

## CPA Australia Podcast

### Episode 61 - Transcript

- Intro: Hello, and welcome to the CPA Australia podcast, your weekly source for business, leadership, and private practice accounting information.
- Ben O'Halloran: Hello, and welcome to the CPA Australia podcast. My name is Ben O'Halloran, and I'm the content and social media manager here at CPA Australia. This week's episode was recorded in front of a live audience at CPA Congress. The topic is Devising Decisive Decisions with Tiffany Quinlan, who is Principal - Human Capital at Taplow Group. Tiffany is also a leadership facilitator, motivational speaker and coach on emotional intelligence and career transition. We hope you enjoy this episode.
- Tiffany Quinlan: As I was introduced, my name is Tiffany Quinlan and I am really passionate in this space. I see people stuck every single day. I spend a lot of my time coaching CEOs and CFOs, and everything in between. One of the biggest things is they're just overwhelmed. What do I do? I don't know what to do. "Well, yeah, you do know what to do," is usually my answer. I know it should be a bit more complicated than that but it's not. Because you, nine times out of 10, know what is fundamentally right to do, but there is something stopping you. And that's what we're going to talk about a little bit today.
- What are decisive decisions? Being decisive is pushing past that fear and that paralysis that we have to just make the decision. At the bottom line here, the things that hold us back are often fear. The unknown. What if I get it wrong? What's the consequence? I don't know what's going to happen if I choose option A or option B. Where is this going to land me? I would say to you and you've probably heard this 100 times, there's no such thing in life as mistakes, just lessons.
- Great, and there's a few of the audience going, "Easy for you to say. You're not looking for a promotion to impress a new boss." Mistakes don't make me feel great, but we all know we have to, at some point, manage that and be, if there's a mistake, what is the consequence? Something that I learned a long time ago when I was being coached, one of the sayings that they used to say to me was, "What is the worst thing that can happen, and can I live with it?"
- That's kind of my little measure that I use when I'm trying to make a quick decision. I think what's the worst outcome here? There's probably option A, B, C, there can be many. Is the outcome something I can live with that's not so grave, it doesn't require anything dreadful happening or not? If the consequence I can live with, just forge on. Get on, go forth and do it. If not, you need to back, back.

What do we think about people that are indecisive? Do we like them? What do we think? We genuinely kind of go, "Aren't you smart enough to make that decision?" Why aren't you making that decision? What's going on for you? Are you holding back? You sitting safe? You're playing some game that I don't know about? We always look at them like, why aren't you making that decision? It frustrates us.

If you come across as indecisive, that's how we see you and if any of you are in titled leadership roles, you're all leaders in your organisations because of the roles you have. You have intellect, you have data, you have information to share. You don't want to be seen as indecisive, people want to have faith in your ability to look at the numbers, to analyse it and to advise. If you don't make decisions, people pop you in that box. It's not a great place to be.

The other one is about time. What do indecisive people do? They suck your time into their vacuum and you never get it back. How many times you stood in the kitchen. Here's I was like, "Jeez, I wish Tiff would just make a decision," because everything is on hold until that decision is made. We sit there and we can't move forward, we can't go back, we can't have in this paralysed state because no one's making a decision so we just sit there and time is ticking by, opportunities are often lost, so we lose time as well.

The key to being decisive is to think about what is the fear? Do I want to be shown to be an intellect or do I want to be seen as indecisive and someone who sits on the fence all the time? I don't want to waste other people's time. That's why we need to be decisive. I just want to touch a little bit on fear and we'll come back to it because for most people this is the underlying reason that you are indecisive, and you may not want to admit that, you're surrounded by a whole lot of people you probably don't know, so you're not going to raise your hand again.

Yep, them like making decisions, I just wanted to give you a couple of thoughts on what fear actually is. Fear is nothing more than false, emotions appearing real. Society tells us that fear is a negative thing that we shouldn't embrace it, I'm going to challenge that grab it. Because fear is actually stepping us out of our comfort zone. Fear is challenging, he's pulling the fire in our belly and saying, "Let's try something new." Yeah, there's an element of risk but imagine if we didn't embrace that. Imagine, oh no, bit scared, I'm not going to do that.

