

BEING A RESULTS DRIVER

EXTRACT: CHAPTER 8

MASTER EXPERT

**HOW TO USE EXPERTSHIP TO
ACHIEVE PEAK PERFORMANCE,
SENIORITY AND INFLUENCE IN
A TECHNICAL ROLE**

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“There are two kinds of people, those who do the work and those who take the credit. Try to be in the first group; there is less competition there.”

Indira Gandhi

CHAPTER | 08 |

Being a Results Driver

How do we ensure we get the right things done, for the right reasons, in the right order, so we have maximum impact?

IN THIS CHAPTER, WE WILL EXPLORE:

- What are the key contributing factors to getting things done, and what skills and processes should we deploy?
 - How do we make decisions, and is it the way we imagine?
 - How do we build the capability to inspire colleagues to action?
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THE THIRD EXPERT ROLE in the Personal Impact capability is that of **Results Driver**. This expert role deals with the extent to which experts demonstrate a results orientation, combining advanced prioritization, on-time delivery of agreed outcomes and value creation.

The behaviors at each level of Expertship for this expert role are described in Figure 8.1.

At an immature level, experts tend to deliver acceptable results or productivity in line with expectations. They consider the interests of both themselves and others. Strongly task-focused at this level, they tend to take responsibility for allocated tasks. It's likely that, at an immature level, experts will still be learning to manage their own time effectively.

Experts derailing in this capability are routinely making excuses for lack of delivery. They may well consider their own interests above all other interests

and be mostly focused on their own agenda. Derailing experts here will regularly blame other colleagues or departments for unachieved outcomes. They may prefer to work alone and may fail to maintain effective contact with the rest of the team. Or they may suffer from paralysis by analysis if they feel they don't have enough data or evidence, and they'll sometimes refuse to make decisions until every last piece of available evidence from anywhere in the world is gathered and considered. In the meantime, the world is passing them by.

The Master Expert, on the other hand, strives relentlessly for results and delivers real-world outcomes. The consideration they show for stakeholders goes far beyond immediate departmental colleagues and themselves, taking into account the interests and agendas of the wider organization and customers. Experts operating at the highest level take ownership for the achievement of both technical and corresponding business outcomes. They manage their time effectively, focusing on important and urgent matters but favoring the important. In order to achieve this level of impact and value creation, they tend to regularly and artfully deploy the courage to have timely, transformative conversations with colleagues.

What Generates Results?

AS EVERY EXPERT KNOWS, consistently getting the results we want isn't easy. There are so many barriers, such as distractions, competing agendas and requests for resources, and time pressures, all of which make focusing on the key objectives very difficult. Sometimes, we feel it's impossible. The simple act of getting the right things done in the right order can be very taxing.

“The simple act of getting the right things done in the right order is very taxing.”

In the next few chapters, we'll explore some critical enterprise skills that Master Experts use to make a substantial impact and get things done.

In this chapter, we'll explore the ability to make decisions and inspire people to take action.

In Chapter 9, we'll explore the Expert Energy Engine, which is the ability to successfully manage our time and energy. In our programs, our participants consistently tell us that this concept is one of the biggest takeaways for them.

In Chapter 10, we'll explore the subtle but critical art of saying “no,” without actually using the word “no.” It isn't possible to prioritize unless we're saying “yes” to some projects and tasks and “no” to others.

Capability: PERSONAL IMPACT

Expert Role: RESULTS DRIVER



MASTER EXPERT

- Relentlessly drives results and delivers real-world outcomes.
- Considers the interests of the wider organization and customers.
- Takes ownership for technical and associated business outcomes.
- Manages time effectively to focus on important and urgent matters but still favors the important.
- Deploys courage in having transformative conversations with colleagues.



EXPERT

- Frequently engages beyond minimum requirements.
- Considers the interests of self, others and the organization.
- Takes responsibility for allocated technical outcomes.
- Manages time effectively to focus on important and urgent matters in equal measure.
- Helps others manage time and priorities.



SPECIALIST

- Delivers acceptable results or productivity in line with expectations.
- Considers the interests of self and others.
- Takes responsibility for allocated tasks.
- Learning to manage their own time effectively.

- Constantly makes excuses for lack of delivery.
- Paralysis by analysis—unable to make a decision.
- Considers the interests of self above all other interests, focused on own agenda.
- Generally blames other colleagues or departments for unachieved outcomes.
- Prefers to work alone and can fail to maintain effective contact with the rest of the team.



DERAILING

FIGURE 8.1: Results Driver Behaviors

In Chapter 11, we'll explore the key Master Expert skill of having courageous conversations in an effective and timely manner.

