

WHAT IS DECISION-MAKING?

DECISION AND DECISION-MAKING

We Take Decisions in Every Moment of Our Lives

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What is Decision-Making?

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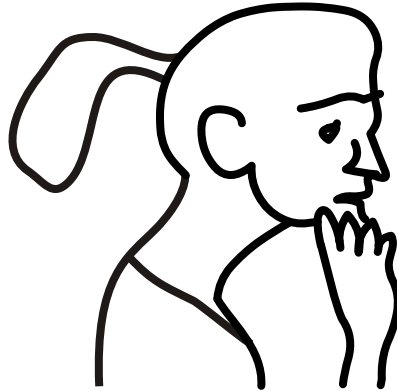
Who Can Help Group Decision-Making? What is Facilitator Role?

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DECISION AND DECISION-MAKING

We Take Decisions in Every Moment of Our Lives

We are decision-makers early in our life, when, for example, we decide which toy we want to play with! Women start the decision-making process early in the morning: which dress should I wear today? And all our life could be described as a series of decisions, even if we are aware only about few of them!



Decision making sounds a very simple process, but it isn't! Sometimes we make decisions alone, sometimes we make decisions in group, but too frequently, we make the wrong decisions!

This Handbook will help you become a better Decision Maker, by increasing your knowledge and deepening your understanding on

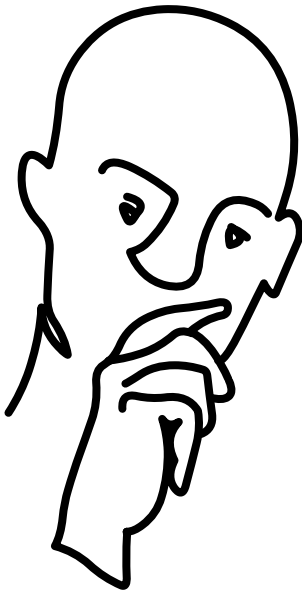
- The individual and group decision-making processes
- The obstacles, when taking decisions as individuals or group members, and how to overcome them
- How to recognize a good decision.

Let's explore together this territory!

What was your last important decision?

Many of our decisions affect not only our lives but many others', especially if we are in a position that gives us the power to decide on the distribution of resources, on the delivering of public services or on our communities' development main directions.

Do you remember a situation when you took an important and difficult decision affecting, beyond your life, other peoples' lives? Write down what was the decision about, who was affected by it and why do you consider it was a difficult decision- making process.



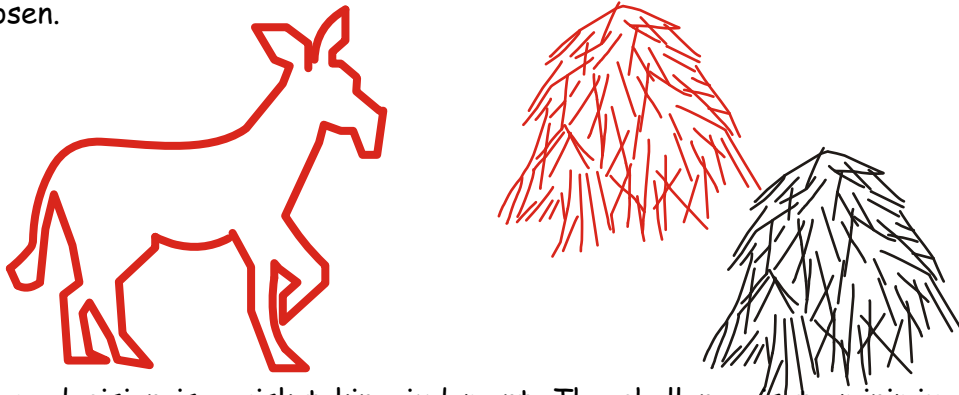
What was the decision about?

Who was affected by it?

Why was difficult to take it?

What is a Decision?

A Decision is a Choice between two or more alternatives or options. But the decision is also about eliminating a choice or an option. The story of the donkey that starves to death between two equally attractive stacks of hay because he can't decide which one to approach is not only about he can't decide which the better choice is, but he can't bear to give up the option that won't be chosen.



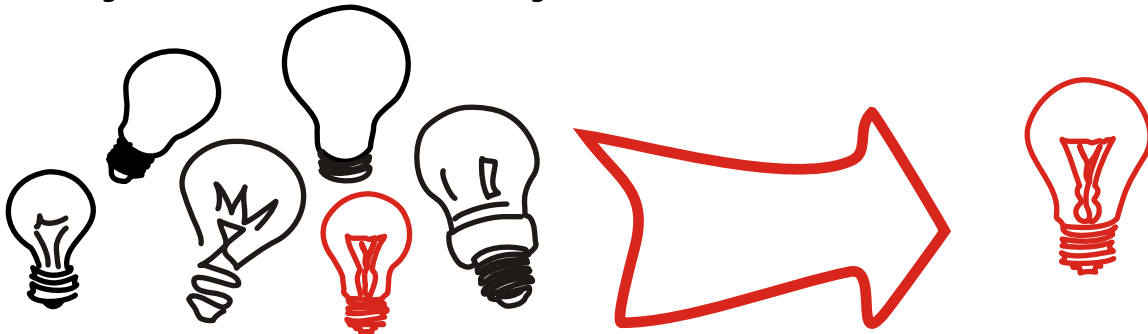
Every decision is a risk-taking judgment. The challenge is to minimize the uncertainty and maximize the impact of your decision.

