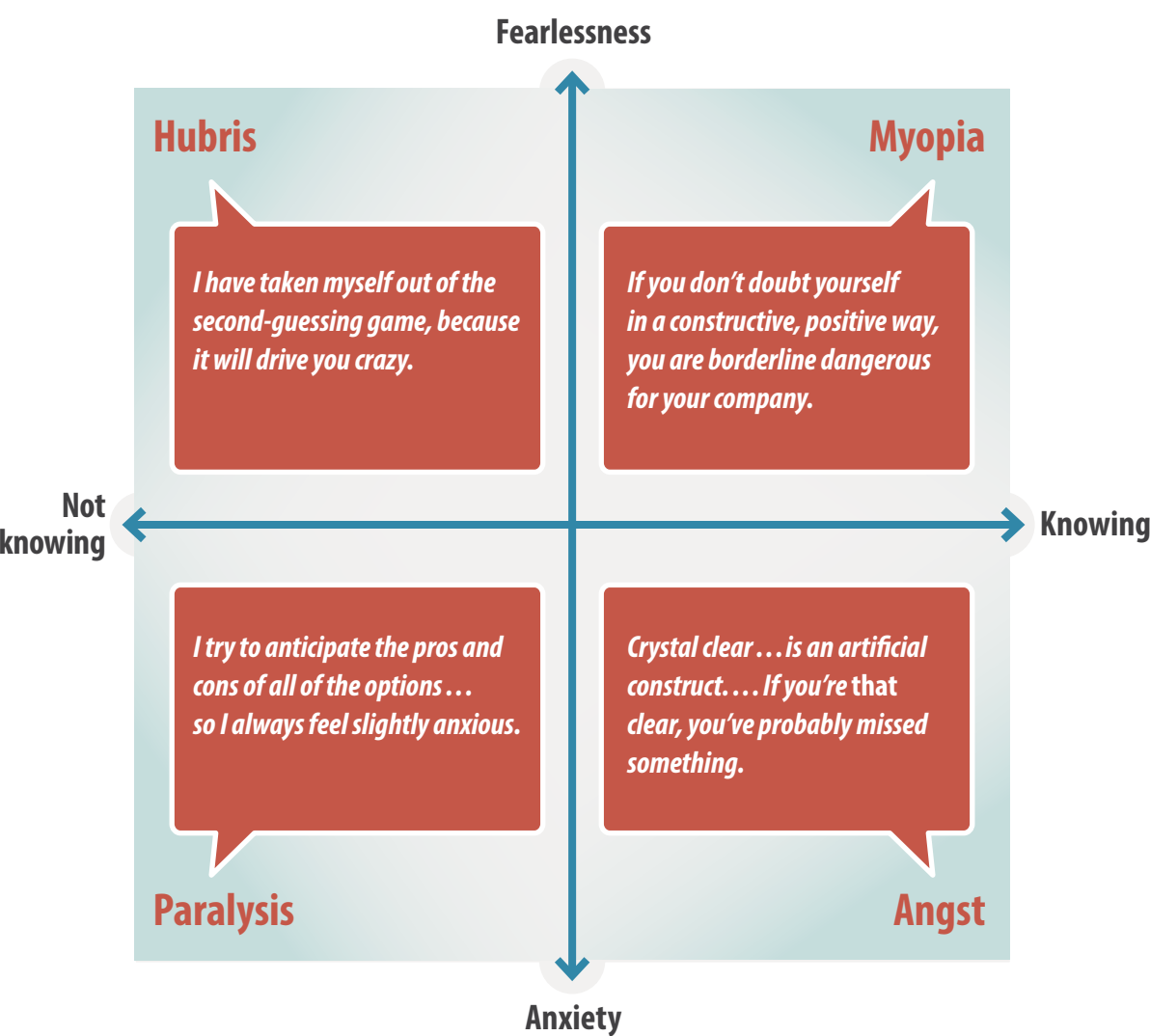


# Harnessing the power of doubt

CEOs must routinely make tough decisions, yet many CEOs worry they don’t have the right information—or enough of it—to know if they’re making the right decisions. Interviews with more than 150 global CEOs suggest that the key to this dilemma is to embrace uncertainty and doubt by focusing on the feeling side of decision making and not just the thinking side. Leaders who do so can bolster collaboration, encourage a culture of learning, and make better decisions—powerful weapons in an increasingly complex and uncertain world.

