



“Leading Together: How Finance Teams Thrive Under Pressure”

Collaborative decision-making methods that keep teams focused and resilient during fiscal deadlines and crises.

Dr. Elvis Epps, Presenter
Author, Leadership Coach

When disruption becomes the new normal, **culture (not just strategy) determines who leads and who lags**. In this interactive workshop, we'll explore why culture is the bedrock of resilience and how you can intentionally shape it with shared decision-making.



Workshop Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will:

1. Understand how collaborative decision-making builds resilience in high-pressure finance environments.
2. Apply time and stress management techniques to maintain accuracy and morale under tight deadlines.
3. Leave with actionable strategies to strengthen team communication, focus, and accountability.

Global Workforce Challenges

Artificial Intelligence

Turnover

Employee Engagement

Constant Change

Burnout

Adaptability

Evolving Technology

Hybrid/Remote Work

Critical Role

Retention

Performance

Improvement



Icebreaker: “The 3-Minute Budget Crunch”

Setup:

- Talk with a shoulder partner about the following:
- This is a fictional scenario: **“You have 3 minutes to agree on how to cut \$50,000 from your department’s budget without harming essential services.”**
- Here is a short list of 6 expense categories (e.g., training, technology upgrades, staffing, travel, community outreach, compliance).

Icebreaker: “The 3-Minute Budget Crunch”

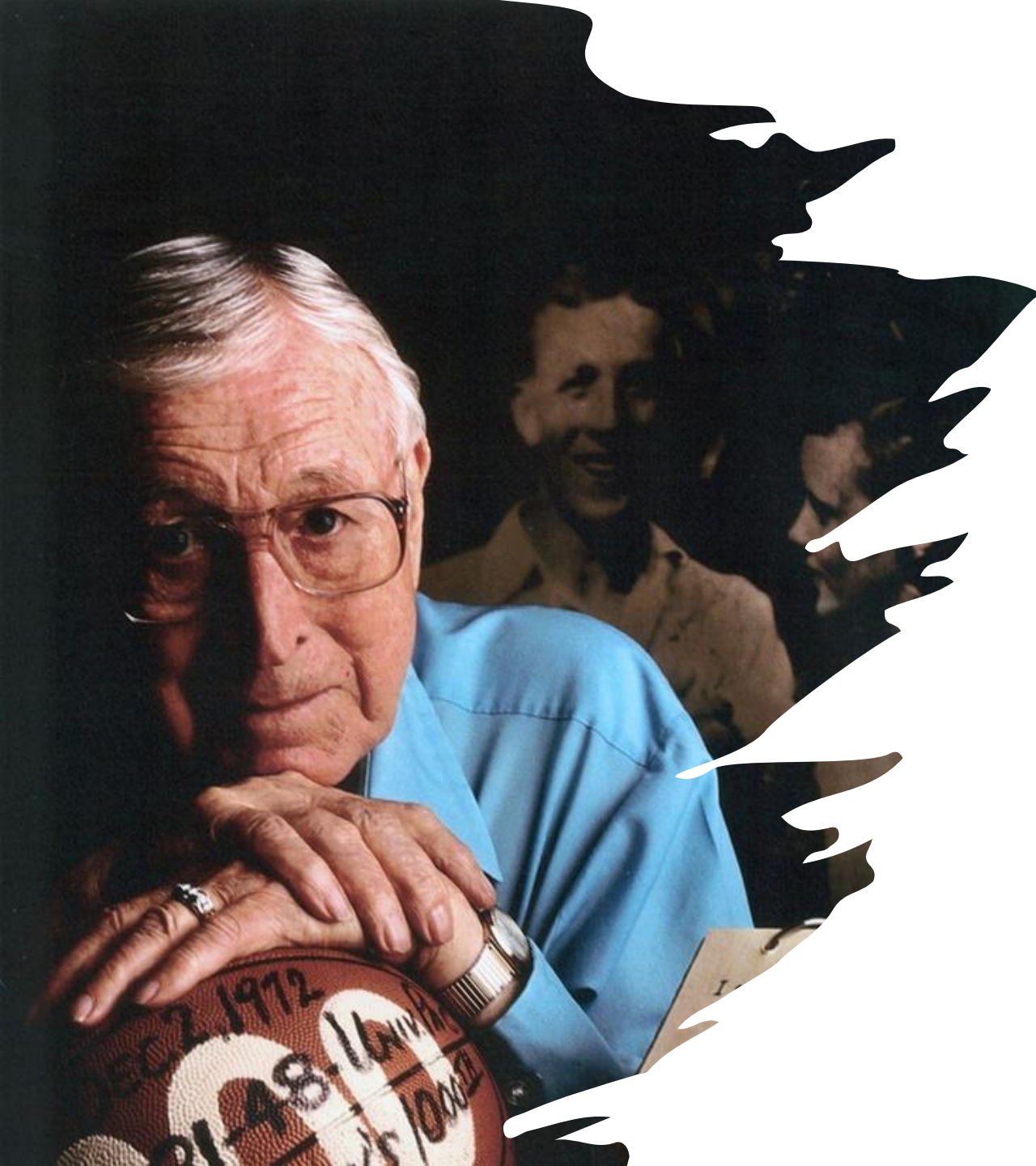
Setup:

