



THINK, TALK, TAKE ACTION... Why Direction Matters

Today's digital watches and clocks may ultimately make the terms "clockwise" and "counterclockwise" dated, but for now that sense of "move towards the right" when we think about time still seems to work.



As you look at this clock, ask yourself "What is the current standard decision-making process at our organization?" Note first that the clock gives equal weight to thinking, talking and taking action.

THINK comes first.

What if the way your team could approach new issues began with a well thought out framework to guide the discussion? Some steps to help you think more critically:

- Start with an open mind: Frame the issue as a question. Examine what you already know, what resources you have, and what time-line is realistic and required. Access more information if needed. Keep asking yourself questions.
- Consider: What principles and values should guide your decisions?
- Visualize: Create a picture such as symbols, a diagram, or a road map that makes the issue into something that "shows" the thinking you've done so far.
- Prepare for conversation with colleagues: Using your picture as a part of this exercise, get the essence of your thinking onto one page. How will you consider all the variables, and in what ways will you measure success?

TALK is next.

I probably would have called the second section of the clock "have a conversation," rather than just "talk," but it's easier to remember when you use alliteration. The "talk" segment involves the team that will be included in the action step. My personal bias is to dialogue with the team before decisions are made. If however, you have made a decision, the dialogue is likely to be more Q & A and factual. In either case, when you send out the meeting notice (and again at the beginning of the meeting), be sure you clearly communicate the purpose of the conversation, the expected end result and the amount of time allotted. Own the responsibility of managing the conversation. Don't end it without clarity about action --- who is doing what, and when. Make clear where they can turn if they're not sure of something. Reaffirm how success will be measured.

TAKE ACTION at the end.

Moving clockwise by thinking, talking and then taking action creates a much different way of accomplishing the biggest of projects and the smallest of actions. It helps avoid poor decisions, confusion, actions that have to be redone. It keeps the focus on the big picture AND the details all at once.