

# Decision Making

Have you ever had to choose between two items for your organization and had trouble making a decision? If so, these steps may be useful to you and your organization.

## Team Decision Making Steps

- Determine the problem.
- Generate possible solutions.
- Evaluate and test the solutions, plans or decisions.
- Decide on a mutually acceptable solution.
- Implement the solution.
- Evaluate the plan/solution/decision.

## Consensus Decision Making

Hopefully, the above methods will lead a team to a decision based on consensus. Consensus-building is a process whereby the members of a team develop an alternative all the members can *live* with, although they may like another alternative better. It is sometimes tempting – and seemingly more effective – to resort to a vote when making a decision. A consensus usually results in a much better-implemented solution because if all of the members can *live* with a decision rather than vote against another alternative, the decision is more acceptable to the group and thus better-implemented.

Two methods of testing for consensus are the **Thumbs Up** and **Stop Light** models. As the leader goes around the room, the members signal “I can live with this decision” with a thumbs up sign in the Thumbs up model or a green index card in the Stop light model. A thumbs down or a red index card indicate non-acceptance. A horizontal thumb or yellow index card indicates neutrality, “not sure,” or “need more information.”

## Factors Affecting Team Decision Making

### The mood of the team

Level of self-confidence, attitudes toward each other, etc.

### Facts of life

Recognizing those factors that may be influenced by the team

### Urgency

What factors are influencing the speed at which this decision needs to be made?

### Groupthink

The group's ability to overcome the urge to agree and to instead bring up ideas and thoughts contrary to the consensus of the members for the good of the group

### Inhibitions

How comfortable group members feel expressing their ideas

### Fear

Level of fear on the team about ridicule or the leadership's tolerance of mistakes

### Outside criticism

Pressure and attacks by outside critics who have a vested interest in the outcome

### Facts vs. value judgments

Uncertainty about how to integrate information and values when making a judgment

## Plan-Do-Check-Act Paradigm

### Plan

- Select the problem/process, and describe the improvement opportunity.
- Describe the current process.
- Describe all possible causes of the problem, and agree on the root cause(s).
- Brainstorm workable solutions and an action plan, including deadlines for improvement.

### Do

- Implement the solution or change on a small scale first.

### Check

- Gather data, and evaluate the results to determine if solution is having the intended effect.

### Act

- Continue the improvement process by revising the approach and acting on results.

### Clarity of boundaries/ limits of authority

The level of understanding among all those involved about whom should be making a decision and the parameters within which the members can make decisions

### Clarity of purpose and expectations

The extent to which the purpose of the group and the decision are clear in the minds of the members, as well as how well the expectations of the group are defined