Effective decision-making is commonly understood to be an essential skill for leaders in any business. Whether it’s a learned skill or a natural talent, making good decisions can put a business owner on the path toward long-term success.

But how does it work? When people are in the throes of battle and a number of options are spread out before them, how do you know the winning path to take?

When you work for a business, whether you know it or not, decision-makers take many factors into consideration before coming to a conclusion. In fact, Tim often stews for hours, days, weeks and sometimes months before making what seems like a “quick” decision. BUT, it is never so!

Whether the decision-making skill is an innate gut feeling or is learned over the course of years, the bottom line is that being a more effective decision-maker requires practice. I remember Tim’s father saying, “Indecision has lost many more battles than a poor decision!”

Gayle Abbott, the president of Strategic Alignment Partners, a Herndon, Va.-based human resources consulting firm, recommends a four-point strategy to deploy whenever you must act:

- Identify the problem
- Analyze the possible solutions
- Evaluate the possibilities that are likely to bring you closer to your goal
- Make the decision

Abbott told BusinessNewsDaily that following this decision-making process does not always come naturally. Those who’ve mastered this approach usually have years of practice under their belts, she said.
“When you see a successful person, you do not see what happened behind the scenes,” Abbott said. “All of them have made mistakes on their way up, but they move on. They have struggled through failures — bad decisions — before finding a solution.”

She said it is important to listen to your inner general.

“The most powerful leaders listen to their intuition and then they gather facts, evidence, and data to support or throw away that gut feeling,” she said.

That last part may be easier said than done, as anyone who has been forced to make a tough choice can tell you.

Knowing when to pull the trigger sometimes, you have to just wing it.

I know in our business, we have made both good and bad decisions, but the longer we have been in business, the easier it has become to know the difference. What we know now is the importance of not making a decision based in FEAR {False Evidence Appearing Real or False Evidence Altering Reality}. When you are afraid, you listen to the wrong inner voice. Take a step back, take a deep breath and be confident in your abilities.

We understand our client base, our product lines, our cost of doing business, our personalities and what we can or cannot handle...and we go from there. Having a partner to talk things over with is very important in this arena!

There are many things that influence how an individual makes decisions. They include emotions, perceived personal and professional risks and rewards, preparation through experience or education, deadlines, stress and a host of others. Know your strengths and weaknesses and trust that you will make the right decisions overall when you look at the big picture.
Tim’s thoughts on decision making...

*Gain as much knowledge as you can within a reasonable amount of time allotted to make the decision. Don’t keep saying, as an excuse, “I don’t know enough to make this decision.”

*Seek wise council when appropriate, but don’t let that cause you to delay making the decision. Procrastination is easy to allow in some cases!

*Many decisions are easier than we think...we simply don’t want to make the choice that lies before us. Sometimes the right thing is the hard thing and we just don’t want to do it.

*Face decisions head on—don’t be afraid.

*Make decisions with confidence and don’t second-guess. You will most likely look back and be thrilled or, in the worst case scenario, you will learn a lesson and be better equipped the next time.

Finally, after serving on the PPA board and as President for 2012-2013, Tim says, “The world admires great decision makers and desperately needs them!”

I found this website that reviewed 10 books on decision making. Take a peek at them and see if any of them will be of help as you pursue your skills in this area.