

“Where Were You On Friday?”

A Management Decision-making Action Maze

Pre-purchase Sample

- What is an Action Maze?
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- Sample Decision Analysis and Evaluation

What is an Action Maze?

An Action Maze is a model-based, decision-making management exercise.

Each delegate receives information, which describes a situation that he might encounter within the context of his job. Together with the information on the situation, the delegate is also given a number of decisions that he might make in order to deal with the situation. Four to six options are the most usual. Depending on the decision option that he chooses, a new situation is described, which can realistically be expected to occur, as a result of his decision. The process continues, with the delegate selecting a decision option against each succeeding situation that is revealed.

Because of the diversity of the decision options offered, the delegate tends to select a route, through the Action Maze, based on his own attitudes, experience and judgement. He follows a pathway, which makes sense to him in terms of his own frame of reference.

The analogy of decision-making to a maze is very appropriate. As in a maze, decisions that a delegate makes, at critical points, lead him in certain directions. If he feels that he has made a mistake, it might be possible for him to retrace his steps, make another decision and pursue an alternative decision route. This could lead him out of the problem. Equally, some decisions commit him to a pathway where he finds it impossible to retrace his steps. Because of the situation, in which he now finds himself, he is often forced to make decisions that he would, otherwise, avoid. It reflects the difficulty of making decisions, in the real world..

Despite the range of decision choices available, the Action Maze is carefully structured, within the exercise model. An exit from the Maze will ultimately be found.

The general session debriefing of the exercise achieve the required learning.

Training Package Contents

The Training Package is delivered to the Client, by e-mail, in four files.

1. Session Leader's Guide

This provides comprehensive details on:

Preparation

Personal Preparation
Photocopying and Overhead Transparencies
Action Maze Staff
Room Layout
Final Preparation Checklist

Running the Action Maze

Timing
Delegates' Arrival and Briefing
Sample Briefing Script
The Action Maze in Progress

After the Action Maze

Completing the Decision Route Summary Sheet
Sample Decision Route Summary Sheet
Analysis and evaluation of delegates' Decision Routes

Debriefing the Action Maze

General Session Review of Action Maze
Individual Performances
Development of Key Learning Points

'Bridge' into selected subject presentation

2. Action Maze Key

The Action Maze Key provides the necessary information to route each delegate from his current decision to the next situation.

3. Decision Sheets

A full set of 41 master copies of the Decision Sheets, required to run the Action Maze.

