

Who Is Involved In The Decision?

In most organizations people assume that decisions are made by a person who has the authority to make that decision, and then other people carry out that decision. But this assumption rarely reflects the varying types of expertise involved, or the range of people who need to be consulted or informed of decisions.

For instance, if an individual or team is making a decision that goes against the law, then a compliance or legal officer should have the authority to veto the decision, forcing it back for greater consideration. Likewise, when a decision forces a team or department to go over it's budget the financial officer should have the authority to require that decision be reviewed. This does not mean those with a “veto” may decide exactly what should be done, but they can halt a process from crossing legal or policy boundaries.

Some people who will be affected by a decision may not have a vote, but they should be consulted before the decision is finalized in order to gather the information required to make the best decision. Others need to be informed when the decision has been made in order to make sure it is implemented completely. Sometimes a group or team may become deadlocked, polarized and unable to reach even a majority vote decision. Ultimately action must be taken, in which case the proper authority must resolve the deadlock and impose a decision by authority.

Every team will have disagreements and power struggles from time to time, much of which can be significantly reduced by taking the time up front to make decisions about how decisions are going to be made. This is the purpose of the Decision Making Grid model. Such a grid *identifies the specific level of decision making influence each team member or position within an organization possesses for various types of decisions*. The following pages provide a model for developing such a grid using six levels of influence along with case studies and a discipline scenario to practice.

The Decision Making Grid*

There are six different levels of participation in the decision making process. Each level carries more authority than the previous level.

Kinds of Influence

PASSIVE

Suggest

This person is free to give input, but his or her input is not actively solicited. Their input has no authority in the actual decision.

Informed

The results of the decision will influence this person's work, and their work actually puts the decision in motion, so they must be informed of the decision if it is to be carried forward effectively.

Consulted

This person has information that is essential to the ultimate decision. It is important to gather this information at the appropriate time in the process, and a decision is not final if his or her input has not been included.

ACTIVE

Vote

This person has an actual "vote" in the decision. The degree of this "vote" must be clarified to identify whether it is intended to be a unanimous, consensus, or majority decision.

Veto

This person has more authority than one simple vote. He or she can prevent a decision from being made if s/he objects strongly enough. But s/he does not have the authority to put a decision in motion beyond the objections of any other person.

Authority

This person has the full authority to make and even impose a decision. He or she has the ultimate authority to override the Vote or Veto of any person.

* Adapted from Schmuck, R.A., Runkel, P.J., Saturen, S.L., Martel, R.T., & Derr, C.B. (1972). *Handbook of organizational development in schools*. Oregon: National Press Books, 1972.

The Decision Making Grid, continued

Levels of Authority

Each of these six kinds of influence carries more authority than the previous level. Higher levels of authority may delegate decision-making power to employees under their supervision, or to a group or a committee. If authority to make the decision is given to a group, then the process for making that decision must be clarified



Sharing Authority

If authority is delegated and invested in the hands of another employee (or group of employees), technically the higher authority may still override that person's authority and impose a decision. In this model this is referred to as the **Authority** position. A person in a position of Authority needs to be aware that every time s/he plays this "*trump card*" and imposes a decision, s/she is taking back the trust that has been placed in the hands of the other individual(s). If this is done too often such trust can be difficult to earn back.

Agreeing or Disagreeing

Even the legendary Konosuke Matsushita once told a section chief, "Only about 40 percent of the decisions I approve are ones I really agree with; the other 60 percent I have reservations about but I okay them anyway. . . I think a person in charge of others has to okay some things he doesn't really like. It is still possible to see that necessary adjustments are made over the long run." (Matsushita)

Therefore, when decision making must be delegated it is important for authority figures to learn how to accept the decisions of those under their supervision, and influence them through clear setting of goals and consistent coaching, rather than through authoritative directives. If the *trump card* is used too often, this could indicate that not all are aligned toward the same goals, or the plan for how to reach those goals has not been clearly set down and accepted

The Decision Making Grid

Case Study: Educational Team

An educational organization put together a diverse team of specialists to develop training programs. This team included a Psychologist, an Educator, a Writer/Trainer, and the team leader who was also the company's Educational Department Director with authority over the team (*position power*).