A decision is a commitment to action. We expect an action after the decision point. Unless a decision has been followed by an action, it is not a decision; it is at best a good intention!

What is Decision-Making?

Decision-Making is a process and involves two main steps:

- Generating Alternatives
- Evaluating the Alternatives and Selecting the chosen ones

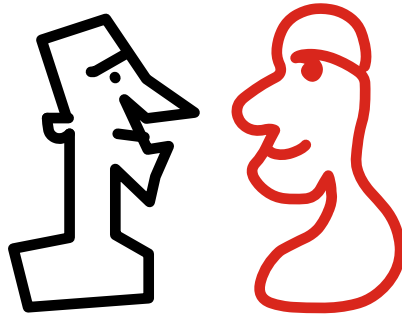


INDIVIDUAL DECISION-MAKING

How do we take decisions individually?

Our individual decisions define our personal choices on specific issues.

We have individual styles of taking decisions. Many studies were made to understand how our brains really work when we take decisions, why are some people brilliant decision makers, while others are consistently inept.



The researchers have demonstrated that one side of our brain, the right side, is the main location of emotions, imagination, intuition and creativity and the left side is the location of logic, language and analysis.

People tend to have a dominant side of the brain so that there are persons who are

- **More intuitive decision makers**, creative and spontaneous
- **More logical decision makers**, working rationally on fact-based judgments

Whichever side your natural decision-making style leans towards, always you should strive to achieve a balance between the intuitive hunch and the logical analysis. This is important because, as we have seen, the Decision Making Process involves both types of thinking:

- The creative thinking to generate alternatives
- The logical thinking to evaluate and select among these alternatives

There are a number of Models made by researchers to better understand individual decision-making processes. Here after we will shortly describe four of them:

- **The Rational (or Economic) Model**
 - **The Administrative Model**
 - **The Judgment Model**
 - **The "Blink" Model**



The Rational (or Economic) Model assumes that the decision makers first define the problems and after that search for alternative solutions. The Model also assumes that decision makers:

- Know with clarity what they want
- Have all possible information about all alternatives
- Understand all possible outcomes of any alternative
- Can judge how much each alternative is likely to achieve what they want
- Select the alternatives that maximize achievement

The Rational Model does not take into account the fact that people's emotions often cloud their judgments, so that many decisions are actually irrational, taken impulsively or on the contrary, delayed



T h e Administrative Model recognizes that people cannot know everything: they are limited by time, information, resources constraints as well as their own mental capacities. The Model also recognizes that people search for and select the satisfactory alternative rather than the perfect one. This Model assumes that decision makers:

- Are willing to settle for less than the best
- Are able to search and examine only a limited set of alternatives and their search continues until they found a satisfactory enough alternative
- Consider few if any consequences when selecting the satisfactory alternative
- Choice is determined many times only by one major factor

The Administrative Model admits that decision makers are influenced by their beliefs, attitudes and values which are determining the issues they take into consideration, the ways they search for information or select the satisfactory alternative.



The Judgment Model focuses on how judgments are made and what influences a person's judgment. Judgment comes into play in the very moment of information acquisition: whether people acquire information from their own memories or from the environment around them.

This Model assumes that, based on their selective attention, people are more likely to pay attention to the information that is similar or different from their experience, and at the same time relevant for what they are actually doing.



The "Blink" Model reveals that great decision makers aren't those who process the most information or spend the most time deliberating, but those who have perfected the art of "thin-slicing" filtering the very few factors that matter from an overwhelming number of variables. In that way, there are psychologists who learned to predict whether a marriage will last, based on a few minutes of observing a couple; tennis coaches who know when a player will double-fault before the racket even makes contact with the ball or antiquities experts who recognize a fake at a glance.

Evaluating Decision Making Abilities

Use the following test to assess your decision making abilities. Check your performance and identify the areas for improvement.

1= never, 2= occasionally, 3= often, 4= always

I make my decisions in good time

1 2 3 4

I combine logical and creative approaches when making a decision

1 2 3 4

I analyze the alternatives carefully and fully before making up my mind

1 2 3 4

I judge alternatives against objective criteria that they must satisfy

1 2 3 4

I tap every available and useful information source

1 2 3 4

I seek to involve others in the decision making process

1 2 3 4

I consult all appropriate people to get their help in reaching the right decision

1 2 3 4

I try to encourage interested or affected people to come forward with any objections

1 2 3 4

I take care to find support for my decisions

1 2 3 4

I encourage teams to think as a group not as prejudiced individuals

1 2 3 4

I take into consideration the consequences that follow from my decision

1 2 3 4

I seek to minimize risks but take necessary ones with confidence

1 2 3 4

I communicate my decisions openly, honestly

1 2 3 4

I explain my decisions clearly and ensure that they have been understood

1 2 3 4



The Options You Have When Using Your Decision-Making Power

Your individual abilities are especially important when you are in power positions: when you are a local leader or manager, elected or appointed, and you have the legitimate power of making decisions on behalf of those you represent. What are the options you have to exercise your power?



Make Decisions

A lot of decisions you make are not particularly important, having minor consequences, but need your approval or denial, because your legitimate power. Some of them are important, due to their consequences or the expectations of those you represent. On these decisions you should concentrate your effort and energy, and be sure that you have all the conditions to make an effective decision!



Delegate decisions

You have the opportunity to delegate authority and responsibilities to others: to your staff or to community groups, if you consider they can take better decisions, and you need to increase their commitment and interest. Remember that sharing power is not similar with losing power, but the opposite: usually the effect is consolidation of your power!



