

Chief of the Air Staffs'

LEADERSHIP **CONFERENCE** SUMMARY

2021

Decision Making:

What Influences Us?

#NextGenRAF

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Published 2021

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Published by the Tedder Academy of Leadership, Trenchard Hall, The Royal Air Force College Cranwell, NG34 8HB, UK in conjunction with Media Services, RAFC Cranwell.

Tedder Academy of Leadership

The Tedder Academy of Leadership was established to deepen and strengthen Royal Air Force leadership and command development and is also the Headquarters for coaching and mentoring. Airpower, air-mindedness and operational effectiveness, within the context of integrated cross-domain operations, underpin all Tedder Academy activity.

Its mission is to lead the direction and development of world class, through-career, air-minded Leadership and Command education and training to optimise the RAF's capability across multiple domains.

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Audio and visual support for CASLC21 was provided by RAFC Cranwell Media Services, Photo ACSSU and RAF Force Protection. Footage of the conference is available on the Tedder Academy of Leadership's SharePoint Page.

Footage available here: <https://bit.ly/CASLC2021>

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Conference Reflection

High Potential Talent Pathway: Pilot Programme Participants

At the end of each session summary are a few paragraphs of analysis provided by participants of the RAF's High Potential Talent Pathway (HPTP) programme. The HPTP is designed to provide a 12-month accelerated developmental pathway, aimed at personnel with high potential for future WO employment. The programme offers a bespoke package of developmental opportunities designed around the strengths and areas for development of each participant. Supported by an HPTP champion on their unit, they are afforded a package of local and national development opportunities, including funded training investment and opportunities to develop strategic understanding.

The limited pilot programme, which was open to all ranks between Senior Aircraftsman (SAC) and Flight Sergeant (FS), commenced in Sep 21 and the TAL were delighted that HPTP personnel were able to remotely join CASLC21 and offer focused feedback on each session.

If you want to know more about the HPTP please see the article entitled 'The RAF Talent Strategy: One Year On' towards the rear of this publication.

A Personal Reflection (Chief Technician Adam 'Thomo' Thompson – Park Fellow)

CT Thompson is a recently graduated Park Fellow from the University of Northumberland and is currently employed on 41 Sqn at RAF Coningsby. His dissertation entitled 'Do Career Management Expectations of RAF Other Ranks Support or Contradict Modern Civilian Career Management theories?' was accepted by the University for the award of a master's degree in Leadership and Management is available to read on the Tedder Academy SharePoint page.

To stimulate wider discussion and debate around some of the key aspects of decision-making, CT Thompson offers some personal thoughts on what resonated with him as a recently promoted CT within a new team.



Introduction

Gp Capt Emma Keith is Commandant of TAL and is responsible for setting the strategic direction for command, leadership, coaching and mentoring across the RAF. Gp Capt Keith wants to ensure that leadership and command education is accessible across the Whole Force and to encourage leadership at all levels across the organisation

Introduction to CASLC21

Gp Capt Keith set the scene for the conference by highlighting how important good decision-making is in everyone's lives, both individually and organisationally. She aimed to spark interest and reflection by posing two questions to participants.

1. What might be getting in the way of your decision-making?
2. What might you do to enhance your decision-making?

She briefly described the 5 main sessions that would be covered during the conference:

- ▲ Decision-Making in Ambiguity.
- ▲ Decision-Making: Bias, Culture and Perspectives.
- ▲ Decision-Making: Interpreting Risk.
- ▲ Decision-Making: The Power of Mindset.
- ▲ Decision-Making: The Global Strategic Landscape.

She stated that the conference could not cover all elements of decision-making and that it aimed to ignite interest, and start an

organisational conversation, about this fascinating topic.

Gp Capt Keith challenged some perceptions that decision making was a role associated with more senior levels in the organisation or only pertinent to those in positions of command. She emphatically made the point that to be a successful whole force organisation it required effective decision making at all levels; this is the premise of mission command; the RAF's fundamental leadership philosophy.

In concluding her opening remarks, Gp Capt Keith invited the delegates to stop, pause and ask the 'so what' at the end of each session: What points could they take away and what was relevant to their growth as a leader?

She encouraged the audience to make use of the TAL SharePoint site to access much of the CASLC21 material for further reference, and to access resources such as podcasts, radio shows, short articles and recommended reading to continue their learning.



Group Captain Emma Keith

Commandant
Tedder Academy of Leadership

▶ A genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus, but a moulder of consensus.

Martin Luther King Jr

If during your own leadership journey, you have an experience or discover new and innovative ways to support your own or organisation's decision making, please share them with us so that we can continue to grow and shape the RAF's Next Generation of leaders.

Opening Address

Air Chief Marshal Wigston has held a succession of operational appointments as well as fulfilling Command and Staff roles at various ranks. Senior appointments have included Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (ACAS), responsible for the strategic coherence and coordination of the RAF, and oversight of the RAF100 centenary programme. Prior to becoming CAS, he was Deputy Commander Capability, responsible for the strategic planning and delivery of all aspects of RAF capability including people, equipment, infrastructure and training.

ACM Wigston was appointed CAS on 26 July 2019.

Opening Remarks

CAS opened the 2021 Leadership Conference by welcoming delegates and remarking that this online-hybrid format allowed for a richer, wider range of contributors and a much larger audience than was ever possible in a physical meeting. He recognised the Tedder Academy being at the leading edge of virtual conference delivery.

CAS began by sharing his enthusiasm for the RAF's exciting new technology and equipment programmes, emphasising

that they presented great opportunities for us all. He urged us to adopt a broad perspective – acknowledging that technology alone was not enough – it is the RAF's culture that allows us to embed technology and really make the difference. Whilst cutting-edge aircraft and equipment were fundamental to the RAF's reputation and success, it was the RAF whole force – individuals, team members and leaders – that ultimately gives it the competitive edge.

CAS noted how the utility of air and space power is explicitly demonstrated through a multitude of current RAF activity ranging from 24/7 protection of our skies, bolstering our NATO allies and monitoring threats to our critical interests in space. This effect has been demonstrated on operations in Mali, taking the fight to Da'esh in Syria and Iraq, and in Op PITTING, the evacuation mission that extracted over 15,000 people from Kabul. All of this would not be achievable without the exceptional leadership demonstrated by RAF personnel.

Whilst there is no perfect 'one size fits all' model for RAF leadership, CAS believed some things are universal to being a good leader: It is important to adapt your leadership approach to each a situation; to show humility; to learn from experience and from others, and to continuously grow and evolve as individuals. Discussing his own leadership role, CAS described balancing three key areas: strategic leadership;



Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Wigston KCB CBE ADC

Chief of the Air Staff

'running' the RAF and custodian of a national institution. Each sphere made different demands at different times and in different circumstances, which required finding the right balance of leadership focus and decision making, and at the right time.

In summing up his introduction to the day, CAS reflected on how the last two years had been extraordinarily testing for leaders at all levels, and of his pride in seeing RAF leaders adapt and innovate to deliver. He was particularly proud of the success of the RAF's work to support the national effort against Covid-19, alongside continued support of our international allies and while continuing our efforts to build our Next Generation RAF in the face of an extraordinary rate of technological change. This success he attributed to the quality and talent of people across the RAF whole force, and exemplary leadership at every level.

Strategy is a pattern in a stream of decisions.

Henry Mintzberg

Conference Programme

Time	Event
08:00 - 08:30	Pre Conference Items and Information of Interest
08:30 - 08:35	Welcome Address Gp Capt Emma Keith BA MSc FCMI RAF - <i>Commandant Tedder Academy of Leadership</i>
08:35 - 08:40	Opening Address ACM Sir Michael Wigston KCB CBE ADC - <i>Chief of the Air Staff</i>
Session One: Decision Making: In Ambiguity	
08:40 - 08:45	Introduction Cpl Arnold Chiy - <i>Park Fellow and Air Support Wing, RAF Waddington</i>
08:45 - 08:55	Leadership Versus Command AM Gerry Mayhew CBE MA RAF - <i>Deputy Commander Operations</i>
08:55 - 09:10	Sense and Meaning Making Lynne Cazaly - <i>International Keynote Speaker and Author</i>
09:10 - 09:25	Evidence and Interpretation Professor Stefan Dercon - <i>Policy Advisor to the Foreign Secretary</i>
09:25 - 09:45	Case Study: COVID Professor Dame Angela McLean DBE FRS - <i>Chief Scientific Advisor</i>
09:45 - 10:00	Live Q&A - Lynne Cazaly & Professor Stefan Dercon
10:00 - 10:10	Coffee Break
Session 2: Decision Making: Bias, Culture and Perspectives	
10:10 - 10:15	Introduction Wg Cdr Daniela Nowalski BSc MSc RAF - <i>Deputy Commandant, Tedder Academy of Leadership</i>
10:15 - 10:30	Thought Cages Richard Buttrey - <i>Director of Academic Engagement, Arm</i>
10:30 - 10:40	Broadening Mindsets Captain Mustafa Al-Raba'ni BA - <i>Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) Exchange Instructor, RAF OTA</i>
10:40 - 10:50	Broadening Mindsets Sqn Ldr Lorna Bearsby RAF - <i>Personal Staff Officer to Director MODSAP</i>
10:50 - 11:15	Crossing the Line Navdeep Arora - <i>PhD candidate</i> Prof Will Harvey BA - <i>MPhil, PhD, SFHEA, FCIPD, FRSA, Professor of Management and Associate Dean of University of Exeter Business School</i>
11:15 - 11:25	Emotions Under Pressure Sgt Darren Drysdale - <i>Intelligence Reserves Wing, RAF Waddington</i>
11:25 - 11:45	Live Q&A - Navdeep Arora, Prof Will Harvey & Sgt Darren Drysdale
11:45 - 11:50	Leg Stretch
Session 3: Decision Making: Interpreting Risk	
11:50 - 11:52	Introduction Sqn Ldr Colin Macpherson MSc RAF, SO2 Leadership - <i>Tedder Academy of Leadership</i>

11:52 - 12:15	Operational Environments Wg Cdr Kat Ferris OBE BEng MA RAF - <i>Officer Commanding XIII Squadron</i> Flt Lt Robin Gould LLB RAF - <i>X1(F) Sqn Qualified Weapons Instructor</i> Astrid - <i>Policy Advisor (POLAD)</i> Cpl Myles Maley - <i>Targeteer</i>
12:15 - 12:35	Case Study: RAF Mountain Rescue Services Wg Cdr Wayne Tracey - <i>OC 85 (EL) Wg</i> Flt Lt Amy Hill BSc Hons - <i>RAF Mountain Rescue Service</i> Sgt Ali Beer - <i>RAF Mountain Rescue Service</i>
12:35 - 12:55	Live Q&A - Wg Cdr Kat Ferris, Cpl Myles Maley, Flt Lt Amy Hill, Sgt Ali Beer
12:55 - 13:30	Lunch
Session 4: Decision Making: The Power of Mindset	
13:30 - 13:35	Introduction WO Mark Willis MSc, FirstLM, WO Leadership - <i>Tedder Academy of Leadership</i>
13:35 - 13:40	Resilience: A Personal Journey LCpl Shanwayne Stephens - <i>Jamaican Bobsleigh Team Pilot</i>
13:40 - 13:50	Resilience: A Personal Journey Cpl Josh McNally - <i>Professional Rugby Player England & Bath RFC</i>
13:50 - 14:10	Fit to Decide Dr Kate Goodger PhD C. Psychol - <i>Olympic Performance Psychologist</i>
14:10 - 14:15	Touching the Void Joe Simpson - <i>Award Winning Author and Mountaineer</i>
14:15 - 14:25	Coffee Break
14:25 - 15:25	Touching the Void Gp Capt Emma Keith BA MSc FCMI RAF - <i>Commandant, Tedder Academy of Leadership</i> Joe Simpson - <i>Award Winning Author and Mountaineer</i>
15:25 - 15:30	Leg Stretch
Session 5: Decision Making: The Global Strategic Landscape	
15:30 - 15:35	Introduction Gp Capt Emma Keith BA MSc FCMI RAF - <i>Commandant Tedder Academy of Leadership</i> Blair Sheppar - <i>Global Leader for Strategy at PwC</i> Anna Keeling - <i>Managing Director of Boeing Defence UK</i> Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston KCB CBE ADC - <i>Chief of the Air Staff</i>
15:35 - 15:50	Decision Making with Machines and Humans Dr. Niels Van Quaquebeke
15:50 - 16:10	10 Years to Midnight Blair Sheppard - <i>Global Leader for Strategy at PwC</i>
16:10 - 16:50	Discussion: Interactive Gp Capt Emma Keith BA MSc FCMI RAF - <i>Commandant Tedder Academy of Leadership</i> Blair Sheppar - <i>Global Leader for Strategy at PwC</i> Anna Keeling - <i>Managing Director of Boeing Defence UK</i> Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston KCB CBE ADC - <i>Chief of the Air Staff</i> Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach GBE KCB DL - <i>Chairman Military Committee, NATO</i>
16:50 - 17:00	Summary and Conclusion Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston KCB CBE ADC - <i>Chief of the Air Staff</i>
17:00 - 17:05	Close

Session 1:

Decision Making in Ambiguity: Introduction

Arnold (Arnie) Chiy was born in Buea (Cameroon, West of Africa) in 1982 and has recently completed an MSc in Management and Leadership with an aspiration to become an executive/leadership coach. He joined the RAF in 2013 in the Personnel (Support) trade and promoted to Corporal in 2017. Cpl Chiy is currently employed in a Continuous Improvement Role.

➤ In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing. The worst thing you can do is do nothing.

Theodore Roosevelt

Introduction to Session One: Decision Making in Ambiguity

Cpl Chiy opened Session One by posing some questions to challenge us:

- ▲ How do we keep pace with fast moving, novel, and dynamic data?
- ▲ How do we map a path forward when the route is not obvious?

