



Resilience Building Resource Hub

A Shilp Initiative

TOOLKITS | PROGRAM RESOURCES | ARTICLES | ONLINE LEARNING |
GUIDES | VIDEOS | FRAMEWORKS



HOW CAN YOU DEVELOP YOUR ABILITY TO MAKE BETTER DECISIONS?

Welcome to the Decision Making self-paced learning module. We make decisions every day, almost every minute. Some are conscious and some are sub-conscious. Research says we make 35,000 decisions a day. Just today you would have decided what we wear, what we eat; what we say; everything is a decision we make. Decision making is a cognitive process which results in the selection of something among several other options. It is important to develop this skill to help us make better decisions, especially when it impacts our organization, teams or communities.

This section will help you understand:

- the importance of decision making
- ways to make effective decisions
- self-assessment tools to help assess self
- additional resources to help you get to an expert level
- self-reflection and action planning
- some DIY tips to get you started on this journey

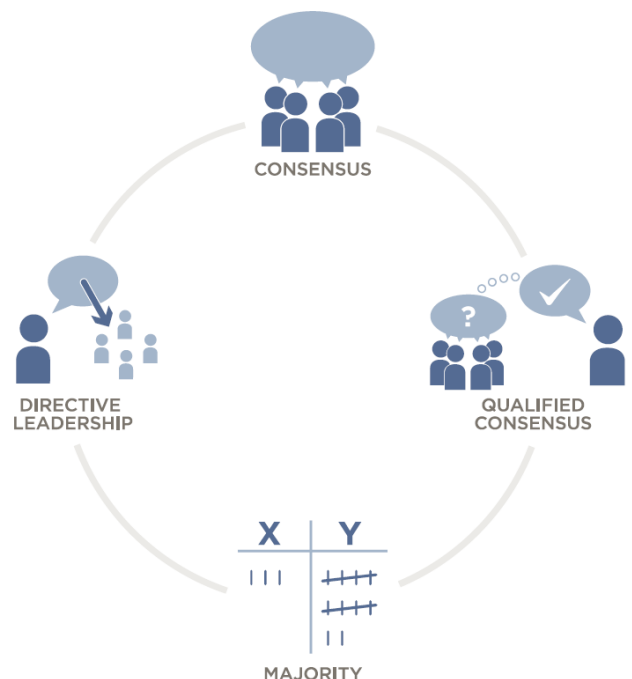
So, let's get started!

Decision making is the thought process of selecting a logical choice from a set of available options.

When trying to make a good decision, a person must weigh the positives and negatives of each option and consider all the alternatives. For effective decision making, a person must be able to forecast the outcome of each option as well, and based on all these items, determine which option is the best for that particular situation.

How to make effective decisions

- 1) Prepare to make a decision.
 - a. Know whether the decision has to be made by an individual or by a team.
 - b. If it is a team decision, then assembling a diverse group of people with different perspectives to help you is more likely to generate a variety of thoughtful ideas than individuals with the same background.
- 2) Select an approach that you will follow to make your decision.
 - a. Consensus. Everyone involved in the decision meets to discuss it and reach agreement. Everyone accepts the final decision.
 - b. Majority. Group members vote, and the majority rules. If there's a tie, the leader may elect to break it.
 - c. Qualified consensus. The group tries to reach a collective agreement. If it can't do so, the leader makes the decision.
 - d. Directive leadership. The leader makes the decision and then informs the group of the decision.



To select an appropriate decision-making method, consider the particular context of your situation. Ask:

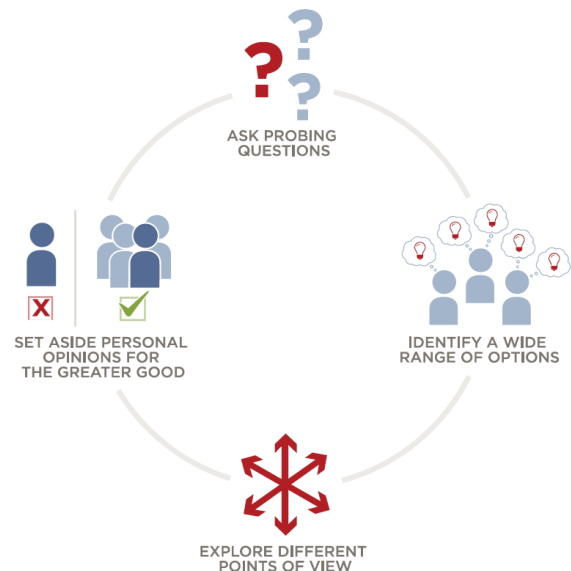
- How important is it that the decision made is of the highest quality?
- How important is it that all team members agree with the decision?
- How much time do you have to reach a decision?