The Writer wrote a first draft, others added their input, and then they would meet to discuss and edit. The process was confusing at first because different people had different objectives, and different areas of specialty that they wanted emphasized. Therefore it took a long time to produce a product.

The team agreed to create a Decision-Making Grid to clarify each person's involvement at each stage in the development of the product. A work process chart showed each stage in the process of creating the educational material, from outlining objectives to writing first drafts, to editing for various factors as age and school appropriateness, and finally for grammar.

Team member positions

Decision Making Category	Supervisor Team Lead	Educator	Psychologist	Writer/ Trainer
Set Objectives	Vote	Vote	Vote	Vote
Choose Models, techniques to teach	Suggest	Veto	Suggest	Authority
Write 1 st draft	Suggest	Suggest	Suggest	Authority
Edit – kid friendly	Suggest	Authority	Veto	Suggest
Edit – School acceptable	Suggest	Authority	Suggest	Suggest
Edit – true to content	Vote	Vote	Vote	Veto

Kinds of Influence in the Decision Process:

- Suggest (blank)
- Consult
- Informed
- Vote
- Veto
- Authority

The Decision Making Grid

Case Study: Disciplinary Situation with an Employee

A Supervisor was having difficulty with an employee on his team. The employee consistently refused to be a contributing member of the team. She would not participate in the preparation for presentations made by the team. The Supervisor had emailed the employee and had informally visited with her about her lack of participation and about what he expected of her. The Supervisor accumulated a folder of documentation, making sure to give plenty of notice to the employee about what the expectations were and what needed improvement.

One afternoon, the employee was scheduled to co-present with another staff member. The other staff member had to leave work due to illness, leaving the employee to make the presentation by herself. She had not participated in the development of the presentation. After muddling through an hour of disjointed, unrelated topics, the employee wrapped up the session. The clients were very dissatisfied. The employee left work early, without approval.

The employee was a single mother of 4 children; she had depleted her 12 weeks of family medical leave earlier in the year due to a chronic and debilitating illness. She had been overheard telling a co-worker that she did not feel like the organization was treating her fairly.

The Supervisor met with the Manager to discuss the next disciplinary step with this employee. The Supervisor wants to fire the employee. The Manager wants to consider whether this should be done, or whether they should continue coaching the employee, issue a “verbal reprimand” or submit a formal letter of reprimand.

Processing This Challenging Situation

- *With your group, discuss the possible angles the Supervisor and the Manager should cover when considering the next step.*
- *On the following page, outline in the Decision Making Grid how this situation should be dealt with according to your company’s protocol (who should be involved, in what way and at what stage of the process?)*
- *Then consider how people sometimes deal with these situations that may not really fit your company’s policy.*



The Decision Making Grid

Worksheet

At the top of each column place the position of the various people involved in the decision making process. This should include anyone who provides information relevant to the decision, anyone who will implement the final decision, anyone who will be affected by the decision, and the people who actually have the authority to make the decision.

Who should be involved at what stage?

Decision Making Category					
Coach Employee					
“Verbal” Reprimand					
Formal Written Reprimand					
Terminate Employee					
Seek Legal Advice					
Meet with Employee to Discuss Decision					
Other:					
Other:					

Kinds of Influence in the Decision Process:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggest (blank) • Consult • Informed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vote • Veto • Authority |
|--|---|

How Decisions Are Made: From Plop to Consensus*

The following is a classification of methods of decision making in teams. This classification shows a number of ways of making a decision and the amount of public and private agreement with the decision that is likely to be associated with each. **“Plop”** - Any single member can decide to attempt to influence others without support from others. He lays a “plop,” for both publicly and privately, all are aware of the failure to accept his decision. Sharing of ideas and feelings has been at a minimum.

