

Satisficing In Decision-Making

Time, Choice, and “Good Enough”

By David Nagai



Summary

Because our time is limited and modern life gives us too many choices, trying to make perfect decisions often creates stress, hesitation, and regret. Ideas like satisficing, *cospa*, and the 70% rule can help us decide what is “good enough,” take action sooner, and spend more time living instead of endlessly choosing.

* The **Audio file (6-min)** is available via email and on my podcast on [Apple](#) or [Spotify](#).

Discussion Questions

1. What kinds of decisions deserve deep thought and what kinds of decisions should be made quickly? Share examples from work or daily life.
2. What is one area of your life where you are good at satisficing?
Explain your strategy for doing it.
3. How do cultural values and social expectations affect decision-making in Japan?
For example: career choice / change, marriage, parenting, or where to live.
4. In communication, when is it better to say something imperfectly than to wait until you can say it perfectly?
5. How do technology and AI positively or negative affect our decision-making?
Do these tools give us more freedom or pressure?

6. For some people, “*cospa*” thinking sometimes makes life feel too practical, cold, or limited. When in life is cost-performance not the most important value?

Article

If you live to around 80 years old, you only have about 4,000 weeks in your life. This idea, popularized by Oliver Burkeman, challenges a common belief: that with better time management, we can eventually do everything we want.

The reality is different. There will always be more to do than time allows.

At the same time, modern life gives us more choices than ever – what to watch, what to buy, what career to choose, and how to spend your time. We often believe that more options will help us make better decisions. But in reality, more choice often creates stress, hesitation, and regret.

This is where the idea of **satisficing** becomes powerful. **Coined** ([word / phrase that's invented](#)) by Herbert Simon, satisficing means choosing an option that is good enough, rather than searching endlessly for the best one. It mixes the word **satisfy** with the word **suffice**, which is a fancy word for **good enough**.

This connects well with the concept of cost-performance (or “*cospa*” in Japan) – choosing what gives you strong value for your time, money, and energy, though not necessarily the perfect option.

Research supports this. In a famous study, shoppers were offered jam samples. One group saw 24 types, while another saw only 6. More people were attracted to the larger display, but far more people actually made a purchase when there were fewer options.

More choices attracted attention – but fewer choices led to action.

So how do we decide when “good enough” is enough?

One useful idea is the 70% rule, often associated with leaders like Colin Powell.

The idea is simple:

If you have about 70% of the information you need, make the decision. If you wait for 100%, it's often too late. If you act with only 40% of the information, you may be guessing. But at around 70%, you usually have enough clarity to move forward.

This connects directly to both time and decision-making: You don't have time to wait for perfect information, and you don't need it.

Burkeman's message and satisficing lead to the same insight: You cannot do everything, and you cannot choose perfectly.

Trying to do both leads to anxiety and a constant feeling of falling behind. Instead, we need a different approach.

First, accept limits. You only have 4,000 weeks. Every "yes" means saying "no" to something else.

Second, define what matters. Instead of asking "What is the best option?", ask: "What is good enough for what I need right now?"

Third, reduce unnecessary choices. Not every decision deserves your full attention.

Fourth, use simple rules like the 70% rule to move forward with confidence and **agility** (*ability to quickly and easily*).

Finally, commit to your choices and be present. When we're always optimizing for the future, we lose the ability to experience life now.

In simple terms:

- 4,000 Weeks reminds us that time is limited
- Satisficing reminds us that perfect decisions are impossible
- The 70% rule reminds us that action matters more than certainty

Together, they suggest a better way to live:

Choose what matters most within your limited time on earth or what is most important for today. Decide when it's "good enough," and move forward without regret. Otherwise you'll spend your time and energy achieving less results that will still often bring regret.

The key question is:

How important is this decision and how much effort should I give it?

If we accept our limited time, let go of perfection, and take decisive action, then we can waste less time choosing and spend more time living without regret.