

# ANALYZE RESPONSIBLY

*Welcome to the White Wine Papers! Please Enjoy Gregory's Most Aromatic (Or Intoxicating) Thoughts About Business Analysis.*

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## What to Stop – When Coaches Trump Analysts



*“Half the leaders I meet don't need to learn what to do. They need to learn what to stop.”*

*-Peter F. Drucker*

Chris, a sales representative, asks you for advice on how he can close higher revenues for the rest of the year. He sells health food and exercise equipment. He is also quite portly (don't ask how he was hired – long story).

As an analyst, you believe that prospects would more likely buy from a healthy sales rep, all else equal. Your market research data also indicate that Chris has not yet done sales calls with a few high opportunity prospects in his territory because the decision-makers have tough spec requirements. Tailoring the presentation materials and offerings would require some new skills on Chris' part before he visits them.

Do you, between 2 mutually exclusive options, choose to:

- A) Tell Chris he needs to learn how to integrate these new specs and concerns into his sales presentation. The time investment is 100 hours and should get \$30,000 Net Present Value (the higher, the better) from selling to these big buyers. **OR**
- B) Tell Chris to stop eating so much and exercise. The time investment is 100 hours and should get \$30,000 Net Present Value from higher closing rates with all buyers.



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If you are an analyst, you probably picked A. If you picked B, I wonder how likely you'd actually tell someone like Chris that in real life!

### Why Pick A?

I have rigged both options so that their economic costs and benefits are the same. Some of you may lean toward A because it makes you "sound smarter." I think there's a much bigger driver:

*Telling people what to do seems positive and analytical (Do This), and telling people what to stop seems negative and confrontational (Stop That).*

The advisor, whether average or absent-minded, has an incentive to tell people to "do more/new" because it might not hurt the ego. To tell people to stop means to negate prior decisions and ego, "I've been doing this for years. Are you telling me I don't know how to run my life?!"

*"The default response is never improvement but inertia."*

-Marshall Goldsmith, Mojo

### WTD is Analytical. WTS is Attitude

We both know deep down according to stakeholder theory (i.e. being a respectful human being) that Option B is the right choice for Chris. His long-term health is an important peripheral (if not central) benefit. But since our own egos (or fears) get in the way, we have to stop being analysts here and start thinking like coaches (or giving Chris a referral to one).

### 360-degree Feedback Isn't Crop Circles

One problem with being an analyst is that:

- A) You're usually the only advisor (*will Chris even accept my feedback?*) OR
- B) If there are multiple analyst opinions, they are given in series, not in parallel (*if I tell the truth, will the next person agree with me, or will the next person withhold to flatter, making me look bad?*).

360-degree feedback's benefits rely not so much on space (all key stakeholders around) but time (simultaneous, aggregated feedback requires anonymity to promote truth-telling). Chris could potentially knock down one critic at a time, but knocking down dozens of people at the same time is not so likely (such is the power of normative pressure).

Here, a coach employs confidential feedback from multiple stakeholders to inform Chris about his weight problem and the benefits of changing. Once Chris has buy-in, he can begin his diet.

Sometimes in order to help the most, we have to **stop** thinking like analysts (the power of information) and think like coaches (the power of key people).

*L'chaim!*