

Overcome inertia by developing your bias for action

You miss 100% of the shots you don't take. [Wayne Gretzky](#)

What is a bias for action?

A *bias for action* uses decision making to drive action. Innovators with a bias for action make decisions and take action, even in the face of uncertainty.

A *bias for action* differs from *acting on impulse* in that there is a clear goal to achieve and plan for achieving that goal. After careful consideration of the potential positive and negative outcomes, the plan is executed with [alacrity](#).

An innovator with a bias for action seeks to understand:

- What is the goal we wish to accomplish?
- What is the plan for reaching this goal?
- What are the core questions that need to be answered?
- What is the cost of not taking action in a timely manner?
- How can this goal be reached in a series of small steps?
- Which small steps are low risk, because they can be easily reversed?



A bias for action is the willingness to act or decide without extensive analysis or when lacking sufficient information. A bias for action means to make a decision first and then to contemplate that decision only when the effects of that decision can be observed. The concept was popularized by Tom Peters, author of '[In Search of Excellence](#),' and was called out as a distinguishing feature of [agile firms](#).

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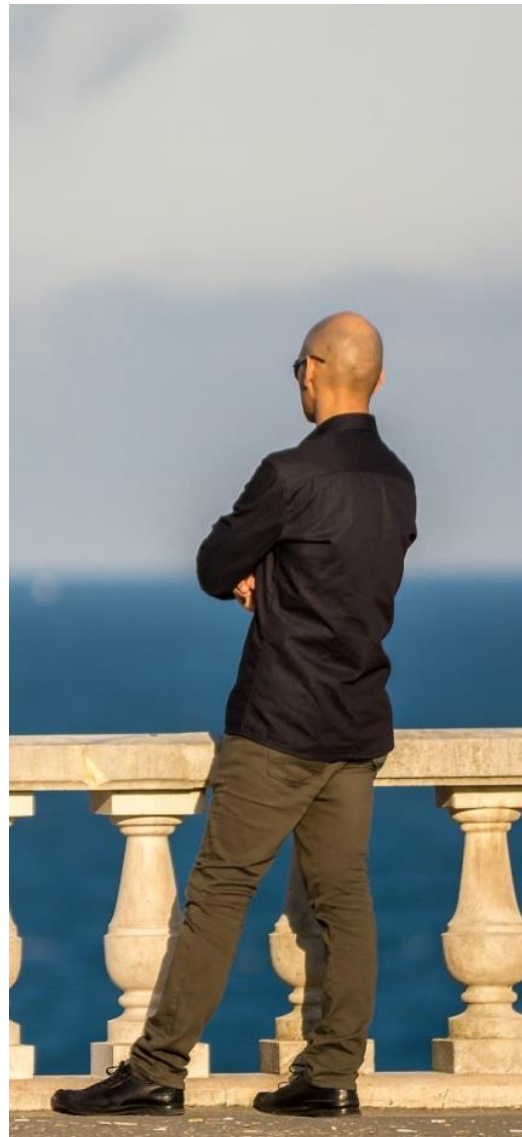
Speed matters in business. Many decisions and actions are reversible and do not need extensive study. We value calculated risk taking. [Amazon Values](#)

Do you have a bias for action?

Innovators with a bias for action most often possess the desirable traits of energy and focus. Energy, in order to deliver personal involvement with dedicated effort and focus to resist distractions, overcome roadblocks and remain persistent.

A bias for action is not reckless or impulsive because decisions are made using careful thought, planning and analysis.

- When you have a choice, do you choose action over inaction?
- Are you comfortable making a decision with less than adequate time and information?
- Have you made an excuse for inaction that you later regretted?
- Do you ask for outside help or seek other viewpoints when progress slows?
- Do you look for ways to move forward or do you let yourself stay stuck for days at a time?
- Can you reflect on a time when you did take prompt action and enjoyed the benefits of moving swiftly? These recollections can restore your resolve.



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Innovators with a bias for action are described as purposeful, effective and accomplished. You are part of this exclusive group if you use the seven wonders of the action-oriented world:

1. You visualize your goal – you know where to go and how to get there
2. You make a list – you break down your journey into manageable steps
3. You prepare for obstacles – you have tools to chip away roadblocks
4. You challenge complacency – you refuse to accept the status quo
5. You embrace choices – you seek out unforeseen options
6. You cultivate commitment – you seek out those who keep their promises
7. You dare to dream – you look beyond your accomplishments and on to the next challenge



You only find oil if you drill wells. You might think you're finding it when you're drawing maps and studying logs, but you have got to drill. [John Masters](#)

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Can you strengthen your bias for action?

Even innovators with an inclination for a bias for action will benefit by honing the skills needed to maintain a robust bias for action. Strengthen a bias for action by avoiding hesitation and action traps.

Drivers of hesitation

- Fear of failure – assess the consequences of a bad decision versus missing out entirely
- Fear of success – focus on the benefits of moving forward
- Fear of uncertainty – consider the diminishing returns of additional information
- Fear of change – focus on the benefits gained when decisions are made
- Fear of imperfection – progress is by definition imperfect, don't let perfect be the enemy of adequate



Action traps

- Demands of routine – of course you don't have time. If you want to do something different, you need to do things differently
- The illusion of constraint – there are no constraints, only prevailing conditions. Innovators focus on what's possible
- The path not taken – focusing on the urgent rather than the important obscures potentially attractive available options

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[Amazon](#) founder [Jeff Bezos](#) says it this way, “...most decisions should probably be made with somewhere around 70% of the information you wish you had. If you wait for 90%, in most cases, you’re probably being slow. Being wrong might be less costly than you think, whereas being slow is going to be expensive for sure.”

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Have a bias for action, let’s see something happen now. You can break that big plan into small steps and take the first step right away. [Indira Gandhi](#)

Putting your bias for action to work

A *bias for action* uses decision making to drive action. If actions are driven by decisions, be sure to decide the right things! Deciding the right things means identifying the core questions.

Many of my clients turn to me to get specific business questions answered. After I answer their questions, I often ask one of my own, namely “Are you asking me the right questions?”

Common client questions	The <i>right</i> questions
Should I get a business license?	Can I make any money?
Should I form an LLC?	How can I validate my idea?
How can I find a good location?	How can I test my market?
Will I qualify for a bank loan?	What are my barriers to market entry?

Using your bias for action when starting a new business

When considering a business idea, the goal should be to quickly evaluate the idea’s feasibility and then to start taking low-costs steps validate the concept.

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The core questions for a new business should be centered on feasibility, validation and scale.

- Are my assumptions valid and adequately vetted?
- Can this business model be executed successfully?
- Is there a gap in the market and a market in the gap?

Too often, entrepreneurs fall into what I call ‘the execution trap’ where the bias for action is misdirected.

Rather than using core questions to guide decision making that drives effective actions, these misguided folks *act on impulse*.

Impulsive actions seldom serve a new business well and often lead to bottle necks and dead ends.

80 percent of success is just showing up. [Woody Allen](#)

What’s next?

Want to take action but don’t know where to turn? Your business coach might be able to help. Don’t let another good idea slip through your fingers and don’t face these challenges alone. The next year will fly by whether or not you get started so get started now.

Blame no one. Expect nothing. Do something. [Coach Bill Parcels](#)



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