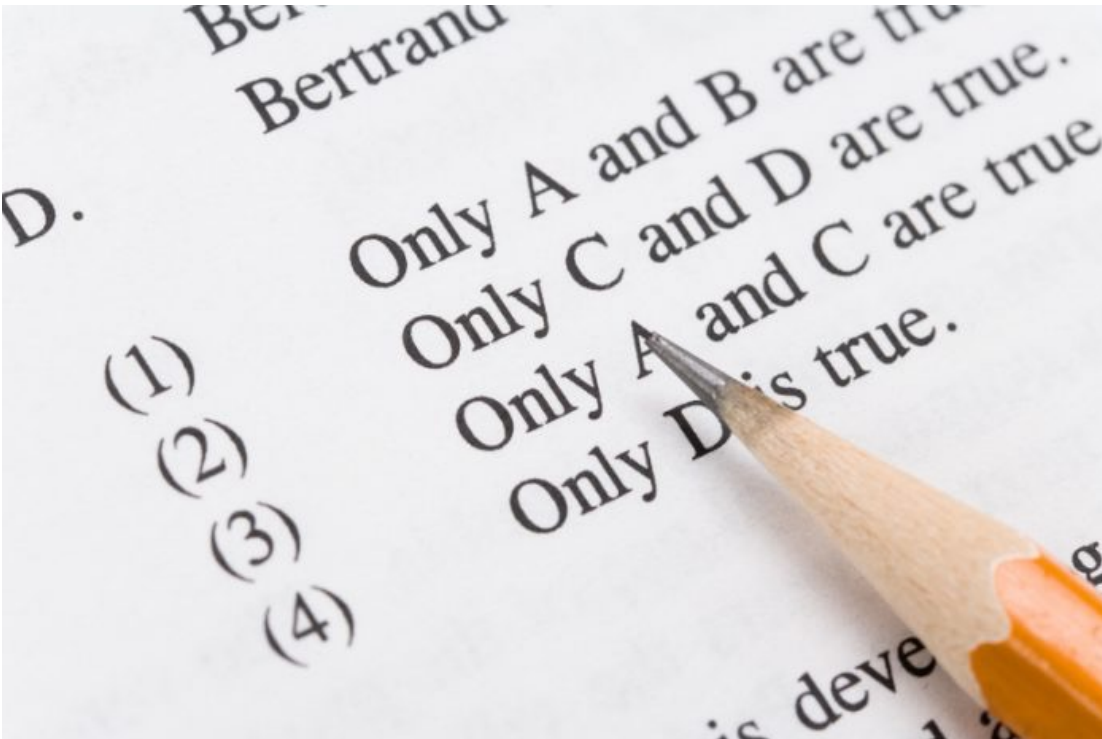
Cranfield, Bournemouth, Henley, UWL

Poll



How do we really make decisions?

