**Kingsley Gate**

How to Avoid Decision Making Failure during an Executive's First 100 days

by Aaron Mitchell Finegold

In the fast-paced world of executive leadership, decision making plays a crucial role in determining any new executive's success. However, many leaders face challenges that inhibit their decision-making potential – including a lack of effective relationships, a lack of genuine listening, and too much haste to "make their mark" in the first 6-12 months.

This article explores the common factors that can hinder an executive's effectiveness within an organization and offers insights from Kingsley Gate's research and findings on how executives can navigate decision making.
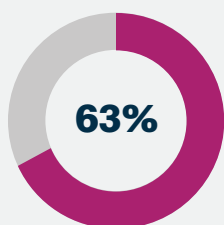
63% of senior executives have either resigned or considered resigning because they were frustrated with how decisions were made,

The Impact of Rushed Decision Making

One common challenge executives face is the temptation to make their mark quickly by changing the status quo. While this ambition is understandable, it can lead to decisions being made without fully listening to and understanding the organization, including what's working well today.

A Harvard Business Review article by Gianpiero Petriglieri, Associate Professor of Organizational Behavior at INSEAD, characterizes leadership as, essentially, an "argument with tradition." Leaders absolutely need to challenge the status quo but with a level of respect and understanding that allows them to put time and energy behind the right set of changes.

In a study conducted by Kingsley Gate with the Financial Times, Kingsley Gate found that 63% of executives have either resigned or considered resigning due to frustration with the existing decision-making processes at their organizations. What's interesting is: the study revealed that a similar percentage of executives (62%) felt insufficiently empowered in making decisions.

This could mean that many executives feel frustrated with both how decisions are made by others and themselves, which has far-reaching implications. Are executives today feeling that their decision-making scopes and scope boundaries are well-defined? For the decisions that fall squarely within their scope, are they feeling empowered to decide?

The Value of Decision Making in Executive Leadership

Kingsley Gate's research, conducted with the Financial Times, explored various aspects of decision making, including different stylistic preferences, emotional factors, and sources of value.

One key finding from the research was that nearly three-quarters (74%) of senior executives say that their personal values and beliefs often influence the way in which they make decisions. This ties in with the finding that people-centric factors were more frequently named as the main driver of improvements to a company's decision effectiveness, ahead of more mechanistic levers like data, processes, and technology.

Another significant finding, not widely publicized, was that 76% of senior executives whose decision-making styles aligned with their organization were satisfied with their jobs overall, compared to 43% when decision-making styles diverged. This doesn't mean that the executive being hired, and the pre-existing dominant organizational style need to match up 100%, but it does mean that having an explicit discussion about what the styles are and whether they align is a frequently missing starting point!

> **Assessing decision making style at interview stage will give a much better chance of recruiting individuals whose leadership style fits in with or facilitates the progress of organizational culture. Senior executives who didn't discuss the decision making topic before taking their current roles are 30% less satisfied with their current jobs overall and 54% less satisfied with decision making effectiveness at their companies, compared to those who did discuss decision making.**

Bad Decisions: Why companies miss the most important factor in executive hiring

Navigating Decision Making in a New Environment

When executives transition to new companies, they often find themselves in unfamiliar decision-making environments which may not have been adequately discussed before the executive's arrival. This results in friction and challenges which can be overcome in two ways.

The first, ideal approach is to have in-depth discussions about decision-making preferences and the company's decision environment before the executive starts their role. This can be facilitated by executive search firms like Kingsley Gate, ensuring that all parties have a clear understanding of expectations.

Even if these discussions do not take place beforehand, executives can still navigate the decision-making process by actively listening and observing after joining the company. By understanding roles, timelines, data sources, and power dynamics, executives can gain insights into the decision environment and make informed decisions.

The second way is to acknowledge that decision-making processes may differ across different functions within an organization. Sales and finance, for example, may require different approaches due to their specific roles and objectives. Cross-functional collaboration can often create friction, necessitating the need for clear accountability and decision-making authority. Understanding the decision-making styles and preferences of individuals within different functions can help leaders bridge gaps and set appropriate expectations.

Mapping Decision Environments and Improving Satisfaction

Our research also delved into mapping decision environments and assessing individual decision-making styles within organizations. Kingsley Gate has developed an approach that seeks to understand a company's decision environment and identifies where different candidates and incumbents fall on the decision-making spectrum. By considering the organization's business objectives as well as their operating culture, firms can gain insights into their business decision environment and understand the decision-making preferences of their teams.

The findings from this research have implications for various areas, including exit interviews and ongoing team management.

For one, restructuring exit interviews to focus on decision-making satisfaction can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of decision-making processes. Additionally, understanding the decision-making styles prevalent among a team's incumbents can enable leaders to better predict friction and dysfunction before it arises.

Decision Making Ensures Organization and Executive Success

Ultimately, decision making plays a vital role in the success of both an individual newly-appointed executive and an organization over the long run. While it is crucial for executives to understand their organization's business environment and their own preferred decision-making style, organizations, too, can increase their own chances of success by prioritizing decision making and decision-making conversations in the hiring process and throughout the business.

Of course, organizations benefit from improving their decision-making processes by making executives who live in those processes feel more satisfied, which in turn allows those executives to contribute meaningful impact to the business – including impact in the form of improving a company's decision effectiveness. This kind of virtuous cycle is achievable only if conversations about decision making at the individual and the collective level are made explicit.

Elevate Your Leadership Journey with Kingsley Gate

Our expertise in identifying top-tier leadership talent can enhance your journey towards organizational excellence. By centering decision making as the primary lens for identifying, evaluating, and selecting outstanding executive leaders, we ensure that your organization's success remains our key focus.

With a track record of successfully assisting over 1700 client organizations in hiring and onboarding decision-making executives across diverse industries, functions, and markets, Kingsley Gate has consistently demonstrated the ability to identify exceptional leaders who drive performance. Headquartered in New York and operating globally since 2015, our consultants bring a wealth of experience and insights to the table, ensuring that organizations can attract and retain the best talent for their leadership positions.

Learn more about our solutions. Talk to one of our experts today!