

# Team Decision Making – Inventory of Techniques

**“The way a team decides to decide is one of the most important decisions it makes!”**

*Though fashion occasionally underscores one or another of these approaches, there is no right or wrong way to decide an issue. The important thing is that the team decide, in advance, what decision-making method will be used. No surprises. If members are appraised of the process, even autocratic methods acquire the consent and blessing of all.*

Depending on the type of decision an effective virtual team will discuss and agree on one of these 7 styles - BEFORE the decision-making discussion starts.

Typically the leader of the team describes the decision which needs to be made and proposes a decision-making style which is then discussed and agreed.

A good leader will also state how the decision about the decision-making style will be concluded (usually through style #2 or style #7).

## **INVENTORY OF TEAM DECISION MAKING STYLES**

**(based on “Why Teams Don’t Work” – by Robbins and Finley)**

#1 CONSENSUS

#2 MAJORITY RULE

#3 MINORITY RULE

#4 AVERAGING

#5 EXPERT

#6 AUTHORITY RULE WITHOUT DISCUSSION

#7 AUTHORITY RULE WITH DISCUSSION

# Team Decision Making – Inventory of Techniques #1

## #1 CONSENSUS

Consensus decision-making is where all team members get a chance to air their opinions and must ultimately agree on the outcomes. If any team member does not agree, discussions continue. Compromise must be used so that every team member can agree with and commit to the outcome.

**Advantages:** Produces an innovative, creative, high-quality decision; elicits commitment by all members to implement the decision; uses the resources of all members; the future decision-making ability of the team is enhanced; useful in making serious, important, and complex decisions to which all members will be committed.

**Disadvantages:** Takes a lot of time and psychological energy, and a high level of member skill. Time pressure must be minimal. There can be no emergency in progress. Bring pyjamas - you could be doing **this** all night.

# Team Decision Making – Inventory of Techniques #2

## #2 MAJORITY RULE

Majority decision-making is democracy in action. The team votes, majority win. Simple.

**Advantages:** Can be used when there's no time for a full-dress consensus decision, or when the decision is not so important consensus is necessary, and when 100 percent member commitment is critical for implementing the decision; closes discussion on issues that are not highly important for the team.

**Disadvantages:** Usually leaves an alienated minority, a time bomb for future team effectiveness; important talents of minority team members may be snubbed; commitment for implementing the decision is only partially present; benefit of team interaction does not happen.

## Team Decision Making – Inventory of Techniques #3

### #3 MINORITY RULE (aka delegate to sub-group)

Minority decision-making usually takes the form of a subcommittee of a larger team that investigates information and makes recommendations for action.

**Advantages:** Can be used when not everyone can get together to make a decision; when the team is in a time crunch and must delegate responsibility to a committee; when only a few members have relevant expertise or knowledge; when broader team commitment is not needed to implement the decision; useful for simple, routine decisions.

**Disadvantages:** Does not utilize the talents of all team members; does not build broad commitment for implementing the decision; unresolved conflict and controversy may damage future team effectiveness; not much benefit from team interaction.

## Team Decision Making – Inventory of Techniques #4

### #4 AVERAGING (aka $1+1 = 1$ - Not recommended!!)

Averaging is the epitome of compromise; it is how our esteemed Congress decides: team members haggle, bargain, cajole, and negotiate an intentional middle position. Usually no one is happy with the result except the moderates on the team.

**Advantages:** Individual errors and extreme opinions tend to cancel each other out, making this a better method than "authority rule without discussion."

**Disadvantages:** Opinions of the least knowledgeable members may annul the opinions of the most knowledgeable members. Little team involvement in the decision making, so commitment to the decision will likely be weak. Letting members with the greatest expertise make the decision is almost always better than a group average.

## Team Decision Making – Inventory of Techniques #5

### #5 EXPERT

This is simple. If you don't already have someone in your team find or hire an expert, listen to what they say, and follow their recommendations.

**Advantages:** Useful when the expertise of one person is so far superior to all other team members that little is to be gained by discussion; should be used when the need for membership action in implementing the decision is slight.

**Disadvantages:** How do you determine who the best expert is? No commitment is built for implementing the decision; advantages of team interaction are lost; resentment and disagreement may result in sabotage and deterioration of team effectiveness; knowledge and skills of other team members are not used.

## Team Decision Making – Inventory of Techniques #6

### #6 AUTHORITY RULE WITHOUT DISCUSSION

This is where there is usually no room for discussion, as with predetermined decisions handed down from higher authority Moses on Mount Sinai. Trust is often killed with this method when a team leader tries to fool team members into thinking that their opinions about the decision really can affect the decision. Team members know when a team leader is jerking them around.

**Advantages:** Applies more to administrative needs, useful for simple, routine decisions; should be used when very little time is available to make the decision; when team members expect the designated leader to make the decision; and when team members lack the skills or information to make the decision anyway.

**Disadvantages:** One person cannot be a good resource for every decision; advantages of team interaction are lost; zero team commitment is developed for implementing the decision; resentment and disagreement may result in sabotage and deterioration of team effectiveness; resources of other team members are not used.

## Team Decision Making – Inventory of Techniques #7

### #7 AUTHORITY RULE WITH DISCUSSION

This method is also known as Participative Decision Making. Unfortunately, most people don't know what this really means. Many leaders think that they have to give up their decision-making responsibility - there is nothing further from the truth. Under this method, those in the decision-making role make it clear from the onset that the task of decision-making is theirs. Then they join in a lively discussion of the issues; their opinions count just like other team members. When they have heard enough to make an educated decision, they cut off the discussion, make the decision, and then get back to all team members to let them know how their inputs affected their decision. Most team members feel listened to and willing to participate in another team decision using this method.

**Advantages:** Gains commitment from all team members. Develops a lively discussion on the issues using the skills and knowledge of all team members. Is clear on who is ultimately accountable for the decision of the team.

**Disadvantages:** Requires good communication skills on the part of team members; requires a leader willing to make decisions,