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NEWS AND VIEWS

By Chuck Hajdú

We're entering the "most wonderful time of the year", as they say in the old song. It's the Holiday Season for just about everyone in this great country.

We've just passed our two most patriotic holidays, 10 November is the birthday of the US Marine Corps and the day after that was Veteran's Day. As a former Marine, I salute all of our current and former service members and thank them for their service.

Next up was Thanksgiving and this year a very early Hanukah. They are followed by a slew of Holidays for people of every race and religion in December. Over the years we've discussed the many, many different December holidays, some of which go back many thousands of years, that are celebrated around the world.

Whatever holidays you celebrate in the last month of the solar calendar year, we hope you have a wonderful season and enjoy time with family and friends.

Happy Holidays isn't a negative greeting to us, it's an understanding that there are a multitude of celebrations all going on at the same time. So don't frown and think we're just being politically correct when we wish you Happy Holidays. We really wish everyone, no matter what holiday they are celebrating, the same joy we feel at Christmas.

Next month is the start of 2014 and once again we're looking forward to going to the big CES show (the show formerly known as the Consumer Electronics Show) in Las Vegas. We'll have a full crew covering the show and we're planning on a lot of daily blog coverage. Look forward to multiple posts because we'll try to inform our readers in a real time way.

Join the multitude of people who read our blog every day to stay informed. You won't be sorry. Just go to the URL at the left or use your QR reader to scan the code.

MCC



WHAT'S NEW

TYLT TUNZ, OWC TOOLKIT, NUANCE DRAGON NATURALLY SPEAKING 11

By George Harding

TYLT Tunz

This is a very compact, portable Bluetooth speaker. It's attractively packaged in a black case with a red wrap-around bump protector.

It's only 4.75" X 2.25" X 2.75" and has a comfortable, weighty feel.

It has an internal rechargeable battery and comes with a cable with a micro-USB plug on one end, a USB plug on the other. The battery may be used to charge your smartphone as well as power the speaker. It's powerful enough to play your music for up to 20 hours.

Being Bluetooth capable, it can connect to any device that's also Bluetooth capable. You don't need a cable to connect with the sending device, but must be within 33 feet or so.

The speaker is stereo and is very high quality. It has two 3 watt speakers and a passive radiator for superb bass.

When Tunz is connected to your cellphone, you can not only hear calls, but you can also respond. There is a noise-canceling microphone built into Tunz. There's also an AUX cable to connect between Tunz and your phone.

There are four buttons on top of the device, increase volume, decrease volume, multi-function and phone. The multi-function button is used when pairing Tunz with another device.

Tunz offers a fairly new technology, NFC or near field connectivity. This allows transfer of information from one NFC device to another by simply putting them near each other. One use

of this feature would be to allow control of one device by another.

The back of the device has an On/Off slider, a micro-USB port, a USB port, AUX out and AUX in.

Price \$150 from the company
www.tylt.com

OWC Toolkit

Other World Computing has created a toolkit just for us geeks! It's made for working with just about any computer or electronic device you may need to work on.

The case itself is rugged and closes with a zipper. The exterior is tough fabric that appears to be able to last for many years of hard use.



The included tools are these: 2 slotted screwdrivers, 2 Phillips head screwdrivers and 3 Torx drivers. This latter tool is for those fasteners that have a hole with inside flanges. There are 2 special-purpose tools which the Company calls "spudgers," nylon pry tools for opening those difficult to open but easy to scratch cases. Lastly, there are two grippers that are so useful for small pieces that can otherwise slip down into the works.

The interior of the case is padded with a space for each tool, so they don't slide around when the case is closed.



George Harding

(Continued on page 3)

WHAT'S NEW

(Continued from page 2)

This is a really handy tool kit that you can slip into a side pocket for use out in the field.

Price about \$18
www.newertech.com

Dragon Naturally Speaking, version 11

Dragon allows you to dictate rather than type on the keyboard in some ways it's a real timesaver, but learning to use the commands that Dragon understands takes some experience and practice.

After installation of the program, which is fairly lengthy, you embark session that allows Dragon to customize itself to your speech and speech patterns. You do this by reading one of three selections aloud. It doesn't take very long for Dragon to customize itself, which is surprising.

