

Decision Making Psychology Made Simple

By Lyndsay Swinton

Decisions decisions! Understanding decision making psychology can enable you to reach a conclusion quicker. Whether it's choosing a holiday destination, or project to fund, you'll find this outline of decision making psychology a useful addition to your management toolkit.

Making up your own mind should (in theory at least) be the easiest - after all, there's only one person involved! So we'll skip onto the more challenging area of group decision making. Somehow, out of the personality clashes, power struggles and hidden agendas, a perfect solution is expected to emerge...

A camel is a horse designed by a committee

In group decision making, there a number of methods that can be applied. These methods map out along a spectrum, from "directive" to "participatory" decision making. The methods that are closer to the directive range, mean that the decision is made by a limited, small number of decision makers in the group. The methods that are lower on the spectrum, towards the participatory range, mean that the decision is made by all the parties involved.

Directive	Individual Dominance
↑ ↓	Minority Influence
	Majority Rules
Participatory	Consensus

Individual Dominance is where one person in the group has the authority or power to make the final decision.

Minority Influence usually takes the form of decisions delegated from larger groups and made by sub-committees.

Majority Rules usually involve the group voting on the alternatives and the

alternative receiving the most votes, wins.

Consensus is achieved through group discussion of the alternatives, where every group member can agree on an option and commit to the outcome.

Directive decision making is great when time is tight and decisions need made fast.

The risk is that decisions made by one person are owned by one person. People affected by the decision can soon make their feelings known by their actions. If there is a high emotional bank account between people involved, the decision may be accepted although not liked. If there is a low or negative bank account between people involved, there may be trouble ahead!

To increase your chance of a decision being accepted, a more participatory approach is recommended. In simple terms, people want to be involved. Regardless of power or status, knowing you have control and influence over your working life increases satisfaction and productivity.

It is well known in the caring professions that offering choice helps speed recovery. The bed-bound patient who is asked whether they want their curtains open or closed, or has a plant to care for, fares better than those whose life is entirely managed by other people.

Involving more people in decision making is risky. It takes more time. It requires skilled facilitation. It doesn't guarantee success. But what it does do, is increase the likelihood of decisions being owned and acted upon by enough people for a positive change to be effected.

Decision making psychology is simple - involvement gets results. Although power struggles, personality clashes and hidden agendas are scary territory, over time, power dissipates, people get on and agendas become more transparent. Invest some time in learning [group decision making techniques](#) and getting [facilitation experience](#) and you will get results. The decision to work this way.... is yours!

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