The Decision

Why making up your mind is not enough



HANS STAVERSJÖ

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The gym membership

Everyone knows how it goes. In the first week of January you decide to start exercising. You buy the membership, you buy shoes that look as if they belong to someone who exercises, perhaps a water bottle too. It feels good. It feels as if something has happened.

But nothing has happened. You have bought things. The decision, the real one, is made on the day you go there, get changed and start. Until then it is an intention with a receipt.

I am not saying this to be stern. I am saying it because the difference is so easy to miss: making up your mind feels exactly like doing something. People who have made up their minds are pleased with themselves, and that is precisely why nothing more happens.

Where most people stop

Over many years I have watched people try to change something in their lives. The pattern was almost always the same. The beginning went well. The beginning is about seeing and understanding, and you can do that without anything having to change. Then came the point where you have to decide to go on, and that is where many stopped. They were not unwilling. They simply did not know whether it would be worth it.

What got them moving again was rarely an argument. It was seeing someone who had already walked the same road, and for whom it had gone well. We listen to the person who stands where we want to stand.

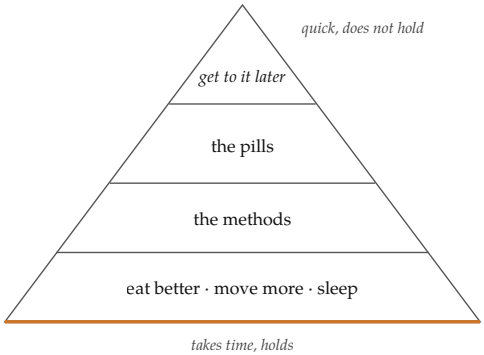
A booklet has no such person to point to, and I am not going to borrow anyone else's name to convince you. So I am asking for something less than trust. I am asking you to try, and the rest of this booklet is about how.

The pyramid

There is an image I have carried with me for a long time. Picture a pyramid. Along the base lies time. The wider, the more time it takes. The higher up you go, the less time is needed, and the less fits.

Say you want to feel better in your body. At the bottom lie three things everyone knows: eat a little better, move a little more, sleep a little more. They take a long time, they give nothing tomorrow, and they are the only things that hold. Above them are the methods, the ones that promise the same thing in half the time. Above those, the pills. And right at the top, on the point, lies the quickest route of all: getting to it later.

We almost always start at the top. Not because we are stupid, but because that is where you get to fastest. I have said "I'll get to it later" myself more times than I care to count. We work our way down only when the shortcuts did not hold.



The same goes for reading

Leadership has the same pyramid. A book you have bought but not read is the gym membership. A course you have signed up for is the shoes. Both are good to have, but neither of them changes anything.

What changes something lies at the bottom and is uncomfortably simple: reading a chapter, sitting down with the people you work with, talking about what is actually happening, writing down what was yours this week. None of it can be hurried, and none of it gives anything tomorrow.

Here I want to be honest with you. I cannot promise that anything will happen after one evening with the book. I can only say that nothing will happen if you do not begin. Deciding to read is not reading. It is only when you open the page that you have decided.

It does not show in a week

Someone who has exercised for a week sees no difference in the mirror and concludes that it does not work. That is the most common way of giving up: measuring too early. What

you do at the bottom of the pyramid does not show in days. It shows in months, and others often see it before you do. Someone says you have become easier to talk to. Someone asks a question she did not ask before.

So do not set the goal at the result. Set it at something small that can be done again. One chapter a week. Three lines every Friday about what was yours. A conversation every other week with someone you work closely with. It is not much, and that is the point. What is small can be done again, and what is done again is what holds.

One thing today

You do not have to decide on the whole road. Big decisions are easy to put off, and that is why people stop.

Do one thing today. Open the first step and read the first page. It takes a few minutes, and then you have done more than most people who have made up their minds.

The first three steps of the course are free at **en.orangize.se**. The books, *The Leadership Awakening* for those who lead and *The Second Chair* for those who are led, are at **en.orangize.se/the-book**.

You do not have to trust me. Try.

Hans Staversjö

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This booklet belongs with the books *The Leadership Awakening – The Leader You Already Are* and *The Second Chair – Your Half of Leadership*. It may be shared and printed freely.
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