This is the ability to find sufficient time, apply energy to tasks, make the right decisions, and inspire our colleagues to contribute, and it's also the courage to call out colleagues who aren't contributing. All of these skills are the building blocks that enable Master Experts to excel at driving results.

In many instances, they might appear to be things we already know or feel we already should know. Who hasn't, at some stage, done a course or read a book on time management? Making decisions just comes naturally, right? After all, don't we already have a reputation for telling it like it is and calling out colleagues directly for poor thinking, discipline or work?

Perhaps, but in the next few pages, we'll all audit ourselves and question whether we're carrying out these tasks at best practice level?

“The decisions we make are far more complex than they seem when you consider the processing involved.”

In our experience, the advice in the next few chapters have the power to change your working life, and perhaps even your personal life, forever.

Let's begin with decision-making.

Advanced Decision-Making

WHAT MAKES DECISION-MAKING ADVANCED?

There are a range of measures in our minds that make a decision-making process advanced:

- Knowing what we have decided.
- Ensuring everyone shares the same understanding as to what has been decided and have bought into the plan.
- Everyone knows why it has been decided and accepts the rationale to be sound. This implies that we can describe the decision-making process and explain what options were not chosen, as well as articulating which options were chosen.
- The ability to describe the decision-making criteria applied, as well as the underlying assumptions, contingencies and dependencies of making the decision.
- Being able to assess objectively, at a later date, whether the decision was a good one. Having an understanding of why it was or wasn't a good decision. This might involve checking our criteria and assumptions to identify whether they were the right ones. This also implies that, at

this later date, we can remember why we made the decision. For more complex or important decisions, did we document our process?

This entire process might sound like it's a little over-engineered, right? Few of us think we have the time for such painstaking and thorough thinking.

However, for smaller decisions, it turns out that most of us can find the time to think things through, which saves us time in the long run.

Michelle was a senior marketing executive at a fast-global moving consumer goods firm. She was super-successful at building great campaigns, fostering positive distributor relationships, and helping drive the organization's key brands forward. As a consequence, Michelle was asking to step into the country manager role and needed to recruit someone to replace her as marketing director.

Simple, eh? Well, perhaps not so simple. Most recruiters will tell you that an incumbent trying to hire their replacement is fraught with danger. Firstly, we tend to look for a facsimile of ourselves, when that is probably not what the organization needs as we already have one copy of us. Secondly, we tend to look for the finished article—the version of ourselves that is ready to be CEO rather than the version of ourselves we were when we stepped into that more senior role for the first time. We find it very hard to remember *that version* of ourselves, or perhaps we don't want to.

We met Michelle after she had hired a replacement named Joanne. Michelle felt she had made a mistake and was seeking to exit Joanne and start all over again. We asked for some examples of where Joanne was significantly underperforming. She described some key media-selection decisions on a major campaign where, according to Michelle, the choices took far too long to make and ended up being “all wrong.” We asked Michelle to share with us her decision-making process for selecting media choices A (her own) over media choices B (Joanne's).

“That snap decision you made—was it really a ‘snap’ decision?”

“I just made it,” Michelle initially told us. “I mean, it's obvious you would choose options A over options B.” When we asked her why, Michelle immediately listed out seven complex reasons why she would choose A over B, including the right target audience, the right volume of audience, the right quality of editorial, the right price point, the opportunity to get editorial and competitions featuring their products, and so on. These were Michelle's decision-making criteria. We asked Michelle why she had chosen those criteria. She told us it was years of experience of running hundreds of campaigns.

This decision-making at the speed of light is a phenomenon we often see among very experienced experts in their field. From the outside, it appears as if it's a simple process, but it's actually very complex processing of multiple options and data points, loaded with judgments about what worked in the past and what didn't, and why. These are all compressed into, in Michelle's case, a frown, some notations on a file, and then a decision.

Readers will discern what came next. We asked Michelle whether Joanne had access to all of the same past data points and decision-making criteria. (“No.”) We asked Michelle whether Joanne was as experienced as Michelle. (“Well, clearly not.”) We asked Michelle whether she had taken Joanne through all of this gathered experience prior to tasking her with choosing the media for this campaign. (“No.”) Why not? (“It would have taken far too long. I'm busy.”) Ah. This is a common story. We deal with the ability to really master *knowledge transfer* in Chapters 46 to 49.

The reason we tell this story here is to demonstrate that decision-making by experts is actually quite complex, but it's also very rapid. It doesn't seem like lots of time was spent choosing option A or B, but actually, years of accumulated experience automatically feed into the decision-making process. Think of a snap decision you might have made in the last week or so. Was it really a snap decision? “There are significant benefits to using a decision-making grid.”

