

YOU HAVE NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT THIS
by Ed Foote

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What job requires more decisions to be made in a shorter period of time than any other job in the world? Answer: Square Dance Caller.

When people hear this, they think it is a joke. But then they realize it is not a joke — it is true.

A caller must make 8-10 decisions every 2-3 seconds. These include:

- (1) knowing how long it will take the dancers to do a call, so as to know when to give the next call;
- (2) knowing what formation the named call will give;
- (3) knowing if this call will flow smoothly after the preceding call.
- (4) Knowing what the next call should be from a variety of options;
- (5) knowing if that next call will flow smoothly from the preceding call;
- (6) deciding the correct timing for this particular call, based on whether the floor is weak, average, or strong.
- (7) Knowing if the next call is “on the list” for the advertised program for the dance;
- (8) giving the calls on the beat with the music;
- (9) knowing who the partners and corners are in multiple squares;
- (10) knowing how to resolve to a Left Allemande and remembering which resolves have been used before so as to avoid repetition;
- (11) knowing where “Home” is if the caller wishes to use an “At Home” resolve.

Remember, all of the above is not happening two or 3 times a tip. This is happening every 2-3 seconds in every tip!

Having read the above, you are now trying to think of other jobs that require multiple decisions this fast. Let me help you.

What about a fighter pilot in a dogfight with another plane? Yes, we concede that a large number of decisions are made here in a short period of time. But a dogfight is over fairly quickly. It may last a minute or two, but that’s it. A caller is doing this rapid-fire thinking tip after tip for the entire dance.

What about a surgeon in a complicated operation? The decisions are crucial, but they tend to be mapped out ahead of time, with a pause between each decision for implementation. In an emergency, there may be one minute of numerous decisions, but then there is a wait to see what happens.

I have presented this idea to many people, and so far no one has identified a job requiring the number of decisions a caller has to make in such a short period of time. If you can identify such a job, let me know.

Note: I am **not** saying that square dance calling is the most important job in the world. On the contrary, I can name hundreds of job that are more important for the advancement of humanity than

that of square dance calling. All I am discussing here is the number of decisions in a short space of time.

A final thought. A number of years ago a psychologist was treating a caller for mental stress and drug addiction (no, it was not me). He told the caller that the human brain is not designed to make the number of decisions in such a short period of time that a caller is required to make.

Remember this the next time your caller misses the corner.