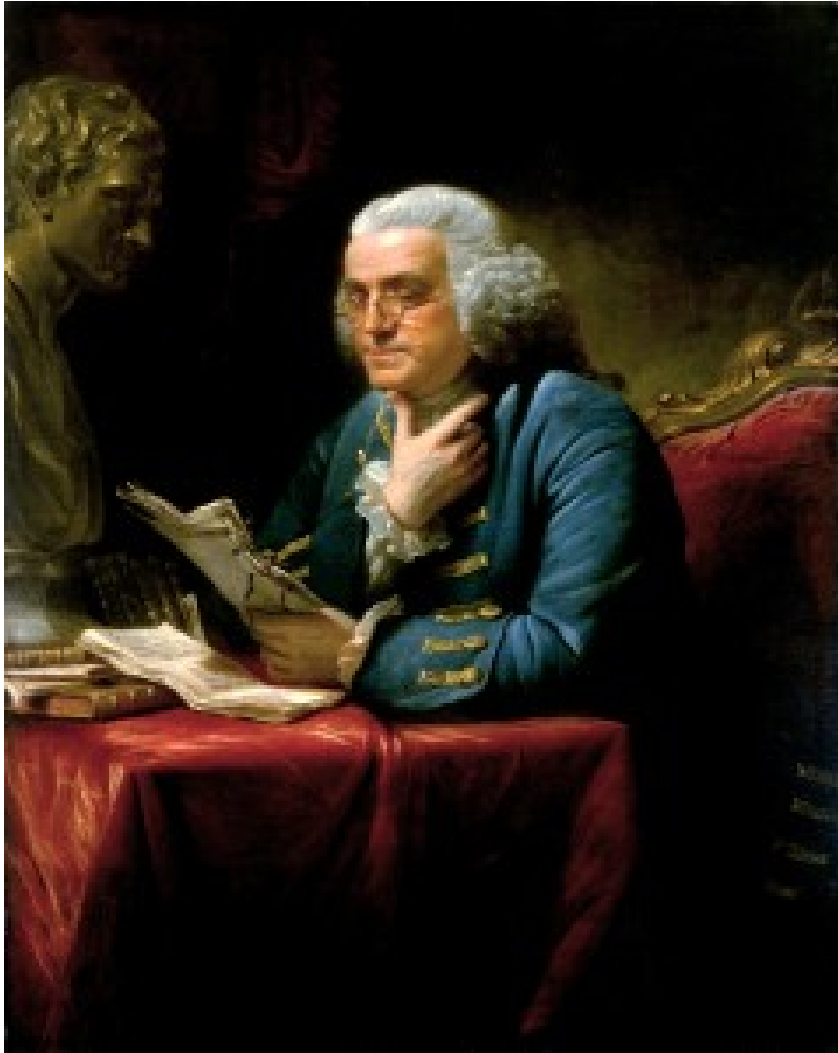# Do you let Ben Franklin make your decisions?

In response to last week's post about [10 Brain Reasons for Delaying a Decision](), a number of readers mentioned using the Ben Franklin Pro vs Con list.

This is the most common and easiest strategy used to finalize decisions, including those where choices may be difficult or complicated.

It seems straightforward enough to compare positive and negative features. List all the positive features or aspects in one column and compared to all negative features or aspects in an adjacent column.

Some decide on the total number of items listed in each column — the highest being the dominant choice. Others do an analytical comparison and decide on which makes the most sense. Still others do an emotions-based comparison and decide on which one "feels" right. And, there are still others who bring their own unique rating factors to the process.

The Ben Franklin 5-Step Method

While the Pro and Con list may seem fair, reasonable and logical, Ben Franklin was keenly aware that such simplicity didn't necessarily given the best results. His complete method included several other steps to ensure a better decision outcome.

First Step: Wait a few days and then return to the list and edit each column for additions or deletions.

Second Step: Rate each item in each column for its value of (I) *Importance* (rate from 1-10, with 10 being most important).

Third Step: Repeat the process and rate each for its (P) *Probability* of success (rate from 1-10, with 10 being the greatest probability of success).

Fourth Step: Multiple each *Importance* number (I) times its equivalent *Probability* number (P) for all items in both columns. (IxP =)

Fifth Step: Add up the (IxP) total for the Pro column, and do the same for the Con column. You will now have two numbers. A total value for the Pro column and a total value number for your Con column.

The column with the higher number will tell you where you place greater importance and how you view the probability of a successful outcome.

As an example, I used this 5-step method to decide whether to invest in a training course.

Its positives included

- Being taught by a major marketer
- It was a conference training which got me away from my desk and

home
- The training would increase my marketing skills
- It was promoted as a tested method to get high-end clients

Some of the negatives were

- The course was a considerable investment
- I would have to fly, which is a hassle
- I would have to add two additional travel days on
- Videos of the training were a separate purchase, though at discounted price
- It was a large conference, and I get more out of smaller events where it's easier to get questions answered.

While I fully expected the results to go the other way, in favor of feeling right about signing up for this course, I came to the realization that money was a bigger issue (course + travel expenses+ videos). Consequently, this allowed me to refocus on how I was allocating my money and plan for future events.

If you take the short Pro vs Con list comparison you have one result. If you take Ben Franklin's advice and go for the longer version of considering *Importance* and *Probability* you may come to a different result with greater insight.

If you get identical results, then rest assure Ben Franklin would be proud of you for making the best decision you can.

Would you consider spending more time evaluating your Pro and Con list for qualities of *Importance* and *Probability* of success?

Resource https://www.smartdraw.com/mind-map/making-decisions-ben-franklin.htm

Image: en.wikipedia.org, Franklin in London, 1767 painted by David Martin, displayed in the White House.