



decide

work smarter,
reduce your stress,
and lead by example

Steve M^cClatchy

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Praise for *Decide*

“Steve's approach is not only hugely engaging but has an immediate impact on motivation and productivity. His book is the next best thing to having Steve in the room. I highly recommend it!”

—**Christina Harper Elgarresta**

Managing Director, Accenture

“*Decide* delivers: If you're struggling to lead, not just manage; if you're frustrated that your very best results are just beyond reach; or if you're simply at war with your calendar, Steve McClatchy's new book is for you. *Decide* is a rare fresh take at some of the thorny problems that block our best work. But don't just take my word for it. Get your own copy, and you'll soon be ordering copies for your team as well.”

—**Marshall Goldsmith**

America's preeminent executive coach (*Fast Company* magazine)

“*Decide* puts personal power squarely where it belongs—in your hands. Follow Steve's advice, and you'll immediately see benefits that will change the way you plan, spend your time, and engage with others. To change your trajectory and start leading in all aspects of your life, all you have to do is *decide*.”

—**Mary Davis Holt**

Leadership coach, speaker, and best-selling coauthor of *Break Your Own Rules*

“I have worked with Steve, and I can say firsthand that his approach has had a profound impact on every level of our organization. His methods are deeply insightful and tremendously impactful. I highly recommend Steve, his approach, and this book!”

—**Luc Robitaille**

President of Business Operations, Los Angeles Kings Hockey Club

“In *Decide*, Steve McClatchy shows us that we can accomplish amazing things by aligning what we want to achieve with how we spend our time. Regardless of the industry or level of the reader, real benefits will be accomplished from Steve's advice—an immensely practical guide!”

—**Valerie Sutton**

Director of Career Services, Harvard Graduate School of Education

“As the late Professor Randy Pausch said, ‘It's not how long you live, rather how well you live.’ *Decide* shows how we can all live more meaningful, productive lives simply by practicing better decision making. I invite you—and your team—to start regaining control over your time and efforts by reading this important book.”

—**Navi Radjou**

Speaker, advisor, and best-selling author, including author of *Jugaad Innovation* and *From Smart to Wise*

“World-class leadership is about making inspired and enlightened choices. With fresh stories and advice, McClatchy drills down to this idea by recommending daily habits that leaders at every level can use to their immediate benefit. *Decide* is a very worthy read on a critical subject.”

—**Douglas R. Conant**

Chairman of Avon Products, founder of Conant Leadership, and *New York Times* best-selling author of *TouchPoints*

“Your success as a leader is as good as your decisions. McClatchy shows you how to make the decisions every day that will keep your business and you moving forward.”

—**Elizabeth Walker**

Vice President, Global Talent Management, Campbell Soup Company

“If your intention is to gain from your life, and not just prevent the pain that often comes with it, then *Decide* is the book for you. Steve McClatchy reminds us that to achieve something of significance, we have to focus on things that matter. His new book is full of the practical wisdom that will enable you to end burnout and bring balance to your life—and to find a path worthy of being followed. I absolutely recommend this book.”

—**Jim Kouzes**

Coauthor of *The Leadership Challenge* and Executive Fellow of Leadership, Leavey School of Business, Santa Clara University

Decide

**Work Smarter, Reduce Your Stress,
and Lead by Example**

Steve McClatchy

WILEY

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Dedication

*To Lynn, Grace, Amy, Kyle, and Kelly,
for being the reason that I work hard, rush home, and
smile.*

*Thank you for your confidence and trust,
your support, and your abundant love.*

This book is for you.

Preface

The material in this book has been presented to high-level executives as well as high school and college students and people in every stage of life in between, over the past 12 years. It is a message of leadership that everyone can relate to in their own way because everyone has the opportunity to be a leader, whether it's for a team of professionals or in their own lives.