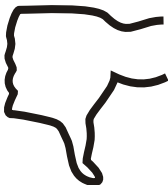
Delay Decisions

Often you have to wait till you make a decision, to be patient until the circumstances are more favorable, or until you collect more information. It is important to understand and be aware that a delayed decision could have both positive and negative impact. If the term of delay is too long, it means that you did not take any decision. This option is usually implicit and not explicit.



Support Decisions

In order to support a decision implementation, or a decision made by other, you may need to make additional decisions, which are under your responsibility and authority.



Cancel Decisions

This could happen related to your own decision, when you are able to understand and recognize that it was a wrong decision, because proper analysis was missing or you made the decision based on wrong/ incomplete information.

GROUP DECISION-MAKING

Group versus Individual Decision Making



The dilemma of what is more effective: to assign problems either to individuals or to groups for resolution would be solved if there were clear-cut evidence as to which process has better results.

Unfortunately researches results about individual versus group performance are contradictory. Several studies suggest that individual decisions are superior to group decisions, but several others conclude the opposite. A frequent finding of these studies is that group performance is superior to the performance of the average individual in the group but inferior to the performance of the best individual in the group.

Some factors make group decision-making superior to individual decision-making. The two most important are:

- The capacity of an individual to learn in a group
- The opportunity provided by many contributors to stimulate thinking

When deciding to involve others in the decision making process you have to be aware that:

- People enjoy expressing their views
- People implement decisions more willingly when they have participated in them
- Collective decisions need time, more people involved longer the decision making process
- The role of leaders need to be clarified before the decision making process is started
- If you have asked people's advice you should be prepared to accept them

How Do We Involve Others in the Decision Making Process?

Who to involve, how and when, is your very first decision as decision makers. The number of people you can involve ranges from none and in this case you make a decision on your own, to total, and in this case you lead a whole team searching for consensus.

Levels of Involvement

There are three levels of involvement in the decision making process, each of them effective in different situations, determined by the nature of the decision.



Low Involvement

Decisions are taken by leaders/managers, unilaterally, without any consultation. Those affected by the decisions are informed about.

In what situations is most appropriate to have this type of decision making process?

- When time is not available, due to tight deadlines or emergency situations
- When consensus is impossible and the decision should be taken
- When the leader has strong views and it is his/her entire responsibility to decide

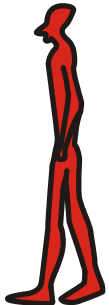


Medium Involvement

Although the final decision is taken by the leaders/managers, stakeholders (citizens, staff) are consulted for their input: views are collected before taking any decision or alternative decisions are provided for discussion.

In what situations is most appropriate to have this type of decision making process?

- When stakeholders input can provide useful ideas for discussion or decisions
- When experts views are needed



High Involvement

Decision-Making is a democratic process, all important stakeholders being invited to participate and to share the responsibility for the decisions and their consequences.

In what situations is most appropriate to have this type of decision making process?

- When the issues require the involvement of all stakeholders, like the planning process for community development
- When commitment to the decisions implementation is crucial for the process success

How Do We Take Decisions in Groups?

In order to work effectively together, we have to understand the group decision-making methods, so that we can choose the most appropriate ones depending on the amount of time available, the past history of our group, the kind of task we have to accomplish or the kind of climate we want to establish in our group. Other important factors to consider is the importance of the decision related to the group mission, the level of information and expertise of group members and how much participation is necessary to assure implementation. It is important that the group is aware about the expected level of involvement and decides at the beginning of their work together which method is most appropriate for a specific context.

A decision-making method describes how the decision will be made, by whom, who will be involved and how.

Decision by Lack of Response

This is the most common and least visible group decision-making method. Someone suggests an idea and before discussing it, someone else suggests another idea, until the group finds one it will act on. The decision made by the group is actually not to support some of the ideas, by ignoring them and those who have generated them. This method is usually appropriate in routine situations, when time is limited, the initiative belongs to a trusted resource person who is recognized by the others and the group members lack the necessary information.

Decision by Formal Authority or Self- Authorization

This is a method used in many groups that have an already established power structure, a chairman or a leader who has the authority to take decisions on behalf of the group members. The group members can generate ideas and hold free discussions but the chairman/leader is the one who take the decision.

This method effectiveness depends on the group leader capacity to listen carefully to group members' ideas and concerns and to make the decision in such a way, that all group members have a common understanding of what was decided. Of course, this method produces a limited amount of involvement and commitment. This method could be appropriate when the group has not an important role in the decision implementation or the leader needs input from individual staff members in order to decide.

Decision by Minority

This method is used when one or more group members a minority come to a quick agreement on a decision and than one of them challenge the others with "Does anyone object?" and, if no one raises his/her voice in two seconds, he/she proceeds with "Let's go ahead, then".

If you may ask the initiator how he/she concluded there was an agreement among all group members, chances are that you will receive the answer "Silence means consent, doesn't it?"

Everyone had a chance to speak up!" But if you may ask the group members also, you may discover that the majority was actually against this decision, but each person hesitated to speak up because they also were trapped by assuming that "silence means consent".

This method of making decisions may be appropriate when group members recognize that time is short, the minority holds the relevant information, the majority commitment it is not necessary, and someone need to make a decision quickly so that they can move on and discuss about more important issues. But this method can also be used as a manipulation tactic to come to a decision without giving to the opposition the chance to speak up, using time pressure or people's tiredness at the end of a long meeting.