We wouldn't have had all the inventions that we'd have, we wouldn't have put man on the moon, we wouldn't have got the electric car, we wouldn't have got all these amazing things if people went, "Yeah, not so sure that's going to work for me." I'll just sit back. So throughout our conversation today, I want you to think about what fear is, and what it generates in you and why you let it control you because it is a choice.

You can sit there and go not too fearful, going take the safe road, and not get anywhere. Or you can look at fear as a positive state, embrace it and run with it.

Okay, so how do we become more decisive? That's what we're here to discuss. The first thing it requires is a change from you, so I can't sit here. I'm not going to give you a hand out.

I'm not going to put all this little PowerPoints up and say, "There you go. Now, you'll be more decisive, now I'll say, see you guys enjoy lunch," not going to happen. What the biggest trigger is, is your mindset. You've got to come in here today with the opinion and the openness to change something, you're the ones that are indecisive, you're the ones that are struggling with this, you've got to come in saying, "Do you know what, I'm going to do something different, I'm going to open my mind up to a different way of thinking. I'm going to challenge myself."

It's all in your mind, so if you're not open to it nothing's going to change you'll just walk out here with a bit of information. Hopefully, had a nice little break and off you go so you need to change your mindset. That was quite just as simple as decide to be more decisive. I'm not going to let the amount of decisions the 35000 that I have to make every day paralyse me, I'm going to make decisions, not going to sit there I'm going to be decisive and I'm going to be prepared to live with the consequence whatever that may be.

Sounds pretty easy doesn't it? Yeah, it's not. Changing the way you think the way we're pre-programmed the way that we feel safe is hard, it's hard stuff but boy it's worth it when you push through. I've worked with a lot of people and common thing as I said earlier is that they just get stuck making decisions, and once we unwrap what it is why? Nine times out of 10 it's that fear thing of something, once we name it we can move forward.

I want you to think about a time when you've been indecisive, and you don't have to share so don't panic, when you've been indecisive and just reflect and be honest with yourself what was holding you back? Was it fear of failure. Fear of the unknown or just didn't have enough data don't feel comfortable or trying to impress someone. Because once you know what it is that's holding you back you can deal with it, but if you don't know, if you're not prepared to be honest with yourself and identify what it is, what that thing is, you're not actually going to progress very far.

So how many of you would say it's fear of the unknown? Thank you for your honesty. What about fear of failure? It's generally the biggest and that's okay, but if I got up here and made a monumental error on what I'm talking about you might all judge me. Do I change as a person? Okay, I might walk out of here and think it wasn't my slickest presentation probably needed to do a few things. I walk out, I'll assess what I did right or wrong and move on. Am I any less a person, nope, I make mistakes every day. We all do.

You've got to get away from that fear of failure because what does it mean? Very few people, in fact, I don't know anyone who's lost their job for one little weeny mistake, if that's a big one maybe, but a little weeny one. I think you'll be

okay. Something to think about, decision is always better than indecision. So look at my little friend there. When you're indecisive what happens? You kind of landed on two feet, you can't go left, you can't go right, you can't go forward, you can't do anything you just stuck and it's quite overwhelming.

You know you need to do something so much like your feet are nailed to the ground and I'm going to go forward but I literally can't until I make that decision, and the more overwhelmed you become, it's like concrete you can't move, but only you can release that by doing something by actually saying, "Do you know what, I'm going to make that decision. I'm going to actually come up with a solution and I'm going to be happy with what I do and I'm going to live with that."

Being stuck is not a great feeling and I'm sure you've all been there, I've been there many, many times but actually once you release that it feels great. So let's be courageous, let's face our fear. Let's actually get on with it and go you know what, making a mistake is okay. I might not feel great at the time but making a mistake is all right, because imagine what I could learn, imagine if I actually learn a skill that I didn't have before, or conquered something, or made a significant difference to my organisation myself or someone around me.

That's what's to gain, to lose is momentarily, to gain is huge and that's what you want to start thinking that you need to have the courage to move forward. Not what you're thinking, just clear that up. This is about ancient Greek armies and I don't know if any of you were up to your ancient Greek history, I studied it sadly, another little trivial fact.

