

Rational vs Irrational Decision Making

How to Make Rational Decisions

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Gentlemen, Antonio here. Okay. We're still in the science of style. We're going to talk about rational versus irrational decision making.

Now, there are a number of assumptions out there. Growing up as a guy that read a lot, I was a big fan of Star Trek, Star Wars, all that science fiction stuff, I think it was Spock that really intrigued me, just how logical he was all the time. He seems human, he's half human, but on the other hand, he's always rational.

I like to think of myself as rational. I would have people tell me, "Antonio, you're so analytical," "Antonio, you pay attention and you read everything and you pay attention to the details," and I started to believe that, so I assume that I'm a pretty rational person.

Then you start reading world history and you realize how the world leaders had nuclear weapons during the Cuban Missile Crisis and rationally, they knew that it wouldn't make sense for us to destroy each other. Our leaders, I assume, are rational.

My teacher, I assume she's rational. She's out there looking at all of the students, but she's grading us on something that pretty much it seems like it's going to make sense like she has to follow those numbers. There is a right and there's a wrong. I love the math. I love science because there were clear-cut answers, so I assume that others behave rationally.

I assume that I behave rationally when really, we are not rational beings. We are driven by emotion and oftentimes, everything we're doing is a habit. In fact, we don't even think a lot of the times when we're taking action. We wake up in the morning. We shower. We shave. We get dressed. We start driving our car. We eat breakfast. We cook. Oftentimes, we aren't thinking much in any of this. If you could think of a computer, this is basically a little bit of memory that we're running on habit and we're doing things as we've always done them.

Now, why do we do this? We do this to conserve energy. Willpower, you've only got a limited amount per day and it's one of those things that you could run out, so our bodies naturally try to keep decision making to a minimum. What happens is we fall back on habits and those habits are oftentimes based off of our understanding of history, our perceived understanding of nature and the way things work around us, and our perception of what are the facts. What happens is though we've made a number of I would say biases. We stereotype things. In many ways, we're prejudiced and that's just the way we are and it is irrational.

So having said all that, the reason I'm bringing this up here in the personal image blueprint is if you think about it, you go out there and you're walking around and then you come off as someone -- let's just say you're going to the grocery store. You're not presented well and you see someone that you're interested in. You want to begin the conversation with her, but if you don't present yourself as someone successful, as someone worth her time, why is she going to give you the time?

You're going in to work on a Saturday and you're just coming from the gym. Now, it shouldn't matter. Come on, this person has met you many times, but if you're wearing that sleeveless tank top, torn up shirt, maybe you haven't washed it all week, beat-up shoes, that security guard who you assume has seen them, he should know. "Why else would someone be in here?"

You're making some assumptions and rationally, he should know. You've got your keys and you're moving around, but you may find that, "Why in the world did I get stopped?" or "When my boss saw me, he asked me, 'Hey, if you're going to come to the office, you need to dress appropriately.' Why would he embarrass me like that? Doesn't he know that rationally, no one else is here and it shouldn't make a difference?"

The thing is we fall back on those things that are built into us, so it's almost primal responses. We need to understand that other people aren't going to act rationally in most scenarios. So they see you coming up, they're going to make a quick decision, fight or flight. You're walking up and you're going to ask someone a question, simple directions, downtown Chicago. Are you dressed like someone that they perceive that could actually rob them or are you dressed like someone that appears to be no threat, a typical business person or tourist, and they would like to engage?

One thing I find is that a woman asking directions oftentimes is going to get a better response, at least in our experience, or me with a family, me holding my daughter. I have found that people just treat me different when I'm with a child. I think because instantly they perceive me as "This guy is no threat at all" and understanding that gives me a leg up because you start to realize that all of these irrational decisions that are being made, in a sense, if you understand it and you play the game, you can actually leverage this to your advantage.

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In the example, we're going to get into a lot more things and hopefully make a live presentation because the live presentation, I have a speed dating example. I'm going to talk about how when people go in with a checklist, it gets thrown right out the window. We also talk about irrational assumptions. I've got a video that I want you to go check out, another support video.

This one is Susan Boyle over at -- I think it's Britain's Got Talent. It's a very interesting case study to watch because why did we assume -- when you go watch the video, why did everyone assume that she couldn't sing? Why did everyone assume that she's going to fall flat on her face? Those types of things make for a great story whenever someone defies the odds,

whenever it just breaks the mold, but here's the deal. If that happens all the time, why do we even trust our assumptions? Well, we trust our assumptions because that doesn't happen all the time. Most of the time, if someone looks or acts like Susan Boyle, they're not going to just start belting out songs like she did.

We trust our assumptions because most of the time, they are right. Now, it's unfortunate when they're wrong, but in order to survive, in order to make our way throughout this life, it's better for us to err on the sense of being right and most of the time, it may be offending some or not having those connections than for us to be overly trustful, for us not to be alarmed or for us not to respond to flight when someone looks like they're going to mug us when really, they're just unfortunately improperly dressed.

The last thing I want to hit on -- and we talk about it in the article in more detail -- is cognitive dissonance. I think this is really important that there is a discomfort that we actually feel whenever we have to admit that we're wrong about an assumption, and this is why people don't want to do it. It's a slight negative feeling, but it's something that we just don't -- it hurts to admit that we were wrong, that we made a false decision and that we have to go back on our first assumption.

And because of this, because we understand that there's this cognitive dissonance, we should -- that's why first impressions are so powerful because if you nail a first impression and a person thinks great things of you, it's going to be hard for them to go back and say, "Gosh, I totally misjudged that person. I was a fool to think that they were qualified for this job." I'm saying you should be qualified for the job, but it's better to have all those things for you and to be in that position of people having a great impression. It's going to be very hard for them to dislodge.

Maybe there's gossip going around that, "This guy is trying to get us all out of a job. He's working hard. He's showing up early, staying here late." Other people will come in and defend you and say, "I think he really just wants to catch up. This guy, he's told me his goal and I believe him. I don't know why. I just get a good feeling from him because he feels that he just wants to be a bigger contributor to the team and hopes that he'll be someone that we can really rely on." Those are the kinds of things where this is going to become very, very useful.

All right, guys, I've got more in the science of style. Don't forget, I'm going to link you over to a series of studies and we've got a lot more coming here in the blueprint. Take care. Bye.

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