Decision by Majority Rule

This method is used extensively in the political systems, and that is the reason is often considered it should be applied to most group decision making situations. When using this method, people express their opinions by voting on different alternatives and the alternative with majority votes is selected.

Even if it seems a very effective method, the decisions made by majority rule are often not well implemented. Why is this happening? Because voting creates coalitions and win-lose situations: the majority wins the minority loses. The main preoccupation of those who lost is not how to implement the decision but how to win the next battle by creating new coalitions. This method is effective only when the minority feels obligated to go along with the majority decisions, the issue is not so important to need consensus, and is not crucial to have everybody's commitment in the implementation.

Decision by Consensus

This is one of the most effective but time consuming group decision making method. Consensus is not the same thing as unanimity. Consensus does not mean the absence of conflict but the fact that group members are willing to spend time and energy in order to understand and accept their different opinions.

Consensus is the situation when communication is sufficiently open and the group climate sufficiently supportive, to make everyone in the group feel that he/she had a fair chance to express opinions and influence the decision. Consensus is reached when those members who would not select the alternative chosen by the majority nevertheless understand the majority reasons to select the respective alternative and are prepared to support it.

In order to reach consensus time must be allowed so that all group members state their opinions and feel that the others have heard and understood them. Only by careful listening to the opposition can such situation be reached.

Only important decisions are worth to be taken by consensus. One of the most important decisions is the decision about how the group will work, what procedures and rules will be followed when taking decisions. This decision should be made by consensus. The group might decide to give complete authority to its leader, or to use the majority rule, or to take decisions only by consensus. Whatever is decided, it is important that everyone is on board, everybody is clear about and that no one has residual feelings of not being listened to or misunderstood, or that no one has the desire to sabotage the group work. Unfortunately this kind of decision is often taken by the minority rule, having as consequences group members' low morale and involvement and lack of clarity in communication. This method is recommended for important and complex issues, which require everybody's commitment and support in the implementation.

Decision by Unanimous Consent

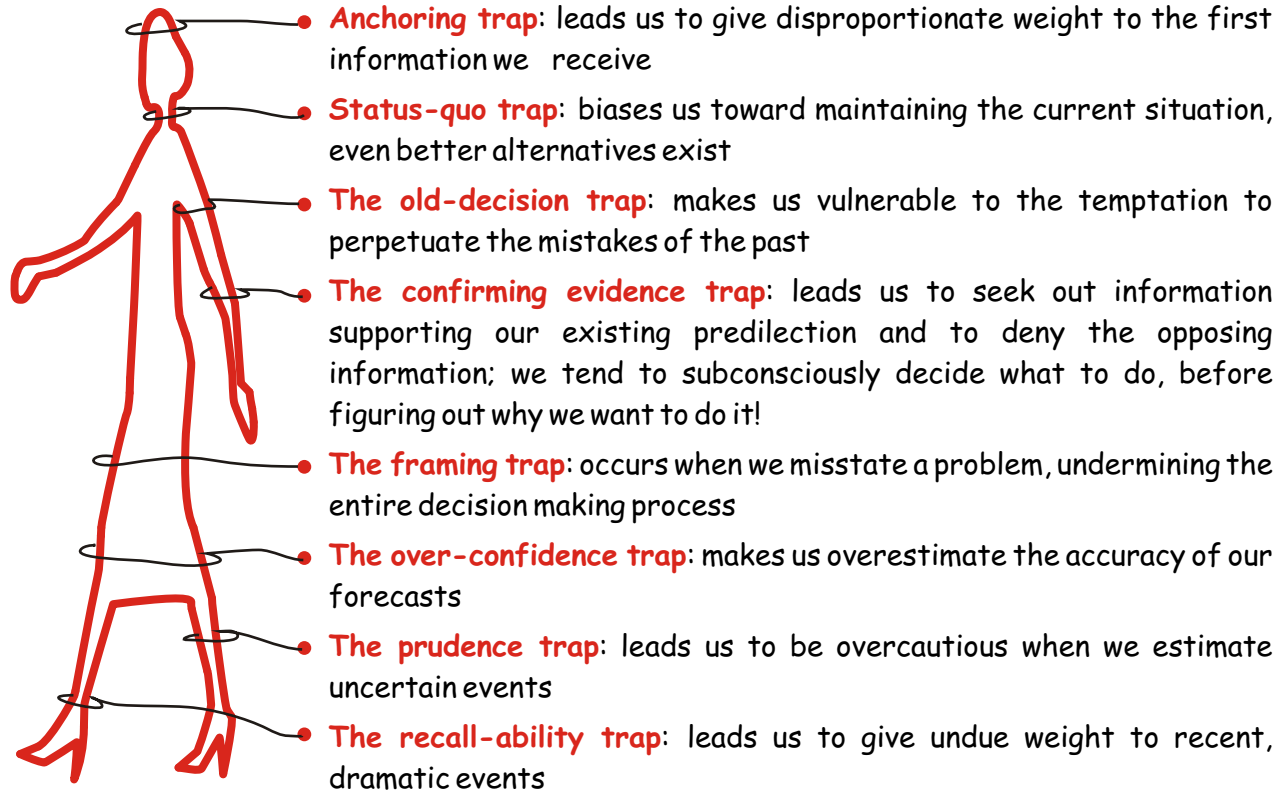
This is the least attainable method of decision making when everyone agrees on the decision. For certain decisions it may be worth seeking unanimity, but many times consensus is enough, when it is a real consensus.