Contending that ambiguous decision making derived from unknown choices, Chiy emphasised the need for clever, creative, collaborative and productive tools and techniques to set the stage for effective leadership and command. Chiy believes it is important to understand the environment and the context, and for leaders to acknowledge moral equality in their people, to build a climate of mutual respect and to share information. All this whilst exercising best judgement in the absence of regulation or in highly ambiguous situations.

Cpl Chiy concluded his introduction by acknowledging the last year had been an epic test of character. He paid credit to those who made sense of



Corporal Arnie Chiy

Park Fellow

information and handled the realities of the 'new norm' to deliver essential services. He emphasised the continued need for trust, authenticity, a clear vision and a plan to provide a blueprint for renewed application and effective decision making.



Leadership versus Command

AM Mayhew commissioned into the RAF in 1988 and has held a number of fast-jet flying and staff appointments. Staff tours include working within the RAF's Personnel Management Agency and the Defence Concepts and Doctrine Centre. He has been the Senior Appointments Team Leader and the Assistant Director (Joint Strike) in the Directorate of Joint Capability. He was the Deputy PSO to CDS, General Sir David Richards, and worked in the Cabinet Office as the Deputy Director responsible for the Defence and Homeland Security aspects of the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review.

AM Mayhew joined the Air Force Board as ACAS, responsible for the strategic

coherence and coordination of the RAF on behalf of CAS. Promoted to AM, he took up his current post as DComOps in April 2019.

Leadership versus Command

AM Mayhew reflected on the impact that varying approaches to command and leadership had on decision makers; on how his personal style had evolved during his time as a commander and leader; and the importance of creating the space to think. By contending that the terms command, leadership, and management (CLM) were often conflated with little thought given to their true definitions he suggested that misinterpretation affected individual and team decision making.



Air Marshal Gerry Mayhew

Deputy Commander Operations (DComOps)

*Command is a position of authority and responsibility to which (military) men and women are legally appointed. (Leadership in Defence, 2004) - **commanders communicate a vision or goal for others to implement.***

*Leadership is the projection of character, principles and behaviours that inspire people to succeed. (AP7001, 2020) – **leaders lead people.***

*Management is the allocation and control of resources (human, material and financial) to achieve objectives, often within the constraint of time. (Leadership in Defence, 2004) – **managers manage things.***

Discussing the importance of command and leadership in greater detail, he emphasised that being effective in one role does not automatically translate to effectiveness in the other.

- ▲ Commanders required the courage, skills and confidence in their own abilities to know and communicate their own direction of travel. They need to own the relevant risks and be the decision maker and not simply be the leader of a committee or sit back and become a member of the staff.
- ▲ Leaders needed to be self-aware, open to personal development and able to draw on their experience, technical knowledge and understanding of context, time and situation to allow their team to make well-informed decisions.

Getting leadership and decision-making right at the lower levels allows commanders to realise

greater freedoms, knowing their team are working with them and within the boundaries of command intent. However, this freedom is predicated on commanders really thinking through their intent, but not overcontrolling, yet avoiding being so vague that their words were worthless. Furthermore, it relied on subordinates actively seeking further clarity where necessary and for those questions to be answered with honesty.

It is important that the RAF whole force understand senior commanders' intent by being familiar with guiding documents and orders, but they too must manage risks, navigate uncertainty and use their judgment to make decisions and exploit opportunities. It is important for everyone to engage in conceptual debate and to invest in their own development to best prepare for future challenges.

Key Take-Aways

- ▲ There is a requirement to fully understand the trilogy of CLM and the effect that ambiguous understanding or application can have on subordinates.
- ▲ A commander must set unambiguous intent and have the courage to act upon their decisions.
- ▲ Leaders must understand that leadership is about relationships, integrity and example, motivation, vision and a sound understanding of context and of one's people.



Leadership versus Command

The separation of command, leadership and management is unhelpful as it is often assumed that different organisations operate solely within one arena. I agree that command is usually associated with formal power as opposed to earned or given power, but the military still romanticises leadership amongst its hierarchy focused on central characters with full decision-making power. I further believe as we become increasingly reliant on specialist knowledge the true aspect of command will diversify into a softer version of itself focussed more on team ethics as opposed to one central entity of power.

CT Thomo Thompson - Park Fellow

Sense and Meaning Making

Lynne Cazaly is an international keynote speaker, multi-award winning author and a master facilitator. She is an experienced radio broadcaster, presenter and producer.

Sense and Meaning Making

How do we decide what to do when we don't know what to do?

In times of great uncertainty and change we can find ourselves at a crossroads – and often whilst also leading a team who might also be thinking, feeling or wondering what we need to do too. How do we make sense of things? How do we make meaning? How do we make decisions? Lynne believes **Sensemaking** is the answer! It is the ultimate decision-making tool in times of uncertainty.

Sensemaking is something we develop as we grow and accumulate experience; we learn to sharpen our sense-making skills based on what we have experienced before, but **deliberate sense-making** gives process to our decision-making, sharpening our minds and allowing us to act even quicker for our own benefit, and for that of the team. Sensemaking helps us understand the deeper meaning of what is going on. It helps us understand and connect the dots within a theme or trend and allows us to challenge each other to ensure decisions make sense.

Sensemaking gives us the opportunity to **think**, to **map** and then **act**.

Map-making, is the key technique

in Sensemaking. We are growing our cartography skills every day, checking our phones to navigate the shortest route to the park or for an update on the progress of our Uber driver, but how often do we use maps to navigate in our own practices or in our business? Lynne says we should!

Daily we take in a lot of information and fill our brains, and just like a sponge it gets full and can hold no more. This is cognitive overload. A way to prevent this is, as you get information, don't soak it up but adopt a deliberate sense making technique known as Externalisation – get the information out of your head and onto a piece of paper, write the thoughts and information down – externalise them. This helps prevent overload (the information is somewhere other than in the almost-saturated sponge!), this accelerates information processing and ultimately accelerates decision making.

Lynne tells a story of a troop of Swiss Army soldiers who were out on an exercise in the Swiss Alps. When the weather unexpectedly changed the disorientated troop were stuck on the mountain overnight in a whiteout. The next day one of the soldiers found a map in their pocket; they got the map out, they all gathered around, worked out where they were, where they needed to go and as a result were able to walk to safety and return to base. Only it turned out the map was for the French Pyrenees, not the Swiss Alps - they were using the wrong map.

What happened and why did the



Lynne Cazaly

Multi-Award Winning Author

wrong map work?

Firstly, the team gathered round and shared ideas, secondly, they had something to focus on, and work on, and collaborate around - that map! They were able to reduce uncertainty, reduce that pressure and tension, take some action and make decisions: **Think, map, act**. It didn't matter that it was the wrong map, what mattered was they made sense of the information they had.

Lynne believes that In Sensemaking any map will do – we don't have to make perfect maps, or even accurate maps, but it is the act of making a map that helps us with sensemaking. Too often we try to digest, sort, synthesise, make sense in our head, when we should be externalising information, emptying our sponge and getting information into a visual management kind of map that we can work with.

Many industries use visual management tools to track what is going on or how they are

progressing towards targets. This enables them to identify sticking points and it allows collaboration by providing a board that you can stand around. The presence of a visual management board enables people to work together, collaborate, communicate and make decisions – **think, map and act**.

Lynne urges Conference delegates as they go through today, as on any day, to make conscious decisions regarding what information you are going to store in your head, and what information you are going to externalise and write down and put somewhere else.

She urges us to also remember that we don't want to become a court reporter trying to capture everything that is spoken. If we do transcription, we're not making sense or meaning of the information. The information will have to be reprocessed again thus slowing the decision making. If you can externalise information, synthesising it as you go, it is much more useful, it is applicable, it is able to be seen and collaborated on. Remember it does not matter what you are writing down it is the fact that you are writing something down that helps us focus and helps us get what we know to be hindsight.

Lynne maintains some of the best decisions in our life come when we get some perspective and we can look back with an understanding of what was going on. When we are deep in information and in a situation, it can be difficult to make decisions. But sensemaking and meaning making helps us get a bit of distance. When we get to the other side of situations, we are able to look back and connect the dots. We're able to look back and understand the deeper meaning of what has been expressed or

what has been communicated and collaborated.

Don't worry so much about the accuracy of the map. It's that you used a map whether you are lost in the Swiss Alps or the French Pyrenees or perhaps you're working on a new project or task service or system. Look at how you can visualise the information. It helps reduce cognitive load. It helps increase confidence and thankfully helps start to reduce some of that uncertainty. Even if the map changes again tomorrow the thing is you and the team have made sense of today, or where they are and where they are going and what they might find on the way.

Keep updating maps, keep people briefed and up to date with changes to information and maps. Create a canvas of information – it helps us think, to then map information and then based on that information make decisions a lot quicker. Take notes today, externalise information, relieve the cognitive load and you will hopefully be able to connect those dots so you will make great sense and meaning of today and you will take a lot more content than if you are just sitting back and soaking it up.

Key Take-Aways

- ▲ Think – Map – Act.
- ▲ Externalise your thoughts – prevent cognitive overload.
- ▲ Keep updating your visual maps and updating your team.
- ▲ Some of the best decisions come when we get some perspective and we can look back and go 'oh, that's what was going on!'

Think Map Act

► Sense and Meaning making

I felt the sense making presentation linked back to the discussion led by AM Mayhew about ensuring understanding and commonality between leaders and their followers towards a common goal. This has been something I have fallen foul of when making assumptions on people's knowledge or understanding and either providing too much information or not enough, and then becoming frustrated when tasks have not been completed as I expected them to be. I think that as we become an increasingly information dependant society, we could become guilty of expecting too much knowledge and understanding from our leaders, especially through the employment of mission command. By assuming leaders and/or subordinates can operate comfortably understanding the intent of one rank up or down we can put external pressures on individuals they might not be ready for due to our own perceptions and abilities.

CT Thomo Thompson - Park Fellow



Evidence & Interpretation

Stefan Dercon is Professor of Economic Policy at the Blavatnik School of Government and a Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford. He is also Director of the Centre for the Study of African Economies, and the Development Policy Advisor to the Foreign Secretary at the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

Evidence & Interpretation

Professor Dercon starts with a story that involves Thomas Edison, the inventor of the light bulb, and his relationship with salt and pepper.

When Edison needed a new member in his team he didn't go by the CV alone, he would take prospective candidates out to dinner. If they salted and peppered their food before tasting it, he terminated the interview. Edison believed that people should use evidence in every decision they made, and not be driven solely by instinct or habit.

Professor Dercon challenges us to consider how we use evidence in our own decision making and to consider how hard it can be to use this evidence within the fast military operating context. We must use evidence and facts, just like

Edison's interviewees, we should not make decisions based on our gut feelings, our intuition.

Using the example of the global pandemic, Professor Dercon explains that whilst we must use facts and evidence in our decision-making, we must also be aware of the way we frame the question. Presenting the same facts and evidence and offering data in different ways gives us a likelihood of very different answers. When options referred to 'saving lives' many of the decision-makers were averse to risk; however, the group were prepared to accept risk when the options referenced 'people dying'. The data is the same, but often the answer is very different. We must therefore make sure we keep reframing the problem in different ways to make sure we don't get pulled in one direction simply because of the way the story is presented.

Professor Dercon believes higher errors in decision-making can also be correlated to using intuition and to the views people held about the issue prior. Decision-makers were swayed by confirmation bias; they did not use the evidence and facts before them. They read in the facts what they want to see and hear,



Professor Stefan Dercon

Professor of Economic Policy

what they had experienced before, and extracted the information that suits them.

In summarising, Professor Dercon urged us to firstly make sure we frame the question in many different ways and to be aware of to whom we tell the story - it changes the quality of decision making. We must then make sure we don't use our bias. However, and most importantly as leaders, we must be willing to be challenged and take advice from a diverse group of people who naturally look at problems in slightly different ways to us.

Sun Zu – Know your enemy but know yourself; in 100 battles you will never be defeated.

► Evidence and Interpretation

Confirmation bias and its effects are felt massively across the RAF, especially when it comes to opinions on personnel. As the RAF is becoming smaller, we all know somebody who knows somebody, and I am sure I am not the only person who has seen bias and perpetuated it themselves; when a new person is posted into the section you immediately check them out through friends, searching for opinions and history. All this knowledge leads to the creation of assumptions and can hinder a person's start upon arrival into a new unit, I have been trying to change my approach to this and ignore the opinions of others but as humans it is in our nature to listen to other people's opinions and use them to form the basis of our own.

CT Thomo Thompson - Park Fellow



Key Take-Aways

- ▲ Your own way of processing information can be your worst enemy.
- ▲ The way your brain tricks you into making decisions based on your intuition is the greatest weakness in decision-making.
- ▲ Good decision making needs to think not only of the precision of the facts but also in their presentation.

Case Study: COVID

Professor Dame Angela McLean was appointed the Chief Scientific Adviser to the Ministry of Defence in September 2019. Dame Angela is a Professor of Mathematical Biology in the Department of Zoology at Oxford University, a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, and Director of The Institute for Emerging Infections of Humans. Dame Angela's research interests lie in the use of mathematical models to aid our understanding of the evolution and spread of infectious agents.

Case Study: COVID

Using Covid as a case study, Dame Angela discusses three topics which help us frame our decision making:

- ▲ The importance of getting the question right.
- ▲ How to shape the information after you have got the right question.
- ▲ How to get a useful decision from a team who don't always agree on what the right course of action may be, or what the right piece of advice is going to be. This may also be at a time when the team are operating under considerable pressure

Getting the Question Right

Drawing on her own unique experience of being relatively new to Defence, but also holding a very senior position, Dame Angela speaks honestly about being in a privileged position with the right to

ask questions. She tells us how she has found personnel to be hugely responsive when she admits that she has heard words, but she didn't really understand what was meant.

