

Six Sure-Fire Ways to Reduce Uncertainty

“For I know the thoughts and plans that I have for you, says the Lord, thoughts and plans for welfare and peace and not for evil, to give you hope in your final outcome.” –Jeremiah 29:11
AMP

Leaders know that decision-making always involves some level of uncertainty. You’ll never see the result of an option until it’s chosen, and the decision is converted into action. The more information, advice, and experience you have to decide, the higher your confidence level will be. You’ll be able to anticipate potential outcomes and assign probabilities.

On the other hand, incomplete, inaccurate, and unreliable information, a lack of wise counsel, and inexperience will lower your confidence level. You’ll be unable to adequately assess potential outcomes, let alone foresee likelihoods.

Your role as a leader is to reduce uncertainty. How?

1. **Build knowledge:** Learn as much as you can about each option. What are the required information and parameters you need to decide? The Bible says, “The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge, for the ears of the wise seek it out” (Proverbs 18:15 NIV). Do your best to validate the information’s completeness, accuracy, and reliability. At the same time, be at peace when you don’t know everything.
2. **Involve people:** Seek advice from others. Listen to people who listen to God. The Bible says, “Surely you need guidance to wage war, and victory is won through many advisers” (Proverbs 24:6 NIV). Pursue different points of view, encourage debate, and listen carefully.
3. **Determine predictability:** Based on your knowledge and

advice you've received, rank each option according to its positive outcome likelihood; 1 is a low positive outcome probability and 10 is a high positive outcome probability. The higher the probability, the lower the uncertainty. The lower the probability, the higher the uncertainty. You want to lean toward options that have the highest likelihood of success.

4. **Understand and accept risk:** I learned a long time ago from Dale Carnegie to ask myself, "What's the worst that can possibly happen?"^[1] Consider what you might lose. What's at risk? If you understand and accept what's at risk, you'll reduce the anxiety that comes from uncertainty.
5. **Remember your values:** Grounding a decision in your core values and guiding principles will help you navigate uncertainty. Without values, you'll be tossed about and be at an even more significant disadvantage when faced with doubt.
6. **Remain flexible:** Keep all of your options open to accommodate an uncertain future. You may need to course-correct and select another option as a contingency plan.

The goal of improving decision quality is about reducing uncertainty and increasing the probability of positive results, not guaranteeing them. Let's take this a step further.

For the believer, you can reduce uncertainty to a large extent and make the best decision possible. You may make a terrific decision and not achieve your objective. Or, you may make a lousy decision and somehow achieve your goal. Uncertainty remains. Either way, there is one thing that is for sure: God is in control. You can trust him with the outcome.

Think about some Bible heroes who made decisions and weren't so certain about the outcomes:

- Noah decided to follow God's direction and build an ark but wasn't exactly sure how everything would unfold.
- Abraham faithfully followed God's call and left his home, not knowing where he was going.
- At Jesus' invitation, Peter courageously stepped out of the boat and walked on water, moving from certainty to uncertainty as he sank.

In all three examples, each person decided in the face of uncertainty and trusted God with the outcome.

- Rain covered the earth, but Noah and his family were rescued in the Ark.
- Abraham settled down and his descendants became a mighty nation.
- When Peter began to doubt and sink, Jesus grabbed his hand and pulled him up.

Noah, Abraham, and Peter trusted God with the outcome. You can too! Why? God promises that he is for you, not against you (Romans 8:31). He has wonderful plans for you (Jeremiah 29:11). And he works all things together for the good of those who love him (Romans 8:28).

When faced with uncertainty, consider asking

- How do you reduce uncertainty when deciding?
- Do you trust God with the outcomes?
- Do you believe he has a plan for your life and will help you make sound decisions?

Look to him when you're faced with a decision and uncertain outcomes. Whether you experience a successful result or make a mistake, know that God is in control. Place your trust in him.

Do want to learn more? Visit <http://www.prestonpoore.com>

Cheers,

Pres

^[1] Dale Carnegie, *The Leader in You* (Diamond Pocket Books Pvt Ltd, 2020).