

SEEKING COUNSEL - A KEY TO MAKING WISE DECISIONS

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Early in my legal career, I made some poor decisions because I failed to seek counsel first. I wrongly let my pride get in the way of obtaining advice and suffered the adverse consequences. Erroneously, I thought it was a good idea to "take charge" and to "be decisive." Thinking of myself as one who gave rather than received counsel also made me reluctant to find help.

I now follow a new method of decision-making, outlined below, and it has produced remarkably positive results in my life. The method is based upon having the discipline to not make the decision before seeking counsel and waiting until there is a clear consensus as to the course of action before acting.

I suggest that you consult:

Your Spouse: If you are married, the first person you need to consult is your spouse. He or she knows you well, loves you, and wants what is best for you. Honor them by asking their advice. Also, the two of you may accept the consequences of the decision more easily if you have made it together.

Parents, grown children and siblings: They also know you well, love you and want what is best for you.

Mentors: Consider talking to more experienced lawyers or persons with expertise in the field you are considering.

Spiritual counselors, such as priests, rabbis or pastors.

When I've achieved consensus about a decision from those listed above, I've found the course of action to be correct. Fourteen years ago, for example, I was contacted about accepting a high profile legal position. All the people I spoke with - my wife, father and mother, and law partner - counseled me to not accept this position.

Within two months after turning it down, I realized it would have been a serious mistake for me to have accepted it.

When the counsel I receive from these sources has been divided, leaving me without a clear consensus, I conclude that I should wait before taking action. After a period of time, a clear consensus usually emerges.

Another benefit of seeking counsel from multiple sources is that you eliminate the possibility of acting upon the counsel of someone who has something to gain from his or her advice. For example, do not buy life insurance after obtaining advice from a life insurance salesperson who will receive a commission thanks to the sale to you. It's better to seek advice in this area from someone who will not benefit by your buying a policy. The same is true for stock brokers in relation to stock tips you may receive.

Taking the time to obtain good counsel before making decisions has helped me. I hope this advice will help you, too.

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