If the quality of the decision is a top priority, you may want to give more weight to the opinions of a small group of team members who are subject matter experts. If support for the decision from team members is critical, aim for consensus, which fosters feelings of involvement and commitment. If a decision must be made quickly, consider a time-efficient approach such as majority rule or directive leadership.

- 3) Define your objectives
Once you've framed the decision at hand, work with your team to define objectives for the decision. To define your objectives:

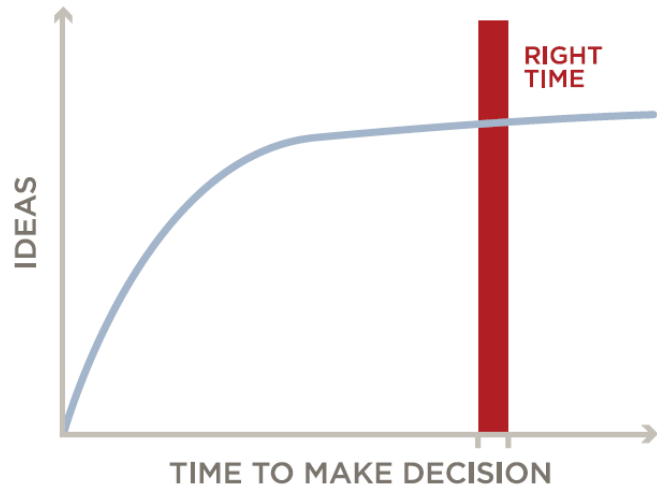
- a. Specify the objectives – what are you trying to achieve by making a decision? Ask those who have a stake in solving the problem to specify their objectives. If you hear two or more substantially different objectives, you may be facing two or more problems. Or perhaps more than a few stakeholders don't understand the problem or different groups hope to see the problem solved in very different ways.
 - b. Define the performance level that represents success – describe as specifically as possible what a successful outcome looks like.
 - c. Describe the future – invite all stakeholders to describe the desired future state in detail. If the responses diverge significantly, resolve differences by compromise, by straight selection of one view over another, or by identifying multiple problems at hand.
 - d. Check for conflicts – make sure that objectives and outcomes don't conflict.
- 4) Anticipate decision-making challenges to avoid falling into familiar traps.
- a. Cognitive biases – i.e., distortions or preconceived notions, such as:
 - Reliance on familiar experiences and past successes.
 - Overconfidence in our assumptions.
 - Affinity for the status quo.
 - Desire to seek confirmation of our opinions while ignoring the real issue.
 - Becoming emotionally attached to people, places, and things, which can affect decisions we make related to them.
 - b. Safeguard against biases by:
 - Injecting fresh experience or analysis.
 - Introducing further debate and challenge.
 - Imposing stronger governance, such as requiring a decision is ratified at a higher level.

- c. Manage group dynamics
 - Guard against groupthink where participants' desire for agreement overrides their motivation to evaluate alternative options for a decision.
 - Empower people sufficiently so that they are motivated to take interest in the decision-making process.
 - Encourage a spirit of inquiry where people ask probing questions, explore different points of view, identify a wide range of options, and set aside their personal opinions and preferences.



- 5) Generate and evaluate alternatives
 To make good decisions, you need to generate many possible alternatives and then weigh their merits. Simple but powerful techniques can help you on both fronts.

- a. Brainstorm (see Brainstorming planning worksheet)
- b. Encourage productive dialogue by making it clear that the final outcome is not predetermined and that everyone's input will be valued. Recognise and thank people for their ideas and inputs.
- c. Promote a fair process that allows people to feel that their inputs are being recognised and valued even if their suggestions aren't ultimately adopted.
- d. Evaluate alternatives to determine how well each alternative meets the objectives you established at the beginning of the decision-making process. Techniques to help you compare alternatives include weighing a range of variables, creating a prioritization matrix, making a trade-off table, and developing a decision tree.



- 6) Make the decision based on the outcome of the evaluation of alternatives.
- 7) Stress-test your decision by asking the following questions:
 - a. Has self-interest driven people to make this recommendation?
 - b. Have those making the recommendation fallen in love with it?
 - c. Were there dissenting opinions within the recommending team and were they thoroughly explored?
 - d. Could the recommendation be unduly influenced by memorable events, such as past successes or failure under similar circumstances?
 - e. Has the team considered credible alternatives to the frontrunner?
 - f. Has the team dug for data about the alternative beyond what's immediately visible and available?
 - g. Have key numbers underlying the alternative been closely examined?
 - h. Are those recommending the alternative overly attached to their past decisions?
 - i. Are the forecasts associated with the alternative overly optimistic?
 - j. Is the worst-case scenario that could result from the alternative's implementation bad enough to accurately reflect the risks?
- 8) Communicate the decision

To communicate a final decision effectively, you need to know who to communicate it to, how to communicate it, and what to communicate.