After that, there are several exercises which you can utilize to understand better how to control Dragon and make it do what you want. One of the important steps is to learn how to correct something that Dragon has misinterpreted. One way is to say "scratch that." Another way is to say "delete line" or "delete that." You can always use backspace but that doesn't work very well if you're trying to correct an entire word or several words. You can also say "undo that."

One of the things that Dragon doesn't understand very well is how to add lines or paragraphs. Another thing that is difficult to do properly is to tab across so as to space things horizontally.

There are two types of commands that Dragon understands. The first is spoken language that you intend to type into a document or a spreadsheet. The second is an action that you want Dragon to execute, such as opening up a program. The expression you use has to be just right so that Dragon does what you wanted to do. For example, if you wanted to type the phrase open Microsoft Excel, you would want to be sure not to use the phrase start Microsoft Excel, which would open that program, rather than typing the phrase that you used.



The help section of Dragon tells you that if you want to be sure that Dragon interprets a phrase as something to be typed, you must hold down the shift key in order to cause that effect. Otherwise, the phrase will be interpreted as a command, rather than dictation.

I find after using this for not too long a period of time that Dragon does a pretty good job in interpreting what I want to have typed. There have been several mistakes along the way. Dragon is supposed to have a learning capability, which causes it to understand better what you want done when you correct something manually in the text that you have dictated. It's hard to tell, however, whether this works or not.

Since I'm a touch typist, it's almost as fast to type the text as it is to dictate and then correct the result. If I were not a touch typist, the situation would be much more in favor of Dragon.

I just completed a copy and paste operation, using Dragon. It did not work completely. I had to manually copy the text in one location, but I was able to open Microsoft Word and paste the text into the new document. It was not clear how to copy all the text in the previous document and how to copy it to the clipboard.

I tried to save the file, but it's almost as easy to do it manually as it is to figure out how to do the same operation in Dragon. The new arrangement of tabs in office 10 complicates the situation somewhat, since the menu system that used to be in office has been replaced by the set of tabs.

Dragon is an interesting program in process. I've followed its progress over the years, a period of continuing improvement. Perfection is still in the future!

Price \$50
www.nuance.com/dragon

THINKTANK PHOTO CASES

MY 2ND BRAIN, MIRRORLESS MOVER 30I

By Chuck Hajdú

ThinkTank My 2nd Brain

Recently I had to make a trip to see a relative who was hospitalized in serious condition. Since this was going to be a fairly short trip, only four days, and one that did not have the potential for much photography, I planned to travel light. Light is, of course, a relative term. My concept of light is: a travel laptop, a 7" class tablet, a smartphone and a flip-phone. No digital cameras (the smartphone camera will do) and no large, connected tablets.

The perfect carrying case for this trip turned out to be the **ThinkTank MY 2nd BRAIN MacBook Air/Pro 13" Laptop Slim Case**. The case has plenty of pockets including inside pockets for power adapters and cords, accessories, and connectivity/adapters. It also has zipper accessible pockets for all of my devices.



The outside dimensions are 10.2" wide x 14" high x 0.8" deep. Weight is only 1.4 lbs. The case is made of water-resistant nylon with high-quality zippers and plenty of foam and padding. I felt totally confident that my expensive electronics were well protected.

The case is actually specifically designed for several iFruit products like MacBooks, iPhones and iPads. However we found it was absolutely perfect for our preferred combination:

Instead of overpriced and underperforming iStuff we use these products:

- MacBook Air/Pro 13 replaced by an ASUS S200e
- iPad mini replaced by a 7" Kobo Arc (it also worked perfectly with other 8" and smaller tablets)
- iPhone replaced by Samsung Galaxy SII (we also used several other Android phones)

The design of the case allowed us to carry our electronics inside and still have an outside pocket that was large enough to hold a magazine to read on the flights and a document holder with all of our tickets and confirmation printouts in it. We were able to access what we needed without having to open the case up, a very nice feature.



We slipped the ASUS laptop into the rear-most pocket so we would have easy access if TSA (Thousands Standing Around) needed to see the laptop before we boarded our flights. This turned out to be unnecessary because somehow USAirways gave me TSA Pre-approved status and I just waltzed through security.

The large middle pocket held chargers, adapters, a mouse, cables and everything else we needed in the numerous built-in pouches.

The front pocket held the Kobo tablet with the Smartphone in a Golla Genmob travel case slipping perfectly into the dedicated pocket on the front at the top.



