



Greeting from Sarasota Florida!





Decision Methods

- Helping groups make decisions is one of the most challenging aspects of group work.
- People may be pursuing hidden agendas, have differing opinions or be polarized.
- Most group conflict occurs during decision-making conversations.
- You need to know a range of tools to manage decision making!

Session Objectives

This session:

- Explores the challenges inherent in decision-making
- Identifies group norms that will prevent dysfunctional behaviors
- Stresses the importance of clarifying empowerment levels
- Describes a variety of decision-making tools in terms of their impact and when they will work most effectively.

Concept #1

Understand that there are two distinct types of conversations:

- decision-making
- non-decision-making

Always know which one you are facilitating

Be alert for sudden shifts from type to the other.

Conversation Types

Examples of non-decision-making conversations:

- A brainstorming session in which all ideas are accepted and not judged
 - An information-sharing session in which group members describe their experiences or update each other
 - A relationship-building session in which people get to know each other
 - A discussion aimed at making a list of individual preferences or key factors in a situation
- = Ideas are recorded without checking with everyone

Conversation Types

Decision-making conversations are those discussions in which group member ideas are combined to arrive at either an action plan or a rule that group members feel they can accept and implement.

= Ideas must be bounced to each person to ensure that everyone's views are reflected. Then the summary of those comments is recorded.

Comparing Discussion Types

Non-Decision-Making

- Conversations in which no action plans or norms are identified or ratified. Examples include:
 - Information sharing
 - Brainstorming
 - List making
- One-way dialogue
- The facilitator records individual ideas

Decision Making

- Discussions in which action plans or rules are identified and ratified
- Discussions where members arrive at a joint decision
- Interactive dialogue
- The facilitator records the group opinion

Concept # 2

Norms that support effective decision-making

Norms are rules or meeting guidelines that groups create and commit to follow

Some decision-making meetings require specific norms to address the problems that are most likely to arise

You can not dictate these rules: they must come from the group members or they will not work

Norms for Effective Decision-Making

In small groups of 4 – 6 people discuss: (10 minutes)

- **Question #1:** What causes some decision-making discussions to come dysfunctional? What behaviors contribute to the problem?
- **Question #2:** What norming questions can you ask a group in advance of a decision-making discussion to prompt them to set rules or norms that will help to eliminate these problems?

Norms for Effective Decision-Making

- **Question #1:** What causes some decision-making discussions to come dysfunctional? What behaviors contribute to the problem?
 - Some people may have their minds made up and fail to really listen or stay open to the views of others
 - A few people may dominate the conversation
 - Some people may not feel that they can speak freely
 - There may be a tendency to argue emotionally
 - People may resist taking a structured approach
 - Confusion about the power of the group or the expected outcome
 - Lack of sufficient information to make an informed decision
 - Lack of awareness of tools to make decisions and end stalemates

Norms for Effective Decision-Making

- **Question #2:** What norming questions can you ask a group in advance of a decision-making discussion to prompt them to set rules or norms that will help to eliminate these problems?
 - How can we ensure that we take a really thorough and systematic approach?
 - How can we ensure that all opinions are considered?
 - What should we do after someone has made a point so that they know that their ideas were heard?
 - How can we have healthy debates instead of emotional arguments?
 - What is ok for anyone to say if we get stuck or start to spin in circles?
 - What should the rule be about discussing what is said in our meetings?