Wisdom of the Innocents

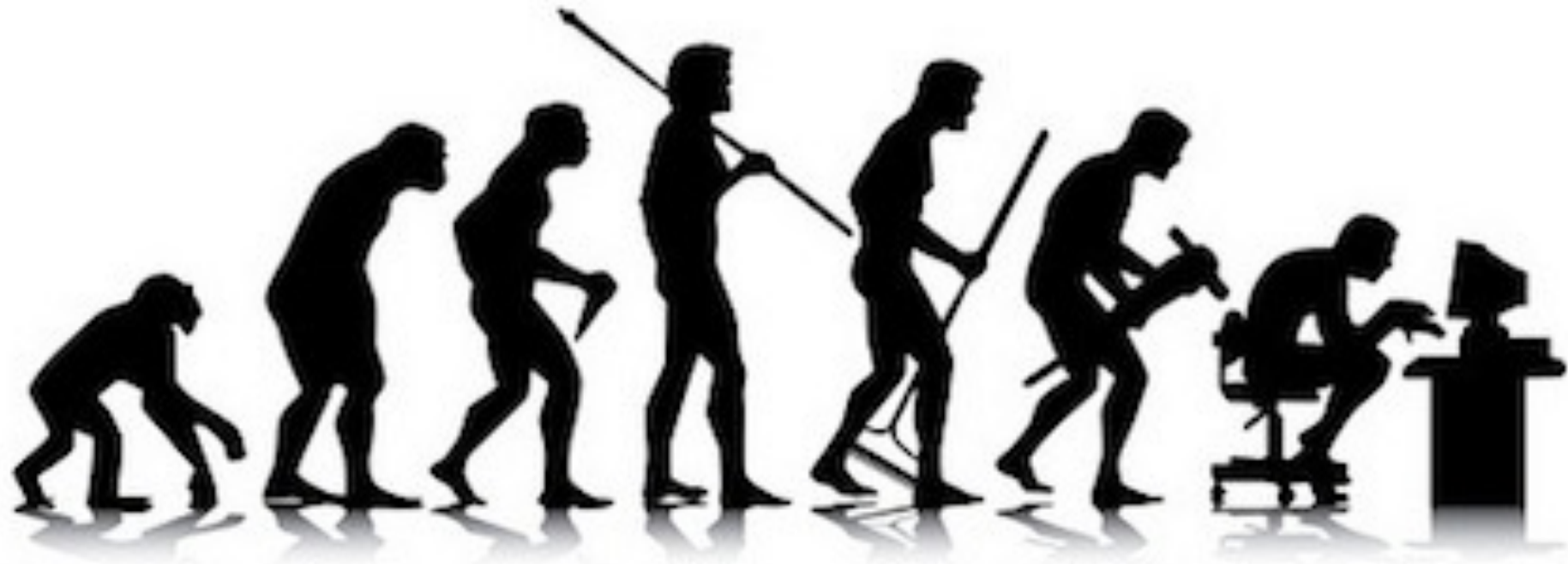


Right OR wrong?



Right AND wrong?

“Homo Economicus”



Peter Drucker – Rational Decision Making



1

Define the problem

2

Analyse the problem

3

Develop alternative solutions

4

Find the best solution

5

Implement the decision

Herbert Simon – Bounded Rationality

The capacity of the human mind for formulating and solving complex problems is very small compared with the size of the problems

Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences, 1978





Daniel Kahneman – Behavioural Economics

Prospect Theory (Loss Aversion)

We are much more
influenced by the prospect
of loss than the prospect of
gain.

Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences, 2002

Carole Osterweil – Neuroscience Insights

When we're delivering projects, we want everyone to be behaving rationally, and if we want people to be behaving rationally then we need to learn how to manage and contain emotions, and that means understanding how the brain works.



Niccolò Machiavelli – Power & Politics



“For he who innovates will have for his enemies all those who are well off under the existing order of things, and only lukewarm supporters in those who might be better off under the new.”

Organisational decision-making adds complexity?

Evolutionary Psychology

You can take the person
out of the Stone Age,
not the Stone Age out
of the person.



Information Hyper-Overload

In 2020 the world reached 44 zettabytes of data stored in private & public infrastructures up from 4 zettabytes in 2019.

(1 zettabyte equals around one trillion gigabytes)



The Rising Importance of “Wicked Problems”



A problem that is difficult or impossible to solve because of incomplete, contradictory and changing requirements that are often difficult to recognise.

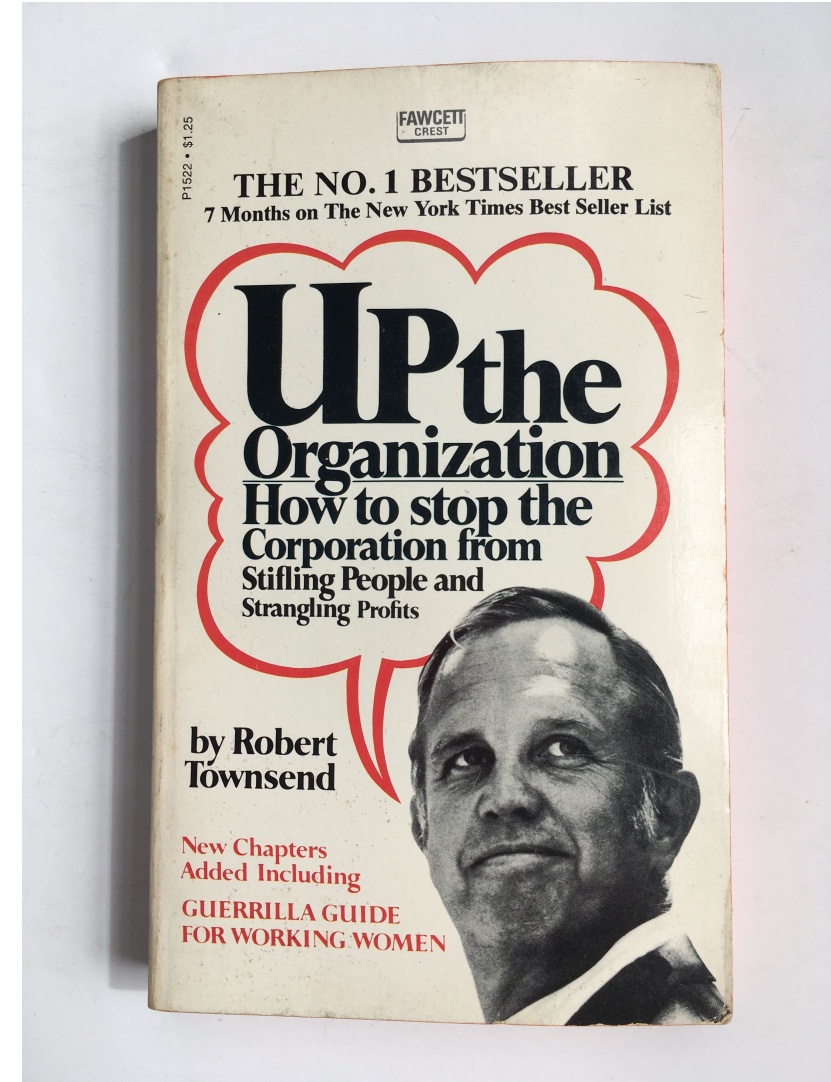
(UNHCR description)

Why are Consultants Important for Decision Making?