All-in-all it was a wonderful experience that shows just how good well planned engineering can be. I can't say enough about the positive experience of using this case, it is excellent un every way.

The 13" version of the MY 2nd BRAIN is a available in Black, Harbor Blue and Mist Green. It is also available in other sizes from Tablet-only up to 15" laptop size.

MSRP for the 13" version is \$94.75
www.thintankphoto.com

(Continued on page 5)

THINKTANK PHOTO CASES

(Continued from page 4)

Mirrorless Mover 30i

The second ThinkTank Photo case that we had the chance to review is also specifically designed for certain products. This case is the **Mirrorless Mover 30i** and it is designed to be used with mirrorless interchangeable lens cameras (MILCs). As our regular readers all know by now we are big fans of the Olympus PEN series of MILCs and this case proved to be the ideal travelling

The 30i is designed to carry two MILCs and two to four lenses. It can also carry a smaller dSLR and a couple of lenses. There is also room for small accessories, a smaller tablet and, of course, a cell phone.



The case is constructed of water resistant fabric and has heavy duty zippers. The bottom has a polyurethane coating to improve water resistance. The interior compartments are adjustable and have foam in the dividers to increase cushioning. There is even a seam-sealed taffeta rain cover included in the front to provide even more protection if it's needed.

We took the 30i on an extended trip and used it to carry two MILCs and the equipment we thought we would need to shoot photographs for two weeks. The equipment list is:

- 1- Olympus PEN E-P3 body
- 1- Olympus PEN E-P5 Body
- 1- Olympus M. Zuiko Digital 17mm f/1.8 lens
- 1- Panasonic Lumix G. Vario 45-200mm f/4-5.6 lens



Body caps for the cameras
 Front and rear caps for both lenses
 Lens hoods for both lenses
 Olympus VF-2 and VF-4 viewfinders
 Wide camera straps for both cameras
 Extra batteries and chargers for both cameras

Everything fit in the case comfortably and we had immediate access to everything with nothing being blocked or inaccessible. Since the case itself only weighs a pound it added very little extra weight to the compact system we were carrying.

There was also room in the 30i for a Smartphone and a tablet but we didn't need to use those slots. We always over pack and actually carried three phones and three tablets for the trip. It seemed to be unfair from a reviewers perspective to try to jam all of them into a compact camera case.

There was one thing that we felt may have been missing however. There was no way to carry a compact but sturdy tripod. I'm not sure how they could have done it but they engineered everything else beautifully.

I can honestly say that this is the best small camera bag I have ever seen. It is extremely well built and provides excellent protection for all of your expensive camera equipment. It is the best investment you can make to help protect your equipment.

MSRP is \$69.75 at
<http://www.thinktankphoto.com/categories/shoulder-camera-bags/mirrorless-mover.aspx>

TECHNOLOGY TODAY

By Robert Sanborn

3D Printing

Having seen the technology of creating a new object out of plastic and resin, I always marvel at the new strides being made in 3D printing. You can have your own printer to tinker with for less than \$1000 and while the cheaper models are really toys for grownups; the technology is moving quite rapidly. One of the first videos I saw on the subject is still one of the best at showing off what the technology could accomplish. **3D Printer**



www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQ-aWFYT_SU

You know the technology is reaching mainstream when you can go to Staples and buy one. Go to Staples website, <http://www.staples.com> and do a search on "Cube 3D" and for \$1299, you can have your own to play with.

YouTube snafu

Got two calls so far so something must be up. Hear sounds just fine but not with YouTube so that leads me to believe we have a problem, not really a problem, just that YouTube has decided to differently show videos started with the sound turned all the way down. Not that hard to see what is going on but if you are not used to seeing it or didn't notice it before, it can be a pain. Just to the left of the Play button, you see the speaker, usually with the little mute icon. Change it and you will be good to go.

Travel Delays

I took a trip recently and was quite surprised at some advances in technology when traveling. Usually when I travel, I print out my boarding passes before I hit the road and then have to struggle with getting them printed for the return journey. Easy if you are near a computer or staying in a hotel with a decent business center but a pain if you are out on your own.

So I downloaded the Delta App to my iPhone to see how well it works and I am surprised as to how easy it goes.

Traveling to Richmond I missed my connection in Atlanta and the good news there is that if you need to miss a connection someplace, Atlanta is the place to do it. They have so many flights out of Atlanta, you can almost always be assured of getting a connection without losing too much time. Get off the plane, they send you to a kiosk that scans your boarding pass, and then automatically prints out a new pass for the new flight that the system puts you on. That is it. No long lines, no waiting, no contact with a human.



