

Plus, Minus, Interesting (PMI)

Weighing the Pros and Cons of a Decision

PMI stands for 'Plus/Minus/Interesting'. It is a valuable improvement to the 'weighing pros and cons' technique used for centuries.

PMI is an important Decision Making tool. Before you move straight to action on this course of action, it is important to check that it is going to improve the situation (it may actually be best to do nothing!) PMI is a useful tool for doing this.

How to Use the Tool:

In the column underneath 'Plus', write down all the positive results of taking the action. Underneath 'Minus' write down all the negative effects. In the 'Interesting' column write down the implications and possible outcomes of taking the action, whether positive, negative, or uncertain.

By this stage it may already be obvious whether or not you should implement the decision. If it is not, consider each of the points you have written down and assign a positive or negative score to it appropriately. The scores you assign may be quite subjective.

Once you have done this, add up the score. A strongly positive score shows that an action should be taken, a strongly negative score that it should be avoided.

Example:

A young professional is deciding where to live. Her question is 'Should she move to the big city?'

She draws up the PMI table below:

Plus	Minus	Interesting
More going on (+5)	Have to sell house (-6)	Easier to find new job? (+1)
Easier to see friends (+5)	More pollution (-3)	Meet more people? (+2)
Easier to get places (+3)	Less space (-3)	More difficult to get own work done? (-4)
	No countryside (-2)	
	More difficult to get to work? (-4)	
+13	-18	-1

She scores the table as 13 (Plus) - 18 (Minus) - 1 (Interesting) = - 6

For her, the comforts of a settled rural existence outweigh the call of the 'bright lights' - it would be much better for her to live outside the city, but close enough to travel in if necessary.

PMI was codified by Edward de Bono in his book *Serious Creativity*.

Key points:

PMI is a good way of weighing the pros, cons and implications of a decision. When you have selected a course of action, PMI is a good technique to use to check that it is worth taking.

To use the technique, draw up a table with three columns headed Plus, Minus and Interesting. Within the table write down all the positive points of following the course of action, all the negatives, and all the interesting implications and possible outcomes.

If the decision is still not obvious, you can then score the table to show the importance of individual items. The total score should show whether it is worth implementing the decision.