“There are significant benefits to using a decision-making grid.”

On the one hand, Michelle has made the decision that Joanne isn't up to the role she has been hired for. On the other hand, Michelle hasn't thought about how much help Joanne might need to make good early decisions about media selections. Both of these things are actually wrong.

Making Complex Decisions

IF MICHELLE WANTED TO effectively explain to Joanne how she had made the decision, the best way of doing so would be to develop a decision-making Grid design to help her make this decision (see Figure 8.2).

A decision-making grid lays out the decision-making criteria, providing a voting system that allows decision-makers to compare different options and thus reach a decision. If we examine the design of the grid, we can see exactly how it's done. This grid can be deployed to make any decision.

Criteria. Arranged at the top of the chart, the criteria are the tests that options need to pass in order to be selected. We've added in what might

have been in Michelle's mind. Target Audience "reach" (traffic), followed by cost per thousand, which is a typical measure of digital advertising cost, and so on. If we were making a decision about buying a residential property, we might include the number of bedrooms, whether or not it has a garden, if it's close to schools, shops, transport and so on. Making sure you have the right criteria, and listing them in order of importance from left to right, is essential to making a good decision. When we're purchasing an expensive item, for example, we might imagine functionality and cost are the main criteria, but often things like cost of maintenance, product life, cost of future upgrades and general running costs can be just as important.

Scores. Having ascertained the rating each media option has across all the criteria, Michelle can now add up the scores. She is using a simple system (2 points for a High, 1 point for a Medium, and no points for a Low rating). Her weighting means that any rating in columns 1 and 2 get double scores. The end result is that Media B is the clear winner, scoring 15 points.

"Many experts bristle at the suggestion that their decisions are anything but objective."

There are significant benefits to using a decision-making grid for an expert, particularly when we're making complex decisions. By creating a grid, we have a tool that can:

- Help us make the decision in the first place, and this is particularly true if a group is making a decision.
- Help us understand the relative value of the criteria we should be using to make the decision.
- Explain the decision more easily to a wider group, and this is particularly useful when explaining a decision to a non-technical group.
- Help us build the decision-making capability of others (such as Joanne).
- Have a documented reference point as to why we made the decision, which we can refer back to later.

For many of our decisions, we have to make assumptions, so a documented grid is a good way to capture those assumptions and re-check them later on. Often, when we make a decision that doesn't turn out right, we struggle to remember how we made the decision and have no real way of figuring out how we made the wrong decision. With the help of a decision-making grid, we can see clearly which assumptions worked out and which didn't.

Capability: PERSONAL IMPACT
Decision-making Grid

		CRITERIA MEASURES	OPTIONS		
		High, Medium and Low rating definition H - 2 pts, M = 1 pt, L = 0 pts	MEDIA A	MEDIA B	MEDIA C
	CRITERIA				
1	TARGET AUDIENCE REACH (TRAFFIC)	H: Over 1 million M: 0.5 to 1.0 million L: Below 0.5 million WEIGHTED (X2)	M	H	L
2	COST PER THOUSAND	H: Less than \$1 CPC M: \$1 to \$3 CPC L: Over \$3 CPC WEIGHTED (X2)	H	H	L
3	BRAND ALIGNMENT	H: Upmarket M: Mid-market L: Mid- to low-market	L	H	H
4	PREMIUM PLACEMENT	H: Yes, available and exclusive M: Yes, available (non-excl) L: Not available	H	M	H
5	FREQUENCY	H: Audience turnover 8 x a month or more M: 4 x to 8 x a month L: Below 4 x a month	M	M	M
6	EDITORIAL PLACEMENT	H: Yes, available unpaid M: Yes, available but paid L: Not available	M	M	H
7	COMPETITIONS	H: Yes, available unpaid M: Yes, available but paid L: Not available	M	H	M
		SCORES	11	15	8

FIGURE 8.2: Decision-Making Grid

One of the authors worked some years back with an executive team that had made a decision to spend \$100,000 on an initiative, which then didn't achieve the goal. A year later, when reviewing the decision (a meeting at which the author was in attendance), the executive team argued for over an hour about why they had made the decision a year before, what criteria had been used, and even what outcomes they were expecting. It turned out that several executives had thought the decision was made to achieve different goals. If they had used a decision-making grid, everyone would have had clarity, both then and when reviewing the decision a year later.

Is Gut Feeling Valid?

