

pro's and con's decision-making method

A simple process for decision-making is using the pro's and con's list.

Some decisions are a simple matter of whether to make a change or not, such as moving, taking a new job, or buying something, selling something, replacing something, etc. Other decisions involve number of options, and are concerned more with how to do something, involving a number of choices. Use the brainstorming process to identify and develop options for decision-making and problem-solving.

1. First you will need a separate sheet for each identified option.
2. On each sheet write clearly the option concerned, and then beneath it the headings 'pro's' and 'con's' (or 'advantages' and disadvantages', or simply 'for' and 'against'). Many decisions simply involve the choice of whether to go ahead or not, to change or not; in these cases you need only one sheet.
3. Then write down as many effects and implications of the particular option that you (and others if appropriate) can think of, placing each in the relevant column.
4. If helpful 'weight' each factor, by giving it a score out of three or five points (eg. 5 being extremely significant, and 1 being of minor significance).
5. When you have listed all the points you can think of for the option concerned compare the number or total score of the items/effects/factors between the two columns.
6. This will provide a reflection and indication as to the overall attractiveness and benefit of the option concerned. If you have scored each item you will actually be able to arrive at a total score, being the difference between the pro's and con's column totals. The bigger the difference between the total pro's and total con's then the more attractive the option is.
7. If you have a number of options and have complete a pro's and con's sheet for each option, compare the attractiveness - points difference between pro's and con's - for each option. The biggest positive difference between pro's and con's is the most attractive option.
8. **N.B. If you don't like the answer that the decision-making sheet(s) reflect back to you, it may mean you haven't included all the pro's and con's - especially the emotional ones, or you haven't scored the factors consistently, so re-visit the sheet(s) concerned.**

You will find that writing things down in this way will help you to see things more clearly, become more objective and detached, which will help you to make clearer decisions.

example pro's and con's weighted decision-making sheet

decision option: should I buy a new car?	
pro's	con's
better comfort (3)	cost outlay will mean making sacrifices (5)
lower fuel costs (3)	higher insurance (3)
lower servicing costs (4)	time and hassle to choose and buy it (2)
better for family use (3)	disposal or sale of old car (2)
better reliability (5)	big decisions like this scare and upset me (4)
it'll be a load off my mind (2)	
total 6 pro's, total score 20	total 5 con's, total score 16

On the basis of the pro's and con's, and the weighting applied, in the above example there's a clear overall quantifiable benefit attached to the decision to go ahead and buy a new car. Notice that it's even possible to include 'intangible' emotional issues in the pro's and con's comparison, for example 'it'll be a load off my mind', and 'decisions scare and upset me'. A decision-making pro's and con's list like this helps remove the emotion which blocks clear thinking and decision-making - you can now see the wood for the trees again, and make a confident decision.

*If you would like further help on effective decision making, or to simply discuss this fact sheet, please call **Philip Barnes**, Director, CFO Insight on **0405 800 767**.*