

CHAPTER 28:

MOVE AND ADJUST

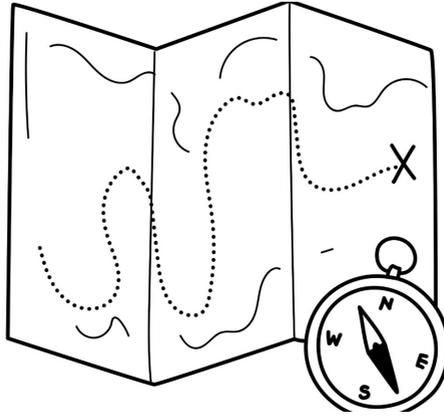
“Ignorance is not Bliss. Ignorance is ignorance. It is not right to believe anything can be derived from it.”

– Sigmund Freud

When in a state of panic, it is reassuring to hear a calm yet firm, guiding voice. In this case, it was the instructor who sat to my right in the cockpit. "Stop listening to your head and read the bloody instruments."

I was flying a light aircraft at 3,000 feet above the featureless and flat Texas countryside but was 'under the hood, so I couldn't see a damn thing. This is an exercise student pilots do to simulate flying in poor visibility, and I was making a balls-up of it. My head kept telling me that the plane was in a gradual right turn (he said this is caused by the engine's torque confusing the brain), which I kept correcting, even though the instruments showed straight and level flight. It took a lot of concentration to overcome my thinking and not put in these unnecessary adjustments.

Within just a few hours of 'under the hood' flying, my brain had made the adjustment and re-calibrated itself to stop me from correcting the imaginary 'pull' to the right. The instructor then put the aircraft into different attitudes, getting me to work out what was happening to correct the plane back to stable and level flight. Unfortunately, in 90% of cases, I misdiagnosed the plane's altitude and sometimes put in corrections that were likely to stall, even crash it.



If we are concerned with progress and performance, we must be concerned with data. We need it to answer two questions; am I doing everything I should be doing, and is it working?

Data also motivates us by demonstrating our progress (or lack of it).

These days there is a proliferation of apps that can track many aspects of our lives. So not having the capture mechanism is no longer an excuse.

Data is critical for tracking complex and unknown variables or situations where we cannot rely on intuition (as was clearly the case for me with flying).

In novel circumstances, we simply don't have a good body of experience. Our intuition has nothing to go on in these situations.

I was lucky enough to be selected for some free training by the Government a few years ago. It was in recognition of my ability to drive faster than the speed limit and was called a speed awareness course. In the introduction to the program, the instructor suggested that people decide whether it is safe to speed based on three data points.

1. *Facts - accurate information about the subject.*
2. *Opinions - ideas based on our own, or someone else's, perspective.*
3. *Guesswork - our best guess at the time.*

He outlined some interesting facts about road traffic accidents that challenged my long-held opinions and made me think twice about some of my decisions.

We base a lot of our decisions based on assumptions, generalisations, preferences and biases. However, our mind plays a few specific tricks on us that it can be helpful to be aware of:

1. We try to make sense of situations and things by looking for and finding patterns, even when they are not there.
2. We tend to extrapolate isolated incidents and turn them into generalised positions (especially if they support our underlying beliefs).
3. We prefer to engage with data that confirms our existing views rather than challenges them (confirmation bias).

We need data to know where we are relative to our intentions and outcomes. Data that can tell us if:

- We are doing what we are supposed to be doing (at the right level of intensity).
- What we are doing is giving us the results we expected or hoped for.
- Our performance is improving or deteriorating.
- We have everything we need to keep moving forward effectively.

- Anything is coming up that might block progress or force us to change course.
- We are where we need and want to be.
- We compare favourably with targets, historical performance, expectations and the performance of others.

If we are going to use data to support decisions, it needs to be correct. This means making sure it is complete, accurate, timely and valid for the purpose we are using it for. It also includes being aware of and adjusting for any bias in collating and reporting the data.

There are two types of data we can make use of:

1. **Quantitative data** is numerical and therefore lends itself to comparison, analysis and modelling.
2. **Qualitative data** is data from the perspectives and views of other people (and our own thoughts). It is subjective by its very nature but can be made more useful by challenging, searching for themes, and cross-referencing other sources.

Using data is an essential element of high performance. However, it isn't a replacement for your intuition; but rather a means of calibrating and refining it.

To be **responsABLE** is to seek out data and use it to challenge ourselves to see reality more clearly and make better quality decisions.