Self-Authorization - A member fails to sense or is indifferent to the matter of support from others and authorizes himself to decide for the team. Only the member has accepted the decision. He ceases his self-authorization only when he becomes aware that the rest of the team has not accepted his decision.

Decision by Authority - An individual with formal authority takes it on himself to make the decision with little or no involvement of the other members of the team. This often results in team members not being aware of the decision and resenting it. Due to lack of member input these decisions can quite easily be made on an inadequate information.

Hand-Clasping - a single member is able to gain a hand-clasping support from one other member. This may be perceived as general support for a decision by the whole team, but this is often a misconception. A team cannot build and grow if such decisions are made frequently.

Minority Decision - More overt conflict and pressure become apparent when a minority decides for the team. The difference between public and private acceptance becomes greater. The minority publicly accepts the decision. Some of the majority go along publicly but not privately. Although there may be a fair amount of

sharing of resources and needs among the minority, the majority remains non-participating and, generally uncommitted. Apathy usually appears when the decision is to be carried out.

Majority Decision - There is more use of resources and more commitment when a majority decides. Many or all of the minority may go along publicly, but their satisfaction and private agreement with the decision are low.

Consensus - Consensus has been found to yield maximum commitment from all in the team. Issues are thrashed out until all viewpoints have been seriously considered before a decision is reached. Yet such consensus may be false if it is gained by announcing that “silence means consent” and when members refuse to reveal their true opinions about matters. Similarly, when members are forced to reveal their true opinions about matters, true consensus still has not been achieved. Only when everyone in the team freely offers his opinions and a decision is hammered out based on the public examination of all ideas is true consensus likely to be attained.

**Schein, E.H. Process consultation: Its role in organizational development. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969.*

Consensus Decision Making

Consensus is decision-making that takes all members' personal opinions into account and results in a decision that all members can live with and support. All members may not be totally happy with the outcome, but they agree that they can abide by it, and they feel their opinions were listened to and taken seriously. In contrast with other decision making patterns, consensus seeking encourages appraisal of more information and provides a broader range of potential solutions. As a result, a group is more likely to choose the best alternative and have a greater confidence in the decision it has made.

*Adapted from The Creative Planning Process,
IC Possibilities & Associates, Victoria, B.C.*

Guidelines for Consensus Decisions

- All members commit to pursuing a consensus decision.
- Members prepare their own position with knowledge that is currently available. This is done prior to the meeting if possible.
- Present your position logically
- Avoid arguing
- State all the facts
- Support the reasons for your position emphasizing the need, not your position.
- Ask for clarification when needed.
- Listen to everyone's opinion. Members then apply logic and understanding to these to modify their own opinion.
- Avoid thinking in terms of win-lose situations and don't give in merely to avoid conflict.
- Look for the most acceptable alternative.
- Avoid using stress-reducing techniques, such as voting or simply giving in to save time. Realize that differences in opinion are helpful to reach a quality decision and that consensus takes more time.

Group Conditions that Support Consensus Decisions

- Unity of purpose
- Equal access to power
- Autonomy of group from external hierarchical structures
- Time
- Willingness in the group to attend to process
- Willingness in the group to attend to attitude
- Willingness in the group to learn and practice skills

Behaviors that Support Dialogue & Consensus Building

- ✓ **Listening and speaking with judgment suspended**—When we listen and suspend judgment we open the door to understanding. This does not mean we do not have judgments; rather that we suspend them until we listen and consider all viewpoints.
- ✓ **Respect for differences**—Our respect is grounded in the belief that everyone has an essential contribution to make and is to be honored for the perspective that only they can bring.
- ✓ **Role and status suspension**—Again, in dialogue, all participants and their contributions are absolutely essential to developing an integrated whole view. No one perspective is more important than any other.
- ✓ **Balancing inquiry and advocacy**—In dialogue, we inquire to discover and understand others perspectives and ideas and we advocate to offer our own for consideration.
- ✓ **Focus on learning**—Our intention is to learn from each other, to expand our view and understanding, not to evaluate and determine who has the best view.