The good news is that they have made it so easy for this kind of problem; the bad news is that they have so many people missing flights that they have to develop such a system. Now I am not sure how well this would have worked if I needed to change airlines because of the missed flight but one thing I do know, if I had been traveling Southwest, I would have had to wait for the next Southwest flight and not gotten a seat on another airline because they don't do that. I was quite irritated with them when I missed a connection going up to New England and had to miss an entire day.

Back to the App. Getting ready for the return, a popup on my phone tells me it is time to check in, swipe it and it is done. Boarding pass appears on the phone what is even nicer is that I don't even have to log into my phone to show it on the screen when I go through security or board the jet. When it came time to travel back through Atlanta, a popup comes up to tell me the gate had changed. A nice application of technology.



BOOK REVIEW

DIGITAL CAPTURE AFTER DARK

By Chuck Hajdú

Digital Capture After Dark

By Amanda Quintenz-Fiedler,
Philipp Scholz Rittermann

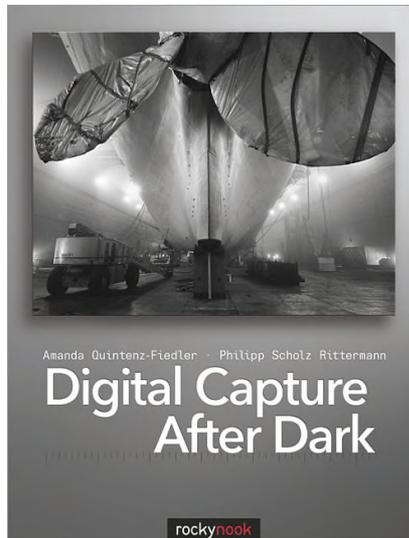
Digital Imaging After Dark is a 13 chapters and 190 pages of detailed information to help the reader become a better low light photographer. Since the entire concept of photography is capturing light on film or a digital sensor it's important to be able to understand the possibilities of capturing what little light is available under many circumstance. Ms. Quintenz-Fiedler has compiled the writings of herself, Mr. Ritterman and Kevin McCollister and Michael Penn into a narrative that encompasses each of their techniques and experiences.

Each chapter covers a specific subject that photographers need to understand in order to become more skilled in this difficult art form. The subjects discussed cover everything from what equipment you need, to getting started, what to photograph, atmospheric conditions, movement, lighting and processing.

Low light photography can get fairly technical, especially if you want to take good pictures, and the author does a good job of keeping the technical aspects understandable for the layman. She does a very good job of keeping the technical subjects readable.

In the equipment chapter the author goes into detail describing what kinds of digital cameras are best suited to low light photography. I agree with the general statement that the sensor size (not the megapixel count) is one of the most important factors in camera choice. I also liked the descriptions of what types of cameras, lenses, and accessories are best suited to low light photography.

The only area of possible disagreement I may have is the authors brief touching on what I see as the wave of the future: Mirrorless Interchangeable Lens Cameras (MILCs). New MILCs, like the Olympus PENs and OM-Ds and truly superb pieces of equipment



with all of the capabilities needed for excellent low light photography. In addition, they don't have the inherent limitations of mirrored SLR cameras, the big flapping mirror below the prism. I would recommend that they use the exact shooting techniques described throughout the book using an MILC. Personally I use an Olympus E-P5 and find it to be perfect

Naturally the one piece of required gear (other than the camera, of course) that is really needed to take low light photographs is a good tripod. I agree with the authors completely on this subject and recommend buying the best one you can afford.

I found Chapter 5, From Dusk 'Til Dawn to be especially informative. Shooting at dusk and at night has always been a passion of mine and some of my best photographs were taken during those hours.

The one piece of advice that really stood out is: Pocket Your Meter! In low light situations your light meter, either built-in or hand-held, will be useless. It is designed to measure reflected light (for the most part) and can't possibly understand the lighting that occurs at night. So how do you get a correctly exposed picture? Simple, experience and lots and lots of bracketed shots. Shoot with different apertures and different time exposures to get what you're looking for. It's so much easier today with digital cameras. I remember shooting dozens of relatively expensive film exposures at night trying to get the one shot I wanted.