OBSTACLES IN THE DECISION-MAKING

The effectiveness of the decision-making process depends on how well we can overcome the potential obstacles caused by individuals' characteristics and group decision making pitfalls. Let's take a short walk through these possible obstacles.

Individuals' Characteristics

The way the human brain works can sabotage the way we make our choices! John Hammond, Ralph Keeney and Howard Raiffa, defined eight psychological traps that affect the way we make decisions:



The Hidden Traps in Decision Making, Harvard Business Review on Decision Making

What We Can Do About Them?

Anchoring trap

- Try to view the issue from different perspectives, using alternative starting points, seek information and opinions from a variety of people
- Think first on your own, before consulting others; tell them as little as possible about your own ideas, estimates and tentative decisions.

Status-quo trap

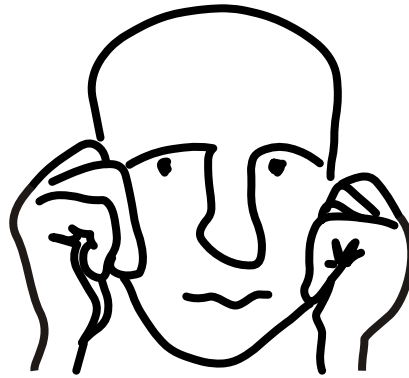
- Identify other options and use them as counterbalances, evaluate carefully the pluses and minuses; when comparing alternatives, evaluate them in term of the future, as well as the present
- Reexamine your objectives and evaluate how they would be served by the status-quo; identify elements of the current situation that act as barriers to your goals.

The old-decision trap

- Seek out and listen carefully people that were not involved in the past decision or were not committed to them
- Remember the proverb: "when you find yourself in a hole, the best thing to do is to stop digging"; Reassign responsibilities, and avoid to cultivate failure-fearing culture that leads employees to perpetuate their mistakes

The confirming evidence trap

- Avoid the tendency to accept confirming evidence without questions, examine all evidence with equal rigor; check if you are really gathering information or you are just looking for confirmation of what you'd like to do!
- Ask someone you respect, but not a "yes-man" to play devil's advocate, to argue against the decision you are contemplating; don't ask leading questions, that invite confirming evidence



The framing trap

- Don't automatically accept the initial frame, whether someone else formulated it or yourself. Always try to reframe the problem in various ways, embracing different reference points and looking for distortions
- When others recommend decisions, examine the way they framed the problem. Challenge them with different frames.

The over-confidence trap

- Avoid being anchored by an initial estimation, by starting considering the extremes, the low and high ends of the possible range of values.
- Challenge the estimate of your colleagues or advisers in a similar fashion. They are also susceptible to over-confidence.

The prudence trap

- State your estimate honestly and explain the need for honest input. Test estimates over a reasonable range to assess their impact.
- Avoid to abuse of "worst case scenario", that usually add enormous costs with no practical benefit; Remember that too much prudence can sometimes be as dangerous as too little.

The recall-ability trap

- Carefully examine all your assumptions to ensure that they are not unduly influenced by your memory.
- Get actual statistics, work with data, and avoid to be guided by impressions.

What are Group Decision-Making Pitfalls?

A number of problems may occur during the group decision making process, due to:

- The group profile and dynamics
- The faults in the decision making process

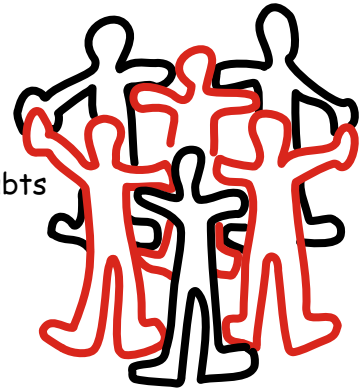
Group profile and dynamics

Important researches have been made about the problems caused by the groups' decision-making profile and dynamics. We will highlight two of them: **Group Think** and **Risky Shift**.

Group Think

The "group-think" occurs when too high price is placed on the group harmony so that loyalty to the group's cohesion is overriding the conscience of each member. There are some symptoms that show when a group falls into the pit-fall of group-think:

- Becoming over-optimistic, taking big risks mainly because the opposing warning voices are ignored or missing
- Selecting the facts, finding reasons and justifications for ignoring some facts and evidence
- Looking at very few alternatives
- A shared illusion that most decisions are taken by unanimity
- Being blind to the moral or ethical consequences of decisions
- Stereotyping enemies or other people that do not agree with the decisions
- Putting direct pressure on the group members who are voicing doubts
- Self-censorship of members by minimizing the importance of own doubts and counterarguments
- Not allowing discussions outside the group



There are also some ways of avoiding group-think:

- Actively encourage self-criticism
- Searching for more alternatives
- Being open to outside ideas and evaluation of decisions
- Not ignoring conflicting evidence
- Being open to re-think decisions