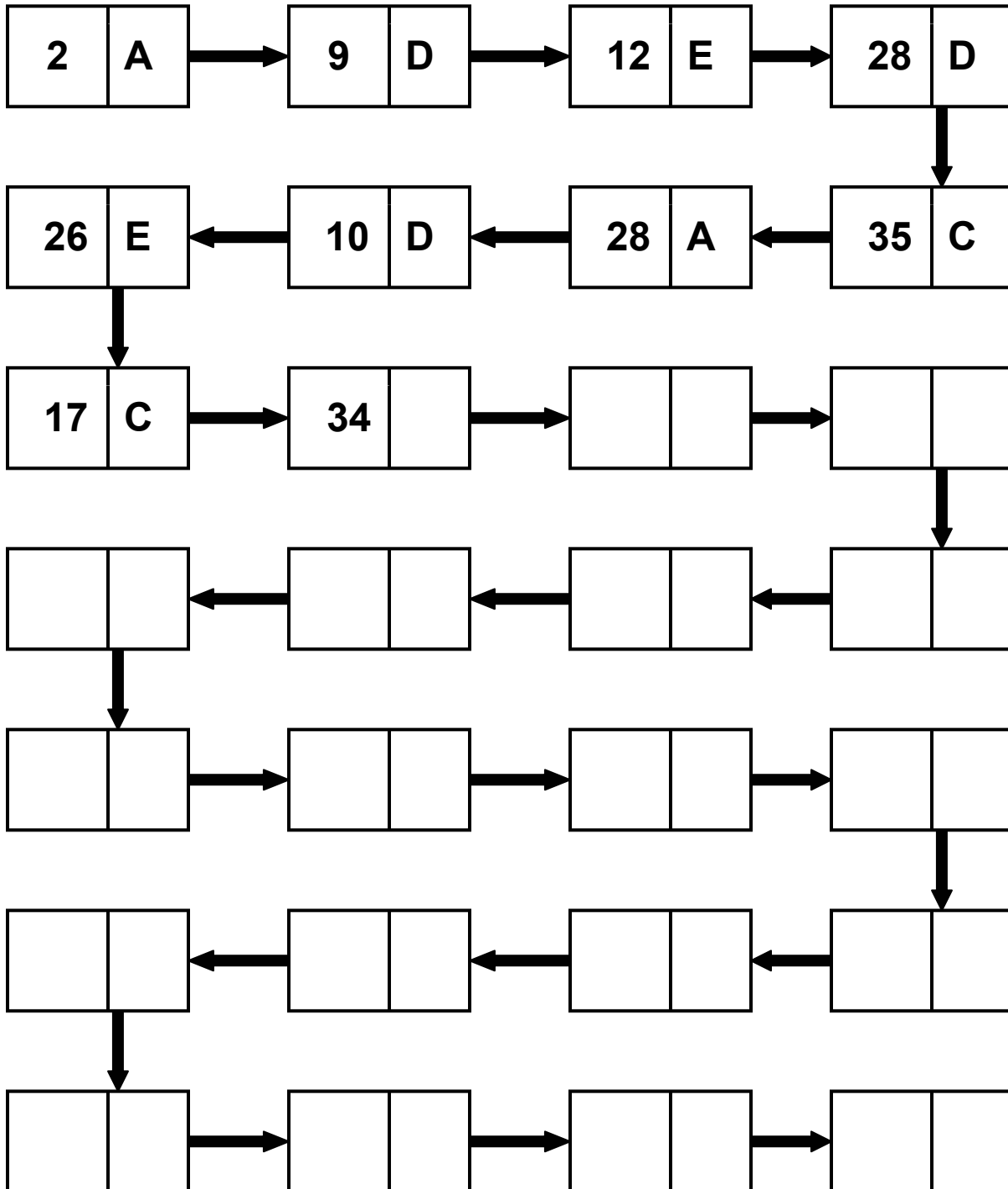
4. Other Materials

File contains all the other photocopying and overhead transparency master copies to run the Action Maze. It also includes the materials for running three potential presentations.

Sample Decision Route Sheet/ Decision Sheets

Decision Route Sheet

Name... *Tony Farino*.....



Decision Sheet 1

Transferred Mike	12
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Statement of the Situation

You are a Sales Manager, in the process of building a sales team. You presently have 10 salesmen, on board. Although it makes life difficult, you have not yet appointed any Sales Team Leaders, preferring to manage the salesmen direct, until the office is fully operational.

Mike Turner is one of the salesmen that you had your eye on for promotion. He was transferred to you from another office, about three months ago, having been with the organisation for two years, overall. Until recently, his sales figures have been consistently good and he has displayed many of the qualities required to head up one of the sales teams that you want to set up.

There is a problem with Mike, however.

Although the salesmen spend most of their time in the field, you insist that they spend Fridays in the office. You have allocated this day to review the activities and results for the past week as well as planning the activities for the week to come. It also gives the salesmen an opportunity to catch up on their paperwork.

Today is Friday and Mike is absent from the office. You are getting concerned because he has not attended on the two previous Fridays, either. This has certainly upset the effective running of the office and, in your opinion, is part of the cause, why you are not achieving your office's sales targets. You feel that you must take some action about the Mike situation.

But, what will you do?

Decision Options

Tick Decision

- | | |
|---|--|
| A. Call Mike aside and have a talk with him. | <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> |
| B. Ask some of the other salesmen in the office, if they know what Mike's problem might be. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C. Discuss the situation with the manager of Mike's previous office. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D. Discuss the situation with your boss. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| E. Transfer Mike, at the next opportunity. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Decision Sheet 2

Your previous decision

You decided to call Mike aside, on his return, and have a talk with him.

The new situation

When you discuss Mike's Friday absences, what general approach will you take?

Decision Options

Tick Decision

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| A. Explain to him the importance of being in the office on Fridays, on the achievement of sales targets. Urge him to do better. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B. Tell him that he must solve his own problems. Your job is to make sure that the office achieves its sales targets. Tell him that he must improve or go. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C. Wait until Mike refers to his Friday absences himself, to avoid embarrassing him | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D. Ask what difficulty he is having. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| E. Tell him that you are going to prepare a warning letter, which will go on his personal, employee file. It will state that you expect to see an improvement in his attendance during the coming month. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| F. Tell Mike that he is fired. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Decision Sheet 9

Your previous decision

You asked Mike what difficulty he is having.