So, the Greek armies would decide they'd have a little battle out there and they decide where they were going to go to battle, why they're going to fight over a piece of land or take control or something. So get on the boats, off they go, land. The very first thing they did before they started battle was to turn around and burn the boats, true fact. Why would they do that? There's no escape, full 110 percent commitment to whatever it was they were fighting for.

So burn your boat, once you've made that decision there is no going back. Keep going forward as you gain more information, as you gain more clarity, involve more stakeholders, keep forging forward. Your plan might actually divert a little bit, but it's forward. You can't go back, you can't go back to where you were. Gut instinct, underrated in my world. We have all this intellect, we have more knowledge and information than we've ever had before. Google it.

My 11 year old son, "Just Google it mum." "Okay, I didn't think of that, everything's just Google it." Okay? So go all this information so we almost don't want to trust our gut because there must be some facts somewhere that I can dig up from somebody's researched 27000 years ago that'll tell me the answer. No. Sometimes, you've got to follow your gut and your gut instinct is made up of common sense and all of your previous experiences. So it's kind of part of you, it's like your soul. Don't ignore it. If your gut says it's not right, it's probably not.

If your gut feel says, "Oh, let's go," then go but don't ignore that feeling. Don't go, "No, it's just a gut feeling my intellect says I must do this." They must work in combination. It's really important to think that through.

How many people just had a little bit of a moment there with the rest not finished? There are going to be times when you're making decisions, you will not have all of the data, that's just how it is. This is where the procrastinators love this stuff. It's okay, I'll just keep finding the data just keep going on, just keep looking. There must be a bit of research out there I'll come back to you in about a week, now the week passes by. No, no, I read somewhere there's some more research and go, we go. What are you actually doing? Procrastinating not making the decision. You have to know when enough is enough. You have to know when you've got enough information to make a sound decision.

Now, you're all accountants, that's making you feel really uncomfortable. I know, but there are times when you've got enough of it and with your gut feeling you can make that decision. Analysis by paralysis is not where you want to be, and that is nothing more than procrastination nine times out of 10. Who's ever done that? Just kept soldiering on I'll get some more data I'll come back to you, and if you actually are honest you go, "Yeah, I just don't want to make the decision." I really don't wanna make that decision, hopefully if I procrastinate long enough somebody else will do it for me and we'll be out there. Not the way it should be. So you have to accept you're not going to have all of the data.

Another way to kind of make sure and sanity check your decisions is what I call the 10, 10, 10 method. So ask yourself, "Will I be happy with my decision in 10 minutes? In 10 months? In 10 years?" You can make whatever 10s you like. The idea is what are the short-term implications, what are the medium-term implications and what are the long-term. Quite a lot of organisations, have got this theory that we need to have a strategic plan, have you ever been to one of those meetings? Man, they're right aren't they?

So we don't worry about what's going on here, we've got no profit, business is not good, turnovers great. But out there, 10 years we've nailed it and we're actually looking out they were not looking here. The decisions we're making a future focused and then there's other organisations, who can't think beyond tomorrow. Who actually go, oh no, we'll just have to look at the numbers we've got now and they were the numbers from last month but they'll be good enough.

So you need to be looking short, medium and long because the implications vary. What might be right now for me may not be okay in the long term and in the medium term. Decisions you need to start thinking about the 10, 10. Just a quick check in your head. How is it for the short, medium and long term? Really critical this one. You set the deadline, you get your big pink highlighter and you circle a date, and you do not move that date because the procrastinators in the room will give yourselves another week, another month. We're not going to do that.

We set a date, we gather our information, we do the analysis that's required but we make the decision when we said we were going to. Now, sometimes that can be an hour from now, it can be 10 minutes from now, but psychologically in your head if you say to yourself, "Tiff I have to make the decision before lunch," can't stretch on then you make it. So saying you know, if you want something done give it to a busy person. So if I say, you're not really busy at work can't imagine it ever happens for any of you, but you'd have your fairly slack day, something might take you an hour to complete.