This book is beautifully illustrated throughout. Almost every photograph is well done with framing and lighting that clearly shows the reader just what can be done with "impossibly" low light. It should inspire the reader to want to take pictures that are as good as the ones in this volume.

Digital Capture After Dark is highly recommended.

Ebook: \$16.95
Print & Ebook: \$43.95
Print: \$39.95
www.oreilly.com

LIFEPROOF CASE REVIEW

By Bayle Emlein

LifeProof nüüd Case & Cover/Stand for iPad Gen 2/3/4

In the box:

- a LifeProof nüüd
- Quick Start Guide
- Owner's Manual



As you know, in my other life I work in an environment full of folks who test the durability of all kinds of products. The LifeProof case seemed like it might offer an answer to our iPad problems, or at least those involving shattered screens (three and counting this quarter).

The case is certainly elegant, much lighter and less bulky than any other protective case we've tested. Like other case support systems, the kickstand on the back adds to the functionality of the iPad.

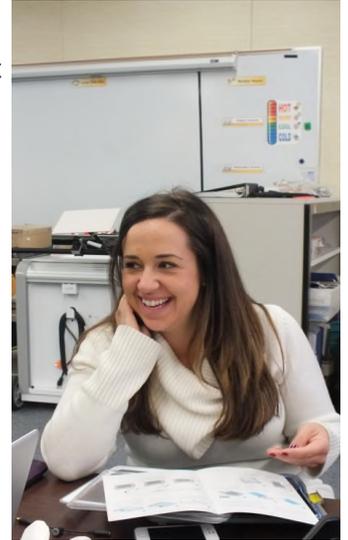
The whole team of Assistive Technology specialists was assembled for the unboxing. Actual trial was delegated to the specialist whose iPad did not already have a cover. Once we wrestled the LifeProof out of the box and plastic, we were confronted by a great many pieces and parts. The Quick Start Guide doesn't mention the Water Test Unit, a clear plastic screen that one is to use for testing the specific case in hand >before< inserting the iPad. The Owner's manual does describe how to water test, but it is not very clearly pictured or described in the regulation flyspeck font. A plea to our resident techie, who eventually figured out that the clear plastic that looks like it should be a screen cover is not part of the final assembly. (Could they have labeled it?)

Moving right along, we finally wrestled the case on to the iPad. Pyrrhic victory (Check Dictionary.Com or Wikipedia). To keep the case watertight (water resistant if you read the French on the box), there's a tight plug to unscrew for the earphone jack. Makes sense, but our hand model absolutely refused to sacrifice her manicure. Don't really need sound.

Once assembled, the iPad with its snazzy new case went home to the 3- and 5-year old product testers, guaranteed to put ascertain the protection level of any protective covering. Oops. We didn't read the fine print at the end of the Owner's Manual before

installing the case with the iPad 4 Lightning Connector adapter still in place. Our brave volunteer figured out that she needed to remove the connector to charge her iPad. Not so easy, and the suggested disassembly process didn't work as suggested. Maybe that had something to do with preserving her manicure; however, it's absurd to suggest that iPad users of LifeProof products would not want to take as much care of the bling on their fingertips as the bling on their iPads.

An hour on hold with tech support, no satisfactory disassembly guidance. But the LifeProof case did come off the iPad. In pieces.



Not relevant to much, but I'm wondering why a company with corporate headquarters in San Diego has a bilingual Owner's Manual—in English and French. Also, why the English promo says that the case is "Water proof, dirt proof, snow proof, shock proof" but in French it's only resistant to all those hazards of mixing the real and virtual worlds. According to product literature, an iPad in a LifeProof nüüd would be safe if dropped into 2 meters or less of water or dropped from a height of 1.2 meters or less. Unlike the PR department, we don't have a spare device for testing.

A tablet is a serious investment, even if it doesn't quite require a mortgage. And there are many facets of a tablet that just cry out to be taken along on every adventure. So a system that protects it from the usual hazards of the active life—water, dropping, dirt and dust—is a great asset. But the protection needs not to interfere with use and operations.

The verdict for the LifeProof nüüd is a guarded "maybe." With so many "gotcha's" in the assembly, the Quick Start Guide and Owner's Manual need serious rewriting if a user is going to get value from this \$130 add-on.