The new situation

Mike says, "It's something of a personal matter. I would rather not talk about it, if you don't mind."

What approach will you take with him now?

Decision Options

Tick Decision

- A. Tell Mike that he is fired. ☐
- B. Ask Mike whether he has really been ill on all of his Friday absences. ☐
- C. Tell him that he must solve his own problems. Your job is To make sure that the office achieves its sales targets. Tell him that he must improve or go. ☐
- D. Tell him that you are going to prepare a warning letter, this will go on his personal employee file, stating that you expect to see an improvement during the coming month. ☐
- E. Say, "It's obvious that you've got some problems, Mike. I don't want to interfere, but I am concerned that your Friday absences continue to affect your sales performance." ☒

Your previous decision

You told Mike that you don't want to interfere in his personal problems, but you are concerned that his Friday absences continue to affect his sales performance.

The new situation

He replies, "Yes; I know you've been concerned about it. It's been worrying me, as well. I'm sorry it's been happening, but it just couldn't be avoided. I'm not sure whether I've mentioned it to you before but I've told my wife that I could lose my job, if it keeps up."

What will your approach be now?

Decision Options

Tick Decision

- A. Say, "I'm glad that you realise how serious this situation is. I hope that you can make your wife see that too. Mike; I hope that you will try to do better." ☐
- B. Say, "You have talked it over with your wife, then?" ☐
- C. Say nothing but continue to listen. ☐
- D. Impress Mike with the serious effects that his Friday absences are having on office business performance. Warn him that you will have to take further action, if he is absent again on either of the next two Fridays. ☒

Your previous decision

You have warned Mike that you will have to take further action if he is absent again on either of the next two Fridays.

The new situation

Mike is in the office on the following Friday.

After your regular sales meeting, the salesmen return to their desks, to prepare their weekly reports for the week just finished and action plans for the coming week. You are sitting in your office, when one of the salesmen rushes in to say that Mike has collapsed. You hurry over to Mike's work station. A number of salesmen are gathered around him, attempting to help.

Mike cannot stop shaking. He is perspiring profusely and complaining of numbness in his left arm. He seems to be on the point of losing consciousness. You call a doctor, immediately. The doctor examines him and confirms that Mike is not having a heart attack. You are relieved because this was your first fear. In fact, Mike is suffering from extreme symptoms of stress. The doctor prescribes a mild tranquiliser and recommends that Mike goes straight home to rest. One of the salesmen volunteers to drive Mike home. Mike was reported to have told the doctor that he had not felt well, before coming to work that morning. He had come into the office because he was afraid that he would lose his job, if he didn't turn up.

He does not return to work until the following Wednesday.

What will you say to Mike on his return?

Decision Options

Tick Decision

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| A. Tell him that, despite his illness, he must solve his own problems. Your job is to make sure that the office achieves its sales targets. He must improve or go. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B. Urge him to do better. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C. Say that you are sorry that he was ill. You don't want to interfere in his personal problems, but you are concerned how his Friday absences continue to affect his sales performance. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| D. Say nothing to Mike. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Your previous decision

You told Mike that you don't want to interfere in his personal problems, but you are concerned that his Friday absences continue to affect his sales performance.

The new situation

He replies, "Yes; I know you've been concerned about it. It's been worrying me, as well. I'm sorry it's been happening, but it just couldn't be avoided. I'm not sure whether I've mentioned it to you before but I've told my wife that I could lose my job, if it keeps up."

What will your approach be now?

Decision Options

Tick Decision

- A. Say, "I'm glad that you realise how serious this situation is. I hope that you can make your wife see that too. Mike; I hope that you will try to do better."
- B. Say, "You have talked it over with your wife, then?"
- C. Say nothing but continue to listen.
- D. Impress Mike with the serious effects that his Friday absences are having on office business performance. Warn him that you will have to take further action, if he is absent again on either of the next two Fridays.



Decision Sheet 28

Your previous decision

You have urged Mike to do better.

The new situation

Mike says, "I'll try to do better".

However, he is absent again on the following Friday. Someone telephones the office, saying that she is his wife. She tells you that Mike is unable to come into the office, because he is ill.