As decision-makers she believes that we should all have this right - if you ask a question, you should listen to the answer, and then you should ask again, because if there are bits that you don't understand, you must be very open and honest and elicit an answer that you can understand. Getting an answer, you understand is not a privilege of those in senior appointments; clarity is something that anybody should be free to insist on, regardless of rank.

Dame Angela also believes that you cannot make any decision unless you know the scale of the question. In her discourse she considers the tension between demanding short-term and short-time scale decisions and equally demanding long-term decisions that we must make, and she asks us to consider how we balance where and how we put our decision-making effort. She also considers scales of space, cost and of risk.

How to Shape the Information

In considering how we shape information Dame Angela draws on her experience as a natural scientist and mathematical modeler of infectious disease and illustrates how she has helped to shape HMG's decision making throughout the pandemic. By understanding the science and knowing the underlying process that caused



Dame Angela McLean

Chief Scientific Adviser to the Ministry of Defence

the pandemic her advisory team were able to use mathematical models – but these would have been useless without a clear plan of what decisions were going to be required and when. This plan shaped and bounded the decision-making process and brought to life the scale of the task in hand.

Working with Teams that don't always Agree

Dame Angela further considers decision making by consensus and shares with us how her team helped the Government bring together different research groups from across the United Kingdom, combining their pandemic data into a single consensus value. Here she considers diversity of opinion to be important (it should always form part of the decision-making process).

In summing up she poses the question: How do you get great value from teams who are working

under a lot of pressure and may not always agree? Dame Angela suggests that there is great value in kindness. People working hard against short timescales and under extreme pressure respond well to being shown kindness by the people who've been asking them to do the work. Try being kind when teams don't always agree but decisions still need to be made.

Key Take-Aways

- ▲ Understand what is being asked and seek clarity if required.
- ▲ Listen to the answer and if necessary, ask again.
- ▲ Formulate a clear plan that shapes the scale of the information.
- ▲ Build team consensus by embracing kindness in leadership.

**Analysis - Dame Angela Mclean Lecture**

I believe the RAF employs the attitude of open questioning quite well, especially within the technical trades. I like to foster a spirit amongst my teams of open dissent and questioning at any time. I think this should be encouraged at all levels and not only should people be encouraged to question decisions or ideas, but leaders should also be willing and able to explain their rationale; both as a learning tool for subordinate development but also as a way of re-evaluating their own decision-making processes. From personal experience the reason it fails sometimes is newer generations expect answers immediately whereas in military operating environments it is not always appropriate to question decisions immediately, but post action reflection and discussion should always be encouraged, and this is when questions can be answered.

CT Thomo Thompson - Park Fellow

Session 1: Reflection

Decision Making: In Ambiguity

This section of the conference delved into the difficulties faced by the RAF in making effective decisions in a world that now changes at a sometimes-alarming rate, often with an overabundance of information clouding our judgment.

A common theme was CLM. Clear expectations from the Command structure ensures that all members of the team are aware of what is required of them when contact with their leadership on the ground may be difficult to maintain, the 'Command Philosophy'. Trust, authenticity, clear vision and planning are the most effective tools to ensure appropriate decision making in ambiguous situations. In a fast-paced environment, it is also important to reflect and take time to make important decisions and judgements. Framing of information, biases, agendas as well as moral and ethical implications, are just some of the challenges to be considered when making decisions - each of these can add layers of ambiguity, only if we are aware of these, can we be suitably placed to make the best decisions.

HPTP Syndicate One

Cpl Josh Brown, Cpl Darin Chapman, Cpl Callum Jones, SAC Georgie Chester, SAC Craig Lutton, SAC(T) Maynard, SAC Larry Nunn



Session 2:

Decision Making - Bias, Culture & Perspectives: Introduction

Wg Cdr Nowalski is the Deputy Commandant of the TAL. A Logistics Officer by background, with a career in air movements and operational planning, she joined the Academy earlier this year.

Introduction to Session Two - Decision Making: Bias, Culture & Perspectives

Wg Cdr Nowalski introduces theory that considers the impact our backgrounds have on our decision making, suggesting that we are all products of our experiences and it can be hard to break out of the cages that trap us.

She considers the 2 forms of systems thinking – one that leads to gut-reactions and impulse decisions based on memories and experience but that can create a bias if unchecked, and a second system that involves effortful

mental activity governed by agency, choice and concentration. This second system is hampered by our inherent laziness to seek out all information. It could also still be influenced by a 'gut-feeling', especially when tired, stressed or multitasking. She stressed the importance of awareness and understanding in developing strategies to overcome such tendencies.

Turning to consider how our perspectives can be broadened by our lived experiences Wg Cdr Nowalski highlights how perspectives can be broadened by lived experiences and how culture plays a huge part in how situations are perceived and decisions made. She also considers what makes a good person make a bad decision, the impact of emotions on decision making, and the tension between training and pressures of the moment.



Wg Cdr Danni Nowalski

Deputy Commandant Tedder Academy of Leadership



Be decisive. A wrong decision is generally less disastrous than indecision.

Bernhard Langer



Thought Cages

Richard Buttery is the Director of Academic Engagement at Arm Research. Richard has contributed to UK strategic policy making in relation to Japan, India, Pakistan, Libya, Iran as well as cross-cutting themes like counter-terrorism, counter-proliferation, complex trade negotiations. He has worked as a staff officer to the former Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff, Lt Gen Sir Edmund Burton, reviewing a major Private Finance Initiative (PFI) project.

Thought Cages

Human beings are subject to a whole range of different biases, many of which we are not aware of. These unconscious bias in decision making have become subject to toxic political debate and can be viewed as part of a culture war, taking on a different meaning for both sides.

Richard begins his presentation by suggesting we adopt the term 'thought cages' instead. Thought cages can still constrain our decision making and trap us in our own perceptions and beliefs, but an awareness of this alternate perspective offers a different insight into ways in which our decision making can be influenced.

Standing in Cambridge's Botanical Gardens Richard draws our attention to an apple tree; it was grown from a graft of the original tree that inspired Sir Issaac Newton's Theory of Gravity. Newton's theory held true for many years; it was used to send

the Viking probes into space - then Einstein showed that Newton's theories broke down when objects travelled closer to the speed of light. Inherent within Newton's theories were assumptions that he couldn't see or didn't conceive at the time he made them. Einstein's work made Newton's theories no less noteworthy and no less praiseworthy but highlighted that even the most brilliant people can inadvertently make hidden assumptions and we are all subject to a whole range of cognitive biases. If you make decisions or come up with ideas consistently that work and you have received praise and admiration for them, you are less motivated to examine your first principles and think, 'am I missing something here?' And it turned out Newton was, and it took another mind later to undo that. Reframing the question to avoid your inherent biases from the decisions you make the first time you looked at the problem is the means to breaking out of your thought cage.

Richard asks us to imagine you are observing the world and taking in data in the same way that a video camera might. You begin to select data, ignoring some things, choosing to focus on others and add interpretation, assumptions and meaning all dependent on your cultural and personal background. He believes we then draw conclusions, and what we choose to observe or not observe is very much driven by what we already believe about the world. Furthermore, the actions that we take will be based often on this



Richard Buttery

*Director of Academic Engagement
Arm Research*

observable data. How do we break out of these cages and what are we going to do about it? Richard suggests that the obvious answer is to question those assumptions and seek contrary data and counter examples. We must put ourselves in alternative situations and thus we will experience observable data in different ways and in different domains.

Richard goes on to discuss how diversity of thought is helpful in challenging assumptions, people from different backgrounds come at things from different angles. But we should not be disheartened working within a team that is more homogenous. It is possible to depersonalise an issue by ascribing challenge through red team exercises or just giving people

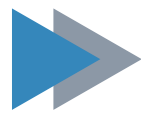
certain sort of mental hats to play with.

Within decision making teams it is also useful to talk about unintended consequences. Small groups tend to over focus on the solution rather than on what else might happen as an unintended consequence. Simply raising this and putting it explicitly on the agenda can flush out hidden assumptions that otherwise wouldn't be exposed.

Finally in his narrative Richard suggests it is important to think about measurable signals related to unintended consequences. We always design performance indicators for the outcomes that are desirable, but how could we measure if unhelpful things are happening? He challenges us to consider how we to notice if we're going off track or if we have fallen into a cage.

Key Take-Aways

- ▲ To 'break out' of thought cages: consider diversity of thought to question assumptions.
- ▲ Seek contrary data and counterexamples.
- ▲ Discuss unintended consequences to flush out hidden assumptions that otherwise wouldn't get exposed.
- ▲ Establish performance indicators for desirable and undesirable outcomes - keep checking you haven't fallen into a cage.



Analysis - Current analysis of past actions and decisions

This is a major issue and becoming even more complex for leaders as we increase the use of social media and information storage within our working lives. It appears to be the norm to punish individuals and find scapegoats as opposed to accepting organisational error. Leaders must make decisions based on the information available to them in that moment, if they are continuously second guessing themselves and searching for more information, they could reach the point where they become afraid to, or unable to make a decision due to perceived future ramifications. It is easy to apply hindsight and judge decisions using in calmer situations or with different mindsets, but I think organisations need to trust their leaders made the decision they thought was best when they made it. The use of formal reflection logs and journals as a record of their decision-making process can protect leaders from future judgement. I encourage all my technicians to document evidence and information on maintenance paperwork, both to cover themselves in future audits and as a way of documenting their thought process to explain their decisions to others not involved in the immediate process.

CT Thomo Thompson - Park Fellow

Broadening Mindsets

Sqn Ldr Bearsby joined the RAF in 1991 as an RAF Policewoman and served for 13 years before commissioning into the Logistics Branch. Sqn Ldr Bearsby is currently employed as the Personal Staff Officer (PSO) to the 2* Director of the MOD Saudi Armed Forces Project (MODSAP) where she has a unique insight into ministerial meetings and engagement with Saudi military commanders.

Broadening Mindsets

As the first female within the MODSAP project to be based in Saudia Arabia, Sqn Ldr Bearsby considers her role as PSO to the 2* director and discusses some of the situations she has been in and the unique decisions she has had to make.

To reflect on her first year in the Kingdom she takes us to 'the big pyramid', a sand dune that is popular with the locals at weekends. It is a peaceful place in the middle of the desert where she can think about what impact culture has on her decision-making process. Firstly, she examines the anxiousness she felt in accepting the appointment 12 months ago - was this the right decision for her family? Her husband would be the dependent. How would that be perceived in an overwhelmingly masculine society? She recalls her arrival at the airport and those first few days when she worried constantly about how to act and if her actions may offend someone.

Lorna explains that life has become a little easier. However, not a day

goes by that she does not make decisions in a different way or for a different reason to how she would make them back in the UK. Everything from drinking coffee, to when it is acceptable to use her right or left hand so as not to offend, are all conscious decisions,

Lorna describes her work as 'fascinating' and relays her first encounter with the Host Nation General who gave approval for her to come to country. When she first met him, she was self-conscious and shy. aware that she was a Western female in uniform and stood out. However, now 11 months on, she is accepted with a seat at the table as an integral part of meetings with Commander RSAF, Commander Navy and ministers of the MoD.

Lorna also recounts that when she first visited the Saudi Naval Training School, she touched on the question of serving females. She was told 10, 'but they were only secretaries'. Lorna reflects that culturally there is a parallel to the RAF of 100 years ago - we must give the Saudia Arabian forces their 100 years. Lorna also suggests that one of the decisions we must make is to have a conscious understanding to respect other cultures and learning to embrace each other's differences.

In concluding her reflection, she considers the cultural lens she is now in a privileged position to be able to look through. The experience has made her a more inclusive person and more willing to embrace different attitudes when it comes to considering



Sqn Ldr Lorna Bearsby

MOD Saudi Armed Forces Project

options and making decisions. In closing Lorna reflects that we are all just people at the end of the day with different outlooks and different paths. But this doesn't mean we can't see the same thing and share the same path.

Key Take-Aways

- ▲ Cultural immersion provides greater understanding and new perspectives.
- ▲ Inclusivity helps embrace diversity which is crucial in considering options and making decisions.

Broadening Mindsets

Capt Al-Raba'ni is the current Omani IDS Exchange Leadership Instructor at the Royal Air Force Officer Training Academy (RAFOTA). He joined RAFOTA in August 2020 on an exchange tour and has a passion for delivering leadership theory lessons and getting involved in the different practical leadership exercises.

Broadening Mindsets

In reflecting on his experiences of British culture and how these have affected his decision-making processes, Captain Mustafa Rabani from the Royal Omani Air Force tells us that this is not his first time in the UK. Having first visited the country in 2010, where he was hosted by a UK family as part of his English language course, Mustafa graduated as a junior officer from the RAF College Cranwell in 2011 and having experienced the RAF's training environment was inspired to come back as an exchange instructor.

These experiences helped immerse him in British culture and changed the way he perceived the UK. Mustafa starts his vignette by telling us how put out he was to experience the public showers when undertaking Initial Officer Training. Not being forewarned he found this difficult, however, the members of the Directing Staff were sympathetic to the cultural differences between the two countries and their approach gave him the courage to be more open about offering an insight into the Omani culture and his perspective on differences between the nations.

Another cultural idiosyncrasy he observed was the RAF's view on cadets drinking alcohol. Whilst in Oman it is forbidden to drink or smoke whilst undergoing training, the UK has a more relaxed approach and relies on the individual to moderate their own behaviours with cadets made aware of the consequences of bringing themselves and the RAF into disrepute. Mustafa also highlights the religious differences which influences decision making. One area of significant difference noted by Mustafa is the way in which cadets speak about themselves and less about their families, however he is particularly impressed by the RAF's social environment which encourages group communication and mutual support suggesting that it is less formal in his own country.