If I throw a whole heap of deadlines on you, I bet you could probably get that done in about 30 minutes. The more time you've got, the longer you will take. Be diligent, set yourself a deadline, go forth and meet the deadline. It is not negotiable. Very important. All right, so we've talked a lot about why we need to be decisive. Have I convinced you that it's important. Nodding would be good here. Yep, good.

Okay, so I'm going to give you just a few little things to think about from a process point of view, because I know that we all like a little bit of a process and we like to be able to follow that through. Before we start though, what I want you to think about as we're going through this is a decision that's currently sitting with you and not whether you're going to have the cake or the fruit at afternoon tea, I'm not talking about that stuff, which is important don't get me wrong, but I want you to think about a decision that's on your to do list or one that you recently made.

Give yourself a quick minute, bring it up at the top of your head something that's going on for you that you have to make, you have ownership for this decision. All right, so now that we know what it is. The first thing I always say to people is write it down. Simple right, really simple but there's something really clarifying about physically writing down what is the thing you need to do. That's why we have to do lists. When you write it down and I've still got a coach that I work with on a fairly regular basis and whenever I'm meeting with her I said she says, "Now you look like you're really struggling. I can't make this. Have you written it down?"

Every time I go, "Oh yeah," and you write it down and all the sudden it's very clear you become very, very focused on what actually needs to be done because how many times do you think, so the human resource manager in your organisation who said to you, "We need more staff in the plant. I want you to come and tell me when I can hire, put it out," you're sitting there going, "Okay." What actually do you need to do? What is it that you need to decide? What you need to decide is when is it profitable? When can you afford to bring somebody on based on the productivity that you forecast out for that individual. How much is that headcount going to cost?

That's actually all you've got to do, write that down but you could be thinking to yourself, "Well, let me go and talk to the operations guys," and more of our growth says, "What's our sales in the West? Because maybe that might affect

what's going on over in the east." You could create a whole heap of decisions but actually the one they want to know is at what point do I need to hire? So you just write that down. Positive decision-making environment, sounds really silly right? How many of you have been to a meeting? Budget meetings are a great example with this group, go to a budget meeting and somehow we're not even talking about the budget.

We get in there and you're ready to go, you put your spreadsheets, got all these things be calculator in the corner, everybody is really ready to go and there's something else going on. You're thinking to yourself, "I distributed this via email, copied everybody in, we're coming here to approve the budget," but we're not talking about that, we're talking about something else how did that happen? You need to create an environment where we're having a meeting and there are stakeholders involved in your decision. That's what we're talking about.

So when you come to the meeting at 10:00, we're going to talk about the budget. What I need from you is to have done this, this and this because this is what we're going to sign off on, does everybody understand? That's what you need. The other thing we've got the right people in the room. This is a killer. Oh my goodness. How many of you have been to a meeting and you go, "What am I doing here? I don't have anything to add, not sure why I'm here, but thanks for inviting me." Feel great. On hierarchical chart, I'm part of it so I've got to be here.

Yep, got plenty of other things I'd like to do, or you're looking at Joe below in the corner up, "What are you doing here? You've got nothing to do with this," but they feel like they better say something so they say something very random and you're looking at them going, "Really? That was not good. Five minutes of my time back." Something I used to do when I was part of the big corporate world and it annoyed everybody I'll be honest, I'd get invited to meetings I was in the executive team and I'd always write back, "Do I really need to be there?" Really, people hated that question."

It wasn't that I was being rude. It's just that, you know what, sometimes HR directors don't need to be at an operational meeting where we're talking about functional sales, "Tell me about it later. I've got stuff to do." Make sure you've got the right stakeholders, not the hierarchy, let's not please everybody we might make some enemies along the way but if there is somebody out in the operating plant who's going to be impacted by your decision, get them in the room. Not their boss, not their boss' boss just because that's how it should roll.

If that person has got a stake in your decision and will be affected by it, they need to be in the room. This is just a really tough one because if you're going to be making decisions affecting people, they're not part of it and what does that mean? I don't buy into it and it's been imposed so I don't like it. Then you start getting the whole fear thing about making decisions back because it's not well-accepted. Stakeholders, right people, right room, right conversation, don't let it get side-tracked, bring it back it should be short and sharp. How are we going to

go with that that do you reckon? It's not easy. That one was really tough, but you got to start somewhere, you've got to challenge meetings you go to, and challenge people being invited to meetings just because they've always been invited.