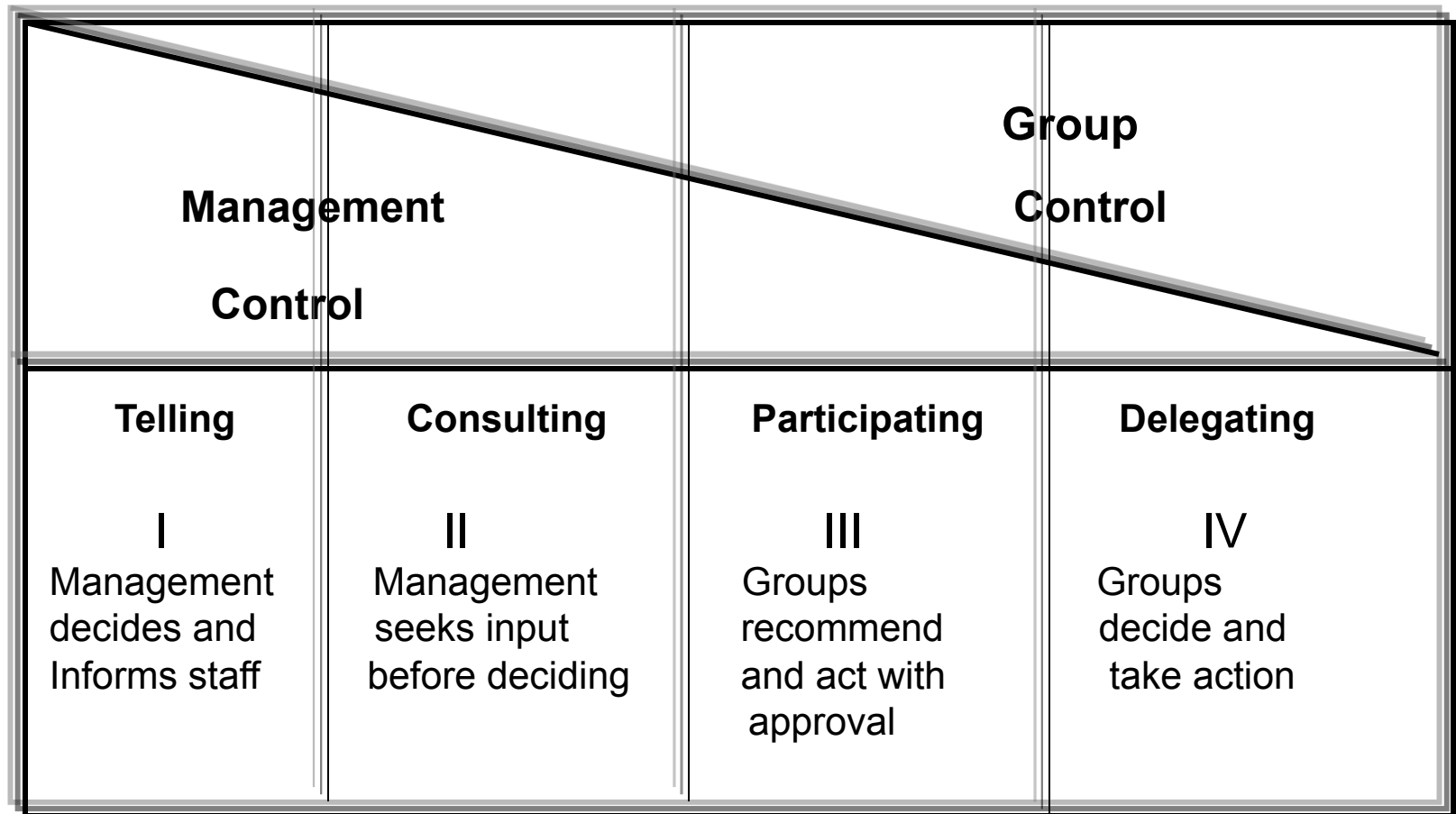
Concept # 3

Empowerment Levels

Before beginning any decision-making discussion always clarify which empowerment level is in effect. When empowerment levels are unclear people make assumptions. When their assumptions are not met this leads to confusion and loss of trust in the process.

There are four empowerment levels:

The Empowerment Continuum



Empowerment Exercise

Empowerment Exercise: In small groups discuss each level, the good things about each, the drawbacks of each and most important, when each empowerment level is appropriate.

For each level, identify:

The pros or pluses of using that empowerment level.

The cons or negatives of using that empowerment level

The conditions in the situation or the group that tell you that this level is appropriate.

Fill in the blanks on the page that follows:

Concept # 4

Decision Methods

There are a number of ways to help a group make a decision. Each method has consequences. Some unite the group while others divide. Some only fit specific situations

Facilitators need to understand how these tools work and be aware of when to use each one.

Decision Methods

Consensus Building

Pros: Collaborative, systematic, participative, discussion-oriented, encourages commitment

Cons: Takes time, requires data and member skills

Uses: For important issues when total buy-in matters

Decision Methods

Multi-Voting

Pros: Systematic, objective, participative, feels like a win

Cons: Limits dialogue, influenced choices, real priorities may not surface

Uses: To sort or prioritize a long list of options

Decision Methods

Compromise

Pros: Features discussion, creates a solution

Cons: Tends to be adversarial, results in win/lose outcomes which divides the group

Uses: When positions are polarized, when consensus is not probable

Decision Methods

Majority Voting

Pros: Fast, high quality with dialogue, clear outcome

Cons: May be too fast, results in winners and losers, choices may be influenced

Uses: To decide trivial matters, for topics where division does not harm the group

Decision Methods

One Person Decides

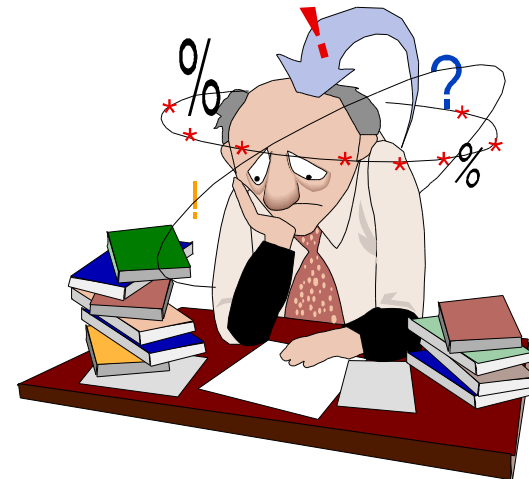
Pros: Can be fast, clear accountability

Cons: Lack of input, low buy-in, no synergy

Uses: When one person is the expert to such an extent that others discussing the topic is a waste of time, when only one person is affected, when only one person can be held accountable

The Decision Options

- Consensus Building
- Multi-Voting
- Compromise
- Majority Voting
- One Person Decides



Software Dilemma Case

1. Read the software dilemma. Work alone to answer the five questions.
2. When everyone is done, each table will pick a facilitator who will help members share answers.*

*This is will be a non-decision-making discussion in which you simply discuss your answers and rationale.

Software Dilemma

- The facilitator's job is to lead a discussion in which everyone explains the reasons for their choices...
- You do not have to all agree!
- The purpose of the discussion is to share views.
- Budget your time carefully!



Software Case Study Answers

- Calls for a decision grid = consensus building or multi-voting.

Software Case Study Answers

1. Calls for a decision grid = consensus building or multi-voting.
2. Best to let one person decide.

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4. Looks like a majority vote, but a multi-vote would be better.

Software Case Study Answers

1. Calls for a decision grid = consensus building or multi-voting.
2. Best to let one person decide.
3. Two options on the table calls for a compromise.
4. Looks like a majority vote, but a multi-vote would be better.
5. This is a complex problem that the whole team needs to analyze together, then brainstorm solutions, sort the solutions and develop action plans = consensus building!

Your Challenging Cases

- Are there any decision-making meetings planned that might provide challenges?

