

Leader-centred Decision-Making Methods

Benefits and Challenges of Leader-centred Decision-Making Methods

Leader Decides: As noted above, there are many situations in which the best way for a decision to be made is for the leader of an organization to make it quickly and efficiently. For example, routine management decisions that arise on a daily basis, budget decisions that are his or her responsibility, and emergency decisions that need to be made for health or safety reasons certainly fall into this category. Effective leaders have the experience and expertise to know when they should make different types of decisions on their own and they have the confidence to make them.

Unfortunately, some leaders assume that nearly all decisions should be made by them and very often this course of action negatively impacts their organization. At the same time, some leaders are very hesitant about making decisions and they are criticized by their colleagues for “not being able to make a decision”.

Understanding the factors affecting the decision-making process, a deep understanding of the shared vision and goals of an organization, and the ability to make sensible judgments about the decision-making process are the major characteristics of sound decision makers. Based on my experience, the following are the benefits and challenges of the “leader decides” method:

Benefits: Relatively quick, quite efficient, and can be effective, if appropriately handled. The leader is clearly accountable and must be willing to accept responsibility for making the decision.

Challenges: Group members may feel they have not had enough input into the decision, which may impact the quality of the decision and its implementation.

Leader Consults and Then Decides: A very common decision-making method involves the leader consulting with colleagues prior to making a decision either in an informal or formal setting. Through the use of the consulting process the leader may become aware of some of the key factors that should be considered in making the decision. By discussing the potential decision with others, the leader may also become aware of alternative solutions or key factors impacting the decision making process.

At times a leader cannot take the time required to consult with colleagues; however, in cases where the leader is concerned with the potential reaction that people might have to the decision, it is only sensible to initiate some form of consulting process. In situations where a particular group within an organization will be directly impacted by the decision, it is especially wise to take the time to consult with the people who will be

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most highly affected. It is especially important to do so if the people involved will be responsible for implementing or carrying out the decision.

When using this method of decision-making it is important that leaders clearly indicate that they are simply consulting and that they will make the decision on their own after considering the input of others. The benefits and challenges of this method are:

Benefits: More information can be gathered and the leader can determine to some extent the reaction of a group to a potential decision. Consulting with groups that will be directly affected by a decision is a particularly sensible course of action.

Challenges: In some cases, consulting may require too much time. Consultations can also result in clearly divided opinions or the hardening of group positions. If the leader is not clear about the consultation process, group members may feel that they have been given the authority to make the decision.

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