Another thing he has experienced is seeing people doing fitness and enjoying it! Back home he suggests that people would try to find excuses to not do the things they didn't like. Mustafa feels privileged that he has had the opportunity to experience a different culture and intends to inculcate many of the positives of his experience into his everyday life when he goes home.



Capt Mustafa Al-Raban'ni

Key Take-Aways

- ▲ Appreciating the benefits that could be realised with less central control and greater reliance on self-discipline in individual decision making.
- ▲ The benefits of seeing the world from a new perspective.



Analysis - Broadening Mindsets

I have recently moved into a role that was an 'interview post', and now managing a team where all members are in 'interview posts' I have realised that people seem keen to surround themselves with individuals they believe hold the same mindsets and ethics as they do. I believe this is to minimise the possibility of challenge either from peers or subordinates. I have the opinion that you need different mindsets and outlooks within a team to give a broadened and wider outlook and approach. I think this is especially necessary within engineering environments where outside of the box thinking can be the key to a complex fault being rectified. On a personal level it can also increase development and growth through discussion and conflict, though leaders need to manage this accordingly to ensure the conflict does not poison or damage the team.

CT Thomo Thompson - Park Fellow

Crossing the Line



Will Harvey

Professor of Management and Associate Dean at the University of Exeter Business School

Will Harvey is Professor of Management and Associate Dean at the University of Exeter Business School. Will advises leaders on reputation, talent management and leadership. He received a first-class degree from the University of Durham, an MPhil with distinction and PhD from the University of Cambridge.



Navdeep Arora

PhD candidate

Navdeep Arora is a PhD candidate at the University of Exeter Business School and holds an MBA from Harvard University. Navdeep served as a Senior Partner of McKinsey & Company for 16 years, as a Partner and Global Head of Insurance Strategy Practice at KPMG for 3 years, a Product Manager for PepsiCo for 6 years, and as an advisor to VC firms and digital start-ups. Navdeep has also served time in a US Federal Prison for professional misconduct.

Crossing the Line

In a frank and honest discussion, Professor Harvey and Mr Arora discuss the legal consequences of a catastrophically poor decision by Mr Arora during his tenure as a senior partner with McKinsey. Mr Arora laid out the pressures that led to him to 'take his eye off the ball' and circumvent company procedures by awarding a contract to a team member's relative. This ended up with him approving payment for work that had been fraudulently billed but not completed and, ultimately led to a

custodial sentence for professional misconduct. Mr Arora went on to elaborate on how many well-educated and highly successful individuals had also been incarcerated for similar unethical decisions, which set the scene for subsequent discussions on the driving forces behind collective poor decision making.

Navdeep believes individuals rarely set out to commit professional misconduct or to make wrong decisions, rather they sleepwalk slowly across ethical lines. In his discussion he outlines six triggers:

- ▲ The burden of custodianship, where the perception of what was required was far greater what was expected;
- ▲ The fear of failure and the drive for self-preservation;
- ▲ Ego and hubris, driven by a sense of invincibility;
- ▲ Overcompensation for perceived deficiencies;
- ▲ Lack of capacity and knowledge to make changes driven by shifting regulatory boundaries;
- ▲ Very unique personal beliefs and values.

The discussion also considered how organisational pressures could weigh heavily on individuals. Combined with culture, governance, organisational structure and practices, this balancing act was illustrated with an example depicting a tightrope: innovation and success on one side, and failure and professional misconduct on the other.

The presentation concluded with discussion on the role of identity and intuition in decision making and of how cognitive dissonance brought on when professional and self-identities overtake moral identity, stops rationale thought and judgement in favour of intuition in decision making. The assertion being that this is the time when the likelihood of professional misconduct or likelihood of making the wrong decisions increases. The pair summed up with their thoughts on how to guard against the situation that Mr Arora found himself in.

Key Take-Aways

- ▲ Discuss your potential decision with a third party before taking it.
- ▲ Decisions taken under pressure may be the opposite of what should have been done.
- ▲ Be aware and beware of being drawn into a 'vortex' of bad decisions and behaviours that you cannot exit. Allow people graceful exits.
- ▲ Foster judgement over intuition; do not forgo values when under pressure – be a role model for your organisation's values.

Superior Leaders are willing to admit a mistake and cut their losses. Be willing to admit that you've changed your mind. Don't persist when the original decision turns out to be poor.

Theodore Roosevelt

Analysis - Crossing the Line

This story resonated with me in my new role as a projects team manager, I am not directly responsible for any individual output, but I am held accountable for the output of my team. I am still unsure as to the level of involvement I should be applying within my team. Previous incumbents have been very standoff, leaving the team to manage workload and progress themselves. I have inherited a very inexperienced team and have low experience levels myself, hence my uncertainty as to how I can support them as they require. I like to be involved to provide support across all levels and to ensure I have a wider understanding of current progress and how it could impact on other projects. This also allows me to hold full accountability for each process as I should be pushing or holding projects back as required to ensure the wider output is in line with expected dates. Not only does my over involvement provide me better overall control of my team it also provides me the exposure to increase my own experience levels, though the increased involved compared to previous leaders could be seen as mistrust, micromanaging or interference.

CT Thomo Thompson - Park Fellow

Emotions Under Pressure

Sgt Drysdale joined the RAF in the Summer of 1988, He enjoyed a variety of tours in the early years of his RAF career comprising of Engineering Wing RAF Benson, Operations Wing at RAF Gibraltar, Personnel Services Flight at RAF Waddington and the Officer & Aircrew Selection Centre RAF College Cranwell. He is now a National List Football Referee, one of only 45 in the country. He has officiated Premier League and International matches.

Emotions Under Pressure

Sgt Drysdale offers an illuminating insight into decision making under pressure from the perspective of a professional football referee. Drysdale compares being a referee to being in command; it is a lonely place to be when hard decisions have to be made. Mental toughness and resilience are required to make swift or unpopular decisions (in command those decisions are not always in front of thousands of fans!) but, in command, just as in football, you have to deal with the consequence of your decisions, recover and push through the rest of the game, or the tour.

Drysdale explains that, as a referee you can make around 245 decisions in a single game, often under conditions of immense physical and mental fatigue. Good training and thorough preparation are key. Again, the same preparatory process can apply off the pitch. He explains how individuals need to not only build the confidence required to make accurate

decisions but must prepare for their role in the broadest possible way. In football officials begin preparations for the upcoming match by adopting a strict four-tier process:

- ▲ The technical;
- ▲ The tactical;
- ▲ The physical;
- ▲ The mental.

Confidence and preparation in these areas, Drysdale believes, will ensure your decisions are underpinned by a sound knowledge base and mental rigor.

The interview also talks openly about an incident during a televised live football match where Drysdale briefly lost his composure with a player. He made the wrong decision and acted inappropriately. He is honest in his reflections and talks on the importance of refocusing as quickly as possible. To demonstrate his coping strategy, Darren describes how he breaks the match down into manageable 15-minute chunks and maintains constant communication with the other officials. This communication also allows the other officials to offer their perspective of the match and informs his decision-making processes.

Darren believes that there was no such thing as a negative experience of failure – every event teaches us more about our inner self, inner strengths and weaknesses, and such learning experiences allow us to change our leadership styles adjusting to the demands of the situations. He emphasised how the wrong style could have huge



Sergeant Darren Drysdale

Royal Air Force

ramifications in peacetime, day-to-day business, a war zone, or even refereeing a local derby.

Key Take-Aways

- ▲ As a leader, no matter how well you are prepared, you have an emotional trigger point that will test your mental toughness and resilience.
- ▲ Leaders need to guard against the dangers of being 'drawn into the moment', to recognise the signs and to maintain composure by stepping back.

Session 2: Reflection

▶ **Decision Making: Bias, Culture and Perspectives**

Guest speakers from a broad range of backgrounds gave insights into their experiences and expertise of decision making. When we get it right, when we get it wrong and how we use our experiences to improve.

Our biases are drawn from our experiences and beliefs. We are all susceptible to bias and left unchecked it can result in poor decision-making. We can break free from our 'thought cages' by questioning our assumptions, seeking contrary data, and depersonalising our biases through diversity of thought.

Our cultural notions and preconceptions are often a result of information being framed in a certain way and influences our decision-making. Understanding different cultures and being adaptable to change is an important part of an inclusive and diverse organisation.

The quality of our decision-making depends upon our personal and professional perspectives. In times of intense pressure, a fear of failure can overtake our moral and ethical principles, causing us to make poor decisions.

"We must prevent ourselves from being trapped in a thought cage of sub-optimal decision making."

HPTP Syndicate Two

Cpl Sean Peacock, Cpl Mark Ware, SAC(T) Jess Garner, SAC Adam Hollick, SAC Scott Teasdale, SAC(T) Joe Welling, SAC Alex Whitmore

Session 3:

Decision Making - Interpreting Risk: Introduction

Sqn Ldr Macpherson is the lead SME for generic officer leadership development within the Tedder Academy and is responsible for aligning officer leadership development throughout the RAF to ensure that it is consistent, coherent, and progressive across Phase One and Three formal training establishments. He joined the RAF Leadership Centre in 2014 and was instrumental in its transition to the Tedder Academy in 2016.

▶ Leadership requires the courage to make decisions that will benefit the next generation.

Alan Autry

Introduction to Session Three: Decision Making: Interpreting Risk

Sqn Ldr Macpherson introduces interpreting risk within decision making by suggesting that being in the military is a risky business and thus, by its very nature, difficult decisions must be made in sometimes dynamic and complex situations. He suggests that even away from kinetic, high-intensity operations, the RAF asks its people to operate in stressful high-risk environments.

In setting the scene, he offers that training has a key role to play in interpreting risk and poses a number of questions:

- ▲ How do we balance our experience and training against the emotion of our decision making?
- ▲ How do we manage the impact of the pressure and reconcile our own thoughts and emotions with the consequences of our actions?
- ▲ Did I make the right decision?
- ▲ What if I did it differently?



Squadron Leader Colin Macpherson

Tedder Academy of Leadership

In discussing risk interpretation in the operational environment Sqn Ldr Macpherson considers whether experience or rank takes precedence in the operational space and reflects on who ultimately makes the decision and owns the risk. He also considers whether the decision making, and the assessment of risk, can remain rational when the relationship between decision making and risk becomes personal.



Operational Environments



Wing Commander Kat Ferris

Officer Commanding No 13 Sqn

Wg Cdr Ferris has deployed on ops in ground and air roles and supported the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL), Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (ACAS) and the Minister of State for the Armed Forces (MinAF) before taking command of XIII Squadron in July 2020. In 2016, Wg Cdr Ferris deployed as the UK National Approval Authority (Red Card Holder) in the Combined Air operations Centre (CAOC) at Al Udeid in Qatar.



Flight Lieutenant Robin Gould

Pilot

Flt Lt Robin Gould is a Typhoon pilot and the Qualified Weapons Instructor on XI(F) Sqn at RAF Coningsby. Operationally he has been deployed on Op SHADER, to the Falkland Islands and has taken part in a multiple international exercises including Ex RED FLAG.



Corporal Myles Maley

Intelligence Analyst

Cpl Myles Maley joined the RAF Intelligence trade in 2011 and is currently employed in 1 ISR SQN APOLLO Flt where he leads a team of up to 8 analysts, providing intelligence support to 1 ISR Wg elements, involved in various operations across the world.

Operational Environments

Wg Cdr Ferris and her team offer a unique perspective on decision making on operations. The panellists all served on the same operation, but in very different roles and with distinct functions. In support of CASLC21 they consider how well they had been prepared for the actuality of combat operations, and how perspectives of the same operation could vary between the policymakers, the operational headquarters, and the cockpit.

For some, their background and prior experience allowed a sound understanding of rules and regulations, yet this could never fully prepare them for decision making during the realities of war. Others relayed their 'baptism of fire' and spoke honestly of the trepidation and emotions they experienced in the employment of lethal weapons. Clear throughout this account was the tremendous responsibility, often accompanied by legal accountability, the individuals assumed.

The panel discusses risk within the command, control and action chain, how it was perceived, managed, and communicated; and how the risk of making a 'wrong decision' with lethal consequences directly affected decisions – not least when an individual's name was personally attributed to each stage of the decision-making process. Successful target prosecution relies on clarity of intent, a full understanding of the operational situation, trust in subordinate elements to conduct their activities within clear parameters and teamwork. It counted on all members understanding their role and the

parameters that they operated to. Teamwork was fostered by open and honest discussion, the ability to express alternative viewpoints, and the knowledge that the command chain would support whatever decisions were taken. The panel also discussed the importance of a feedback loop to reinforce bonds for those situations where trust had broken-down and delayed decision making.

Discussing how the team's experiences had changed over time, they focused on a positive and increased understanding of the risks across the chain of command, yet a reluctance to take risk in some tactical situations for fear of doing the wrong thing. Frustration centred around the delays experienced when decision making was passed up the chain for a command and the perception that some took no risk at all. The team also considered the need for greater complex scenarios in training to better prepare for those ambiguous situations where the dynamics and constraints did not provide for reach back in decision making.

The experiences of Wg Cdr Ferris and her team offer a relevant, timely and stark reminder of the operational pressures our people face, the decisions they have to make and the need to empower and trust them. Underpinning it all is the need to support those who need to make difficult decisions at the right time. Sometimes the most dangerous thing to do is not to make a decision at all.

Key Take-Aways

- ▲ The need to understand, accept or elevate risk and your own appetite and accountability in the decision-making process.
- ▲ The importance of building two-way trust, of empowering and of supporting your team in order to affect the right decision at the right time.
- ▲ The most dangerous thing is often not to make a decision at all.