Decide aims to help readers lead toward improvement in their business and their life by teaching them how to make better decisions based on the real results they want to experience. *Decide* explores what drives us to do the things we do each day. It explains that the things we don't have to do at all matter the most in defining us as leaders and as individuals. It explains how to achieve balance in our lives through better decision making, rather than waiting for an employer to provide it for us. It presents readers with a perspective on the different ways we create the energy we need to get through each day—including accomplishments and procrastination—and challenges readers to make a choice on how to get theirs. It presents an understanding of the value of time from an opportunity cost perspective and how our understanding of that value determines how we will spend our lives. It offers valuable advice on prioritizing, planning, managing interruptions, and organizing to provide real-life practical skills to apply in order to get more done in less time, reduce stress, and complete the things we have to do so we can have more time for the things that make life worth living. And last, it offers an explanation of how our decision-making habits shape our lives and relationships in the long run.

This project is the culmination of many years of content creation, idea development, live presentations, audience polling and brainstorming, research, and soul-searching on the topics of time management and personal leadership. I have spent many years in the talent development industry because I believe in its mission to help people think and reflect about their values, to take responsibility for their lives, to take a step back and recalibrate when new direction is needed, and to provide the framework within which people can evaluate their decisions, direction, and vision of the future.

I also believe in the power of this industry to help businesses form vision, missions, common culture, and meaningful purpose, as well as the road maps to fulfill them. Employee development, as part of a company's mission, has been linked to happier employees, happier customers, and longer retention of both. These metrics improve not only the general wellness of an organization but also productivity and the bottom line. After attending my leadership programs, clients have reported increased engagement, improved retention, and intensified corporate culture. Leadership is essential for companies to survive and thrive in a fast-changing world. I especially believe my definition of *leadership* as "improvement" is necessary in business and in life. Without constant improvement, organizations begin to fall behind and die out. As individuals, the same thing is true. Personal leadership, pursuing Gain and adhering to values, is what gets us out of the rut and allows us to grow and improve over time.

Leadership and progress take time, energy, and commitment. But time continues to pass, whether you use it to accomplish something worthwhile or not. If your decisions about life and how you use your time do not reflect an effort to make the future better than it is today, then it won't be. Pursuing Gain, making proactive choices,

and considering the consequences of your actions or inactions on your employees, family, colleagues, friends, and children define you as a leader, because you are improving things and determining what the future can be rather than leaving it to chance.

My passion for cultivating leadership at all levels has driven me to develop this material and present it to thousands of people every year. After hearing people around the world tell stories about their leadership experiences, I can tell you that leaders really do make a difference. So I hope you decide to be a leader and to make a difference, and I hope this book will show you how.

If, after reading this book, you decide and commit to making improvements in your life and leading toward a more passionate, engaged future, then *Decide* has accomplished its purpose.

Introduction

September 16 was always a great day during my childhood. Once per year, every year, for at least 18 years, it was the only day I got to decide what I would eat for dinner. It was my birthday.

With 12 kids, a husband, and various guests in the house every evening, my mother would had to have been crazy to take orders and try to satisfy everyone. So every day, she surveyed the pantry and made the decision herself regarding what everyone in the family would be eating that night. The only time this wasn't the case was on someone's birthday. Then the royal treatment was bestowed, and everyone had to eat *your* favorite that night. I remember what each person's favorite was and the look of pride and satisfaction on each one's face when it was served. I also remember the rarely successful negotiations my siblings and I undertook in trying to influence the birthday kid's choice. Everyone understood the value of the opportunity in front of them. No one was naïve enough to let that feeling of power and freedom of choice slip by for another year.

Lucky for us, the meals, although undemocratically chosen for us, were always enjoyable—and always welcomed as something we didn't have to do for ourselves. The fact was, there was a lot you had to do for yourself from a young age in a family this big. For the record, Mom was a fair-minded person and a believer in free will, so for the 364 days of the year on which the meal choice was not up to you, an alternative meal of cereal and milk was always available. You still had to sit at the table with everyone, but your cereal bowl was the statement of individuality that would satisfy even the crankiest child among us.

Mom didn't make the choice as a reminder of who was in charge. She had constraints: time, budget, only two hands, and one kitchen. Thankfully she didn't have to deal with any food allergies, but there was no shortage of strong opinions. Almost every night there was someone who chose the cereal.

