

How Do You Decide Under Pressure?

A self-diagnostic for founders and executives

About this diagnostic

Under pressure, most decision-makers default to one of three patterns — and most are not fully aware of which one they use. This diagnostic helps you identify your dominant pattern, understand what it may be costing you, and ask the question that tends to shift it.

Instructions

Read each statement and note your score in the right-hand column. Answer for how you actually behave under pressure — not how you aim to behave.

1	2	3	4	5
Rarely or never true	Occasionally true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always true

The diagnostic

#	Statement	Score (1–5)
1	When a decision is urgent, I move quickly rather than risk losing time to deliberation.	
2	I often feel relief once a decision is made — even before I know whether it was right.	
3	Looking back, I sometimes wonder if I moved too fast on decisions made under pressure.	
4	Under pressure, I look for more information before committing, even when time is limited.	
5	I find it difficult to commit to a direction when significant unknowns remain.	
6	Reviewing past decisions, I sometimes wish I had taken more time before deciding.	
7	Under pressure, I prefer to bring key decisions to a group rather than decide alone.	
8	I tend to wait to see what others think before declaring my own position.	
9	I find reasons why the moment isn't quite right — and delay a decision as a result.	
10	I am genuinely satisfied with the quality of my decisions under high-pressure conditions.	

How to score

Pattern	Add scores from statements	Your total (max 15)
A — The Accelerator	Statements 1 + 2 + 3	_____ / 15
B — The Analyst	Statements 4 + 5 + 6	_____ / 15
C — The Deflector	Statements 7 + 8 + 9	_____ / 15
Statement 10 score	Note separately — we return to it on the next page	_____

Your highest total identifies your dominant pattern. If two scores are close, you likely move between both depending on the stakes.

Your pattern profiles

A — The Accelerator	Statements 1–3
Under pressure, you move. Decisions get made, actions happen, momentum doesn't stall. The cost is that speed can outrun the thinking. You may find yourself reversing decisions, managing the consequences of choices made with thin deliberation, or feeling a hollow relief when a decision is closed — only to reopen it a week later. <i>Key question: "Was I deciding — or just ending the discomfort?"</i>	
B — The Analyst	Statements 4–6
Under pressure, you go deeper. You gather, you assess, you model the scenarios. The cost is that more information rarely produces the certainty you're looking for. Every day spent gathering is a day the situation continues to evolve — often in precisely the direction you were hoping to avoid. <i>Key question: "Is there information I'm waiting for that would genuinely change my answer — or am I hoping the decision will close itself?"</i>	

C — The Deflector

Statements 7–9

Under pressure, you broaden the conversation. You involve others, test for consensus, wait for a clearer read. There's wisdom in this. But there's also a cost: decisions that require your judgment don't become easier when they're distributed. And teams read ambiguity from their leaders as a signal to hedge — which compounds the original problem.

Key question: "Am I seeking input — or am I transferring ownership of a decision that is mine to make?"

On statement 10

Statement 10 asks whether you're satisfied with the quality of your decisions under pressure. This is worth holding next to your pattern score. A high Accelerator or Analyst score combined with a low score on statement 10 is a clear signal: the pattern is costing you something you can already feel. A high score on statement 10 is worth examining too — it's worth asking whether your confidence is calibrated to outcomes, or to how decisions feel in the moment.

Three questions to sit with

1. Looking at your dominant pattern: when did it last cost you something concrete?
2. What would it look like to decide differently in the next high-stakes situation?
3. If a peer who knows you well saw how you make decisions under pressure, what would they say?

On working through this

These patterns are not fixed. They're habits — built under conditions that once made sense and can be changed when they no longer do.

If this diagnostic surfaces something worth exploring further, I work with founders and executives on exactly this: the decision-making patterns that drive outcomes — and how to shift them when they need to change.

A free discovery call is the place to start. You'll leave with something useful regardless of what we decide after.

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