- Divide into small groups of 3-5.
- This is a fictional scenario: **“You have 3 minutes to agree on how to cut \$50,000 from your department’s budget without harming essential services.”**
- Here is a short list of 6 expense categories (e.g., training, technology upgrades, staffing, travel, community outreach, compliance).
- *“What made the decision-making easier or harder under pressure?”*

“When the clock is ticking, what’s more likely to break first —your process or your people?”

Strong processes + strong relationships =
strong performance.





***“The guy who puts
the ball through the
hoop has ten hands.”***

-- Legendary Basketball Coach
John Wooten

Best Practices: Collaborative Decision- Making Under Pressure

1. Clarity of Roles & Responsibilities (RACI Model).

Quick activity: Assign “Responsible,” “Accountable,” “Consulted,” and “Informed” to your earlier budget-crunch scenario.

Use the **RACI Model**:

- **Responsible** – does the work
- **Accountable** – owns the outcome
- **Consulted** – provides input
- **Informed** – needs updates

Keeps accountability visible and reduces duplication of work.



2. Prioritized Decision Path

Use the “***Must-Should-Could***” framework for prioritizing actions when time is tight.

- **Must** – Absolutely critical actions.
- **Should** – Important, but can wait if needed.
- **Could** – Nice-to-have; lowest urgency.
- Prevents decision fatigue during crunch periods.

3. Structured Check-Ins

Use brief, timed stand-ups (e.g., 10 minutes at start/end of day during crunch weeks).

Time & Stress Management in Time-Sensitive Projects: **Two-part approach**

A. Time Management Strategies

- *Backward Planning*: start with the deadline and reverse-engineer tasks.
- *80/20 Focus*: identify the few activities that drive the most critical outcomes.
- *Batching & Blocking*: schedule uninterrupted focus periods.

B. Stress Management Strategies

- *Micro-breaks*: 5–7 minutes every 90 minutes to reset focus.
- *Pressure Valve Conversations*: create space for open, judgment-free venting to prevent burnout.
- *Crisis Communication Norms*: what gets said, how, and when.

Application Activity: “The 48-Hour Close” Simulation

Scenario:

“Your finance team has just 48 hours to reconcile accounts and prepare an urgent report for the board after a major compliance update.”

Task: In small groups, outline:

1. Key steps to take.
 2. How did you apply the decision-making, time, and stress strategies discussed.
- **Report Back:** 2–3 groups share highlights.

(Possible solutions)

Define the Deliverables

The report will likely need:

Current Budget Overview – Baseline financial picture.

Areas for Potential Cuts – Departmental and operational cost analysis.