ANOTHER CRITICAL INSIGHT ABOUT decision-making that we need to understand is that regardless of the decision, very often, we're making emotional decisions about issues without realizing it. This is the "gut feeling" we mentioned previously. Gut feelings are real. They're a store of emotions that tell us whether option A feels right, or whether option B does. Daniel Goleman does a great job of explaining this simply in his talk to Google University, which you'll find on YouTube.

Many experts bristle at the suggestion that their decisions are anything but objective, evidence-based, and untainted by unconscious bias of some form. But the data supports the view that gut feeling is a crucial factor in the way we make decisions.

This is exactly why deploying emotional reasoning, one of the six emotional intelligences (see Chapter 5), is very important for experts. Experts with a high emotional reasoning capability have the ability to tune into those gut feelings and determine whether it's appropriate to apply it to this particular decision or not. And that is harder than it sounds.

Emotional Reasoning

THIS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE REFERS both to a thought process as well as the attempt to convey such thoughts, whether verbally or in writing. There are a number of ways in which immature experts may exhibit insufficient emotional reasoning:

- A failure to anticipate (or recognize as legitimate) others' likely reactions to our assertions.
- Communication that fails to adequately engage or inspire.
- Proposals and business cases that may be fact-laden but are bereft of passion or strategic connection.
- Emotionally driven decisions that fail to account for personal bias.

Facts are safe, finite, and predictable. Yet as we have now described several times, research suggests that all decisions involve the emotional brain, too. Ignoring or simply failing to master the emotional dimensions of decision-making means we'll be blind to these significant influences in the decision-making process.

Experts with advanced emotional reasoning:

- Are more persuasive, influential and inspiring because they can explain the *why* behind the decision, not just the *what*. They're also prepared to take the time to do so and will not move forward until colleagues understand the overall context of the decision. This builds buy-in and commitment.
- Are more articulate about subjects outside of their technical knowledge. When it comes to making a decision about asking for funding for a specific project, the Master Expert will see beyond the technical case for the investment and be able to link it to corporate strategy and organizational benefits. They'll be thinking about how other senior executives will be thinking about their proposal and will shape it accordingly.
- Make more rounded decisions, taking into account both the salient facts as well as their and others' feelings. Where are our colleagues' opinions and feelings coming from? What are they based upon? Do they perhaps have some insight or data that we don't have?

Is it possible to build up our emotional reasoning? There are a number of actions we can take, and there is a lot of literature around this topic now. Some simple techniques include:

- We can make a deliberate point of gauging our own and others' feelings as part of the decision-making process.
- We can put ourselves in the shoes of others and intentionally try to make a case that would be compelling from that frame of reference.
- We can develop a comprehensive vocabulary that describes emotions so that we can recognize and describe all shades of feelings.

Inspiring Engagement, Commitment and Change

THE ULTIMATE CAPABILITY OF a successful Results Driver is being able to convince colleagues to engage and commit to the path being proposed. Inspiration means that our colleagues *want* to follow the path we have formulated (often in association with others), which is a powerful motivator that ensures things get done.

Inspiration and engagement are the mature fruits of all the other aspects of emotional intelligence. They allow us to positively influence others'

thoughts and feelings and then prompt them to shift their behaviors in accordance with the organizational or project goals. When experts lack this capacity, they:

- Rub others the wrong way, triggering their resistance.
- Fail to motivate others to change and even trigger others' demotivation or resistance.
- Work in isolation more than collaborating or compete excessively or inappropriately.
- Become over-reliant on formal authority structures (escalation), policies and systems rather than practicing the art of persuading people to do things on their own merits.

Experts who are strong in this capability:

- Tend to have greater influence.
- Develop lasting and productive/rewarding relationships.
- Negotiate win-win outcomes and resolve conflict constructively. This includes being open to shifting their own views if presented with compelling evidence that they may be wrong.
- Collaborate effectively.

Authenticity

BEING AUTHENTIC IS VITAL if we're to foster trust in others. Subconsciously, we're all reading others' intentions and determining whether or not those intentions are honorable. Our antennae for picking up something fake or disingenuous are highly developed, even though the process is typically subconscious, primal and instinctive. When we feel that someone is being genuine and is extending trust to us by being themselves, then we tend to be at ease around them. If we perceive the opposite, we tend to be guarded.

There are a number of ways in which a lack of authenticity can show up:

- Coming across as closed-off or guarded through a lack of personality, being non-expressive, withdrawn, or overly private.
- Non-committal and unwilling to take a stand or to "get their hands dirty," or being aloof, distant or disinterested.
- Untrustworthy or lacking integrity.
- Closed-minded.
- Passive-aggressive.
- Evasive.

