



## ***The 5 Best Decisions the Beatles Ever Made:***

### ***How to become a gold standard***

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*Wouldn't you like to be the 'gold standard' in your role as CIO in your current organization?*

*By: Ward Keever, CTG HealthCare Solutions Executive Director of Executive Services*

Who would have 'thunk' it? Sometimes, the weirdest sources can provide the most valuable ideas. At the mall recently, I picked up one of those skinny paperback books that can be read in an hour. It was titled *The 5 Best Decisions the Beatles Ever Made*. It looked like an easy read and had the intriguing title, so I started reading while waiting for my wife to finish more serious endeavors. At the risk of being found guilty of not providing original ideas, I would like to use this edition of *Insights* to share these five decisions with you.

Some of us are old enough to remember February 9, 1964. That was the day that I and 73 million other TV watchers saw the Beatles first perform on *The Ed Sullivan Show* (remember him?). At the time, I thought their hair was too long and they looked silly. To this day, though, I enjoy listening to their music and hearing that unique 'something' in it.

Do you realize that the Beatles were together for only ten years and yet had a greater impact on music than any other group ever? Whether you enjoy the Beatles' music or not, they are *the gold standard*—a sign of greatness. It means that everything that came before you becomes obsolete and everything that comes after you bears your mark. Wouldn't you like to be the 'gold standard' in your role as CIO in your current organization? Here are the five decisions that helped make the Beatles the gold standard and how they apply to our world.

### ***Decision #1: Spread the Spotlight***

In 1957, a small musical group called the Quarry Men, led by 16-year-old John Lennon, was playing in Liverpool, England. During a break between sets, John was introduced to Paul McCartney. After listening to Paul play his guitar and sing, John concluded that Paul was a better guitarist as well as a better singer (at least at that time). In addition, Paul was better looking—a triple-threat! John had to decide whether he should keep the spotlight for himself as leader of the Quarry Men, or spread the spotlight by inviting Paul to join the group, making the band better and the team stronger. Of course, we all know what he decided—that was the day the Beatles were born with the core team of Lennon and McCartney.



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I find it amazing that a 16-year-old had the insight to make this decision. The easy choice—the one many of us would have made—would've been to put as much distance between himself and this McCartney triple-threat as possible. But John Lennon understood something many of us never really do: *when you spread the spotlight, everything gets brighter.*

### **Decision #2: Have a Single Shared Vision**

When the Beatles were first starting out, there were over 300 other rock and roll bands—not in the world, not even in England, but *in Liverpool alone*. And most were better than the Beatles. So how did they rise above the others? They all shared, believed in, and pursued a single common vision: to be bigger than Elvis! That vision drove them to reach for the top. (And conversely, it was when they started to lose that single shared vision that they began the internal dissent that eventually led to their breakup.)

Articulating your vision gives it definition and focus. There is a sense of clarity that comes with having a clearly defined vision. That vision becomes the litmus test against which all decisions are made.

When Bill Gates founded Microsoft, he too had a shared vision for his team: “a computer on every desk.” Like the Beatles’ vision, it was simple and measurable. Another one we all know that is simple and measurable is “a man on the moon by the end of this decade.” A shared vision (a frequent *Insights* topic) remains a critical success factor for a healthcare organization—across the entire enterprise as well as within the IT department.

### **Decision #3: Play to Your Strengths**

As a group, the Beatles’ biggest strength was their ability to compose songs. They turned down good songs written by others, some of which went on to become number 1 hits for other artists. But this was consistent with the Beatles’ decision to play to their strength as songwriters. They realized that if they were going to be bigger than Elvis, they couldn’t be just another cookie-cutter band playing cookie-cutter music. They had to answer the question most of us never ask: what can we do better than anybody else? In other words, what’s our biggest strength?

They also played to their individual strengths. For example, no one suggested that since Ringo was lacking in guitar skills he should spend time practicing guitar. Instead, they capitalized on his skills as a drummer. George Harrison was the lead guitarist because that’s what he did best (and better than John and Paul).

Too often we focus on the other side of the equation. During performance reviews, we frequently spend more time on weaknesses (we call them ‘opportunities for improvement’) and don’t focus on playing to a person’s strengths and taking advantage of those strengths to position the team to succeed. The net result is average performance.



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Our most significant possibilities for growth are in the areas of our greatest strengths, not our weaknesses. As a leader, if you focus the team as a whole on its shared strengths while also leveraging the strengths of each team member, overall team performance significantly improves.

### ***Decision #4: Shake It Up***

When the Beatles started out, the general rule was that tours were necessary to promote records. You had to mix with your fans. But at the top of their game, the Beatles decided to stop doing live performances. August 29, 1966, was their last live performance. Many music experts thought they had committed professional suicide—until June 1, 1967. Nearly nine months later they released *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, an album which shook things up in every possible way: musically, lyrically, and visually. It was the album that turned rock and roll into an art form. *And it went to number 1 on the charts, without a tour!*

Years ago, the best watches were made by the Swiss—17 jewels. Swiss watches are legendary for their accuracy, beauty, and engineering. In 1968, Switzerland held approximately 80 percent of the world's market share. With the advent of the digital watch (no hands, no gears, and no ticks), however, Switzerland's domination disappeared overnight. Do you know who invented the digital watch? The Swiss! But they weren't willing to rock the boat; they didn't want to shake things up. Instead, a Japanese company patented the technology. That company was Seiko, and the rest is history.

A successful CIO must be willing, even eager, to challenge the status quo, to do things differently, to grow, to evolve. It's how to keep yourself and your staff on your toes, how you keep fresh and enthusiastic and have some fun. By shaking things up and letting go of the industry-accepted way of promoting music when it no longer fit their vision, the Beatles were able to take their career to a level that even they could not have dreamed of.

### ***Decision #5: Carry the Weight***

Paul McCartney once said, "The reason we were twice as good as everyone is because we worked twice as hard as everyone else." Okay, let's be honest. You can spread the spotlight, have a shared vision, play to your strengths, and even shake it up a bit. But until somebody rolls up his or her sleeves and does the heavy lifting, nothing's going to happen. That's what the final decision is all about: doing the heavy lifting, going the extra mile, doing what it takes—carrying the weight.

If you and your team take the first four decisions and make them your own, then carrying the extra weight won't seem like an onerous chore. If a great team is allowed to do what they do best in pursuit of a common goal, and have some fun along the way, they'll naturally want to do what it takes to get there. Decision #5 becomes a natural offshoot of the first four decisions.



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## ***And in the end . . .***

The last album the Beatles released together was *Let It Be*, but the last album actually recorded was *Abbey Road*. And the last words of the last song on that album were these: "And in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make." I believe these words mean that you get out of life what you put in. Your results equal your efforts. This is good news. In fact, it's great news. It means that we get to determine our outcomes. By changing the quantity and quality of our efforts, we can change the quantity and quality of our results.

A well-known philosopher by the name of Katherine Hepburn once said, "If you obey all the rules, you miss all the fun." So be serious about your career, but be sure to have some fun doing it.

I look forward to seeing many of you at CHIME in Las Vegas. Tally ho!

*The 5 Best Decisions the Beatles Ever Made: A Handbook for "Top of the Charts" Success* is by Bill Stainton. Little Creek Press, Seattle WA.

Read more at <http://ovationconsulting.com>.