

Development Suggestions for Decisiveness

Suggested Readings

Title	Author/Publisher	Learning Mode
The Five Temptations of a CEO: A Leadership Fable	Lencioni, Patrick M. / 1998/ Jossey-Bass	Book
Why Didn't I Think of That? Think the Unthinkable and Achieve Creative Greatness	McCoy, Charles W. Jr / 2002/ Prentice Hall Art	Book
Harvard Business Review on Decision-Making	Harvard Business Review / 2001 / Harvard Business School Press	Book

Activities

1. When faced with a decision to be made, remember that there are four basic ways to make a decision. Which method is best depends on the nature of the problem and the circumstances surrounding the decision. The four ways to make a decision are:
 - a. Unilateral – the leader makes the decision
 - b. Consultative – the leader gets input from the group and then makes the decision
 - c. Majority – the group takes a vote and goes with the decision favored by the majority
 - d. Consensus – all members of a group participate fully in the decision-making process and the decision is one that every member can accept and support.

Development Suggestions for Decisiveness, continued

2. Ask yourself the following questions when deciding which decision method will best serve your needs:

- How important is the quality of the decision?
- Do I have enough information?
- Is the problem structured? Is it clear what information is needed and where to get it?
- How likely are other people in the group or organization to accept my decision?
- How likely is conflict over possible solutions?

Consider using the following to help you choose the best method:

Factor	Question to ask	Method to consider
Importance of quality of decision	Is a high quality decision essential?	Y: consensus N: other methods
Leader's information/expertise	Does the leader have enough information to make a high quality decision?	Y: unilateral N: other methods
Problem structure	Is the problem structured?	Y: unilateral, consultative N: consensus, majority
Importance of acceptance by group or organization	Is acceptance by all members of the group or organization critical?	Y: consensus, consultative N: unilateral, majority
Likelihood that group will accept leader's decision enthusiastically	If leader makes the decision, are other members of the group likely to accept it enthusiastically?	Y: unilateral N: other methods
Likelihood of conflict	Are group members likely to be in conflict over which solution the group should choose?	Y: consensus N: other methods

Development Suggestions for Decisiveness, continued

3. When using the consensus method of decision making, consider the following guidelines for reaching consensus:
 - Avoid arguing for your own view.
 - Do not assume that someone must win and someone must lose.
 - Do not change your mind to avoid conflict.
 - Avoid conflict-reducing techniques such as voting.
 - Identify areas of agreement as you go along.
 - Test for consensus.

Tips

1. Before attempting to reach a decision, make sure everyone involved agrees on the problem definition.
2. Attack problems, not people.
3. Keep a record of problems that arise to identify recurrent ones.
4. Before making a decision, establish checkpoints that will be used to assess the continuing success of the decision, the downside risks at each point, and potential alternative strategies. This way, if the downside risks materialize, an alternative strategy can easily be adopted.
5. Develop disciplined decision processes in your workgroup whereby all elements of the decision must be backed with researched information.
6. Ask others for their perceptions of your decisiveness. If the feedback is that you procrastinate in decision making, or that you are too conservative, consider involving respected others, who can help you move to a decision.
7. Set a target date for decision and plan the decision process accordingly. If several individuals or groups are involved in the decision process, and/or if data need to be collected to make the decision, timelines need to be established to meet the target date.
8. Clarify precisely your manager's expectations regarding decisions that you should make alone and decisions that you should make with others.
9. Avoid the need to gather and analyze too much information before making a decision.
10. Before you ask someone else for an opinion about a decision, choose one of the alternatives and develop a rationale for why that alternative is best. Then ask for input.

Development Suggestions for Decisiveness, continued

11. If you tend to rely on your superiors for decision making, force yourself to formulate alternatives and then present recommendations, instead of the problem, to your superior.
12. Use a factual approach to decision making by systematically collecting valid and reliable data. Rely on these data rather than on emotions, even if the decision is unpopular. In turn, explain decisions in terms of data, not emotions.
13. Openly acknowledge that your decision may be unpopular, and explain why it is important for others to consider your point of view.
14. Once you have made a decision, stand by it unless you receive new information.
15. Seek input from decision-makers within your organization on how they arrive at their decisions and how they deal with people's reactions. Incorporate some of their ideas and strategies.
16. Collect reliable and pertinent information to a decision. Use the data in deriving a decision.
17. Consider a temporary assignment that is conducted within a very tight timeline that forces decisiveness.