# Six Decision Making Options

## Spontaneous Agreement

This type of decision-making emerges occasionally when there is a solution that is favored by everyone, and 100% agreement seems to happen automatically. These types of decisions are usually made quickly. They are fairly rare and often occur in connection with the more trivial or simple issues.

### Pros

This process is quick, easy, can leave everyone happy, and can unite the group.

### Cons

The decision may be made too quickly when, perhaps, the issue actually needed to be discussed.

### Best Used

Use this process when lack of discussion isn't vital (i.e. issues are trivial) or when issues are not complex, and do not require in-depth discussion.

## One Person Decides

In this decision-making process, the group chooses to defer to one person and that person makes the decision on behalf of the group. A common misconception among teams is that every decision needs to be made by the whole group. In fact, a one-person's decision is often a faster and more efficient way to get resolution. The quality of any one person's decision can be raised considerably if the person making the decision gets advice and input from other group members before deciding.

### Pros

Decisions can be made quickly and accountability is clear. Can result in commitment and buy-in if people feel their ideas are represented.

### Cons

It can divide the group if the person deciding doesn't consult with others, or makes a decision that others can't live with. A one-person decision may lack in both the buy-in and synergy that come from a group decision-making process

### Uses

This process is best used 1) when the issue is unimportant or simple;, 2)there is a clear expert in the group, 3) one person has the information needed to make the decision it is not wise to share it, and/or 4) one person is solely accountable for the outcome.

# Compromise

A negotiated approach is applicable when there are two or more distinct options and members are strongly polarized (neither side is willing to accept the solution/position put forth by the other side). A middle position is then created that incorporates ideas from both sides. Throughout the process of negotiation, everyone wins a few points, but also loses a few. The outcome is, therefore, something that no one is totally satisfied with. In compromises, no one feels he or she got what he or she originally wanted, so the emotional reaction is often "It's not really what I wanted, but I'm going to have to live with it."

### Pros
This process generates a lot of discussion and does create a solution.

### Cons
Negotiating when people are pushing a favored point of view can be adversarial, hence this approach may divide the group. If used appropriately, in the end, everyone wins – but everyone also loses.

### Best Used
When two opposing solutions are proposed, neither of which are acceptable to everyone; or when the group is strongly polarized and compromise is the only alternative.

# Multi-Voting

This process is a priority-setting tool that is useful for making decisions when the group has a lengthy set of options. It involves rank-ordering the options based on a set criteria in order to clarify the best course of action.

### Pros
This is a systematic, objective, democratic, non-competitive, and participative proces. Everyone wins to some degree, and feelings of loss are minimal. It's a quick way of sorting out a complex set of options. It often feels consensual.

### Cons
This process is often associated with limited discussion, hence limited understanding. This may force choices on people that may not be satisfactory to them because the real priorities do not rise to the surface or group members may be swayed by each other if the voting is done in the open.

### Best Used
When there is a long list of alternatives or items from which to choose, or when the group is choosing from a set of criteria and need to identify the best course of action.

# Majority Voting

This process involves asking people to choose the option they favor, once clear choices have been identified. Usual methods are a show of hands or secret ballot. The quality of voting is always enhanced if there is good discussion to share and analyze ideas before the vote is taken.

### Pros
Multi-voting happens quickly and decisions can be of higher quality if the vote is preceded by a thorough analysis.

### Cons
The process can happen too quickly or can lead to a poor decision if people vote based on their personal feelings without the benefit of hearing the facts or each other's thoughts. It can create winners and losers, hence dividing the group. The show of hands method may put pressure on people to conform.

### Best Used
This process works well  1) when there are two distinct options and one or the other must be chosen; 2) when decisions must be made quickly, and division in the group is acceptable; or, 3) when consensus has been attempted and can't be reached.

# Consensus Building

Consensus building requires that all group members clearly understand the situation or problem to be decided. Group members then analyze all of the relevant facts and jointly develop solutions that represent the group's best thinking about the optimal decision. This process is characterized by active listening, healthy debate and the testing of options. Consensus should result in all group  members saying this about the decision: "I can live with it."

### Pros
This approach can be a collaborative effort that unites the group. It is systematic, objective, fact-driven and demands high involvement. The process builds buy-in and high commitment to the outcome.

### Cons
Consensus-building can be time consuming and may produce low-quality decisions if done without proper data collection or if members have poor interpersonal skills.

### Best Used
This approach works well 1) when decisions will impact the entire group, 2) when buy-in and ideas from all members are essential, and 3) when the importance of the decision being made is worth the time it will take to complete the consensus process properly.

# Decision Options Chart

| Option | Pros | Cons | Best Used |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Spontaneous Agreement** | • fast, easy<br>• unites | • too fast<br>• lack of discussion | • when full discussion is not critical<br>• trivial issues |
| **One Person Decides** | • can be fast<br>• clear accountability | • lack of input<br>• low buy-in<br>• no synergy | • when one person is the expert<br>• individual willing to take sole responsibility |
| **Compromise** | • discussion<br>• creates a solution | • adversarial<br>• win/lose divides the group | • when positions are polarized; consensus is improbable |
| **Multi-Voting** | • systematic<br>• objective<br>• participative<br>• feels like a win | • limits dialogue<br>• influenced choices<br>• real priorities may not surface | • to sort or prioritize a long list of options |
| **Majority Voting** | • fast<br>• high quality with dialogue<br>• clear outcome | • may be too fast<br>• winners and losers<br>• no dialogue<br>• influenced choices | • trivial matter<br>• when there are clear options<br>• if division of group is OK |
| **Consensus Building** | • collaborative<br>• systematic<br>• participative<br>• discussion-oriented<br>• encourages commitment | • takes time<br>• requires data and member skill | • important issues<br>• when total buy-in matters |