When I anticipated going away to college, I was excited about my visions of the independence I would have living in a dorm. I knew there would be many choices available to me regarding schools, majors, how to use my time once I was there, and so on. But I had to laugh the first time I went to the campus cafeteria and found that there was a limited, predetermined menu every day, and there was a large cereal dispenser at the end of the tray line in case you didn't like what they were offering.

That rush of pride and freedom that comes from the authority to make our own choices, our own decisions, is a powerful feeling to experience. Even as children, we recognized the power of having choices. Obviously, as we mature, the process of making decisions moves from what we once considered a cherished privilege to a significant responsibility. This usually happens as the consequences of those decisions become more serious and lasting. The bigger the decisions we make, the more the results begin to affect other people, like our family or employees. Sooner or later, making decisions can even feel like a burden to the point where you sometimes just want someone else to tell you what to do or pursue next and how to get there...or at least just to decide what's for dinner.

Although most of the decisions we make result in a good meal choice or affect similarly insignificant matters, some have a significant impact on our lives. Do these things deserve equal amounts of time and attention? How do you

decide how to prioritize them? Do you know where to start when it's time to make a crucial decision?

Let me ask you some other important questions: How do you feel about the big decisions you've made so far? What about the everyday choices that affect your daily life? Does your life feel balanced? Do you have enough time to get to the important things, or are you always running in place trying to keep up? Do you know how to prioritize and plan effectively to get more done in less time? Can making better decisions produce better results? Do you know how to progress from managing to leading? Are you fully engaged in your career and your goals? Do you find ways to improve your business and your life while still managing and maintaining the daily business of just *being you*? This book will show you that these things are not only possible, but indeed *they are necessary* to prevent burnout, maintain happiness, and become an effective leader in your business and in your life.

Chapter 1

Two Forms of Human Motivation

Gain and Prevent Pain

Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.

—Mark Twain

What decisions or pursuits produce significant results in our lives—and are we giving them enough time and attention? Which of the many things that we do each day actually move us forward, and which just keep us running in place?

According to popular psychology, we all have the same reasons for doing the hundreds of tasks that we do each day. Many psychology studies have agreed that we can divide all sources of human motivation into two categories: to move toward Gain, or Prevent Pain. Every time you've felt compelled to do *anything*—from making a phone call, to getting up off the couch, to spending money, to going to work, to traveling, you were either motivated to move toward something you want (Gain), or prevent the loss of something you have (Prevent Pain).

We can illustrate this concept in almost any part of your life: health, finances, eating, career/work, even family and hobbies. Let's look at your health first. Do you exercise regularly, take vitamins or medications, or see doctors for checkups or when you feel ill? Every time you're motivated to do something about your health, it has either been to

Gain in that category (get healthier than you are now, lose weight, lower cholesterol levels, tone muscles, heal injuries) or to Prevent Pain (prevent illness, weight gain, disease, muscle deterioration, and so forth). Sometimes you can have *both* motivations for doing something; for instance, you might exercise to lose weight *and* to prevent heart disease.

How about your finances? Everyone has been motivated by money at some point in his or her life. Are you trying to Gain in this category by getting a promotion and a raise, making a profitable investment, or increasing your savings? Or are you trying to Prevent Pain—that is, keep from losing the money you have—by buying insurance, clipping coupons, applying for a scholarship or grant, refinancing your mortgage, or finding a cheaper place to live?

Then, of course, there's food and eating. Sometimes you want to Gain a fine dining experience or try a new type of cuisine. Sometimes you are far too hungry or busy for that and just need to eat something to prevent hunger pains or headaches and be done with it so you can get back to work.

The Gain versus Pain question applies in business as well. Ask yourself: Is the purpose of your weekly meeting to identify new target clients or figure out how to improve the process of taking new orders? Or do you use it to go over meeting protocols and talk about employee lateness or inventory status? Is it a Gain meeting that will move your business forward, or is it a Prevent Pain meeting that will simply keep you from falling behind?

