



Scenario Planning Application Preloaded Decisions

Action Triggers and Preloaded Decisions

It's a lot easier to make a decision if you've done some thinking about it beforehand. Yet life often seems to come at us so fast that we feel there is no time to do that valuable "pre-thinking." The good news: scenario planning makes it possible to cut through the noise and work smarter, not just harder.

Whenever you make an advance decision to execute a certain action when you encounter a certain situation, you're making use of two powerful concepts: "action triggers" and "preloaded decisions."¹ An effective action trigger is specific and visible, acting as a red flag: *"oh yeah, I decided that if X happens, I will do Y."*

Recognizing Leading Indicators

Preloaded decisions are an outcome of scenario planning, which is an approach to predicting possible futures and deciding the best actions to take depending on what actually happens.

For each scenario developed, early warning signs are identified.² Like action triggers, these are specific, visible indicators that get our attention so we can make preloaded decisions thought out carefully in advance. By keeping one eye peeled toward these critical signs, it's possible to recognize that a particular scenario is beginning to unfold, and take appropriate action in response.

Preventing Guesswork

Preloading decisions using action triggers identified during scenario planning takes a lot of the guesswork out of important actions that have long-term implications. This approach reduces decision paralysis, increases confidence and prevents knee-jerk responses to change.

1. [Switch](#) by Chip Heath and Dan Heath, pages 209-212.
2. [How to Build Scenarios](#) by Lawrence Wilkinson.