Curriculum Development
Centers Program

Awardee of The Office of the National Coordinator for
Health Information Technology

Working in Teams, Unit 4a

Individual Roles and Team Mission

Objectives

At the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

1. Clarify individual roles relative to the tasks and processes assigned to a team.
2. Identify strengths and limitations relative to the tasks and process when developing a team.
3. Define specific roles and responsibilities for the fulfillment of the team mission.
4. Define expectations to support the team action plan.

Team Decisions

http://www.the-happy-manager.com

Different Models and Approaches

Introduction

In teams, different members take on different roles.

Understanding these roles helps promote a more effective team.

Method 1. Decision made by authority without team discussion

Process: The designated leader makes all decisions without consulting team members.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Takes minimal time to make decision	• No team interaction
• Commonly used in organizations (so we are familiar with method)	• Team may not understand decision or be unable to implement decision
• High on assertiveness scale	• Low on cooperation scale

Appropriate Times for Method 1
Simple, routine, administrative decisions; little time available to make decision; team commitment required to implement the decision is low.

Method 2. Decision by expert

Process: Select the expert from the team, let the expert consider the issues, and let the expert make decisions.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Useful when one person on the team has the overwhelming expertise	• Unclear how to determine who the expert is (team members may have different opinions)
	• No team interaction
	• May become popularity issue or power issue

Appropriate Times for Method 2
Result is highly dependent on specific expertise; clear choice for expert, team commitment required to implement decision is low.

Method 3. Decision by averaging individuals' opinions

Process: Separately ask each team member his/her opinion and average the results.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Extreme opinions cancelled out	• No team interaction, team members are not truly involved in the decision
• Error typically cancelled out	• Opinions of least and most knowledgeable members may cancel
• Team members consulted	• Commitment to decision may not be strong
• Useful when it is difficult to get the team together to talk	• Unresolved conflict may exist or escalate
• Urgent decisions can be made	• May damage future team effectiveness

Appropriate Times for Method 3:
Time available for decision is limited; team participation is required, but lengthy interaction is undesirable; team commitment required to implement the decision is low.

Method 4. Decision made by authority after team discussion

Process: The team creates ideas and has discussions, but the designated leader makes the final decision. The designated leader calls a meeting, presents the issue, listens to discussion from the team, and announces her/his decision.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Team used more than methods 1–3	• Team is not part of decision
• Listening to the team increases the accuracy of the decision	• Team may compete for the leader's attention
	• Team members may tell leader "what he/she wants to hear"
	• Still may not have commitment from the team to the decision

Appropriate Times for Method 4
Available time allows team interaction but not agreement; clear consensus on authority; team commitment required to implement decision is moderately low.

Method 5. Decision by minority

Process: A minority of the team, two or more members who constitute less than 50% of the team, make the team's decision.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Method often used by executive committees	• Can be railroading
• Method can be used by temporary committees	• May not have full team commitment to decision
• Useful for large number of decisions and limited time	• May create an air of competition among team members
• Some team perspective and discussion	• Still may not have commitment from team to decision

Appropriate Times for Method 5
Limited time prevents convening entire team; clear choice of minority group; team commitment required to implement the decision is moderately low.

Method 6. Decision by majority vote

Process: This is the most commonly used method in the United States (not synonymous with best method). Discuss the decision until 51% or more of the team members make the decision.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Useful when there is insufficient time to make decision by consensus	• Taken for granted as the natural, or only, way for teams to make a decision
• Useful when the complete team-member commitment is unnecessary for implementing a decision	• Team is viewed as the "winners and the losers"; reduces the quality of decision
	• Minority opinion not discussed and may not be valued
	• May have unresolved and unaddressed conflict
	• Full team interaction is not obtained

Appropriate Times for Method 6
Time constraints require decision; group consensus supporting voting process; team commitment required to implement decision is moderately high.

Method 7. Decision by consensus

Process: Collective decision arrived at through an effective and fair communication process (all team members spoke and listened, and all were valued).

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Most effective method of team decision making	• Takes more time than methods 1–6
• All team members express their thoughts and feelings	• Takes psychological energy and high degree of team-member skill (can be negative if individual team members not committed to the process)
• Team members "feel understood"	
• Active listening used	

Appropriate Times for Method 7
Time available allows a consensus to be reached; the team is sufficiently skilled to reach a consensus; the team commitment required to implement the decision is high.

Activity

You are to review the seven methods for making team decisions and construct a method for how to make a small-scale and a large-scale decision. Use an example for each decision from your personal experience.