How Are Decisions Made In Your Team?

4 *Which decision making model best describes how your team CURRENTLY functions? (Select as many as are true.)

- Team functions as advisors, Supervisor makes decisions
- Some decisions made by Supervisor and some by team (even if Supervisor disagrees)
- Some decisions made by Supervisor and some by team (when Supervisor agrees)
- Decisions are made by Consensus
- Decisions are made by a Majority
- Decisions are made by a Minority
- Decisions are delegated to the appropriate level of the organization.
- Other, Please Specify

5 *What decision making model best described how you WOULD LIKE your team to function? (Select as many as are true.)

- Team functions as advisors, Supervisor makes decisions
- Some decisions made by Supervisor and some by team (even if Supervisor disagrees)
- Some decisions made by Supervisor and some by team (when Supervisor agrees)
- Decisions are made by Consensus
- Decisions are made by a Majority
- Decisions are made by a Minority
- Decisions are delegated to the appropriate level of the organization.
- Other, Please Specify

Taking A Survey – Activity In Consensus Building



Purposes

1. Getting a reading on where the team stands on an issue
2. Testing for consensus of opinion
3. Involving all team members actively

Activity

1. The requesting member calls for a survey and states what he wants to know from the total team.
2. Other members paraphrase until all are clear about what they are being asked.
3. Each person, in turn, briefly states his current position.

