



How can two different people see the same situation and make two TOTALLY different decisions? Quite fascinating how we get there and how we reach decisions, huh? What if we could ensure we could make those decisions better? Let's dig into that in this month's book. In the meantime, find a quiet spot to read these articles and stay cool!

Kristin

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### IT'S CRUCIAL TO CREATE AND KEEP A TEAM MEMORY

Especially in this post-COVID world of geographically distributed teams (otherwise known as 'hybrid' teams), it's even more important to create and keep a "team memory." The team memory is a physical and/or digital repository of information produced by the team including agendas, minutes, action plans, papers, correspondence etc.

Reasons for Keeping a Team Memory

**Catch Up.** Team membership may change, and the "team memory" allows for new members to catch up quickly. Peruse the files and ask questions of your teammates to fill in the gap(s).

**Retrace Steps.** The team may have to retrace its steps to track down problems or errors. Good record-keeping makes this easier.

**Remember Decisions.** Some team members may not remember what was decided at an earlier meeting. An up-to-date team memory allows for a quick check.

**Prepare to Present.** The team may have to prepare a presentation, and team memory makes this much easier.

Typically, the recorder keeps the team memory in a well-organized notebook or digital file and can easily access it at every team meeting.

Whenever I am on a team, I always take the team agenda (what we planned to do) and capture the "minutes" on the back side of the paper (see next page). I keep this one-pager (agenda/minutes) in my daily planner or as a digital file in my team folder. Although not the definitive source like the team memory, my file serves as a nice reminder of where we've been and where we need to go. You'd be surprised at how many times a team has looked to my notes as the "fallback" team memory!

## FAVORITISM DURING A PANEL DISCUSSION

I could have screamed at a panel moderator who was clearly fawning over a famous panelist, “Stop showing favoritism during a panel discussion!” But that would have been rude, so I’ll tell you what tips off the audience that the panel moderator is NOT fulfilling their role of being “Neutral & Objective.” A person who withholds their own personal opinions and judgment. Doesn’t show bias or favoritism toward any particular side, faction, or person.

- **Airtime.** When the panel moderator allows one panelist to have more “airtime” than all the others – even if they are all famous. If that person is such a big deal, conduct an interview vs. a panel!
- **Proximity.** Just because a panelist is close to you doesn’t mean you have to cater to them. This is not a dinner party where you just talk to the people closest to you. You are the host and you need to involve everyone at the table.
- **Introductions.** Just because you’re a fangirl doesn’t mean you should go on and on about your favorite panelist and say just a few words to introduce the other panelists. What you do for one you should do for them all.
- **Friendly.** People tend to be more friendly to people they like and know. That can show up as casual conversation or banter, a bigger smile, a humorous quip – all of which are good tools for a panel moderator to use – just not all pointed toward one panelist!
- **Uneven Responses.** Beware of using affirming words such as “great,” “good point,” or “awesome” to some panelists and blase (or no) responses to others such as “oh,” “yeah,” “um.”
- **Matching.** Body language expert Traci Brown says, “You can spot favoritism when one person ‘matches’ another person in body language and tone. The panel moderator sitting the same way as a panelist is a clue as to who they are tuned in to the most. Watch how they speak at the same pace or repeat the same words. We are wired to follow those with whom we have a deep unconscious rapport.”

The subtle signals that we prefer one panelist over another do happen and it takes a high level of situational awareness to guard against favoritism during a panel discussion.

## FROM THE BOOKSHELF: NOISE: A FLAW IN HUMAN JUDGMENT

As a student of critical thinking and decision-making, I was more than surprised while reading Daniel Kahneman (author of *Thinking, Fast and Slow*), Olivier Sibony, and Cass Sunstein’s book, *Noise, A Flaw in Human Judgment*. The authors highlight the importance of a specific type of error in human judgment: noise, or the random variability of decisions amongst a group of people presented with the same information. They painstakingly explain why noise matters, why there’s so much more of it than we realize, and how to reduce it.

Within the first few pages, the authors clarified the distinction between noise and bias, I was shocked at the effects and magnitude of noise in the decision-making process! Prison sentences that vary widely from different judges, contradictory diagnoses from different physicians, and different evaluations of workplace performance are just a few examples of decisions that are rife with noise.

The book is divided into six parts:

1. Finding Noise
2. Your Mind is a Measuring Instrument
3. Noise in Predictive Judgments
4. How Noise Happens
5. Improving Judgments

## 6. Optimal Noise

The chapters take you through identifying noise in different sectors, comparing noise in human decisions to AI algorithms, determining the causes of noise, and ultimately how to reduce noise through noise audits and other “decision hygiene” practices.

The final (and best) section deals with how much noise is tolerable, and what levels can be realistically reached. They also share ways to reduce noise in different settings: personal methods, such as training people to continually update their views with contrary perspectives; and collective approaches such as how to best leverage the expertise of a team charged with an important business decision.

Warning: The book can be a bit pedantic (did the authors get paid by the word?), but well worth the read!

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