 - a. Communicate the final decision to all stakeholders — i.e., everyone responsible for implementing it plus anyone who will be affected by it.
 - b. When communicating the decision and getting buy-in, foster perceptions of fairness by doing two things:
 - Explain the thinking behind the decision. This builds trust in your intentions and confidence that it was made for the benefit of the organisation as a whole.

- Clarify new expectations from people as a result of the decision, such as new rules, new responsibilities along with performance measures.
- c. In your communication about the final decision:
- State the problem or opportunity that the decision needed to address.
 - Describe the objectives of the decision.
 - Specify who was involved in making the decision and why they were included.
 - List the alternatives considered and summarize the group's analysis of their relative merits.
 - Explain the final decision and its implications for stakeholders.
 - Lay out the plan and timeline for implementing the decision.
 - Solicit feedback.

9) Implement the decision

To put the final decision into action, you need to assign tasks and resources, manage implementation logistics, follow up, and allow for adjustments.

Self-assessment and Practice tools

1. How Good Is Your Decision Making?

Decision making is a key skill in the workplace and is particularly important if you want to be an effective leader. This assessment will help you understand your decision making skills.

Duration: 25 mins

https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_79.htm

Additional Resources

The Power of Decision Making

Every day we make 20.000 decisions. Most of them with lightning speed; brain research proves that. The least of them, on the other hand, are rational and well thought through; the behavioral economy shows that. Benedikt Ahlfeld reveals which three decision traps you should certainly avoid and how you can utilize the findings of brain research

Duration: 18 mins

Video/ Ted talk

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=542qgGgL1s4>

The Elements of Good Decision Making - Dave Ramsey

Making decisions—big and small—are a huge part of being an effective leader. Dave Ramsey shares some practical ways to simplify the process.

Duration: 5 mins

Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UUqj5onSVM>

The Way to Make Better Decisions, with Annie Duke

This episode features an insightful conversation with Annie Duke. Annie is the best-selling author of *Thinking in Bets*, and most recently, *How to Decide*. She has made it her pursuit to help us understand how we make decisions and provide us with concrete steps and tools for improving our decision making process.

Duration: 33 mins
Podcast

<https://coachingforleaders.com/podcast/make-better-decisions-annie-duke/>

9 Habits That Lead to Terrible Decisions

This article by Harvard Business Review based on research conducted, suggests nine factors that lead to poor decision making

Duration: 15 mins
Article

<https://hbr.org/2014/09/9-habits-that-lead-to-terrible-decisions>

Decision Matrix Analysis

Decision Matrix Analysis is a useful tool to use when considering a number of similar-looking options. This video provides examples of both a Simple Decision Matrix and a Weighted Decision Matrix.

Duration: 9 mins
Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2HtqQjyt5s&t=208s>

What is a Decision Tree Diagram

Need to break down a complex decision? Try using a decision tree maker. Read this article to find out all about decision trees, including what they are, how they're used, and how to make one.

Duration: 15 mins
Article

<https://www.lucidchart.com/pages/decision-tree>

The Power Of Clarifying Your Decision-Making Process

This article by Dr. Joel M. Rothaizer emphasizes the importance of clarifying the decision-making process which in turn promotes true teamwork and rich collaboration. It also provides a safe container for the resulting dialogue and minimizes negative consequences.

Duration: 10 mins
Article

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2020/02/21/the-power-of-clarifying-your-decision-making-process/?sh=38edbd323426>

30 Group Brainstorming Techniques to Find Your Next Great Idea

To have a truly successful discussion, it is vital that everyone on the team be aware of the rules of brainstorming. And alternatively, the manager or leader of the group needs to find ways to keep everyone engaged in the conversation from beginning to end. Read this blog, for the rules every team should follow and a list of 30 power brainstorming examples you can use to keep everyone involved.

Duration: 15 mins

Blog

<https://toggl.com/blog/30-group-brainstorming-techniques-to-find-your-next-great-idea>

Self-reflection and action planning:

1. What is your current level of proficiency in decision making? Identify 2-3 areas that are challenging you and preventing you from becoming better at decision making.
2. What proficiency level do you want to reach in the next six months?
3. Identify 2-3 specific things that you will do over the next six months to practice becoming a better at decision making.

DIY Tools:

1. Review your logic. Whenever you reach any conclusion, think about whether it is based on facts or on personal beliefs and assumptions. Decisions based on facts and proof are always more longstanding
2. Evaluate more than one course of action to ensure a best find between problem and solution. Ensure that a back-up plan / solution is also evaluated
3. To ensure that decisions are based on fact not feeling, write down the rationale for the decision, weighing the pros and cons
4. Take complete ownership for a difficult decision that has to be communicated to your team. Prepare to communicate – list the issues that are likely to come up and put down your responses for each issue. Work with your team to ensure that the decision is accepted and the wheels of change are set in motion.
5. Shadowing: Work on a live complex problem (or a burning issue!) with your manager. Volunteer to analyse the problem and present your recommendations for review to your manager.