The other thing about a positive environment is making sure that everybody's got a voice. I may not be your typical accountant, but believe it or not I was an auditor at KPMG for many, many years and not being stereotypical but most accountants are very intellectual and not necessarily the loudest people in the room. That's just sales staff and your marketing team, they're in there all going. You're sitting back, you know the answer but there's all this rubbish going on.

In a positive environment, you make sure you're inviting people who are holding back to speak up. Invite them to participate, make sure you are doing that and that you are actually speaking up as well, because you've got the numbers, you've got the data, you've probably analysed it and you've probably got the answer but they just won't let you get a word in.

It's really important that the right people in the room at the right time with the right voice, just because you're not the loudest doesn't mean to say you're not the smartest or have the answer. Don't get intimidated. Solutions, okay so what we tend to do with a decision when we're under pressure is we just grab the first solution, we run with it, and hope what how it works. Not necessarily the best strategy. So again, depending on the timeframe that we have, we should try to generate as many solutions in our mind as we possibly can, and the reason we do that is the more we start thinking the more the decisions keep flowing, the wider the scope, the more innovative we become the more creative.

What we tend to do is default back to decisions we've previously made, data that we've had before, we think it's safe. Some of the best decisions we make are when we just stop and write down a whole heap of things. We go back to what I said earlier that thinking about that decision that's in your head, that's on your to do list, there'll be a solution that jumps at you. Don't just stop there. What else could happen? Don't restrict your thinking, don't judge it, just put it down.

So you've written down what your decision is and what you need to do and then you write one, and you write another, and you write another that the others may not be relevant, but what it's done is got you thinking outside the square. It's got you thinking a little differently and opening your mind to various possibilities. That's really important. We always go with what we always did, we we'll always get what we always got. Makes sense to people? You've got to vary it up a little bit.

This is another bit that we sometimes use as a procrastinating tool. So we've got all our alternatives, we know what we need to decide on, we've had our meeting with our stakeholders, gone well, everybody spoken up, we had the



right people in the room. We've put a whole bunch of kind of various solutions and now we need to evaluate which ones are right. So we look at it like this, we go what is the risk of each one? How big is it? How small is it? Can we live with the risk? You might cross a couple and you go, "Right now, it's not great we're not financially stable, not a good option," or we might go to, "You know what, minimal risk maximum return put that over on the maybe pile."

What are the consequences of our decision? Again, not just for us for the whole organisation if we're making a business decision, what are the consequences? Can we live with them? Does it mean staff changes? Does it mean shutting down a plant? Does it mean hiring? Does it mean redeploying? What does it mean? What are the consequences of our decision? Do we need investment from external? And the last bit is what is the feasibility?

Again, lots of people forget this, got a great idea let's go risk is minimal. Not a lot of consequences but I don't know how we're going to do it. Not really sure that we can do it, it might require, I don't know building a new plant. Well, that isn't going to happen because we don't have any land, we don't have an investment, we don't have the cash flow to do that. It's actually not feasible so ditch that one off my list.

Thinking about those three things, risk consequence and feasibility really important. What that will do is stop using the evaluation as a procrastination tool, because when you evaluate and you can keep looking and you can keep digesting, you can keep having another look at them, and another look at them, and another, and you actually don't make a decision.

Those procrastinators in the room you'll love this one, so keep it real. Risk, consequence, feasibility. The next part of it is actually, "Let's make the decision." This can be both exciting but very, very stressful as well, now's the crunch time. I've done everything else, I've got the stakeholders I know what I'm trying to do, I've got my options, I've evaluated them and I've got to do it. Just got to do it. That's the tough bit. So everything's out, it's right in front of you but for some reason we don't want to make that decision. And now we come back to the fear. Now, we come back to the ownership of the decision and the risk for us personally. And this is where it becomes about you, so remember at the beginning I said it's all about you changing a mindset.

