

DENNIS BAKKE

THE DECISION MAKER



Unlock the Potential
of Everyone in
Your Organization,
One Decision at a Time

THE DECISION MAKER

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BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF JOY AT WORK

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WWW.DECISIONMAKERBOOK.COM

COMING IN MARCH 2013

A groundbreaking new book from the author of
the *New York Times* bestseller *Joy at Work*

Maybe the boss shouldn't decide.

Who makes the important decisions in your organization? Strategy, product development, budgeting, compensation—such key decisions typically are made by company leaders. That's what bosses are for, right? But maybe the boss isn't the best person to make the call.

That's the conclusion Dennis Bakke came to, and he used it to build AES into a Fortune 200 global power company with 27,000 people in 27 countries. He used it again to create Imagine Schools, the largest non-profit charter-school network in the U.S.

As a student at Harvard Business School, Bakke made hundreds of decisions using the case-study method. He realized two things: decision-making is the best way to develop people; and that shouldn't stop at business school. So Bakke spread decision-making throughout his organizations, fully engaging people at all levels. Today, Bakke has given thousands of people the freedom and responsibility to make decisions that matter.

In *The Decision Maker*, a leadership fable loosely based on Bakke's experience, the *New York Times* bestselling author shows us how giving decisions to the people closest to the action can transform any organization.

The idea is simple.

The results are powerful.

When leaders put real control into the hands of their people, they tap incalculable potential. *The Decision Maker*, destined to be a business classic, holds the key to unlocking the potential of every person in your organization..

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dennis Bakke is the co-founder of Imagine Schools. He is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Joy at Work: A Revolutionary Approach to Fun on the Job*. Bakke previously co-founded and served as the president and CEO of AES, a Fortune 200 global power company. He lives with his wife in Arlington, VA.

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THE DECISION MAKER

From the Introduction

Nothing tells you more about an organization than the way it makes decisions.

Do leaders trust team members? Do the people closest to the action get to make the call? Do team members have real responsibility and real control? All of these questions can be answered by one other one: who gets to make the decisions? And nothing affects an organization more than the decisions the people in it make. Great business minds know this. In fact, decision-making is at the heart of all business education. Nearly a hundred years after the case-study method was invented at Harvard, it's still the foundation of the world's best business programs. Why? Because the case-study method puts top business students in the role of decision-maker.

Outside of business school, few business leaders tap into the value created by putting important decisions in the hands of their people. Instead, "team players" are taught to do what they're told. This takes the fun out of work, and it robs people of the chance to contribute in a meaningful way. Or, organizations will use a participatory style of decision making in which recommendations are given to the boss, who then makes the final decision. This approach also fails to fully realize the value of the people in the organization. What I am talking about is quite different.

The Decision Maker is founded on the idea that all of us can make good decisions. So this story is not just for people who currently lead organizations. It's for managers at any level who want to unlock the full potential of the people around them.

About *The Decision Maker* Cover

A rubber-band ball bounces only when hundreds of rubber bands are stretched and bound together. Each unique rubber band is fully engaged and makes a meaningful contribution, not just the few on the top layer. The ball represents the decision maker culture you'll discover in this book. My dream is for people at all levels of an organization to have the freedom and responsibility to make decisions that matter.



THE DECISION MAKER



Praise for Dennis Bakke's first leadership book, *Joy at Work*

"A timely and inspiring book that challenges us to rethink the purpose of business in society. It is all the more important because Dennis Bakke's personal life mirrors the principles he advocates."

— **President Bill Clinton**

"*Joy at Work* is a remarkable book about a remarkable company told by a remarkable man. For almost 20 years, AES defied most conventional management wisdom as it built a culture in which people were treated as adults, leaders were truly servant leaders, and fun was a core value that became actualized in the day-to-day lives of AES people, not something just hung on the wall to be talked about. The lessons of this journey are captured by Dennis Bakke in a brilliantly written, frank, and honest account of the ups and the downs. In a world in which fear often seems to have replaced fun; the search for profits has replaced the pursuit of purpose; conformity and following the crowd have replaced the courage to do the right thing and live by principles; and widespread corruption has replaced the conviction of ideals, this book offers both the recipe for a better way of organizing and being in an organization and the inspiration to try. Never has a book such as this been more needed, more important, or more welcome."

— **Jeffrey Pfeffer, professor of organizational behavior, Stanford Graduate School of Business**

"A must-read book for anyone who wants to make work fun, fulfilling, and financially rewarding."

— **Jack Kemp, former HUD secretary and vice presidential candidate**

"*Joy at Work* is simply the best book I have ever read about integrating human values and economic success. Bakke has changed the nature of the game of business forever. The book is an answer to our cynicism and materialism and to the loss of faith in our leaders. It is required reading for all who are in a leadership position, are studying leadership, or know someone who is doing either."

— **Peter Block, author of *Stewardship* and *The Answer to How Is Yes***

"*Joy at Work* is a major breakthrough in corporate decision-making, which is buttressed by actual practice. It is right in principle, persuasively argued, and reader-friendly, as well as pioneering in its potential to revolutionize the cultures of corporations and most other organizations in society."

— **Joel L. Fleishman, professor of law and public policy studies, Duke University**

"All leaders and aspiring leaders should read this provocative book."

— **Lynn Sharp Paine, John G. McLean Professor, Harvard Business School**