Impact Analysis – Short- and long-term effects of cuts.

Risk Assessment – Operational, legal, reputational risks.

Recommendations & Justifications – Prioritized, with data support.

Assign Roles & Set Mini-Deadlines

Objective: Parallel work streams to maximize the 48-hour window.

Finance Analysis Lead → Compile current numbers, trends, and forecasts.

Operations Liaison → Identify operational impact of each proposed cut.

Risk Officer → Evaluate compliance and reputational risks.

Communications Lead → Draft final report in board-ready language and style.

Data Validation Team → Double-check all figures before submission.

*“When there is no **consequence** for poor work ethic, and no **reward** for good work ethic, there is no **motivation**.”*

There are
several (6)
types of
team
norms:

Communication Norms: These dictate how team members share information, provide feedback, and interact during meetings.

Decision-Making Norms: These norms guide how the team approaches decisions, whether through consensus, majority vote, or another method.

Accountability Norms: These are the standards the team sets for holding each other responsible for completing tasks and meeting deadlines.

There are several (6) types of team norms:

Conflict Resolution Norms: These norms determine how the team handles disagreements or conflicts, ensuring that issues are resolved constructively.

Meeting Norms: These establish the expectations for how meetings are conducted, including punctuality, participation, and preparation.

Work/Life Balance Norms: These norms help the team maintain a healthy balance between work responsibilities and personal time, fostering a sustainable work environment.

Barriers for Creating a Positive Culture



Dealing with a Problem Coworker: 10 Common Issues

Dealing with a problem coworker can be ***one of the toughest challenges in any workplace.***

In fact, studies show that ***85% of employees*** experience conflict at work to some degree, and unresolved conflicts can lead to significant losses in productivity.

According to CPP Inc., U.S. employees spend an average of ***2.8 hours per week dealing with conflict***, costing companies an estimated \$359 billion annually.

1. The Disgruntled Employee

A disgruntled employee can be like a dark cloud hanging over the office. They often express their dissatisfaction openly, which can negatively influence others. But how can you tell if you're dealing with one? Look for the following signs.

- **Frequent complaints:** They're always vocal about what's wrong—whether it's the company, management, or coworkers.
- **Negative attitude:** Their pessimism is noticeable, and it might feel like they're constantly bringing the team down.
- **Reduced productivity:** They may seem disinterested in their work, resulting in missed deadlines or poor-quality output.
- **Isolation:** They might withdraw from team activities, social events, or even casual conversations.
- **Undermining others:** They may subtly (or not-so-subtly) criticize others' work or make passive-aggressive comments.

... of Honey Bees and Yellow Jackets



Of Honey Bees and Yellow Jackets: Which One Are You?



The Honey Bee.

Honey bees are planners. They gather sweet nectar from living flowers and store it away for the lean seasons ahead. In fact, they prepare with enough surplus to share with others. **Their sting is reserved for protection, and when they do give it, they pay the ultimate price—dying in the act.** Honey bees embody sacrifice. **Their mission is to sustain life and provide sweetness.**

Of Honey Bees and Yellow Jackets: Which One Are You?

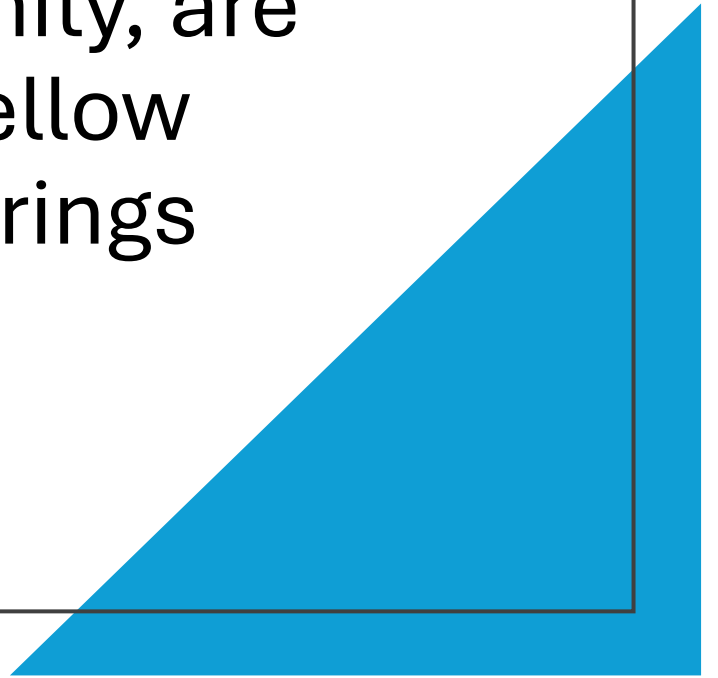
The Yellow Jacket.