Nothing I've told you so far you probably don't already know, but now I'm telling you to just make the decision. For those of you who thought of a decision at the beginning, have kind of come through with me on the journey, right now you should be able to write on a piece of paper what your decision is. Now some of you are going, "Yeah, I know that, that, I just really want to do that." That's exactly how it happens. Just do it, get rid of the fear, embrace it. Tell yourself, this is great me feeling a little bit uncomfortable, is a good state. It's not something to be fearful of.

And what is the worst thing that can happen if I get it wrong? I get a slap on the hand, okay, I can move with that. I get two slaps on my hand. Maybe, I don't live with that, don't I? But you've got to make the decision and this is the bit where it just all goes under, you're all intelligent people. You know what you need to do and you get here and you go, "Oh, I can't push the button. I don't want to do it, I don't want to do it." Who can help me? I'll create a working party, another committee, let's go. How many people are on a project group at the moment?

Yes, it's not a great place to be, it's not, because a project group is a delaying tactic. As a general rule for not making a decision or someone up high knows what wants to happen is just convincing you that decisions are being made, let's be very clear. Project groups don't often work. They are a delaying tactic. We've made our decision, we're making forward, one final little step. Let's just check it. Let's make sure it sits comfortably with us intellectually.

I've made the decision and yet my gut feel intellectually, it makes sense to do what I've just decided to do. If it doesn't go back to the beginning of the process and work out which bit you missed. Did you get the right stakeholders? Did you have the right information? Why doesn't it sit well? Never make a decision that you intellectually and gut feel, oh it's wrong? because it probably is. So you go back to the start of the cycle.

Another absolutely pivotal part of the process is the communication and implementation of your decision. So I'll give you an example because this happened to me the other night and I thought it was quite apt. I have a young daughter and I've got a son but the little one is probably more of a challenge. "Mum, can I please have ice cream?" "No," "But I want ice cream," "No, not having ice cream for dinner tonight. I'm doing the dishes." "Mum, I want ice cream." "No, you can't have ice cream. That's it." "Why?" "Because I said you can't have it stop nagging me, go away."

Played it out a little different way. "Mum, can I have ice cream?" "Lily, we've been swimming it's now 7:30, just had a really big dinner, I don't think ice cream is sure before you go to bed you know what that does is probably not a great idea. How about we roll over ice cream for tomorrow night. How does that sound?" Did you see what happened? The first time, I just said, no I didn't give an answer, no, why, just I'm your mother shut up listen I'm in charge here I've got the ice cream scoop with the hand you go to bed.

If I tell her why she may still not like my decision but she understands there was a reason. What I've done is bought her into it, so if you try to force a decision on someone, "No ice cream tonight. That's it. My decision move away" that never goes well. In the business world, I have decided that we are going to reduce staff wages by 5% across the board, so thank you all for taking a salary cut I'll see you Tuesday, not really going to go that well, that's why we have enterprise bargaining agreements, that's why we go through consultation process.

Whereas if we said to the executive, guys, things aren't as great as they should be, I'd like to put on the table that if you will took a 5% pay cut, we could put it into short term incentives, sends a great message to the staff. This is what it'll look like for your package. Here's some information on it would you like to think about it. They probably still not going to like the decision, but they understand where it's coming from, why it's there and what their role is.

So you need to communicate your plan to all the key stakeholders, make sure they understand why the decision has been made. What you were trying to achieve and how you're going to implement it, and what do they need to do. Again, we made a decision team, this is how it's going to go and just get on with it. Doesn't really work. Made a decision that we are going to shut down the plant over Christmas to save some money, those of you that don't have enough leave what we'll do is we'll redeploy you to other sites for that period of time. The rest of you please embrace the break.

This is what I need from you to make that happen as a manager, you need to speak to each one of your staff da, da, da. The decision has been made. I told you why and I told you what I needed you to do. This bit, lots of people forget that just do the communication sometimes they did that badly, don't communicate and why we need to implement. There's one more decision for you guys. You need to adopt some new ideas and concepts. Make change to become more decisive or not, it's up to you.