Becoming authentic involves being comfortable expressing oneself, including one's feelings, in an unedited fashion. It's about being candid in a manner that others appreciate and that fosters trust. Candor, for example, in

sharing our decision-making grid to explain decisions and policy positions. We're willing to take risks and be vulnerable, thus signaling that we're trusting and operating in a safe environment.

Experts who have significantly developed their capacity to be authentic:

- Earn others' trust more rapidly.
- Create an environment wherein information flows easily.
- Engage in courageous conversations.

How we can develop our authenticity:

- Practice the courageous conversations methodology detailed later in Chapter 11.
- Find a way to put what we're feeling into words and take a risk in disclosing it.
- Take responsibility and avoid the temptation to blame.
- Clearly state our expectations and provide timely and courageous feedback.

TAKING ACTION

Growing Our Results Driver Skills

IF THIS IS AN expert role in which you believe you could add greater value, here are some high-level suggestions for actions to take:

▶ PRACTICE A STEP-BY-STEP PLANNING PROCESS

Without a planning discipline that prioritizes high-value strategic activities over those that are merely urgent, experts get caught up in the day-to-day demands at the expense of long-term effectiveness. Questions we might like to ask ourselves:

- Am I getting trapped in humdrum day-to-day activities instead of acting strategically?
- Have I assessed what my key strategic priorities are? Are they expressed as meaningful, proactive, well-defined, high-impact goals in each of my most important roles?
- Have I adopted a step-by-step planning process that enables me to assess the value I'm adding and where my time and energy shouldn't be invested?
- What conversations are needed with key stakeholders to reset expectations and communicate my larger directives?
- Have I identified a sensible operating rhythm for my role?

▶ TAKE OWNERSHIP OF IMPROVING KEY ORGANIZATIONAL RESULTS

When experts don't seem aware of or committed to improving organizational results, we're seen as marginal players. To avoid this, we need to become (and be seen as) active players and owners of key organizational metrics. Questions we might like to ask ourselves:

- Which organizational KPIs do I have the ability to influence?
- How aligned are my contributions with creating a positive impact? How could I improve this alignment?
- How does the organization currently track and report any uplifts in those metrics that I can reasonably attribute to my inputs? Do I

have visibility of these measures? Do I measure and report my own performance against them? If not, why not?

- Do I need to develop internal, forward-looking metrics to measure my contribution to key organization goals?

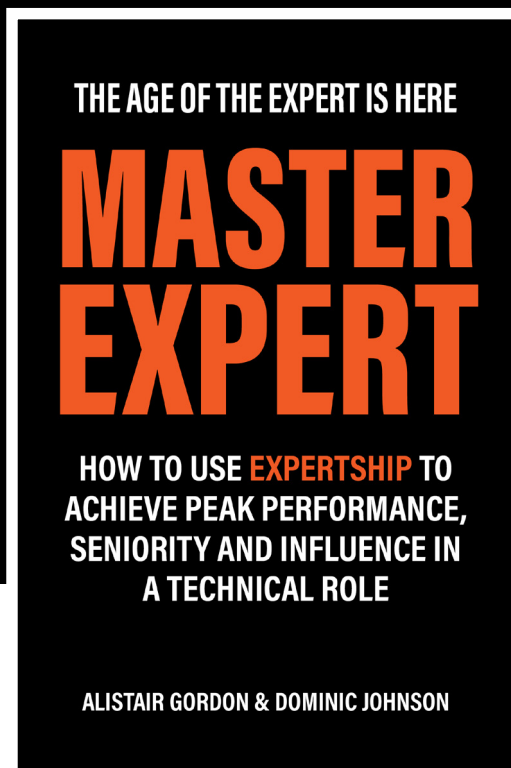
▶ ACT WHEN COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS ARE NECESSARY

Failing to tackle challenging conversations in a timely and effective way means that issues often end up unaddressed, including our needs not being met. This can lead to resentment and looking weak and ineffectual. Questions we might like to ask ourselves:

- What is my default position when it comes to courageous conversations? Do I refrain from expressing my concerns or needs, or do I find a way to express my needs, concerns and observations in a manner that balances courage and consideration?
- What key courageous conversations have I been putting off, and why? What has got in the way of tackling them confidently and effectively?
- What courageous conversations have I had recently, and how did they go? Effectively? Or did they damage relationships and my personal brand? If so, why? How could I improve my delivery and effectiveness?
- Do I spend time using models, such as the I-GRROW (Chapter 48) and OFFICER (Chapter 11) models to plan these conversations?
- What opportunities are there for me to immediately increase my influence and impact, including the timely resolution of issues?

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