

## How Decision Point Bridges Divides

Our previous results showed that decision point improves respect because of its ability to highlight rationality. However, there are multiple ways to appear to rational—not all of which may build respect. Our latest results suggest that Decision Point highlights a specific kind of reasoning that involves balancing perspectives and coming up with pragmatic solutions. We call this *balanced pragmatism*.

### Defining Balanced Pragmatism

Balanced pragmatism combines **perspective taking** with **pragmatic problem-solving skills**. In the political arena, it is easy to consider multiple perspectives without taking real action. It is also easy to act while ignoring alternative perspectives. We propose that Decision Point signals politicians ability to do both.

In support of this, we randomly showed 304 participants either campaign ads, news interviews, or a video from the decision point series including an outgroup politician. Decision Point increased perceptions of balanced pragmatism more strongly than other forms of competence, including assertiveness and overall intelligence. Further, perceiving an outgroup politician as using more balanced pragmatism translated into seeing them as more moral and respecting them more. In fact, balanced pragmatism predicted willingness to have conversation with an outgroup politician nearly twice as strongly as intelligence and 35 times as strongly as assertiveness.

### Leveraging the Decision Point Strategy to Bridge Divides

In the final research phase of this project, we are examining how to use the Decision Point strategy to communicate across partisan lines more effectively. In a pilot experiment ( $n = 100$ ) we asked anti-gun liberals to form impressions of pro-gun conservatives who framed their opinion analytically using data or exhibited balanced pragmatism. Liberals respected the pro-gun conservative more when they exhibited balanced pragmatism. The effect of balanced pragmatism was so large that it even caused liberals to prefer having a conversation with a pro-gun conservative who exhibited balanced pragmatism over a fellow liberal who did not exhibit balanced pragmatism. This pilot data is promising for the potential of the Decision Point Strategy help bridge divides more broadly.

*“My recommendation is you do not hire Joe Page...Because there is a personal relationship with the president-elect, I think you informed the president-elect of your decision and the reason why...Your job, if he decides to move forward, is...to show that the president is open-minded, can accept criticism, wants criticism, wants diversity of opinion within his inner counsel, and that is the reason Joe Page is being hired.”*

An example of Balanced Pragmatism in Decision Point transcripts. In blue (Balancing Perspectives), the speaker later rethinks his original recommendation after considering a personal relationship the president elect has with Joe. In red (Pragmatism), the speaker offers a workable solution that considers the president’s perspective.

