Team Decision Making and Effective Communication

22.033

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Objectives

- Become familiar with some of the methods for team decision making
- Know when each method is applicable
- Become familiar with the common barriers to communication
- Know how to manage conflict in team oriented situations
What is the “Best” Team Decision?

- Would not have been thought of by an individual alone
- Sound solution to the problem
- One that is based on unbiased input from each team member
- Addresses the team’s goal for the decision making process
Seven Methods of Decision Making

Decisions can be made by:

- An authority without group discussion
- An expert
- Averaging individuals’ opinions
- An authority after group discussion
- The minority
- The majority
- Consensus
1. Authority Without Group Discussion

**(Strengths)**
- Takes minimal time to make decision
- Commonly used in organizations
- High on assertiveness scale

**(Weaknesses)**
- No group interaction
- Team may not understand the decision or be unable to implement the decision
- Low on cooperation scale

**Example**

Changing the brand of printer paper that the company uses
2. Expert

**Strengths**
- Useful when one person on the team has the overwhelming expertise

**Weaknesses**
- Unclear how to determine who the expert is
- No group interaction
- May become popularity or power issue

**Example**

The CEO of Kickin’ Kicks Shoe Company consults a marketing specialist on the strategy for advertising a new line of sneakers.
3. Averaging Individual Inputs

**Strengths**
- Extreme opinions cancelled out
- Error typically cancelled out
- Group members consulted
- Useful when it is difficult to get the team together to talk

**Weaknesses**
- No group interaction, members aren’t fully involved in the process
- Opinions of least and most knowledgeable members may cancel
- Commitment to decision may not be strong

**Example**

The group leader sends out a survey to decide what the group’s softball team name is going to be.
4. Authority After Group Discussion

**Strengths**

- Team used more than the previous methods
- Listening to the team increases the accuracy of the result

**Weaknesses**

- Team may compete for the leader’s attention
- Team members tell leader “what he/she wants to hear”
- Still may not have full commitment from team members

**Example**

A business owner changes the hours of operation to 7am - 3pm after talking to employees and finding out that it would help those that commute to spend less time in traffic.
5. Minority

**Strengths**
- Often used by executive or temporary committees
- Useful for large number of decisions and limit time
- Some team perspective and discussion

**Weaknesses**
- Can be railroading
- May create an air of competition among team members
- May not have full team commitment to decision

**Example**

The executive board of Enron decides to “balance the books”.
6. Majority

**Strengths**

- Useful when:
  - There is insufficient time to make a decision by consensus
  - Complete team-member commitment is unnecessary for implementing a decision

**Example**

A group of friends decide where to go out to eat on Friday night.

**Weaknesses**

- Opposing parties are viewed as “winners and losers”
- Minority opinion not discussed and may not be valued
- Unresolved conflict may remain
7. Consensus

**Strengths**
- Most effective method of team decision making
- All team members express their thoughts and feelings
- Team members feel “understood”

**Weaknesses**
- Takes more time than previous methods
- Takes psychological energy and a high degree of team member skill

**Example**

After days of deliberation, the jury emerges and delivers the verdict to the courtroom.
Additional Benefits of Consensus

- Team member expression
- Group agreement
- Individual satisfaction
  - Agreement with most parts of the decision
  - Lets go of non-crucial opinions and backs decision
  - Values aren’t compromised
  - Belief that the final decision is the “best”
Constraints of Decision Making

Efficiency
Pros: save time, $$, resources
Cons: weaker buy-in

Buy-In
Pros: optimal ideas, creativity, talent, expertise
Cons: slower progress

One person: Decide & dictate
One person gathers input and decides
Consensus with a fallback solution
Set constraints & delegate
Whole team: Consensus

Barriers to Communication

- Judging
- Sending Solutions
- Avoiding Other’s Concerns
Judging

- Criticizing
- Name-calling
- Diagnosing
- Praising Evaluatively
Sending Solutions

- Ordering
- Threatening
- Moralizing
- Excessive/Inappropriate Questioning
- Advising
Avoiding Other’s Concerns

- Diverting
- Logical Argument
- Reassuring
Managing Conflict

💧 Conflict will inevitably arise when working in groups and as future project leaders, it will be up to you to resolve them.

💧 Three Parts of Conflict Management
  – Stay Calm
  – Show Respect
  – Make decisions based on facts, not emotions
Questions?