Case Study: RAF Mountain Rescue Services



Flight Lieutenant Amy Hill

RAF Mountain Rescue Services (MRS)

Flt Lt Hill manages the support elements of the three Mountain Rescue Teams based at RAF Lossiemouth, RAF Leeming and RAF Valley. Her role is dynamic and ranges from ensuring MRS capability effectiveness in communications assets and MT, to managing the delivery of MRS training.



Sergeant Ali Beer

RAF Mountain Rescue Services (MRS)

Sgt Beer is a member of the RAF Regiment and is the Deputy Team Leader of RAF Lossiemouth's Mountain Rescue Team.

➤ A key leadership lesson from MRS duty is that a leader must inspire good followership rather rely on rank or position.

Sgt Ali Beer, CASLC21


The criticality associated with decision-making is starkly evident within the RAF's Mountain Rescue Service (MRS). The 3 geographically dispersed teams, at RAF Valley, Lossiemouth and Leeming, deal with risk to life decisions in arduous conditions daily and must embrace the tenets of mission command and empowerment to be able to do so.

Flt Lt Hill and Sgt Beer, both highly experienced mountaineers, share their thoughts on how they are required to operate and the personal challenges that brings. They begin by discussing the freedoms and constraints that

enable them to operate safely and apply a just culture to exploit lessons from post-incident debriefs.

Moving on to discuss training, planning and experience within the MRS they share their thoughts on an occasion where the importance of this trilogy was dramatically demonstrated. On a Scottish hillside in late summer 2020 a member of the team sustained a heat related injury; this called for a dynamic re-evaluation of the mission and associated risks.

Sgt Beer recalls juggling the three courses of action open to him



You must never be fearful about what you are doing when you know it is right.

Rosa Parks

and thinking that none of them were particularly favourable. He reflects on constantly reassessing his thought process and asking himself 'am I doing the right thing or am I potentially making things worse?' He discusses that, as a team, they were experienced in managing casualties when there is no emotional attachment, but in this instance, it was one of their own who was deteriorating rapidly, and this was having an impact on the whole team. Sgt Beer goes on to describe a feeling of becoming a lot more reactive, working on instinct, but that he was not in control. He was reacting to the situation as it evolved. On the transit to hospital, he found himself increasingly under pressure when he thought the patient was going to die. Once at the hospital he delivered a clinical handover but allowed his emotions to take over. In his own words, he considered it the worst patient handover he had ever given.

Sgt Beer openly admits reflecting on why he made certain decisions that day was exceedingly difficult. Motivation for his decision making became less clear as the situation evolved. He recalls thinking that he had done seven tours of Iraq and Afghanistan and never lost anyone that he was responsible for but would do so that day on a sunny Scottish mountain. Although trained to deal with casualties on the battlefield, and on the hill, one can never anticipate the emotional impact of having to deal with the loss of one of your own; there is no detachment.

In this compelling account, the team expand on instinct and prior training, and the emotional tolls that cannot be trained for. Paramount in their conclusion was the importance of knowing they had the support of their chain-of-command in the decisions they made when committing their team to save another's life.

Key Take-Aways

- ▲ To get the best results from your team ensure that they are prepared, empowered, and resourced for the task in hand.
- ▲ As a leader give appropriate direction and guidance; but if that decision making is delegated, you must ensure your team feel trusted and supported.

Session 3: Reflection

Decision Making: Interpreting Risk

The guest speakers provided an insight into the interpretation of risk and how emotions can affect decision making. The requirement for increasing complexity of training will better prepare our personnel for the difficult decision's they face.

The key points included creating positive cohesion embedding the RAF ethos of mission command; this trust, along with defined parameters, allows for good decisions, given the information available at the time. The ability of a team or individual to reflect without fear enables the whole force to learn from mistakes, reducing the repetition of error. Risk can, therefore, be minimised but never mitigated entirely.

With this in mind, "a bad decision is better than no decision at all".

HPTP Syndicate Three

Cpl Stuart Dunlop, Cpl Paul Jones, Cpl Jordan Oatley, Cpl Alex Miller, SAC Christopher Bujok, SAC(T) Pearse Murphy, SAC(T) Chloe Nickel

Session 4:

Decision Making - The Power of Mindset: Introduction

WO Willis is the Airman Leadership specialist within the Tedder Academy, responsible for aligning NCO leadership development throughout the RAF to ensure that it is consistent, coherent and progressive across all training establishments. He is also the Vice-Chair of the RAF Social Mobility Network.

➤ Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.

Sir Winston Churchill

Introduction to Session Four: Decision Making in Ambiguity

Introducing this section, WO Willis links having the right mindset to being a great leader describing mindset as the mental lens through which a leader assimilates the information that informs their decision making. He provides a brief overview of different mindsets: growth, fixed, learning and performance, which he links to deliberate, implemental, promotional and prevention approaches to decision making.

WO Willis contends that leaders with a deliberate approach to their actions made better decisions because they are more receptive to information, more impartial, more accurate and less biased in their information processing. In contrast, leaders with an implemental approach were more focused on delivery, which limited their ability to absorb new information or different ideas.



Warrant Officer Mark Willis
Tedder Academy of Leadership

He highlights leaders who adopt a promotional approach were more positive thinkers, more resilient and higher performers and were those who identified a purpose, a set of goals and a way to achieve them to make gains and win. In contrast, a prevention mindset focused on avoiding losses and bad decisions, which meant leaders were less likely to take risk.

Key Take-Away

- ▲ Research had shown that leaders with a growth, learning deliberative and promotional mindset are likely to be the best leaders.



Resilience: A Personal Journey

Cpl McNally joined the RAF in 2009 as a Weapons Technician and was granted Elite Athlete Status in 2014 which has allowed him to pursue an opportunity to play professional rugby. Josh plays for Bath RFC and represents both the RAF and UK Armed Forces at rugby union and brings back a wealth of experience to grow the sport within the military.

Resilience: A Personal Journey

Cpl Josh McNally is an RAF technician and an elite sportsman who suffered what he initially thought was concussion during a rugby match but was later diagnosed as having suffered a stroke due to an undiagnosed hole in his heart.

Relating his experience in terms of decision making, Josh describes his personal journey,

how he actively adopted a positive mindset, combined this with a strong desire to seek out the root cause of his stroke, find a cure, and regain match fitness and return to playing.

Recognising that he could not seek a solution in isolation, he reflects on the diversity of thought and awareness of the bigger picture that support networks and cohesive groups offer when brought together to inform decision making. He describes how balanced thinking and group collaboration are important in understanding a problem, sharing the load and formulating a way forward. Josh is a firm believer that the days of an individual being given sole responsibility for decision making had passed - group involvement always resulted in "cleaner and more positive decisions".



Corporal Josh McNally

Royal Air Force

Key Take-Away

- ▲ Decisions made in 'splendid isolation' are likely to be sub-optimal should the 'decider' miss the bigger picture by over-focusing on the task in hand, or not considering alternative perspectives.



Resilience: A Personal Journey

Cpl Stephens joined the RAF in 2011 as an RAF Regiment Gunner and is the number one pilot for the Jamaican bobsleigh team.

Resilience: A Personal Journey

In his discussion Cpl Shanwayne Stephens describes how, thorough preparation and rehearsal, it is possible to relegate motor actions to the sub-conscious to provide additional mental capacity to drive time sensitive decision making. He illustrates his narrative with examples from his time with the Queen's Colour Squadron and

as a member of the Jamaican bobsleigh team. He also expands on the importance of support networks in maintaining the necessary mindset to continually rehearse.

Stephens shares how the bobsleigh team prepare themselves to make decisions (while hurtling down a run at 80 mph) by visualising the run over and over, to the point where "in a sticky situation [that] you've rehearsed so many times, your hand knows what to do, but your brain's almost two or three corners ahead to be able to get you out of that situation".



Corporal Shanwayne Stephens

Royal Air Force

Key Take-Away

- ▲ The need to free up the mental space to be able to fully comprehend the operating environment and allow informed decision making.



Fit to Decide

Formerly a PE and Geography teacher, Dr Goodger is one of the most experienced performance psychologists in Olympic sport in the UK. She has a formidable reputation as a high-performance coach and facilitator with executives, leaders, and teams in European and global businesses. Dr Goodger is a BPS Chartered Psychologist, has a PhD in Athlete Burnout and is a published researcher.

Fit to Decide

Dr Goodger describes her job as helping athletes solve problems, to fix a puzzle and in doing so unlock their performance potential. Although we are led to assume that an athlete's performance is about decision making under pressure on the day it is the off-the-field decisions and preparations that deliver the results.

The first step, Kate explains in her commentary, is to determine what is the problem we are trying to solve? This is done through three principal questions:

- ▲ **The first is what is the outcome we are trying to achieve?**
- ▲ **The second is to ask what is getting in the way?**
- ▲ **Thirdly we should ask, what is the gap and what do we need to do to bridge it?**

Taking the standpoint that decision making is a mental skill, we need self-insight and should ask ourselves 'What kind of decision maker am I? Dr Goodger suggests that there are some rules determining how the brain operates which unlock these secrets for us. In the age of

neuroimaging we can understand what the brain does and what it does not do, and Dr Goodger draws on Professor Steve Peters' book, the 'The Chimp Paradox', to explain the mechanics of the mind and how decision-making is cultivated.

Decision-Making is a skill and skills need practice to make perfect.

In practice we must also pause. Dr Kate urges us to sleep on a decision, to not decide when we know we are in an emotional place. She also suggests we test our decisions with others, and when we are approaching a decision that feels uncomfortable, we should take time to unpick what is behind it; what is driving that disruption. An important aspect of decision-making is recognising the nervousness associated with the potential consequences. We start to anticipate the worst possible outcome from this scenario when nothing has happened yet. Noticing helps us to pay attention to the fact that we might be looking at perceived consequence rather than a real thing.

Dr Goodger also tells us to be alert to an exchange between logical and emotion-based thinking. What are the facts versus the opinions or assumptions we are making? Taking a moment to check facts versus stories can be helpful.

In deciding we should also try shifting from a fixed mindset to one that's more of an experimental; test and learn. Whilst failure may not be an option both in sport and in military operations, it is an important part of improving decision making skills.



Dr Kate Goodger

Performance Psychologist

We get better by really leaning into what contributed to failure. There's a huge amount of richness and a greater pace when we can embrace the failure and learn from it instead of trying to avoid it.

Key Take-Aways

- ▲ Decision making needs to be practiced and tested.
- ▲ Slowing down the process of decision making can be helpful in unpicking the rationale behind the requirement and considering whether attention is being paid to perceived consequence or the real thing.
- ▲ The need to carefully weigh the facts in hand against opinions or assumptions.
- ▲ Decision making can be improved by moving away from a fixed mindset.

Keynote: Touching the Void

Joe Simpson has drawn from his experiences as one of the world's most respected mountaineers to become a leading author. "Touching the Void", the story of his amazing survival, having shattered his leg and been left for dead in a crevasse high in the Andes, has sold over two million copies worldwide.

▶ We knew a number of expeditions had failed on it, so we knew it was hard, at some point you're going to have to rely heavily on your partner, got to make decisions. You've got to keep making decisions, even if they're wrong decisions. We just lost control. I was just convinced. He was dead. Soon as I saw it, I knew it had been cut. And we just wanted to call on the world, and it was fun, it was just brilliant fun. And every now and then it went wildly wrong and then it wasn't.

Touching the Void

Climbers by their very nature are risk takers but extreme alpine style climbing in the greater ranges in the early 1980s was very high risk. Joe Simpson reflects that in the first 25 years of his climbing career, 25 of his friends had tragically died in climbing accidents. A generation of the best were decimated, so one could be forgiven for thinking that climbers have some sort of death wish. Joe ascertains the opposite is, in fact, true: climbing a mountain and dying in the process is about as pointless as swimming to the centre of an ocean. There are no points for being dead. You must come home.

In his captivating presentation, Joe recounts the circumstances and rationale behind some of the life-or-death decisions that he and his climbing partner, Simon Yates, were forced to make during a harrowing descent in the Peruvian Andes. He describes the descent as "an absolute nightmare of near vertical fluted powder, snow ridges, terribly dangerous cornices, big overhanging lumps of ice hanging over the west face and our hopes of reaching base camp or at least the glacier that night faded", which was exacerbated by unplanned situations that saw them run out of food and water.

Roped together, Joe explains, they encountered a 40-foot vertical ice cliff, which he elected to climb down; however, towards the bottom the ice shattered causing him to spin around and fall sustaining multiple breaks to a leg. Realising his predicament, he observed



Joe Simpson

Mountaineer and Author

that it would take a 10/12-person mountain rescue team to get them off a 3000 ft Scottish mountain in similar circumstances; here it was just him and his climbing partner at 19,000 ft.

There follows a compelling account of how he and his partner attempted to recover the situation, which culminated in a parting of the ways when the rope that connected them separated following Simpson's fall into a crevasse. Simpson describes feeling "pretty shocked" looking up to his "star shaped entry hole ... in great pain ... frostbitten [and] dehydrated" and of having "had a really, really bad day". Initially, Simpson tells us, he thought his climbing partner was dead, however, a rational reassessment of the situation showed the rope to have been cut. This meant that his partner was very much alive and had made "a superb decision ... under immense pressure and done so very coolly". To save them

both he had cut the rope, hoping that Simpson would survive the subsequent fall.

Getting no response to his shouts to alert Simpson, his partner assumed him to be dead and took the decision to continue his descent to ensure his own survival. Simpson goes on to describe how his own self-survival instincts drove him to seek a way out of his predicament, describing the decisions that he took, the rationale behind them, and the consequences of those decisions. He credits his ability to make some difficult decisions as giving him his

“world back” and the realisation that he “wasn’t going to die in a crevasse” spurred him on. Simpson concludes with the harrowing account of how he crawled back to basecamp and was eventually reunited with his climbing and support partners.