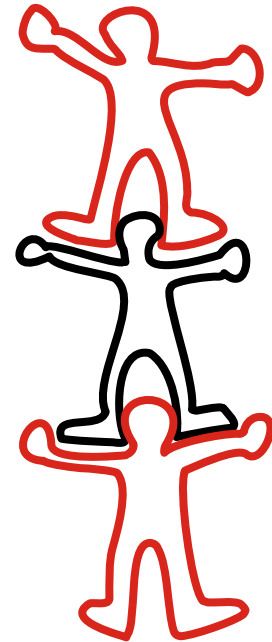
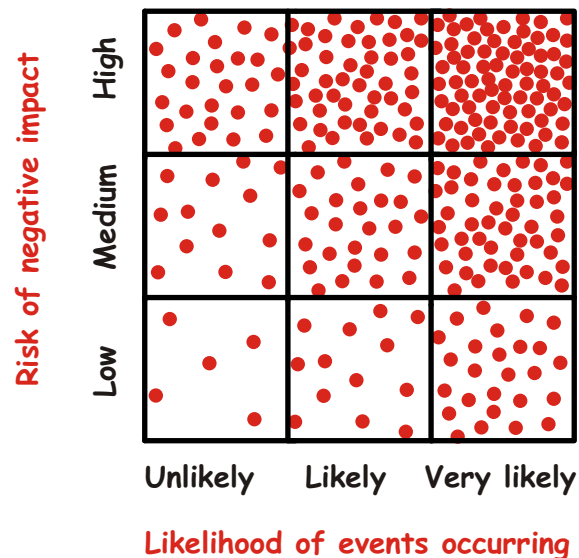
Risky Shift

An important focus of researchers was what groups do in decision situations involving high risks. Common sense may lead us to think that individuals may take riskier decisions than groups because groups may adopt more conservative, middle-of-the-road position to accommodate the perspectives of each member. But researches show that, on the contrary, groups often make riskier decisions than individuals do alone.

The shift toward risk in group decisions has some explanations:

- The responsibility for taking a risky decision is diffused among group members, each member feeling more secure and confident by sharing it with the others
- People can change their minds once they are exposed to arguments they were not thinking about before

Risks can be minimized by listing and assessing the decisions possible consequences. The following matrix can be used for this purpose:



Decisions that have as consequences events that are very likely to occur and may have high negative impact can be considered high risk decisions.

Robert Heller, Making Decisions, 1998

The Faults in the Group Decision-Making Process

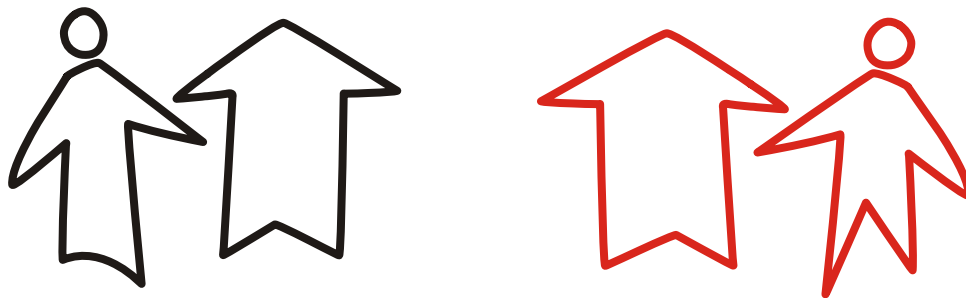
We will focus on the two main steps of the decision making process: obstacles in generating alternatives and obstacles in evaluation and selecting the best option

Generating Alternatives

What are the obstacles when generating alternative ideas? Some of them could be:

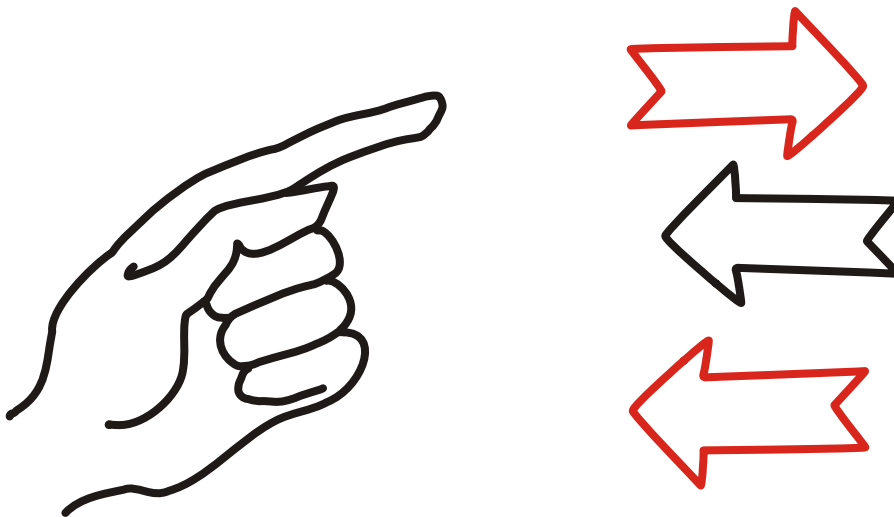
- Lack of appropriate knowledge and information
- Good ideas lost during discussions
- Lack of creativity
- Lack of openness to new ideas
- Lack of trust among group members

We are sure you encountered many of them and even more. Would you like to add other obstacles?



What are some of the solutions to overcome these obstacles?

- Of course, informed and competent persons are able to generate many and good quality alternative ideas
- Diversity of expertise and experience helps also ideas generation (quantity as well as quality of ideas)
- If all ideas are recorded during discussions, we can be sure that none of them will be lost or forgotten.
- In order to encourage creativity we have to arrange a relaxed environment in which people feel comfortable and unthreatened.
- Creative flows of ideas should be supported also by not imposing too many constraints or by not having preconceived or premature judgments or assumptions.
- Never should be ideas criticized during the generation stage
- Previous relations among group members could help overcome mistrust. The closer a set of people worked together, the easier is for them to relax and build up trust in each other
- Good and effective communication helps group members build trust, listen actively to each other and avoid misunderstandings.