Yellow jackets, on the other hand, **live in the moment. They don't plan ahead**, nor do they store food. When fall comes and resources dwindle, **they grow restless and aggressive**. Unlike honey bees, **they can sting repeatedly**—not just to protect, **but often out of anger**. They scavenge from dead things, fallen fruit, or whatever they can steal. **Instead of bringing life, they often disrupt it**—becoming the uninvited nuisance at every picnic.



The Challenge

So here's the question: When conflicts arise in your home, workplace, or community, are you more like the honey bee or the yellow jacket? Are you a peacemaker who brings life, or a fighter who stirs up strife?



2. Chronic Unexcused Absenteeism

Chronic unexcused absenteeism can be a significant issue for any team. It disrupts workflow, causes frustration among coworkers, and often leaves others picking up the slack. But how can you tell if someone's absenteeism is becoming a problem?

- **Frequent, unplanned absences:** How much unexcused absenteeism is acceptable? If a team member is regularly missing work without prior notice or a valid reason, it's a red flag.
- **Patterns of absenteeism:** Watch for absences that often occur on specific days, such as Mondays or Fridays, or around major deadlines.
- **Lack of communication:** They may fail to inform anyone in advance when they're going to be absent or don't provide explanations afterward.
- **Impact on team performance:** Their absence leads to missed deadlines or a backlog of work that affects the entire team.

3. Poor Communication

Poor communication can quickly lead to misunderstandings, frustration, and missed deadlines within a team. When one person consistently fails to communicate effectively, it can create confusion and disrupt team flow.

- **Vague instructions:** They often give incomplete or unclear directions, leaving others confused about what needs to be done.
- **Missed updates:** They fail to inform others of changes in plans, project progress, or deadlines.
- **Over-reliance on one form of communication:** Whether it's only using email or avoiding face-to-face conversations, they limit communication channels.
- **Misinterpretations:** Their messages are often misunderstood, causing delays or extra work.

4. Passive-Aggressive Behavior

Passive-aggressive behavior can be tricky to spot because it's often subtle, but it can poison the work environment over time. It's when someone avoids direct confrontation but uses indirect actions or remarks to express dissatisfaction, which can create tension and confusion in a team.

- **Sarcastic comments:** They may make underhanded or sarcastic remarks, especially when giving feedback.
- **Procrastination:** They deliberately delay tasks or make excuses for not completing work, often as a form of silent protest.
- **Silent treatment:** They stop communicating with certain team members or withhold important information.
- **Feigning agreement:** They may say “yes” to tasks or projects but secretly resent them and subtly sabotage progress.

5. Overly Competitive Behavior

Healthy competition can boost performance, but when a coworker becomes too competitive, it can disrupt collaboration and harm team morale. Overly competitive behavior may make others feel undervalued or put undue pressure on the rest of the team.

- **Constant self-promotion:** They frequently highlight their own accomplishments while downplaying others' contributions.
- **Undermining teammates:** They may go behind others' backs or sabotage their work to make themselves look better.
- **Refusal to share information:** They hoard knowledge or resources, seeing it as an advantage over their peers.
- **Over-focus on personal goals:** They prioritize their own success over the team's objectives.

