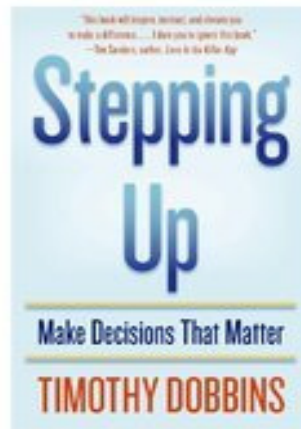


Stepping Up

Make Decisions That Matter



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Publisher: HarperCollins Books, 2006

ISBN 13 978 0 06 082373 3

193 pages

■ The Big Idea

What does it mean to step up? We are presented with choices everyday. We make decisions, and these decisions have consequences: This sequence happens to us each day, in every part of our lives. This is a business book about the business of life.

Dobbins explores five major ways we make decisions. We can Stand Still, Step Aside, Step Back, Step On or Over Someone, or we can Step Up. These five ways of making decisions are considered in the context of how we live a meaningful life in the workplace.

Stepping Up offers you a new way to make things happen.

Why You Need This Book

This book will lead you to a new way of making conscious decisions that will have an impact on your life as well as on the lives of others.

EXPERIENCING MEANING

The emptiness you may be feeling inside is hunger; hunger to make a difference. Deep down you know work is not just about money or power. Sure, you need to take care of yourself and provide for your family and future – we all do – but there's more to it than that. You need to feel that what you're doing counts; that your work and you matter. And you can feel that.

By stepping up – by making right, just, and loving decisions throughout your day – you'll experience meaning in your work and your life. You'll feel as if you're truly being the person you always thought you could be. You'll wake up in the morning even wanting to go to work.

Your Options

You can divide humanity into three types of people: people who watch things happen, people who make things happen, and people who wonder what happened.

Stepping up means consciously becoming one of those people who make things happen.

In each situation in life, there are at least five paths you can follow, five choices you can make:

- You can stand still and do nothing;
- You can step aside and avoid taking action, forcing or allowing someone else to do it;
- You can step back and block others from taking necessary action;
- You can take advantage of the situation and step on someone to take revenge or improve your position; or

- You can step up and do the right thing.

Standing Still

This is the default option for almost all of us. To stand still is to let something happen without taking any action. Things might work out, or they might not, but in either case your action is inaction.

Stepping Aside

If standing still is ignoring your responsibility, stepping aside can be an abdication. It's taking yourself out of the game, giving up, waving a white flag, and telling someone else to take your place.

Stepping Back

We step back to block others from moving forward. Often workplace stepping back takes place in team or group projects. If standing still is passive indecision, stepping back is active indecision; it's sabotage so no one else can take responsibility. Think of it as putting up roadblocks, whether real or imagined.

Stepping on Someone

Stepping on someone means eliminating someone or something that stands in your way.

Stepping Up

Stepping up is all about doing the true, just, and loving thing. It's about choosing what's best for the other person, for the company, and yes, for yourself too. By stepping up you will bring meaning to your work and your life. Step up and you'll never wonder if you made a difference. You'll know you did.

STANDING STILL

Do something. Yes, it can be hard. But to step up and experience meaning in your work and life, you'll first need to stop standing still.

Standing still does not necessarily mean physical inactivity. It could just as easily manifest itself as emotional indifference, or spiritual apathy: we see someone desperately trying to place a bag in the overhead rack of an airplane and we stay seated, pretending we don't see the struggle; or we hear about a coworker who has suffered a trauma and we just tune it out.

Do not feel guilty if you recognize yourself in these examples. Standing still is human nature. Trying to overcome that natural indifference forms the basis of most of our religious traditions.

STEPPING ASIDE

Stepping aside is an error of omission. You're facing a situation in which you know something must be done, and you realize you have the opportunity to do it, but instead you let someone else step up. You see what needs to be done and are aware you could do it, but you lack the vision that you have a responsibility to do it.

Acting Self-Righteous

Often this happens when you feel superior to another person in the situation. Often we frame it as a lesson that will build his character or a necessary step in his professional growth.

Giving in to our fear

Stepping up often means taking a risk, maybe not with your life, but perhaps with a job or a relationship. Worried about what might happen if we step up, we step aside instead and let someone else take the risk.

Giving in to our anger

Upset at someone, we decide to punish her through passive-aggressive behavior. Instead of confronting her directly, we harm her through inaction of some kind.

STEPPING BACK

A Sense of Entitlement

Sometimes we step back to block someone else from getting something to which we feel entitled. This is referring to covert sabotage or the undermining of someone through faint praise, or a backstabbing campaign of whispers and innuendo.

The Need for Control

Sometimes we step back to block someone else from taking away our control. Unlike blocking out of a sense of entitlement, blocking because we need to assert control usually comes from the best of motivations.

Putting Means Above Ends

Finally, in some instances, we step back to block action so our roles in some process retain importance. We often lose sight of what's important by putting more value on the means than the end.

STEPPING ON SOMEONE ELSE

Stepping on someone else means using someone else's situation for your advantage, usually by attacking them somehow. It could be as revenge for their having stepped on you in the past. Or it could be a way for you to "beat" them in some kind of competition, real or imagined.

You'd think such contentious actions would only come after a great deal of thought. Actually, the reverse is actually the case.

STEPPING UP

If you step up, if you think about your actions and do your best to make the loving choice, you'll experience meaning in your life and your work. Step up in ways large and small, at work and at home, and when you're facing your mortality, you'll know the answer to the eternal question. Step up and you'll you made a difference.

Remember that each day, in going through our personal and professional lives, we confront dozens, perhaps hundreds, of situations in which we face choices. In response to each of those situations we make decision. And every one of those decisions, whatever its apparent import, has consequences.

We have been given the potential to make a difference; the opportunity to step up. That can be as simple as smiling at a stranger, or as complex as making sure an organization deals with an abusive executive in a manner that helps him, his peers, and the company.

To feel fulfilled as a human being, we need to fully live our potential; we need to step up. The Hall of Fame outfielder Roberto Clemente, who died New Year's Eve, 1972, while on a humanitarian mission to earthquake-ravaged Nicaragua, once said, "Any time you have an opportunity to make a difference in this world and you don't, then you are wasting your time on earth."

Time is wasting. Step up!

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