



2020-12-14 / In Decision Making, Digital Leadership / By Milla Nevanlinna

A Transformation Journey to Leadership & Decision Making

Developing leadership and decision making in an organization is not done overnight, even though they are key functions and processes with big impact on the success or failure of business. Maybe due to this, organizations courageous enough to tackle this are rare. With work and leadership undergoing so much change, investing in leadership and decision making should be on every organizations' agenda.

We at Fingertip have had the pleasure of working with one of the early birds, The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (FIOH). FIOH is a multidisciplinary research and specialist organization that focuses on well-being at work, research, advisory services and training with around 500 employees. Their aim is to improve Finnish work life on the level of individual workers, workplaces, organizations, and society at large. [Read about the project in Finnish.](#)

A couple of weeks back we co-hosted a virtual seminar that celebrated the learnings of a 1-year path towards social and digital decision making and leadership – a path where Fingertip has tagged along as a guiding partner and transformation facilitator.

The joint development project was initiated by FIOH and funded by Finnish Work Environment Fund. One of the goals of such projects is to find new and innovative perspectives even in familiar areas of working life i.e. leadership and decision making.

The seminar narrative was scenes from a transformation journey – not focusing on what was done during the project, but what it has revealed and what to consider moving forward. Transforming leadership and decision making is not something that becomes ready, it is in constant movement.

We heard observations from several professionals from their point of view and presented some of ours. This post recaps the discussions, realizations, and insight shared from the seminar, so you can learn from it as well.

Leadership and objectives

First on the online stage was **Anne Linna**, director of development and support, discussing objectives management at FIOH. She wants to improve their objectives management with a more systematic approach. Instead of using spreadsheets and documents, an app that facilitates objectives management would help piece down the main objectives to individual teams and people. It grants new insight in real time to progress, so they would have a better view of the whole. It enables better resourcing and learning, while also giving a new bottom-up direction for objectives to arise.

Digital tools for leadership

Tomi Luostarinen, Head of Development in Digital Services, gave us his point of view to software and its possibilities. We have switched gradually from custom programs to configurable platforms, having less in-house development and partnering more to use our expertise more efficiently and focus on our core competences. Overall, platforms enable us to

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expertise more efficiently and focus on our core competences. Overall, platforms enable us to work, they are not supposed to limit what we are able to do. Thus, it is also important to trust people to know that they can prioritize their own work.

For FIOH, the purpose for software is to support daily work. Building software in-house is neither core competence nor efficient use of resources, so good partners are a great alternative. Choosing solutions is heavily reliant on integrations to existing ecosystems that are in use.

After Tomi, we heard from **Konsta Huuki**, Marketing Coordinator and thesis worker at Fingertip, on his findings about the role of collaboration platforms for internal communication. Collaboration platforms, like Fingertip, enable the structuring and formatting of tacit knowledge, and link work packages to each other, to projects, to goals and more. They can digitize leadership and create a repository for past decisions and projects for future reference. Internal communication itself is commonly less in focus than external communication, though it is crucial for effective teamwork. (Read more about the thesis findings in this [dedicated blog post](#).)

Understanding people's role in decision making

Our next topic was regarding knowledge work from a cognitive perspective. We had the pleasure to listen to product manager **Teppo Valtonen**, who does research and services to develop brainwork. Teppo gave us insight on how humans differ from computers in analyzing data and making decisions. Often, we call our biases bugs that pollute our objective thinking, but they should be considered features. They have evolved through our history, and their purpose is to allow faster decision making for survival and making sense of the world and patterns. Unfortunately, they can be exploited, which we do not often even notice.

Our biases enable the human brain to be much more efficient than computers in understanding connections for example in image recognition and understanding larger wholes from partial data. Taking a systematic, process-like approach to decision making allows us to suppress the effect of biases, while keeping the speed. One key way to remove biases is to consult others. Together, we notice more biased opinions and make objectively better decisions. Another aspect that helps us notice biases is documentation of past decisions for a reference point.



*22 pages of science
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People in the core of digital processes

Kirsi Ahola, director of operations, discussed how digital processes support research and development. Understanding the vastness and importance of a process is the defining characteristic to who should be involved.

Digital tools allow us to create ready processes with phases, tasks related to certain phases and stage gates where certain people need to confirm everything is going right before deciding on moving forward. They also provide a portfolio of all projects, which visualizes projects in different phases and allows us to analyze how what we are doing reflects our goals and objectives. The project management office perks are increased transparency, openness, knowledge creation and spread, and participation. Digital makes it possible to distribute directions and know-how effectively to anyone in the organization.

Decision making – a lawyer's perspective

Aija Kuurne gave us a "lawyer's perspective" into organizational decision making, and why decision making became a major development focus at FIOH. The goals for introducing Fingertip were to develop better decision making processes across the organization using a platform designed for it. Fingertip offered participation, clear decision making process, learning from past decisions, decision categorization, and well-documented digital decision history.

In law school students are taught that a lawyer's job is to make decisions. Each case has a necessity of a solution. The solution needs to be made in a defined timeframe, leaning to an existing set of rules (laws). However, in business the situation is quite different. We don't have rules to define what is a correct decision. There isn't even a timeframe, so decisions can easily be abandoned at some point.

The quality of business decisions isn't a binary metric, rather a combination of goals, speed, process, and execution. Improving decision quality includes improving these metrics. For

process, and execution. Improving decision quality includes improving these methods. For example, defining what we are deciding helps participants orient to the case, improving the clock speed and process. Defining the decision making process helps us make decisions systematically and better.

What the future of decision making holds

Finally, **Milla Nevanlinna** and **Jaakko Pellosniemi** from Fingertip summarized the event's topics and offered some more to chew on, presenting their perspectives on the future of leadership and decision making. Leadership, like many other aspects of business before it, is being productized with engineering, relying on digital tools. Putting our leadership processes on paper and digitizing them as a digital twin allow us to replicate and tweak our leadership in an agile way.

Decision making is becoming a science in and of itself. We consider the evidence we have, make hypotheses, look at past decisions for reference, and try to understand how our emotions affect our thinking. In the not-so-distant future, we should be able to utilize artificial intelligence to help us find similar decisions from our past, predict the success of our decisions through the sentiment, and even recommend the best alternatives.

Using digital platforms, our companies can act as self-organized neural networks, with each cell (team) making their own decisions and interacting with others in decision making if necessary. Digital tools enable us to tackle the leaders' jobs to be done together and individually. In the end, it comes back to the people behind the screens, and the systems that connect them, which should enable a seamless social work experience – digitally.

The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (FIOH) is a multidisciplinary research and specialist organization that focuses on well-being at work, research, advisory services and training. They operate under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in Finland as an independent legal entity and have around 500 employees.

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