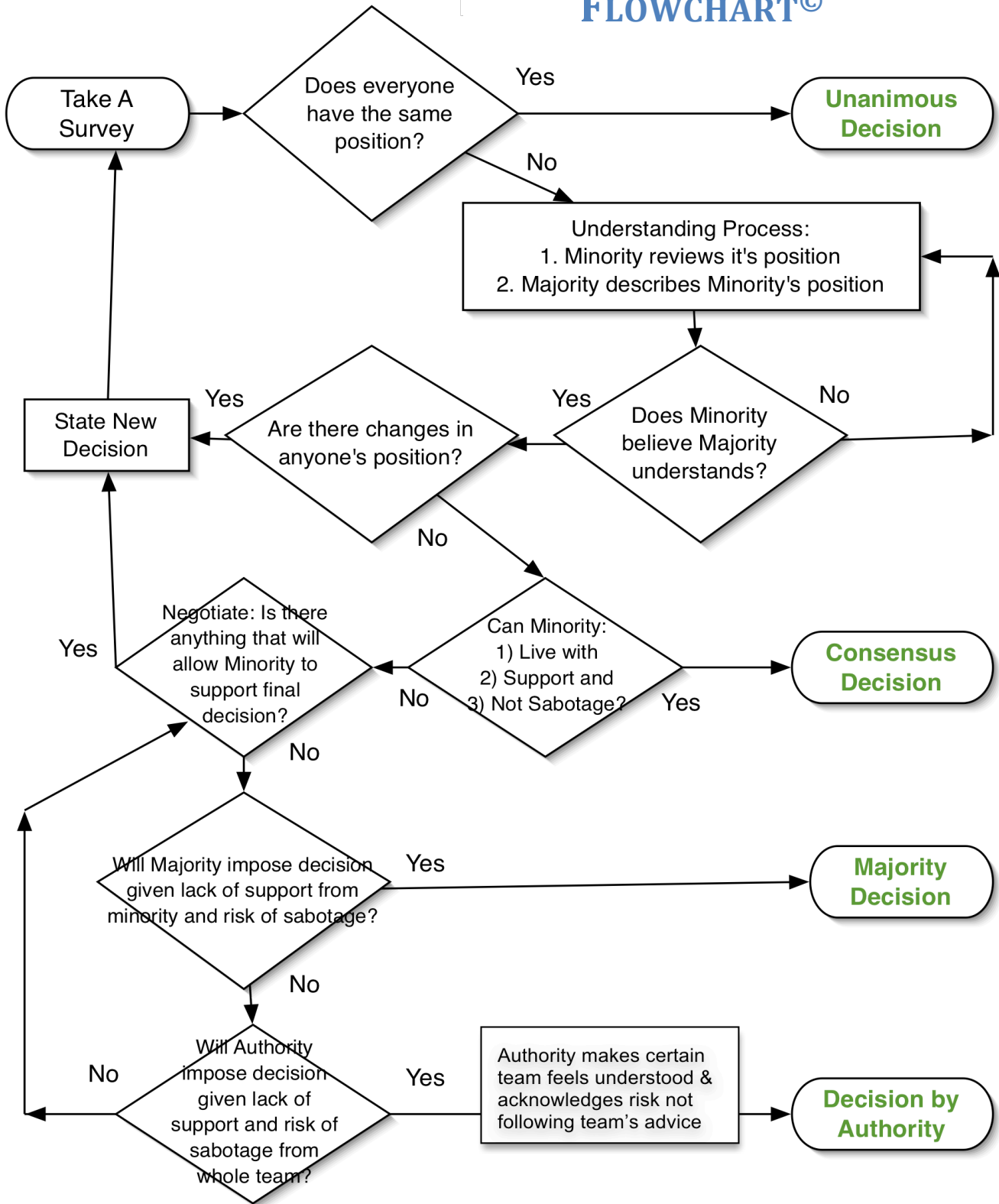
Theory

The essential technique for obtaining a consensus is a survey. In the techniques the chairman or someone poses the decision. One or two people clarify it by restating it. Then everyone in turn states his reaction to the proposal. Each person should be as brief as possible, but need not restrict himself to yes or no. He can say that he is uncertain and wants to hear more, or he can simply say that he does not want to talk about it.

A team using the technique of the survey, however, cannot allow the individual merely to remain silent. If he wants to say nothing, he must say explicitly that he wants to say nothing. A consensus is the only safe method for a decision where non-support or sabotage by one member would ruin the undertaking. It is a slower and more painful method, however, than other decision making methods that have been described. Consequently, it is usually less efficient than those other methods in situations where they will suffice.

**Schmuck, R.A., Runkel, P.J., Saturen, S.L., Martell, R.T., & , C.B. Handbook of organization development in schools. Oregon: National Press Books, 1972.*

DECISION MAKING FLOWCHART[©]



Decision Making Flowchart Observer Worksheet

- Was there anyone who tended to talk more than others, and thereby dominate the conversation?
- Was there anyone who hesitated to speak up, and tended to defer to others?
- Did a leader emerge, either formally or informally? Did that person lead by facilitating others to contribute more, or by influencing others with his or her own opinion?
- How well did the group follow the “flowchart”? Did you notice any difficulties in the process?
- How did the group manage their time? Did the group tend to focus more on one question than on the others? Did they choose to spend more time attempting to reach consensus on one issue, or did they attempt to cover more questions quickly, even there was not as much agreement?
- What enhanced their ability to reach a consensus decision?
- What seemed to get in the way?

SMART Objective Model

As you prepare your development objectives, you might consider testing them against the following **SMART** characteristics to ensure they are effective and aligned with PDC standards. Below are some definitions, using the **SMART** acronym, to guide you:

S Be **Specific** about what you want to accomplish with your objective. Include why it is important to achieve and, based on the following four guidelines, specifically how you are going to do it.

M If you can't **Measure** an objective, you can't manage it. So, establish criteria to which you can put numbers or observable results. In that way you can measure and manage progress towards the successful completion of the objective.

A Your development objectives should **Align** (or be consistent) with your supervisor's objectives for you. Supervisors and employees should collaborate to make sure this happens.

R Objectives should be **Results oriented**. Your objective should state what will be achieved; what is the desired end result you want to accomplish. You should specify either a quality or quantity that can be measured.

T Development objectives should be **Time bound** with defined target dates. Milestones should be used for more complex objectives with several deliverables. Being time bound reinforces the need for measurement and management on an ongoing basis.