Asking for help to tackle uncertainty

Following Daudelin's (1996) approach, I would like to start my learning journal of the week by identifying the main problem that I have encountered this week. As the marketing director of our company, I feel like even though there are some useful reports that I can rely on, in most of my decisions I face uncertainty – as the development of the market is highly dependent on the decisions made by other firms in issues such as setting the prices and deciding on the amounts to produce. Therefore, I often had difficulties in predicting the possible future effects of my decisions, as they were so unsure and risky. Interestingly enough, I thought about this particular issue being my "problem" this week before I realized that most of our readings for the week are actually about decision making. Buchanan and O'Connell (2006) mention that "decision implies the end of deliberation and the beginning of action". And that is exactly why I found it difficult.

Relating to my goal from last week, about preparing more for each session and making informed decisions, I took a lot of time this week to "deliberate" and dive into different reports and data to come up with possible ideas about the impacts that my decisions could have. I made a lot of notes too, but when it came to actually deciding about numbers, or "beginning action", it still appeared to be hard, given the risk of making mistakes in the first real round. While reading the article by Buchanan and O'Connell (2006), it was interesting for me how they stated that risk is actually the only reason why decision making can become difficult, as we are afraid of the potential negative consequences of our actions.

That is why I think asking for help and opinions from my teammates has helped me get over my issue. By sharing the responsibility of making decisions and by having the approval of my team on my suggestions, I felt like the risk related to the consequences of my actions has decreased to some extent. Furthermore, "seeking information and opinions from a variety of people to widen my frame of reference and to push my mind in fresh directions", as suggested by Hammond et.al (1998) helped me overcome potential decision making traps that I could have fallen into alone.

What I have learned through having reflected on my problem is that asking for help and approval is another helpful tool (next to being well prepared) that might make decision making and teamwork in general somewhat easier for me. I plan to continue the pattern and to try and reach out to others in the future in case I am in doubt, to test my theory.

Buchanan, L., O'Connell, A. (2006). A brief history of decision making. Harvard business review. 84. 32-41, 132.

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Hammond, J. S., Keeney, R. L., & Raiffa, H. (1998). The hidden traps in decision making. Harvard Business Review, 76(5), 47+.