

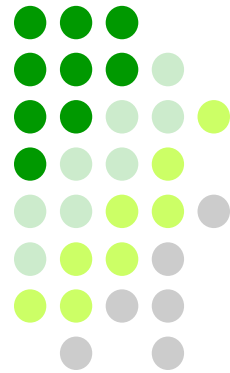
Decision Making

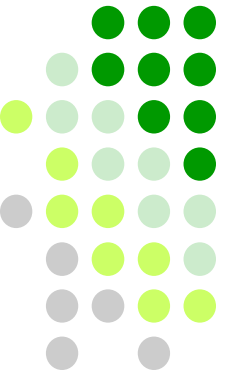
Methods of Decision Making

Each decision – making method has its uses and is appropriate under certain circumstances. Each also has its particular consequences for the group's future operation. An effective group understands each method of decision making well enough to choose the method that is best for:

- * The type of decision to be made.
- * The amount of time and resources available.
- * The history of the group.
- * The nature of the task being worked on.
- * The kind of climate the group wishes to establish.
- * The type of setting in which the group is working.

- 1. Decision by Authority without Group Discussion** – Example: The President calls an unscheduled emergency meeting.
 - +useful for simple, routine decisions
 - +good if very little time is available
 - +helpful if group members lack the skills and information to make the decision by other ways
 - advantages of group interaction are lost
 - one person is not always a good resource
 - no commitment to implementing the decision
 - resentment and disagreement may result in sabotage and deterioration of group effectiveness
- 2. Decision by Expert** – Example: The Treasurer decides how to spend the organization's money.
 - +useful when the expertise of one person is so far superior that little is gained from group discussion
 - +takes less time than group discussion
 - difficult to determine who is the expert
 - no commitment to implementing the decision
- 3. Decision by Averaging Individuals' Opinions** – Example: The Vice President calls members of the executive board and asks, "What's a good weekend to have our retreat?"
 - +can be useful for simple, routine decisions
 - not enough interaction between members for them to gain from each other's resources and from the benefits of group discussion
 - unresolved conflict and controversy may damage group effectiveness in the future
- 4. Decision by Authority After Group Discussion** – Example: Membership Chairperson solicits input on potential recruitment efforts; however, s/he makes the final decision on what events to hold.
 - +uses the resources of group members more than some other methods
 - +gains some benefits of group discussion
 - does not develop a commitment to implement the decision
 - members compete to impress the designated leader or tell the leader what they think s/he wants to hear





5. Decision of Minority – Example: Fundraising Committee decides to send letters to annual members soliciting donations.

- +can be used when not everyone can meet to make a decision
- +helpful when only a few members have any relevant resources
- +useful when board members commitment is not needed to implement the decision
- does not utilize the resources of many group members
- does not establish wide spread commitment to implement the decision
- full benefit group interaction is not obtained

6. Decision by Majority Vote – Example: Organizations hold an election for new officers.

- +can be used when there is insufficient time to decide by consensus
- +can be used when complete member commitment is not necessary for implementation
- +closes discussion on issues that are not highly important to the group
- usually leaves an alienated minority
- encourages either/or thinking
- full commitment to implement the decision is absent
- full benefit of group interaction is not obtained

7. Decision by Consensus – Example: Organization establishes goals for the coming year.

- +produces an innovative, creative and high-quality decision
- +elicits commitment by all members to implement the decision
- +uses the resources of all members
- +useful in making serious, important and complex decisions to which all members are to be committed
- takes a great deal of time, psychological energy and high level member skill
- time pressure must be minimal and there must be no emergency in progress

Making Consensus Decisions

Perfect consensus means that everyone agrees on what the decision should be. Unanimity, however, is often impossible to achieve. There are degrees of consensus, all of which bring about a higher quality of decision than majority vote or other method of decision making.

The basic guidelines for consensual decision making are as follows:

- × Avoid arguing blindly for your own opinions.
- × Avoid changing your mind only to reach agreement and avoid conflict.
- × Avoid conflict-reducing procedures such as majority voting, tossing a coin, averaging, and bargaining.
- × Seek out differences of opinion.
- × Do not assume that someone must win and that someone must lose when discussion reaches a stalemate.
- × Discuss underlying assumptions, listen carefully to one another and encourage the participation of all members.