Whilst stressing the critical importance of teamwork, commitment and experience in his survival, Simpson summed up the experience as follows: “I can honestly say there wasn’t a moment during that entire experience where I once sat there and thought, yep, I’m feeling really lucky today”.

Key Take-Aways

- ▲ Success is not chance; it is a choice - you must keep making decisions. Even if they are bad decisions, you have got to keep making decisions in order to succeed.
- ▲ If you stop making decisions, you are dead in the water – you don’t just get lucky.



▶ Good decisions come from experience. Experience comes from making bad decisions.

Mark Twain

Session 4: Reflection

Decision Making: The Power of Mindset

Each speaker provided an insight into the Power of Mindset and its use in situations that can be transferred into everyday use, especially within the Military sphere.

To be an effective leader, focus and positivity are paramount, especially during times of adversity. Maintaining a focused, determined and emotionally aware mindset allows effective decision making, achievable targets and the transfer of inspiration to others.

Adaptation is vital, having a good situational awareness allows you to adapt and thrive in environments and cultures to break boundaries and operate effectively.

Knowing your own mind and what area of your mind is operating can aid in decision making to grant success in both steady and difficult scenarios. This allows you to rationalise and control emotions to allow the "Human" and "Computer" mindsets to operate effectively and make decisions.

The human body is more resilient than most think, the correct mindset coupled with small achievable goals during moments of pressure result in unexpected achievements, followed by inspiration to others and the ability to put future trials into perspective, allowing the mind to operate and continue being an effective leader.

HPTP Syndicate Four

Cpl Alex Davies, Cpl Liam Greaves, Cpl Aaron Marshall, SAC Michelle Cutting, SAC Eden Stottor, SAC(T) Ben Sturgess



Session 5:

Decision Making - The Global Strategic Landscape

Professor Van Quaquebeke is Professor of Leadership and Organisational Behaviour at the KLU in Germany. He is affiliated with the University of Exeter as a Distinguished Research Professor

Drawing on his experiences Professor Quaquebeke discusses how leadership is often suboptimal and organisations often shy away from hard truths when it comes to leadership and good decision-making. He believes this is a critical failing in business and society - organisations must know how much hinges on good leadership and should not allow bad leaders within their ranks.

Professor Quaquebeke believes that for organisations to succeed they need to:

1. Use everything that could give them a competitive edge.
2. Harness digital: It is the ultimate competitive edge because it's better, faster, cheaper and more controllable.
3. Remember digital needs data, and we have this in abundance.

If we buy into this premise, then development into the digital seems inevitable - especially for leadership and decision-making. The question is how that development may look.

The Now

Digitalisation and leadership refers to digitally mediated communication. Technology allows us to communicate our decisions from one person to another. The challenge is to ensure a good DSL connection, good audio, stable video, and a good structure for meetings. This all became evident during the COVID pandemic when remote working set ups emerged. This may be challenging but is not too different from our traditional ways of working.

The New

Here leadership is digitally augmented. Digital support tools help people navigate in fulfilling their leadership role. Algorithms make suggestions regarding what you should look at, who you should look at, and provide you with corresponding background



Professor Niels Van Quaquebeke

information. Such systems are in place in the US justice system where judges receive support from algorithms when passing their sentencing. These algorithms calculate probabilities for re-committing a criminal offence. Technically they are there to support decision-making, but in practice algorithms already make the decision: they make a judge think twice before overruling the suggested sentence. This can add a moral dilemma to leadership.



Machines don't fight wars.
People do, and they use their minds.

John R Boyd



The Next Generation

Within a generation leadership and decision making is likely to be digitally substituted. Initially, standardised tasks will be completely outsourced to machines. It is expected that machines will be responsible for the dissemination of information, communicating and delegating tasks. They will take on managerial decision tasks such as hiring and firing, allocating resources, or even making investment decisions, and comprehensively carrying out the monitoring and controlling of employees in real time. This is just the beginning and it can be envisaged that digitalised decision making will soon drive product design, the production of highly novel and yet marketable ideas such as the development of innovative products, the creation of art or music, and the discovery of incremental as well as radical inventions.

Where Does that Leave Humans?

Being governed by machines provides a lot of transparency because of the very data that machines need will also be available to you. Machines could enable instant communication and it becomes possible to extrapolate information at any time, day or night. Transparency allows for fairness and more immediate communication access would allow for much more self-leadership, something that many modern organisations aspire for in their employees. However, the comparison standard is not between a machine and a great leader, but rather between a machine and regular leader and their decision making.

Where do the Human Decision Makers go?

Professor Quaakebeke believes that strategic decision making will also cease to be the preserve of humans. Strategic decision making is already heavily influenced by data; and if machines have the data to see patterns, to spot gaps, to anticipate movements, why not let them decide how to react to it?

Professor Quaakebeke concludes with his belief that we won't need as many human decision makers in the future. Mid-level decision making will become obsolete with little need for decisions to be cascaded down or information distilled for feedback up through multiple layers. He envisages the need to prepare a new crop of leaders who will lead fewer humans; rather becoming stewards of computerised decision-making systems.

Key Take-Away

- ▲ To gain a competitive edge requires a core of leaders who are confident to leverage digitisation and data exploitation by outsourcing appropriate decision making responsibilities to machines.



Ten Years to Midnight

Blair Sheppard joined Price Waterhouse Coopers in June 2012 as Global Leader for Strategy and Leadership. He is also Professor Emeritus and Dean Emeritus of Duke University's Fuqua School of Business.

Ten Hours to Midnight

Professor Sheppard discusses the context in which decisions are taken, focussing on two areas: distractions posed when issues of scale and importance took precedence and changed meanings; and situations where "the cards are stacked against you". He illustrates this with examples of what he describes as "the crisis of unintended consequences of technology" and "the crisis of prosperity". He contextualises this in terms of decision making, by questioning:

- ▲ how we find things,
- ▲ how we aggregate them,
- ▲ how we analyse them, how we draw inferences from them,
- ▲ how we create or make decisions on the back end.

Professor Sheppard suggests that our inability to comprehend the decision algorithms that drive machine led decision making make it harder for us to filter and analyse data thus creating potential for poor decision making. He further discusses the challenges of decision making against a backdrop of institutional instability and global change compounded by a failure to adapt fast enough. He poses the question of "how... we keep the thing that make the

institution trusted [whilst massively adapting] ... at the same time"? This he believes. has implications on resource, innovation and creativity. Moreover, he alludes to the impact that globalisation and the concentration of wealth in certain parts of the world has on intergenerational wealth and the social consequences associated by a polarised society. He considers that people are faced with an unattractive future and that this in turn makes it harder to court consensus.

He concludes with a discussion on the leadership challenges of bringing people together in a polarised society that he suggests is more focused on who the leader was, rather than fact, debate or argument concluding that times are tough and that this means that decision-making is more important than ever.

Key Take-Aways

- ▲ Decision-makers should be very clear about what matters, what doesn't and what trade-offs need to be made in re-assigning resources and material.
- ▲ Appreciate that problems are often profound and foundational
- ▲ Preserve that which "makes us special and unique".
- ▲ Create trust to achieve your desired outcomes.



Blair Sheppard

Professor Emeritus and Dean Emeritus of Duke University's Fuqua School of Business

▶ In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities. In the experts there are few.

Shunryu Suzuki

Panel Discussion

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston is joined by Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach and Ms Anna Keeling - Managing Director of Boeing Defence UK.



Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach

Sir Stuart has held the appointment of CJO at PJHQ(UK) before becoming the first Commander of the UK Joint Forces Command. He was VCDS and served as CDS as well as Chairman of the Military Committee of NATO.



Ms Anna Keeling

Anna joined Boeing as Managing Director of Boeing Defence UK in 2019 from GKN Aerospace. She is responsible for Boeing UK's significant defence programmes, people and sites and the organisation's growth, alignment and business development across all Boeing businesses which operate in over 30 key Boeing and customer sites and employs 2,500 people directly and many more through a significant domestic supply chain.

The panel were invited to discuss the impact of the contemporary strategic environment on decision making.

The panel reminded the audience that the RAF was part of something much bigger and was still growing - the RAF whole force operated in alliances and coalitions of air forces and nations with shared values. Values matter more than ever in leadership; they bring you together with other nations to deliver successful outcomes. This emphasised the impact of leadership at the

tactical level and its impact on the operational and strategic levels in pursuit of a winning strategy. How your leadership values are expressed in the air, in space and on the ground has direct strategic impact.

In discussing the role that information played in higher level decision making it was suggested that the myriad of data needed to be distilled and understood. There was a need to keep command and control as simple as possible and to ensure that everybody understood the mission and their part in it.

The panel identified the need for future leaders to think about sustainability, that geography still matters. Partnerships and alliances will still be based on old orders, history, and politics, but agendas will increasingly be determined by climatic factors and the environment in which they operate. We may not have the luxury of time in this arena

Discussion also focused on the need for leaders to share data. This had been starkly evident during the Covid pandemic when military medical services worked

in partnership to share clinical data, to determine what did and did not work. This work also highlighted that it was OK to fail via experimentation to improve understanding. Humanitarian missions and the allocation of medical supplies to places of need, not places of want, was a data-fed leadership challenge and enabled us to keep our people safe wherever they were in the world

The importance of speaking truth to power was emphasised; it was essential when things went wrong, that there was understanding and honesty. The world remains a troubled place, surrounded by turbulence that would not change in our immediate lifetime; therefore, we must lead to find a way to navigate it. The art of leadership was being true to yourself, being who you are, and remembering your part in the mission; and if you do not understand - ask.

In the commercial context, there is a need for organisations to change with the dynamics of the environment to be successful. This involves, listening to the voice of the customer, partnering within the ecosystems they operated in, understanding the unique place that organisations had in the lives of their employees and the communities that they operated in, and of defining a purpose and mission that established the feeling of being 'in it together' to achieve something for the greater good. The importance of employees being able to align with what that an organisation stood for was stressed as critical to enabling employees to be the best that they can be every day to fulfil their personal ambitions for career development and growth.

The panel asserted the importance of organisations in raising their awareness of the part they played in global crises, enabling them

also to be part of the solution. This could range from advancing technology to serve humanity; a responsibility towards the environment through how organisations are run and the products and services they deliver; to the social responsibility helping people fulfil their career ambitions; to making sure that the countries within which we operate are in themselves prosperous.

All these considerations were extremely strategically important to organisations. This required leaders to empower others, to ensure that decision making was pushed down to the place in the organisation best placed to make that decision. Leaders in organisations cannot make all decisions in isolation, empowerment enabled organisations to get the best out of the diversity that we have in the workforce.



Session 5: Reflection

Decision Making: The Global Strategic Landscape

In this section the discussion was around the global context of decision making - none of us operate in isolation and without external influences, we are all part of something bigger. Strategic adaptability is paramount in The Global Strategic Landscape, and our rate of change is accelerating. Could data gathering, and artificial intelligence be the answer to predicting and capitalising on greater strategic outcomes?

The unintended consequence of technology – ubiquity will see the demise of an entire middle tier of managers, while senior leaders become facilitators of AI. We as leaders must remain convicted in our end purpose, have self-awareness, and appreciate that change is necessary for growth.

With the crisis of prosperity – the widening wealth gap, and the lack of trust in institutions we need to assimilate unity by empowering our people to challenge authority. Are we just ten years to midnight?

HPTP Syndicate Five

Cpl Elisabeth Cooper, Cpl Peter Sutherland, SAC(T) Beth Andrews, SAC Suteerak Mueaybut, SAC Jake Simpson, SAC Callum Thomson

Closing Remarks

In his closing remarks, CAS thanked the RAF whole force for producing and participating in a virtual conference that had reached out and stimulated a far wider audience than previous physical events ever had. He emphasised the importance of leadership at all levels and invited the audience to really think about how they lead and the part they play in three specific areas.

- ▲ In setting the right culture, which in turn sets the tone for RAF whole force;
- ▲ In realising the guiding vision

that will achieve the RAF of the future;

- ▲ In delivering air and space power to protect our nation.

CAS emphasised how changes in our day-to-day workplace would help build the RAF of 2040 through Astra.

He closed the Conference by attributing the success of Op PITTING [the evacuation of over 15,000 people from Afghanistan] to good leadership at every level, and expressed his gratitude to, and pride in, all who played a part.



**Air Chief Marshal
Sir Mike Wigston**

Chief of the Air Staff

► When obstacles arise you change your direction to reach your goal, you do not change your decision to get there.



From options to objectives: value-focused decision making in the RAF Rapid Capabilities office (RCO)

Cecil Buchanan, Hd Science RCO and **Air Cdre Jez Holmes**, Hd RCO

➤ If I had an hour to solve a problem, I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and five minutes thinking about solutions.

Attributed to Albert Einstein

Many of the decision problems being tackled today in military capability planning are strategic and complex: strategic in that the consequences of the decisions will be felt well into the future, may be irreversible, and have a fundamental impact on the ability of the military to deliver its mission; and complex due to many legitimate competing factors vying for different outcomes. In addition, the potential solution options to these problem sets are heterogenous – the classic apples with oranges comparison problem. Despite these challenges associated with simply understanding complex strategic decisions, the most common

practice appears to be a focus on option analysis - alternative solutions to an apparent or often untested problem, i.e. "what do we want and how do we get it" – as opposed to understanding the fundamental decision problem objectives and associated value analysis – what are we trying to achieve and why. In the following we outline a personal perspective on strategic decision making, from an Options-Focused to a Value-Focused decision-making practice, based on our experience of implementing a Value-Focused decision-making practice as the modus operandi for ourselves and more broadly in the RAF Rapid Capability office (RCO).

Do you understand what the objectives are of the projects / activities are that currently dominate your work life? If not, why?