Some Truth Behind the No. 1 Joke About Consultants

Consultants are people who borrow your watch and tell you what time it is, and then walk off with the watch.

Robert Townsend, Author



The Outsider's Advantage



Seeing the situation from outside, afresh and independently can bring new insights for decision-making.

And the outsider can say what insiders dare not.

Rapid Deployment of Armies of “Smart Talent”

Audit Commission is reporting hundreds of millions spent by government to UK consultancies during the pandemic response.

But where else could they have gotten smart capacity at scale in a couple of weeks?



Test and Trace

Spreading Innovations

James McKinsey invented management & cost accountancy.

Ernest Batten brought the work of F W Taylor to the UK.

Today, the big 4 are Gold Partners for the tech giants



Edgar Schein: Expert versus Process Validation



Argues that the consultant often does not know enough about the client's situation and culture to offer a solution to their problems.

Instead, the consultant & client can work together in a helping relationship where the consultant brings a process for solving the problem.

Applying Data Sciences/ML/AI



Consultancies are designed for decisions that can be addressed with “two-by-two matrices” and can be understood easily.

ML/AI’s models handle millions of events, hundreds of variables and scores of dimensions and need MSc/PhD level STEM skills to understand them.

How Do Consultants Get Decisions Delivered

Evidence Based Management



..... Increases rationality and reduced bounded rationality.

Engagement through Consulting



..... Reduces the “fight or flight” response & builds engagement.

Communication through Compelling Slide Decks



..... Increases psychological safety with a shared understanding.

Syndication through Walking the Decision Around



..... Acknowledges power and politics with no surprises.

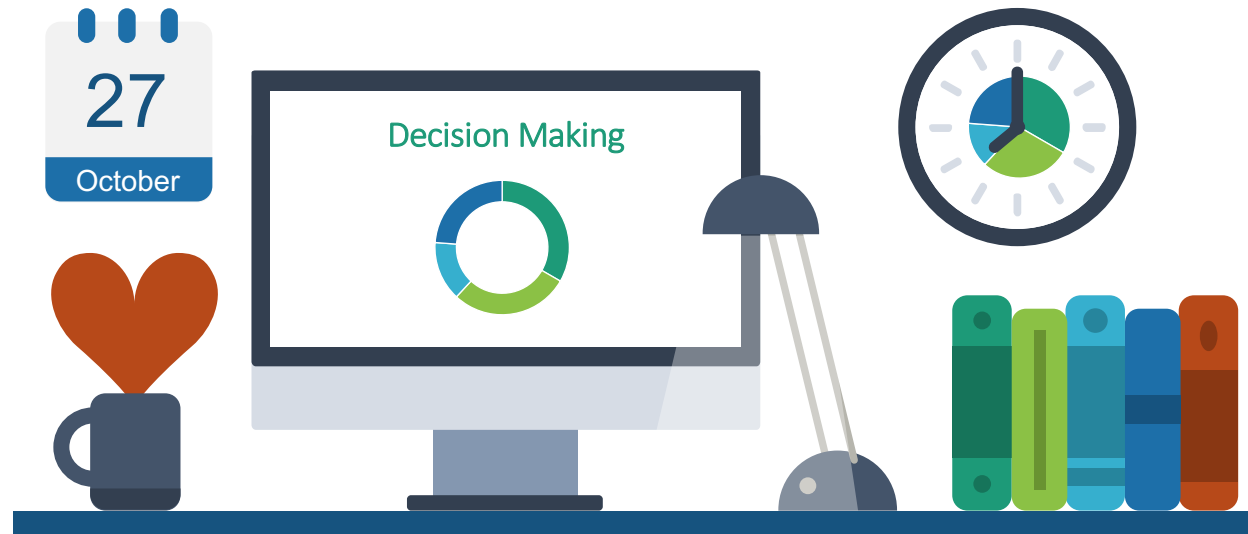
Allow Client to Make the Decision (Incl. In Principle)



..... Risk appetites vary, some progress is better than none.

Discussion

Question: What have been your experiences?



..... Post a short phrase into **chat** or **indicate** if you want to unmute & add a new thought or tell us a story from your experiences

THANK YOU