

# Taking the Right Turn by John C. Maxwell

As president of Ford Motor Co., Robert McNamara once briefly pondered a decision made by one of his executives and then asked him, “What did you decide not to do?” Why is it important to consider multiple options during the decision-making process? Here are three reasons:

## **1. With options come possibilities.**

Not long after moving to the Atlanta area, I realized that the drive from my home to the airport takes 35 minutes—if I leave at 6:30 a.m. If I leave just 15 minutes later, at 6:45 a.m., the same drive takes an hour. And if I wait until 7 a.m., that same drive takes 80 minutes.

Driving in Atlanta traffic has trained me to become a student of the routes and time because they help define my options. When I arrive somewhere early, sometimes I double back and look for new ways to make the same trip. I want to know my options. That way, when the obvious route slows to a crawl, I know my options and I often come up with a creative solution. If we don’t have options or if we don’t know our options, we’re stuck. We have little choice but to stay in the traffic jam. In decision making, if we do not have options, we only have one decision. And that decision may be the wrong decision, or it may not be the best decision.

## **2. With options come insights.**

The more options we have, the more we can see what is not obvious to others. And people who are successful see what is not obvious to others. They don’t see what others can’t see; they just see what others don’t seem to see. Successful people engage that creative part of their minds and say, “Well, I wonder how else I can look at this problem. I wonder how else I could deal with this decision. I wonder what other possibilities I have there.”

## **3. With options come options.**

Options are a result of thinking early, often and differently. And when we think early, often and differently, we begin to create more options within our life. Options come from the disciplines of pursuing options. And very often they take us down roads we never would have traveled, to places we never would have seen, where we find new options we never would have considered.

Fred Smith, a businessman in Texas who has been one of my mentors, has a sign on his desk that says, “But on the other hand...” He’s an optional thinker, and he’s taught me to be an optional thinker, too. So when somebody asks me to make a decision about a situation, I don’t offer a solution, I ask a question: What are our options? Give me the good, give me the bad, give me the pretty, give me the ugly, give me the impossible, give me the possible, give me the convenient, give me the inconvenient. Give me the options. All I want are options. And once I have all the options before me, then I comfortably and confidently make my decision.