What will you do now?

Decision Options

Tick Decision

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| A. Telephone his home to verify his illness. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B. Send him a 'Get Well' card. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C. Ask some of the other salesmen, in the office, if they know what Mike's problem might be. (if you have not done this before). | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D. Wait until his return to deal with Mike. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| E. Contact the Personnel Department to get some help with the problem. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Your previous decision

You decided to wait until his return to deal with Mike.

The new situation

On Mike's return on Monday, what approach would you take in discussing his most recent absence?

Decision Options

Tick Decision

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| A. Explain, to him, the significance of everyone attending on Fridays on the achievement of sales targets. Urge him to do better. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B. Tell him he must solve his own problems. Your job is to make sure that the office achieves its sales targets. Tell him that he must improve or go. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C. Wait until Mike refers to his Friday absences himself, to avoid embarrassing him. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D. Ask him what difficulty he is having. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| E. Tell him that you are going to prepare a warning letter, which will Go on his personal employee file, stating that you expect to see An improvement in his attendance, during the coming month. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| F. Tell Mike that he is fired. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Your previous decision

You have prepared a warning letter that has gone on Mike's personal employee file, stating that you expect to see an improvement in his attendance during the coming month.

The new situation

Mike is absent for the first two Fridays of the following month.

What will you do now?

Decision Options

Tick Decision

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| A. Warn Mike that you will have to take further action, if he is absent again, on either of the next two Fridays. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B. Wait to see if Mike is absent on either of the next two Fridays. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C. Transfer Mike at the next opportunity. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| D. Tell Mike that you don't want to interfere in his personal problems, but you are concerned how his Friday absences continue to affect his sales performance. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| E. Tell Mike that you hope he will be able to improve his Friday attendances for the rest of the month. Then wait to see if he comes into the office on the remaining two Fridays. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Your last decision

You have transferred Mike, at the next opportunity.

Review

In the space provided below, explain the thinking behind your action, by answering the following questions.

- What overall reason made you take this action with Mike?
- On the basis that Mike's Friday absences will continue, what likely effects do you think it will have on the activities of the office to which he has been transferred?
- How do you feel that you have fulfilled your role as a manager, within the organisation?
- Given the situation again, what alternative action might you have taken and why?

Your response

(Use additional sheets, if you want to extend your response. Include them, when you hand in your document set.)

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Sample Decision Analysis

“Where were you on Friday?”

Action Maze Decision Analysis

Delegate.....*Tony Farino*.....

Decision Sheet	Decision	Tutor's Remarks
2	A	The only opening if you want to obtain the facts about any situation; start by asking the person concerned.
9	D	Again, the direct approach.
12	E	You are still keeping the dialogue open, with your empathetic comment in Decision E.
28	D	This response seems a little out character, considering your apparent wish to listen, in your earlier decisions.
35	C	Mike's illness seems to have softened your approach, somewhat.
28	A	Your relationship with Mike seemed to have been re-established, but selecting Option A, this time, has terminated the dialogue. Option C would have got you more information.
10	D	More absences. You can only wait for Mike to return.
26	E	You decided to formally warn Mike. The disciplinary procedure is for incidences of poor work performance and misconduct, not human relations problems. In any event, it is still usual to get all the relevant facts in disciplinary matters, before proceeding. You have no real information, yet.

Decision Sheet	Decision	Tutor's Remarks
17	C	You decided to transfer Mike at the next opportunity. Why? Is it just too much bother to deal with Mike? He's a good salesman. Isn't he worth the effort?
34		So Mike's gone and his problem with him. You have just abdicated your responsibility and left it to someone else to deal with. A satisfactory outcome?

General Remarks

Here was a case of committing yourself to warning Mike, having no idea what the facts were. This was a human relations matter, not a disciplinary problem. Mike needed support and advice, not censure.

You embarked upon a route that would, inevitably, lead to Mike making his own decision to quit or you having to remove him from the branch, somehow. Remember 'one-way decision gates' from the program? Now, you have transferred him; effectively giving the problem away for some other branch manager to deal with. You have lost a high performing salesman with promotion potential and you still don't know why!

You had the opportunity of 'continuing to listen', four moves in. Had you opted for that route, you would have found out Mike's problem, been able to solve it, kept a good salesman and got out of the Maze in the minimum number of moves.