Consider any motivation you've recently had about your career. Has it been focused on Gain tasks that would benefit your career in the long term, such as pursuing an advanced degree, earning a professional certification, or closing a landmark deal that could put you in the running for a promotion? Or are you thinking more about how to

avoid the next round of layoffs that may be coming or what needs to be done to meet expectations on your next performance appraisal?

Either Gain or Prevent Pain pushes you toward completing every decision and activity you pursue. And although it could be a combination of both, one is always in the majority. You have 51 percent or more of one of these motivations driving you to do that specific task. The most important difference between the two is the results they produce.

Tasks that you are driven toward by Gain produce more significant positive results in your life and your business than tasks that you are driven toward by Prevent Pain.

You might immediately wonder why. When you are thinking about Gain and you are being motivated by Gain, you are focusing on something you *want*. You are figuring out how to produce a result that you *desire* in your life. You are not thinking about losing something or maintaining the status quo. You are working to move your life forward from where it is now, making it better than what it is today, considering how you *desire* your life to be—and that's exciting! Gain gives you focus, a direction to head toward.

These aren't the thoughts that cross our mind as we do our everyday Prevent Pain tasks such as paying bills and doing laundry. Clean laundry isn't something we *desire* out of life. When we do laundry we are preventing the pain of having no clean clothes to wear. Similarly, paying bills prevents the pain of having our electricity turned off or having to pay late fees to the credit card company. But focusing on a Gain is different. It pushes us to move toward something we *want*, something that will make our lives better. And those

results are much more significant to our lives than the results that Prevent Pain tasks produce.

Take a minute to think of something you'd love to do or achieve in life that you haven't already done. There is no right or wrong answer; this is uniquely you. Have you always dreamed of getting an MBA or PhD, finishing a marathon, learning a new language, writing a book, opening a business, starting a foundation, or restoring a vintage car? What about learning a new sport, traveling to foreign countries, or researching your family tree? How about buying your first house, owning an income property, or running for political office? Think of one thing that stands out among all the others. What would you most love to do in life that you haven't already done?

Now, would you say that this goal or accomplishment is about moving toward something you want or preventing the loss of something you have? For most people, it's about *Gain*. Few people, when asked to identify something they would love to do in life, talk about paying their electric bill or filing an expense report. *When we think about things we want to accomplish in life, we are thinking about Gain.* Consider what your life would be like if you accomplished that Gain task. Would it bring you pride, a sense of accomplishment, and happy memories? Would your life be better than it is today?

That's what Gain is about: improving life and moving forward. It's about the experiences and accomplishments that you *want* to have as a part of your life.

Prevent Pain: I Have to Do It!

Prevent Pain tasks simply prompt us to do what we have to do. There's that old saying that the only certainties in life are death and taxes. However, I'm sure that if I asked you

what you have to do today (or any day) in order to keep up, you would have a much longer list.

Everyone has responsibilities; some more than others based on our age, job, family, and so forth. There are many “have to” responsibilities that simply come with earning a paycheck; after all, your employer is paying you to take care of certain tasks. If you are in school, you have to study and take advantage of the opportunity to learn and prepare for your future. Things such as home ownership, car ownership, and even pet ownership come with big responsibilities. Parenting is in a category by itself when it comes to taking on responsibilities and all the “have to” tasks that come with it. Some responsibilities, such as dealing with illness or injury, may have come to you without your consent; some you may have willingly signed up for; others may have come as an indirect result of your decisions.

No matter how many “have to” tasks are on your plate, you can always fill your day with them. There's always something to repair, maintain, clean, feed, keep up with, pay for, or care for. The reason that Prevent Pain tasks go on and on is that they never actually go away; they just eventually repeat. For example, you don't really cross doing dishes off your to-do list; you just move it to the bottom because by the next night, you will have to wash them again. The same is true with checking e-mail or stocking inventory. You don't cross it off; you move it down the list, because it's coming back again at some point. Tasks such as putting gas in your car, doing laundry, and going grocery shopping all have to be done over and over again because the things necessary to maintain your life are never finished. By always focusing on getting them done and preventing pain, you don't end up with Gain; you end up with no pain and unfortunately no progress.