## Four decision-making pitfalls



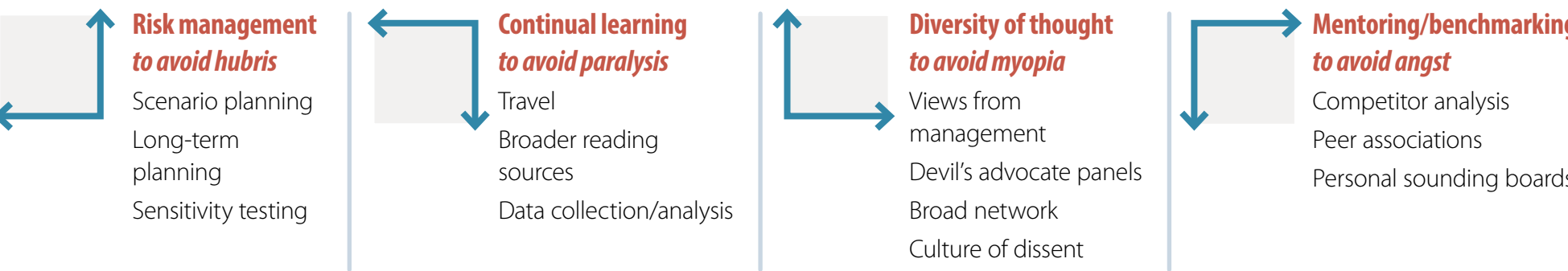
Viewing the decision-making process along two dimensions—feeling and knowing—helps CEOs improve their decision-making under uncertainty. As the matrix shows, an overreliance on either dimension alone is not only ineffective, but risky for both CEO and organization alike. Two of the four critical risks our research identified are **paralysis** (anxiety in the face of insufficient knowledge) and **hubris** (fearlessness given the same level of information).

CEOs who combine the two dimensions can get more comfortable with discomfort, better distinguish constructive doubt from disruptive second-guessing, and better select the appropriate decision-making strategies that help minimize risk and maximize opportunity.

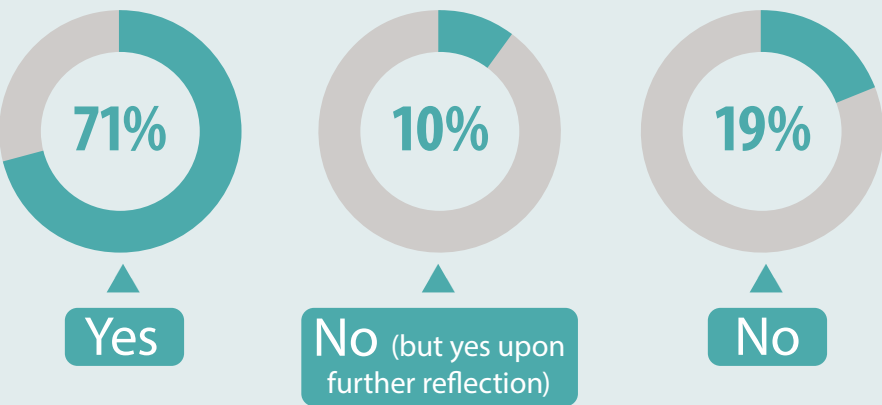
**We call this the Power of Doubt.**

## Get comfortable with discomfort

Complexity and uncertainty aren’t going away, so CEOs need decision-making strategies to help them cope. Four such strategies (one for each risk) allow CEOs to “outsource” doubt, find their comfort zones, and make better decisions.



## Do you ever doubt yourself?



CEOs were surprised we asked it, and we were surprised by their answers. While CEOs admitted a range of doubts, they most often cited “people decisions” (64% called these the most difficult decisions). Still, by approaching doubt positively forward-looking CEOs recognize that doubts are to leaders what nerves are to elite athletes: potential sources of focus and insight.

For more, see *The CEO Report: Embracing the Paradoxes of Leadership and the Power of Doubt* on [heidrick.com](http://heidrick.com).