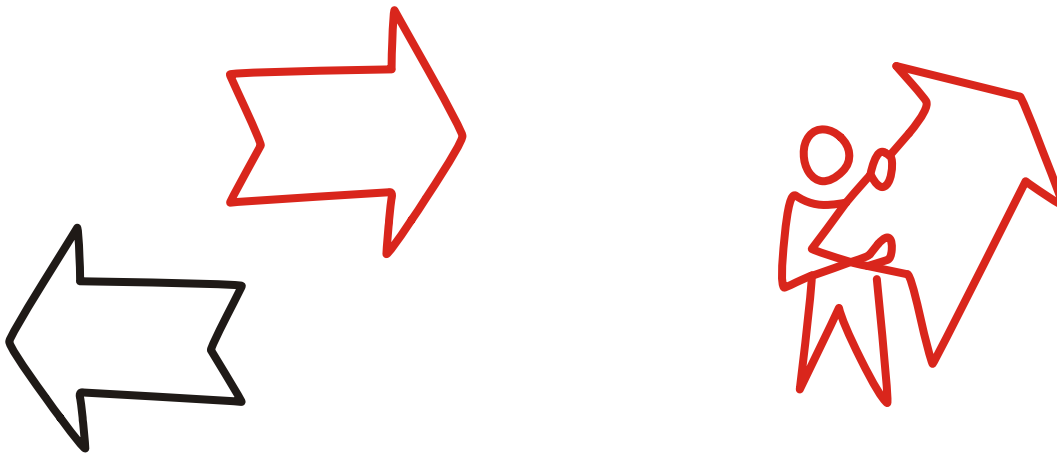
Evaluating the Alternatives and Selecting the chosen ones

Generating ideas is usually pleasant. Choosing among alternatives is painful and creates tensions.

What are the main obstacles/difficulties when trying to narrow down and chose among many alternatives?

- Jumping too early to evaluation and selection of alternatives
- Lack of clear criteria for evaluation and selection of alternatives
- Use of different criteria by the different group members when evaluating and selecting alternatives
- Comparing alternatives that should not be compared due to the fact that they belong to different levels of complexity
- Uncertainty concerning the selection consequences

We are sure you encountered many of them and even more. Would you like to add other obstacles?



What are some of the solutions to overcome these obstacles?

- Alternative ideas generation step should give an opportunity to all those involved to express their opinion, before going to the next step
- Before starting the evaluation, the list of alternatives should be clustered in categories to end up with groups of related ideas, having similar levels of complexity that are comparable with each other
- Evaluation and selection should be based on clear criteria and enough time should be devoted to develop them and build common understanding and agreement among group members about them
- Systematic methods of evaluation should be used. For example you can use the following format in which the results of the evaluation (from 1 to 5) were aggregated taking into account three criteria.

Alternatives	Resources	Feasibility	Impact	Total
# 1	3	4	4	11
# 2	2	3	4	9
# 3	4	5	3	12

This format can be completed first individually and then, for each alternative, a group average can be calculated.

- Uncertainty and risk can be minimized by collecting, as much as possible, accurate and detailed information
- Decisions that have a large element of chance in them should not be taken. Better is to take decisions involving a well-understood acceptable risk than an unknown chance.

IN SEARCH FOR GOOD DECISIONS

Who Can Help Group Decision-Making? What is Facilitator Role?

A skilled Facilitator can help overcome many of these obstacles and support group members in having an effective decision making process.

The Facilitator can provide systematic methods for alternative ideas generation, evaluation and selection. The Facilitator can help groups identify and overcome the pitfalls caused by the group individuals' profile and dynamic. Here after are two of them:

Brainstorming

Nominal Group Technique NGT

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a group activity that focuses on channeling collective energy towards the generation of a wide range of ideas, by using a few simple, practical rules to cultivate creative thinking. Brainstorming is ideal for groups of 10 12 participants. The typical Brainstorming session is carried out as follows:

- The Facilitator writes the question on the flip chart, for which alternative answers are sought. The question should be brief, specific, clear and stimulating. For Example: "What are the characteristics of an effective decision making process?"



- The Facilitator explains the ground rules for Brainstorming

Rules for Brainstorming

Every idea is accepted - no judgment or evaluation is permitted. This includes both verbal and non-verbal expressions of approval or disapproval.

Every idea is written down exactly as stated. No restating, summarizing or interpreting

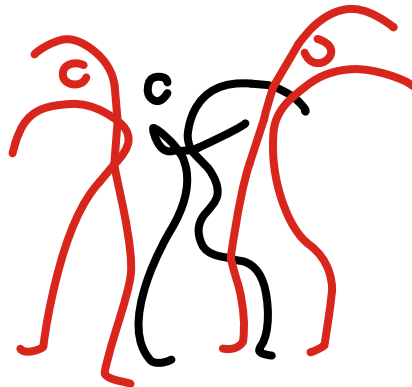
The objective is quantity of ideas. Quality ideas will come later. This is known as free-wheeling

Building on the ideas already suggested is acceptable and encouraged

Opposites or the reverse of ideas are okay and encouraged

A time limit is set and is observed without fail. When time is up, STOP!