Most people don't like problems, and all problems require decisions. Thinking about problems, in particular asking the right questions to probe at understanding the actual problem, is hard, compared to thinking about relative merits of solution options – what and how is easier than why. One of the most annoying questions from children is the recurrent 'why?' – because cogent answers to why questions are difficult, requiring us to reach

deep into our lazy deliberate-thinking brain rather than our always-active heuristic-driven bias-susceptible brain. Yet without the recurrent why questions, we cannot get at understanding fundamentally what the decision problem really is. Identifying, wrestling with, and clarifying an overall desired end state (a vision) and the fundamental objectives required to meet that vision is the first step in enabling a Value-Focused approach to our work. Objectives frame what good looks like, sometimes identify decision opportunities (i.e. an opportunity for investment rather than simply addressing a decision problem), and act as the critical signposts for the 'what' and 'how' decisions throughout project delivery. Yet it is intriguing how little effort, if any, is spent in most projects thinking about the overarching vision and what a complete, coherent set of objectives look like. Value-Focused project thinking focuses on creating a clear, minimum, set of objectives up front and a singular pursuit of their achievement through the project lifecycle; objectives provide the framework within which all other project activity has meaning. They are lived, not simply stated and forgotten. Starting with why is vital if we are ever to understand what

good, better or best might look like.

How do you understand the good, better, best options for your work, and what you actually mean when you talk about trade-offs?

Why all the trouble about understanding project vision and objectives? Well, they alone encapsulate 'why' – why we are bothering, what we are trying to achieve, and what is actually of value to the decision maker. The degree to which each objective is met we call value (often interchanged with benefit), and we measure it using a value scale for each objective. Value scales encapsulate the decision maker's preference – what good, indifferent and ugly (and shades in between) looks like for each objective. With a different scale for each objective, each scale is used to assess how well all alternative options meet each objective. Moreover, since our objectives and their associated value scales have been well defined, this Value-Focused approach allows us to not only assess extant options coherently, but to help identify better options by asking 'what would an option look like that scores maximum value against this and/or that objective?'. Objectives, even for our simplest projects, will invariably be in tension with each other, so when we talk about trade-offs, we talk about trading across objectives. In other words, trading more achievement of one objective for less of another for a given option. Finally, value for money. When we talk about value for money, value is the aggregate of the value scores across all objectives relative to the cost for a given option. Value for money doesn't simply mean cheap or cheapest (i.e. cost is not value, its merely an input as opposed to a

desired end state).

So much for the theory, does it actually work?

Options-Focused 'what' thinking tends to dominate decision making practice, with perhaps some token benefits management devoid of understanding whether they are actually benefits at all since we don't know what our objectives are. Moreover, whilst almost everyone talks value for money, almost no one when pressed can articulate what it actually means or how it can be realised for their project since they haven't really thought about what they fundamentally value. We have been on a journey on the use of Value-Focused decision making for the past 6-7 years. For us it started in the run-up to SDSR15, when we were working on questions affecting the future of the UK Combat Air capability - what should the future of the UK Combat Air Capability look like? how important is collaboration with allies? what sovereign capability must we protect? ... and so on. Making sense of a complex, strategic decision problem affecting the future of the RAF Combat Air capability and the entire UK aerospace enterprise required starting with why, not what and how. We used Value-Focused thinking to develop a desired end state (vision), understand the fundamental objectives and their associated values measures, shape decision options to achieve better value outcomes, communicate in value-based language with senior decision makers, and ultimately secure a strategic decade long investment for Combat Air technology. We have been using the same approach to shape individual option projects and

multiple option portfolios spanning several £k to several £Bn across the RCO. Whilst not removing the requirement for difficult decisions, Value-Focused thinking means our decisions are always framed in a 'why' context, giving us significantly more clarity on the implications of the how and what decisions we make on a day-day basis.

So what?

Isn't this just Multi Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) which is in widespread practice? It is MCDA, but probably not as you know it. Most MCDA practice appears to be Options-Focused – all of the effort on options assessment, with little if any Value-Focused effort – all about how and what as opposed to why. To steal a quote from a soon to be (re)published MCDA guide to the Treasury Green Book - 'Its easy to do MCDA badly' – and one of the easiest bad practices is to pay lip service to understanding the actual decision problem. If you aren't clear on your vision and objectives, you can't understand what you value and why. If you don't understand what you value, you can't know what good looks like. If you don't know what good looks like, you can't know you are pursuing the better or best options, nor what value for money actually means in your project context. So how are you running your project?

How's My Decision Making?

Judgement, feedback and decision making competence - **Squadron Leader Rich Green**

Consider your most recent decision in a work setting. Did you receive feedback about the quality of the decision you made? Feedback in this sense could be generated as you make sense of how the cues, prior to a decision interact with the world in that situation. It could also be from a peer giving their evaluation of your decision. How frequently do you get feedback about your decisions? Do you consider that a decision was good because you experienced the outcome that you wanted?

Decision making is an innate ability of all animals in our world. Our decisions as the dominant species on Earth has ultimately determined the state of the world in which we live, the structure of our societies, the relationships we foster, and the lifestyles we lead. All decisions made are based on our forecasts about the future, where there is an expectation that your choice can determine your relative satisfaction about the eventual outcome in some situation. For instance, I choose not to play the lottery because I don't expect to win enough over my lifetime of playing to justify the cost of a ticket. I decide to take a waterproof on my morning dog walk when my weather forecasting app suggests a 40% chance of rain in the next hour, despite looking out the window and seeing blue skies above me. My choices are probably different to yours. My appetite to accept some risk about my choices is

different to yours. These differences are characterised by who we are as individuals, conditional on our experiences, knowledge, education, the available information at the time, our trust in the available information, or some other factors important to us.

The influence of such intrinsic factors affects our decisions in private as well as in our professions, except that the knowledge base on which decisions are formed in each context is subtly different. For instance, I might make balanced, formally rational choices in work when selecting maintenance interventions and balancing the flying programme against the risk of aircraft accident, but I might be a thrill-seeking BASE jumper at weekends who smokes 40-a-day and binge eats fast food every night despite knowing the objective statistics of coming to harm¹. Put simply, a decision is a choice made from a set of alternative options, the outcome of which depends on the state of the world. As decision-makers we try to make rational choices, or rather we make choices that maximise value to us. Value, in this sense can take many forms and is, once again, an individualistic trait. Organisations try to influence us by setting policies that instruct decision-makers on the values they should be considering for a given decision.

Our ability to attain the outcomes we desire is usually influenced by factors outside of our control.

However, our developed ability as humans to react automatically to numerous cues and factors present in a situation, which has protected our species no less, allows us to routinely make inferences in situations about which we have very little forecasting knowledge. In this regard, the accuracy of our decision making autonomy is governed by whether we receive feedback about decisions. In some environments, like weather forecasting, the feedback is frequent and allows forecasting models to be adjusted to make better decisions. In other environments, like assessing the risk of aircraft structural collapse having identified some damage, decision-makers will rarely gain feedback about how calibrated their decision making was in that situation. Cast your mind back to the decision making situation I asked you to consider at the start – do you know how calibrated your decision making was for that choice before you made your decision? If you faced that same decision again, what are the reasons you would make the same choice, or not?

Fortunately, some decision making situations are relatively well understood, meaning that rules – or norms – can be established to ensure that the optimal decision is made. Consider applied situations such as aircrew with their flight reference cards, aircraft component damage limits established to guide maintenance decision making, or

¹ Fatality rate from BASE jumping are 1 in 2317 per jump; 20% of all deaths are smoking-related; and there are strong links between high fat/sugar diets and ill health through obesity, diabetes, heart disease and cancer.

emergency medical staff triaging patients based on the symptoms they can identify. In the scientific community, academics study formal and defined decision making situations under the banner of normative decision analysis, applying statistical, probabilistic and computational models to establish norms for achieving the optimum decision output. However, in the real world, humans do not always conform to the optimal decision making models. For example, consider the following two choices, which would you select from each?

Which would you prefer:

- A. Choice A will give you £1mil for certain;
- B. Choice B will give you £1mil with 89% chance, or £5mil with 10% chance, or £0 with 1% chance.

Now, which would you prefer?

- C. Choice C will give you £1mil with 11% chance, or £0 with 89% chance;

- D. Choice D will give you £5mil with 10% chance, or £0 with 90% chance.

If you chose A and D, your choices are perfectly normal but you have fallen for the trap that most people fall into. This famous situation within the decision sciences is called the Allais Paradox and demonstrates that one of the rules of rational decision making, independence, has been violated. If you chose A, the 1% increased chance (comparing choice B with choice A) of getting £0 was too important for you; however, if you also chose D, the 1% increased chance of getting £0 in this situation (comparing choice D with C) was less important. It demonstrates that feelings (like regret or fear of losing £1mil for certain), heuristics (such as the availability heuristic which has a tendency to guide our decisions based on more recent and vivid experiences) and biases (such as authority bias which shows that we have a tendency to default to the

perspective of persons in authority) can dominate our decision making in real-world situations.

In order to handle dynamic and unpredictable operational military situations, personnel are highly trained and gain important experiences early in our careers in order to help us understand which decision making processes work in certain contexts. Crucial to this is the feedback that we received regarding whether our previous decision making was effective or not. When we are entrusted to apply our judgement under operational pressures, we only have the available information and our own cognition (knowledge, experiences and ability) in which to meet the (usually time constrained) decision deadline. Sometimes, we are supported by analysis and support from other information sources (**Figure 1**), sometimes we are not (**Figure 2**).

I'm going to talk briefly about the situations where support is not

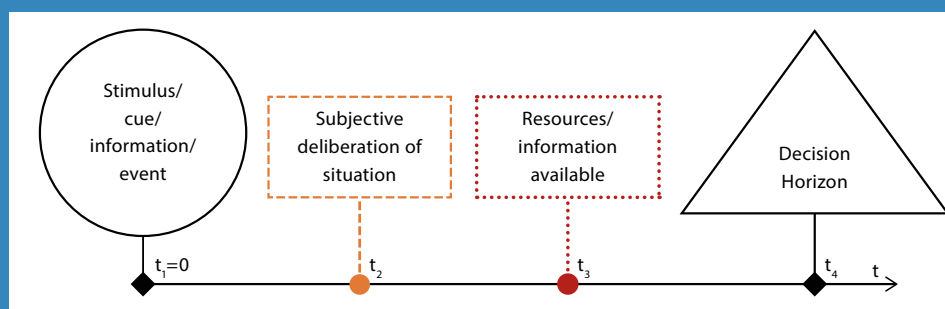


Figure 1

Schematic of an individual's decision making situation where they are supported by information or resources prior to the decision horizon (the deadline for a decision to be made). "t" is time. Figure simplified from Green (2021).

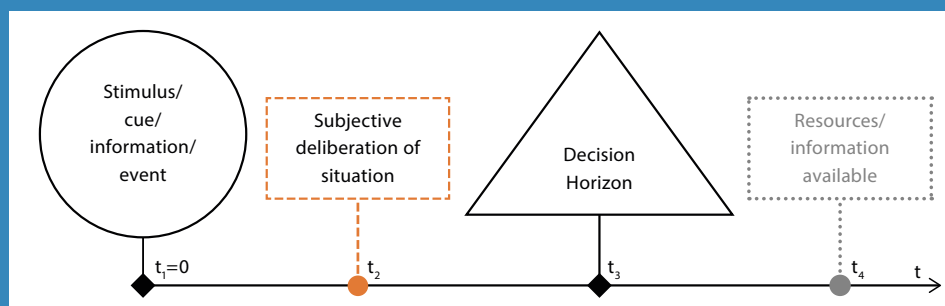


Figure 2

Schematic of an individual's decision making situation where they are unsupported, without the benefit of information or resources prior to the decision horizon (the deadline for a decision to be made). "t" is time. Figure simplified from Green (2021).

available, where decision-makers are expected to rely only on their own deliberations. One such circumstance was the Challenger Shuttle disaster in January 1986 (**Figure 3**).

Manufacturing engineers of the solid rocket boosters, Morton Thiokol, had become worried about the forecast freezing launch temperatures expected the following day and made efforts to convince their colleagues at NASA and Marshall to reschedule the launch. But with an established organisational reliance on scientifically acquired data and a belief that the data illustrated that the shuttle vehicle would be safe to launch at the expected temperatures², engineers at Morton Thiokol were unable to be convincing about their judgements that the cold temperatures were a credible threat to vehicle safety. Consequently, Challenger launched the following morning with an ambient temperature of 2°C and exploded 73 seconds later with complete breakup of the vehicle and a loss of all seven crew. The cause of failure was concluded to be the inability of the O-ring seals in one of the solid rocket boosters to contain hot propellant gases, causing the

joint between sections of the booster to fail. Had the engineers been able to convince their colleagues of their judgements about the threat posed by the weather, under the launch time constraints, disaster may have been avoided.

Despite the knowledge that humans can be biased when using their judgement, information, cues and feelings can provide credible inputs into formalised, judgement-based decision making, provided they can be presented in a credible manner. For instance, justifying a decision on the basis that you've experienced the same decision before might be challenged by asking yourself how similar the previous circumstances were. Thinking about your own thinking in this way is known as meta-cognition and is a useful competence for checking one's own judgements before committing to action. Irrespective of critiquing your own judgements, humans can still be biased even when expecting to be influenced by bias. Therefore, another useful strategy is to engage with other colleagues or peers and have them scrutinise your judgement. Their perception may provide alternative framing of the situation,

provide additional knowledge that can be incorporated into your decision deliberations, or stress-test your argument by querying the underlying assumptions that you've made. Another aid can be to review the decision quality by examining characteristics of the decision before or after it has been made (see Howard and Abbas (2016)): the framing; information available and used; the alternatives considered; the logical reasoning applied; the individualistic values relevant to the decision and its expected outcomes; and the commitment to following the chosen action through. As a qualitative checklist, they can enable a decision-maker to attain prior understanding about the nature of their decision before they commit to action. In judgement-based decisions, where analytical support is unavailable, this may be invaluable. By gaining such a perspective, you can understand, irrespective of whether the outcomes of a decision were favourable or not, whether you made a measured decision given the situation you were in at that time. Military decision making situations are dynamic. They can change quickly, have many component



Figure 3

Clockwise from left: view of ice on the launch complex; camera D-67 shows grey smoke near the aft attach strut on the right SRB; liftoff of Shuttle Challenger for STS 51-L mission. All photos courtesy of NASA. Sources: images.nasa.gov and cbsnews.com.