6. Micromanagement by a Peer

Micromanagement isn't just something managers do—sometimes peers take it upon themselves to control how others work. When a coworker oversteps and tries to dictate how you or the rest of the team should do their jobs, it can lead to frustration, decreased autonomy, and tension within the team.

- **Constant oversight:** They frequently check in on others' tasks, often without being asked to.
- **Unnecessary feedback:** They provide detailed instructions or critiques that go beyond their role.
- **Difficulty delegating:** They refuse to allow others to take ownership of their tasks and hover over team projects.
- **Overstepping boundaries:** They give directives or corrections when they aren't in a position of authority.

7. Low Productivity or Lack of Engagement

When a team member is consistently underperforming or seems disengaged, it can drag down the overall productivity of the team. This behavior may stem from various causes, such as burnout, boredom, or personal challenges, and it needs to be addressed before it becomes a bigger issue.

- **Missed deadlines:** They frequently fail to meet deadlines or complete tasks on time.
- **Poor quality of work:** Their output consistently falls below expected standards, requiring others to redo tasks.
- **Disinterest in meetings:** They seem disengaged during team meetings, rarely contributing or showing enthusiasm for team discussions.
- **Reduced initiative:** They do the bare minimum and rarely take initiative to go above and beyond.

8. Gossiping or Negative Talk

Gossip and negative talk in the workplace can quickly erode trust and damage team cohesion. While it may start with small conversations, it can lead to misunderstandings, resentment, and a toxic environment.

- **Frequent behind-the-scenes conversations:** They regularly engage in side conversations about other team members or company decisions.
- **Spreading rumors:** They share unverified or private information, causing tension or damaging reputations.
- **Fostering negativity:** They often criticize management or other coworkers, spreading negativity within the team.
- **Exclusionary behavior:** They might form cliques or intentionally leave others out of important conversations or decisions.

9. Inflexibility or Resistance to Change

In today's fast-paced work environment, **adaptability** is key. However, some team members struggle with change, which can slow down projects and create friction within the team. Their resistance can stem from a fear of the unknown, a lack of understanding, or simply a preference for routine.

- **Refusal to adopt new processes:** They push back against new tools, workflows, or procedures, preferring to stick to old methods.
- **Negative attitude toward change:** They often express skepticism or doubt about the need for change, affecting the morale of others.
- **Procrastination:** They delay tasks related to new initiatives or avoid training sessions designed to implement new tools.
- **Withdrawal from discussions:** They might avoid participating in team meetings or discussions about upcoming changes.

10. Lack of Accountability

Accountability is crucial for team success. When a coworker consistently avoids taking responsibility for their mistakes or missed deadlines, it can lead to frustration, decreased trust, and a breakdown in team productivity.

- **Blaming others:** They regularly shift blame to teammates or external factors when things go wrong.
- **Excuses for missed deadlines:** They frequently provide reasons or justifications for why tasks aren't completed on time.
- **Avoiding feedback:** They resist receiving constructive criticism or become defensive when mistakes are pointed out.
- **Failure to own mistakes:** They rarely admit when they've made a mistake, making it difficult to improve processes or workflows.

Conclusion

Dealing with problem coworkers isn't easy, but addressing issues early can prevent them from escalating into bigger problems. Whether it's poor communication, lack of accountability, or resistance to change, understanding how each team member fits into the bigger picture can make all the difference.

Wrap-Up & Action Steps

Action Step Framework:

- **Pick One:** Choose one new collaborative decision-making method to implement in the next 30 days.
- **Team Brief:** Share today's top three takeaways with your team within one week.
- **Build a Ritual:** Establish one recurring practice that supports both focus and morale during fiscal deadlines.
- **Final Guiding Question:** “What will you do differently the next time your team is under pressure?”

Contact Information:



Point your camera at the QR code.

elvisppsspeaks.com



www.elvisppsspeaks.com; elvisppsspeaks@gmail.com;
(407) 963-1253