MSRP is \$129.99

www.lifeproof.com

CONTENT INSIDER

MORE DATA DOESN'T MAKE BETTER DECISIONS, IT JUST TAKES LONGER

By Andy Marken



Painting – Na Leo Hone by [Leonora Magno](#).

Help Unseen – *The first time I saw The Paddler painting I knew I had to have it in my office. It was a reminder to me that decisions are based on understanding and commitment as well as everything that came before to make you the man/woman you are today.*

Ever wonder how the Vikings sailed across the endless Atlantic to set foot on Canadian soil?

How about the Polynesians who crossed the vast Pacific to arrive at the Hawaiian Islands?

They had no Big Data, no analytical tools, nothing to quantify/qualify their decisions – just a gut feeling it was going to work. Sorta' make your day-to-day "critical" decisions pale in comparison.

In those decisions it wasn't one boss, senior executive or leader making the decision to venture into the unknown.

One had the idea but a lot of folks contributed to the decision – made it happen.

Peter Drucker explained it in business terms hundreds of years later, "*Most discussions of decision making assume that only senior executives make decisions or that only senior executives' decisions matter. That's a dangerous mistake.*"

Even though we spend millions on data and information systems, decisions are made by people.



Source [Biztech](#).

Big Hose – *Today's high-speed internet, the web and social media have made a torrent of information available to us to help make better decisions. The challenge is too many people are drowning in too much data.*

Today we have more information at our fingertips than we have ever had, yet informed decisions seem to be more difficult make, take longer than they should.

There's a lust to find out a little bit more to guarantee the right decision.

Yet, with all of the information, all of the statistics, all of the analysis, executives say 80 percent of business decisions are made with a gut-level feeling of what is right at that moment.

Actually, that gut feeling is from a lot of the information you've gained over the years combined with healthy doses of empirical data you can't fully define.

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CONTENT INSIDER

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That's because today's business is in a state of continuous change – action/reaction.

Most people will make decisions that are good for themselves and their company.

If they can't or won't, that can be changed.

The biggest hinderance in today's decision-making is that so much data is almost instantly available and data is always missing.

Because it is missing, we overestimate its value.

Lack of You Time

The second hurdle to making a decision is all of the demands on our time.

Back in the Viking, Polynesian, Drucker eras, they didn't try to handle calls/communicate while commuting (train or bus). Nor did they bring connected devices on their holidays just in case.

And they didn't have WiFi everywhere just to stay in touch.

Because so much teamwork is involved today, being connected and open/available for communications is vital.

That's why most responsible people feel guilty if they don't respond to an email within 24 hours.

They're uncomfortable ducking or being unavailable to team members when they need to focus on really complex issues.

Oh cripes, admit it it's satisfying to feel needed!

But today, competent professionals delegate the majority of decisions to responsible team members and focus on the complex, long-range goals.

Those less than competent withhold responsibility/authority and avoid decisions until it's too late.

Decision Types

Competent and incompetent executives seem to fall into five specific categories:

- **Go Numb, Do Nothing** – You've encountered them. They're paralyzed by fear, are distressed, simply can't make a decision
- **Passive Pleasing** – They focus on pleasing others (especially bosses). They avoid conflict, sit quietly, passively
- **Mediocre, Middle-of-the-Road** – They are constantly politically correct, sitting in the middle of the road on issues. Eventually, they get run over people who are assertive, enthusiastic, committed
- **Active, Assertive Expression** – They know what they know, believe in it, express it. They focus on positive action, positive results
- **Energetic, Do It with Enthusiasm** – They enjoy a challenge and like the personal challenge of facing a major decision. They communicate their points, lay out the plan of action, make it easy to follow their lead

Those who are active and energetic help organizations make decisions, help them move forward.

Then too, there are corporate cultures that seem to exist – and do fairly well – with only passive, mediocre executives. You know, organizations that discourage people who question decisions, suggest alternatives/options, voice concerns/dissent.

At some level, senior management sees the need for change and people really want to change but culture runs deep.

To survive in these environments talented people go to exhaustive lengths not to appear dumb.

They resort to extensive analysis.

To paraphrase an old saying, the road to hell is paved with good intentions, judicious decisions and exhaustively analyzed strategies paralysis by analysis.

When you have a decision to make and don't make it, that's a decision.

The challenge for executives, according to psychological researchers, is that information is addicting. The more you have the more you want because you know you're only one click away from the **eureka!** decision.

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I call that bold talk from a four-eyed fat man.

LS/MFT

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