² This belief was predicated on sub-component and sub-assembly test data conducted at low temperatures. No reliable performance data for the whole Shuttle system at cold temperatures was available. Previously launches had indicated variable O-ring seal performance at a variety of temperatures, but of those poorer performing examples, colder launch temperatures showed worse performance than higher temperatures.

parts that are dependent upon each other, and can vary subtly between situations to the extent where declaring a previous situation as similar too hastily could be catastrophic. By getting to know common decision fallacies (such as a hasty generalisation), one's own biases and knowledge gaps, and the techniques that can be deployed rapidly in a stressful and unaided decision making situation, we can improve our reliability and

credibility as decision-makers. Biases can be motivationally derived (such as confirmation bias) or cognitively influenced (such as overconfidence bias). Getting feedback on a decision or eliciting perspectives on a prospective decision from peers, subordinates, superiors or experts will expand your decision situational awareness and improve your mental model of the decision situation to improve performance in future decisions. Ultimately, to achieve

success in military operations, we need to be good decision-makers reflective of what makes a good decision, irrespective of whether outcomes were bad or good. To do this in time-, resource- and information-limited situations necessitates improving our decision making competency.

Sign-posting to related resources for further reading:

Green, R. (2021), *Supporting operational decision making concerning aircraft structural integrity damage identified during maintenance*. Unpublished PhD thesis.

Howard, R. and Abbas, A., 2016. *Foundations of decision analysis, global edition*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Montibeller, G. and von Winterfeldt, D. (2015), *Cognitive and Motivational Biases in Decision and Risk Analysis*. Risk Analysis, 35: 1230-1251. <https://doi.org/10.1111/risa.12360>

Vaughan, D., 2007. *The Challenger launch decision*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.

Author short bio for context:

Sqn Ldr Green is a Royal Air Force AeroSystems Engineer Officer with experience in ISTAR, rotary and fast-jet environments. He has just completed his PhD researching how to improve aircraft structural integrity risk decision making under operational conditions, through Cranfield University and sponsored by the RAF Engineer Branch. He is currently employed at Air Command as SO2 Inspector Airworthiness Support Team.

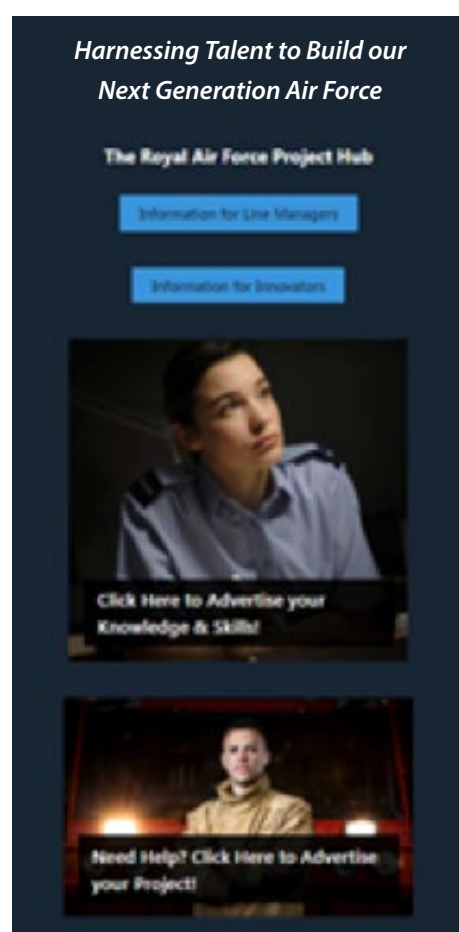
The RAF Talent Strategy: One Year On



On the 15 Oct 20, at the 2020 CAS Leadership Conference the Royal Air Force launched its first ever Talent Strategy. It set out to modernise the RAF's approach to recognising and rewarding talent, by expanding the definitions of talent beyond the exclusive characteristic of Leadership, to include three other talent characteristics that are integral to the future successes of the RAF; Initiative, Expertise and Creativity. The strategy launch was a commitment from the Service to recognise, develop and invest in the talents of all our people and offer truly bespoke and rewarding careers. Now some 12 months later, we explore what progress has been made since the launch, what impact have the talent initiatives delivered thus far had on the lives of our people and what challenges lie ahead.

RAF Project Hub

Launched in Feb 21, the RAF Project Hub seeks to create an informal network connecting innovators with innovative projects, fostering innovation from the ground up to deliver Service gain. Allowing for both project leaders to advertise their projects and individuals with additional capacity to advertise their skills, the Project Hub recognises that our people are more than the skills we have taught them; through self-declaration, project leaders have access to unlimited knowledge, skills and experiences, leveraging the full talent of our people, not just their trade skills. For those that volunteer through the Project Hub, it offers an opportunity to build their professional portfolio whilst showcasing all they have to offer the Service.



"Through the Project Hub I have been able to get involved in exciting work that is nothing like my primary duties... I feel like I am making a difference."

Talent Spotlights

Our true strength is in the diversity of our people, which allows unrivalled cognitive diversity to innovate and meet challenges head on. However, with many varied possible approaches to talent, it is important that we expose our people to these different opinions, to allow them to develop their own talent development approaches. Through the Talent Spotlight, each month we explore talent through the lens of a different person associated with the Service.



Re-muster Policy Review

Progression and challenge will not always mean ascending through the ranks. For some, their professional journey may involve a complete change of direction. Our review of the re-muster policy has now removed unnecessary barriers to application and sought to minimise the impact of losing trade workforce levels. The deciding factors on an individual's suitability to re-muster should always be their potential to succeed.

High Potential Talent Pathway (HPTP)

The HPTP is a 12 month accelerated development scheme, aimed at personnel with high potential for future WO employment. The programme will be entirely bespoke, built around the strengths and areas for development of each participant. Supported by a HPTP champion on their unit, they will be provided with both local and national development opportunities, including funded training investment and opportunities to develop strategic understanding.

Whilst the full HPTP will be open to all in the ranks of SAC to FS, a limited pilot began in Sep 21 in the ranks of SAC to Cpl. The pilot sees 33 personnel across 17 units enrolled on to the full HPTP programme in order to test and evaluate the programme ahead of a potential wider roll-out.



"Really supportive of this initiative – I believe there is much more the RAF can do to manage its talent pool."

RAF Talent Toolkit

The level of time and effort that is invested into the development of our people should not be left to chance. Whilst many line managers in the RAF are exceptional talent managers, either through natural ability or through effort and experience, for others it does not come naturally. The RAF Talent Toolkit which launched in Jul 21 seeks to fill this gap, ensuring that all line managers have access to the same tools and knowledge and opportunity to provide parity of investment in the talent of their people.

Whilst the toolkit initially launched as a PDF document, this is a live tool that will undergo constant evaluation and refinement with future editions intended to be delivered through a more interactive app based product in due course.



The toolkit assists line managers in undertaking open and honest talent conversations with their staff and seeks to compliment, rather than replace the existing feedback loops that exist within the appraisal cycle. The Talent Toolkit is not subject to the same rank caveats of the SJAR system and as such Cpls are encouraged to undertake talent conversations with their subordinates.

The Talent Toolkit is now live, and available to all line managers to assist them in undertaking honest talent conversations with their staff. For more details please see the RAF Talent Comms Page.

For more information please contact: Air-COSPersTalentResearch@mod.gov.uk

And finally.....

A look behind the scenes of CASLC21

Whilst it may have looked like CASLC21 happened by magic there was a lot that went on behind the scenes to make it the success it was.

Planning started about 12 months before delivery with the identification of dates, venues, and conference themes. These were refined over the next few months as speakers were identified and the raft of admin support tasks were started. Accommodation was booked, meals arranged, the venue recce'd. Technical rehearsals took place, filming then occurred and the whole thing choreographed. This was not without a hic-up or two! Ground rush to the day saw some major changes as presenters were suddenly unavailable, and as replacements were sought, we undertook some final editing.

On the day, the best laid plans were still challenged by minor technical issues and admin challenges. Whilst Gp Capt Keith presented the image of a consummate professional, the swan like demeanour we all saw on camera was nearly always accompanied by the mad paddling behind the scenes as the team tested, adjusted, and readjusted, cameras, lighting sound and connectivity as well as

rallying guest speakers and panel members whilst ensuring total silence around the studio. This was not an easy challenge in a building full of talented musicians with a mindboggling array of musical instruments.

Local knowledge is critical and this year we were delighted to be hosted by the Band of the RAF Regiment and the Central Band of the RAF who offered the use of their excellent facilities as our makeshift studio. Notwithstanding this incursion into their building, they also kindly provided a local project officer in the guise of Sgt Louise Dean who was ably supported by three members of the Band, Sgt Ellen Driscoll, SAC Chris James and SAC Sarah Smith. The Station Commander at RAF Northolt also offered support from her personnel and we quickly roped in the Acting Station Warrant Officer, WO Ben Moore, to ensure smooth passage of VIP guests onto the unit and into the venue as well as help us resolve local admin issues.

However, not all the activity centred around the conference venue. Wg Cdr 'JD' Davies and Mrs Carole Ross, acting as rear party at HQ Tedder, fielded a whole host of

calls and queries on the day, as well as acting as our connectivity and quality assurance panel.

A major challenge when executing a hybrid conference with a healthy balance of pre-recorded speakers, live virtual presentations and studio panels is technology. Technology can either be your best friend or your worst enemy! Whilst we were fortunate to escape with only the occasional hic-up, we could not have achieved this without the technical knowhow of Mr Paul Saxby and Ms Linda Lowing from the RAFC Cranwell Media Team who filmed, edited, reedited, and made us all look good on camera. FS Gaz Cooper and Sgt 'Quinnie' Quinlan from the RAF Honington Force Protection Centre enabled the conference to be broadcast across the RAF Whole Force community and selected external partners. Their skills, and patience, were a testament to their professionalism.

As the accolades flow and we pause for reflection on what went well and what needs to be improved upon, the decision making process commences for CASLC22 – see you there!







The Park Fellowship is open to all Regular RAF personnel, regardless of rank. The Fellowship is for part-time study at a UK university to undertake a masters-level qualification in a leadership related area. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate how their dissertation will be of benefit to the Service.

Find out more today from:
WO Mark Willis | WO Tedder Academy of Leadership
Trenchard Hall | RAFC Cranwell
Email: mark.willis552@mod.gov.uk

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New RAF Mentoring Platform



Q | Do you want to be a **MENTOR** or a **MENTEE** within the organisation?

A | If the answer is **yes**, join the **RAFMentorMe** platform [**here**](#)



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THE TAL PERFORMANCE ROOM

Tedder Academy of Leadership (TAL) have created a 'TAL Performance Room' that is exclusive to RAF WF personnel. The working area covers subjects such as Leadership, Resilience, Mental Health, Mindset, Culture, Coaching, Performance Intelligence etc, it also exclusively gives access to the 'Ask an Expert' facility that gives one-to-one access to a Performance Expert.

Performance is our passion and we wanted to create something where we share everything we know.

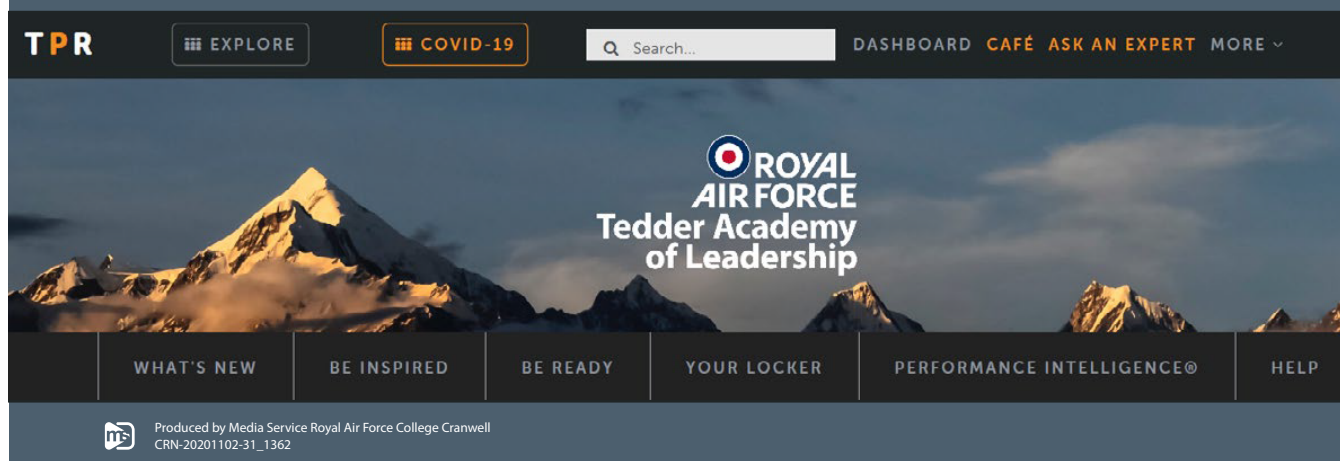
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DECISION MAKING: WHAT INFLUENCES US?

- Interpreting Risk
- Sense Making in Ambiguity
- The Power of Mindset

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