So if you walk out of here today and haven't taken one maybe two little tips, that's okay, that's up to you. I can't make you decisive but I can challenge the way you think about it and hopefully give you enough to move on with. I've talked at you, it's now your turn to ask me questions and have a chat back. So the question was, any ideas on how to work with a manager who can't make decisions. Feedback is a gift. I know you're looking at me going, "She's in the HR space again, doesn't get it," feedback is actually a gift it's wrapped up really nicely and you choose what to do with it.

So I say to you, you know when you don't make those decisions it actually impacts my work quite significantly and I just want to try to understand why you don't. Gentleman at the front can go, get stuffed, not doing anything about that, don't like you, or can take that feedback and think, "Yeah, okay, I actually didn't realise I was impacting."

As an employer, as a society in Australia we're not great at feedback and I don't know why, but what's the risk? What's the worst thing that could happen? The best thing that could happen is it starts making decisions. The worst thing, nothing changes so you're no worse off, you're exactly where you were. So sit down next one on one and just say, when you do these things this is how it impacts me, is there anything I could do to help make that easier for you? Call it.

So the question was, how do you empower staff as a manager to make decisions when they are afraid? So we all have fear but understanding what it is

that that person is afraid of, so don't know you but I would say that their fear is about impressing you or impressing the organisation. So that's a respect thing and it's a positive thing, not a bad thing on you at all but you need to create an environment where it's okay. One of the things again, sorry I'll share a home story, I went to this seminar and I often come home my kids just go, "Here she goes again," so sitting around the dinner table and I start off and I go, "What did you do badly today everyone?" All of my kids just looked down and go, "Oh, God, how much trouble am I going to getting to today?"

There's something about actually acknowledging that you don't do everything well and that it's okay, so we often once a week we try to do it. I sit down, "What did you do badly?" "I didn't do so well on the maths test." Okay, I have to hold my legs from, "Really, if you would've studied more or it would have been great," I go, "Okay, so what could we do differently?" A bit more homework, open the book. Okay, that'd be great.

Same thing in no team environment, when they're fearful ask, just say, "You know guys, I really want you to make these decisions. If we make them together you'll learn and it takes a whole heap of pressure off me. I know you can do it, so why aren't you?" There'll be silence, be comfortable with the silence. But encouraging them to speak up and say actually I just feel a little bit like if I make the wrong one I'm letting everyone down, how does everyone feel about that? Again, just trying to open and create that environment was okay because I'm sure you make mistakes along the way, so showing a bit of your vulnerability as well is always helpful. Share an example of where you got it wrong because then it makes it okay. One more?

Audience Member: Can I ask a question?

Tiffany Quinlan: Sure.

Audience Member: Cultural differences, how does that apply...

Tiffany Quinlan: Lots, and I didn't touch it because it's a really big piece. So there's cultural diversity decision, so men really interestingly between the ages of 24 and 28 are the most indecisive group. Go figure. Not what you thought I was going to say did you? The reason behind all the research that says is because they're the most impressionable and they have the most pressure on them. There's a lot of stereotypes that says, "The man must be a hunter gatherer, he must be able to do this and he must be decisive, and if he's not he's weak." And men are not allowed to be weak, remember that? They're not allowed to be weak. So cultural differences make a big difference as well.

Some cultures are very more reserved and in the company of women particularly in the company of men often hold back. What I would say to you is, if you are given a seat at the table there is a reason, use it. If you choose not to say anything you are missing an opportunity. You are invited to a meeting

assuming the stakeholders are there for the right reason because you have something to contribute, contribute. It's not always going to be easy but baby steps the first time, think about it, think about it and then say something, and then kind of go back and it wasn't so bad.

Then the next time try to say two things, and then next time try to say three, baby steps, change is not easy but you've got to have a go. Remember you're there for a reason, you've been employed for a reason.

Ben O'Halloran: We hope you enjoyed this episode of the CPA Australia podcast. If you like this episode you can access more Congress on demand via our show notes. Tiffany Quinlan will be presenting at the upcoming emerging leaders conference at CPA Australia. For more information on this event and if you'd like to learn more about Tiffany visit our show notes at [www.cpaaustralia.com.au/podcast/61](http://www.cpaaustralia.com.au/podcast/61). Thanks for listening.

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