- The Facilitator records each idea on the flip chart as quickly as possible. Ideas are recorded exactly as stated. Two recorders may be used to speed up the flow of ideas, if the participant group is larger.
- When time is up, participants are allowed to ask questions for clarification. Only the individual who provided the idea is allowed to clarify it.
- Participants are invited to evaluate the alternative ideas. This can be done in the group as a whole or by assigning ideas to sub-groups. Common criteria for evaluation are agreed. The most promising ideas are identified. Efforts are made to arrive at a consensus.



Nominal Group Technique NGT

Unlike Brainstorming, in which participants interact with one another from the start, NGT is designed to let people work in the presence of each other in a structured manner, by writing down their ideas independently, rather than talk about them.

Expressing ideas in writing make them more clear and thoughtful. Also, participants of NGT groups are less inhibited by one another and are less prone to make premature judgments.

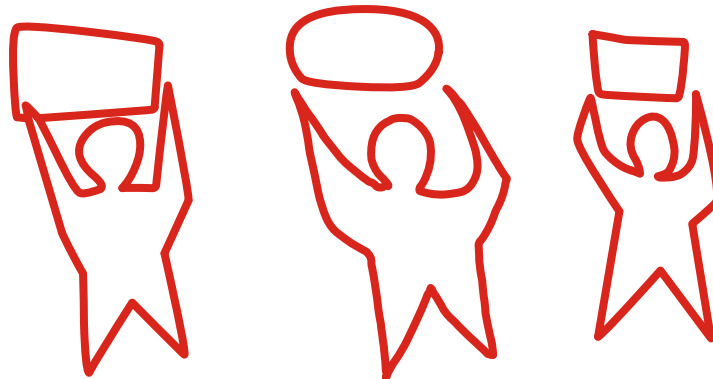
The NGT process has the following steps:

- **Silent generation of ideas in writing**

The Facilitator reads the question, which has clear and unambiguous wording in order to generate specific answers. The Facilitator then asks participants to write down a number of answers to the question by working silently and independently.

- **Round-robin recording of ideas**

Starting at one end of the table, the Facilitator asks a participant to read one of his/her answers. The answer is recorded. The next participant is asked for one of his/her answers. This process is continued until every answer of every participant has been recorded. Participants are encouraged by the facilitator to "Pass" if they have nothing further to offer with the understanding that they may re-enter later with any new ideas that may occur to them. Discussion of ideas and side conversations at the table are strongly discouraged.



- **Discussion for clarification**

The Facilitator explains that the purpose of this step is to ensure that everyone understands what is meant by each idea. Participants are told that everyone can contribute to clarifying an idea and not just the person who offered it.

- **Selecting among alternative ideas**

The facilitator asks participants to structure similar ideas, even reformulate them so that the list includes ideas having similar complexity. The Facilitator asks participants to decide on what criteria they will rank the ideas (urgency, importance for more people, under our control to implement it, etc) and to select the alternatives that correspond better with the agreed criteria.



You can read more about the Facilitator Role in the Handbook

“What is Facilitation?”

How Can We Recognize a Good Decision?



One of the greatest fears when taking decisions is that of getting it wrong. This is often combined with the fear of the decision impact on our job position, reputation, rewards or our work results.

We have to face our fears and accept that many decisions in our life have a chance of error and progress is impossible by being always negative. Our fear of making mistakes can be totally eliminated only if we do not make any decisions at all.

Instead of falling into this trap we have to take positive steps to assess if our decision was a good decision and in that way to strengthen our confidence. We have also to imagine and be prepared for the "worst scenario" that may happen and if we decide we can live with it, than what to fear?

Two dimensions are relevant when assessing the potential effectiveness of our decision:

- **The decision quality**
- **The decision acceptance**

The quality of a decision is largely objective and falls into the field of the rational school of thinking. The acceptance of the decision is more subjective, falling into the arena of behavioral sciences. Sometimes these two dimensions are in conflict with each other: decisions that seem logical and rational are rejected by those who have to implement them or are affected by them.

The Decision Quality

The decision quality depends on a number of factors:



- Adequacy: will the decision we made be a step toward solving our problem or achieving our desired future?
- Resources availability: do we have the resources to go further with our decision?
- Timing: is the timing right for our decision? Have we rightly evaluated the time needed to take the decision? To implement the decision?
- Feasibility: is it possible to implement our decision? Sometimes irrational and unexpected reasons can be obstacles in its implementation.

The Decision Acceptance

A decision is good when it is fully accepted by

- Those who are responsible for its implementation
- Those who have to live with its consequences, being directly affected by it



In order to gain acceptance (and consequently support) we have to think seriously about who should be involved whenever we make decisions that affect other people.

In this Handbook we have already stated many times that involving in the decision making process those responsible for the decision implementation and those affected by the decision, as much and as early as it is possible, will have as results increased acceptance and increased commitment for the decision implementation.

By reading this Handbook we hope you increased your knowledge and understanding as Decision Makers. However your skills in taking decisions will not improve just by reading about.

You must learn by doing.

By taking good and successful decisions, but also by making mistakes and learning from bad decisions you have taken in good faith.

By not allowing the fear of failing, paralyze your decision making abilities. By being aware that not taking any decision or delaying decisions is also a decision. And that sometimes it may be the best solution when you are in the midst of ambiguity and uncertainty.

By using your creative side of the mind to dream and by balancing dreams with the realistic, logical side of your mind in order to evaluate and select among them the most feasible ones.

By knowing who, how and when to involve in the decision making process.

By knowing when to ask the support of skilled Facilitators to help you work in groups and take good decisions in an effective way.

