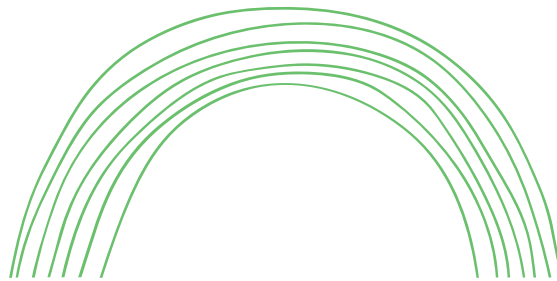


MODEL FOR DECISION-MAKING

DECISION-MAKING BY CONSENSUS





FORMULATING A PROPOSAL

The development of proposals is based on the principle whereby it is more efficient to take decisions by concentrating firstly on the reasons why a decision is needed, before exploring the aspects to be considered and the way in which they can be addressed, and finally agreeing what precisely needs to be done. Generally, human behaviour tends to move directly to the solutions when confronted with circumstances that appear to call for a response – thereby neglecting considerations which can be interesting and, too often, leaving out details about the conditions and needs which prompted a response in the beginning.

A proposal can be formulated in the context of an in-person meeting, or in the virtual space (for instance, an online document) and over a period of time, depending on factors such as the size of the group, the geographical location of the contributors, the complexity of the subject, etc.

A facilitator directs the process and someone records the results of each stage during a live meeting. Setting a deadline for each stage and taking turns to speak contribute to simplifying the process.

PRESENTING THE “DRIVER”

Briefly explain what has happened and what the need is (clarify the context requiring a response).

AGREEING TO THE DRIVER

Check that everyone understands the conditions and the needs which the agreement is going to address, and that there is agreement that a response is necessary or desired.

The start of the process is a written statement defining a set of needs and with a description of the relevant conditions to understand these needs.

Listen to and, if possible, respond to relevant questions that people ask, in order to better understand the various details and aspects of the “driver” (context, conditions and needs).



RECORD ASPECTS TO BE CONSIDERED THAT PEOPLE RAISE

In the form of questions – categorized as follows:

1. Questions about information-gathering relating to the subject (for instance, is there a budget available?)
2. Questions relating to the proposal being formulated (for instance, I wonder how other people deal with this issue)

After having heard all the necessary aspects to be considered – identify issues relating to information-gathering and answer them (the information shared can help people to make suggestions for suitable solutions during the next round of speaking). All questions can help to stimulate creative ideas for possible solutions.

Ensure that no-one objects to the idea that the list of aspects to be considered is “sufficiently complete for now”.

GATHERING IDEAS

People swap ideas on possible solutions which may relate to one or more specific aspects to be considered, or may set out a global solution.

At this stage, nothing is decided and people contribute ideas without evaluating them or comparing different suggestions.

The result is a set of ingredients which can be taken into consideration in order to come up with the draft recipe (the proposal).

FORMULATING A PROPOSAL

An individual or a selected group drafts a proposal.

Sometimes, it is sufficient to establish a viable next step that is “good enough for now”. At other times, an agreement or a global strategy (a set of agreements) may be formulated.

Formulating a proposal sometimes takes time. At other times, it can be drafted in a matter of moments.



THE PROCESS OF DECISION-MAKING BY CONSENSUS

1-PREPARE THE REASONED PROPOSAL

See above.

2-PRESENT THE WRITTEN PROPOSAL

The proposal also includes a date for review and a frequency of review, together with evaluation criteria.

3-QUESTIONS FOR CLARIFICATION

The facilitator checks that everyone has fully understood the proposal as drafted, and invites people to ask possible questions for clarification. These questions can help to formulate the text better.

4-REACTION ROUND

This round serves to validate personal evaluations. This point is important, in order to gauge “the temperature of the group”.

Generally, one round of contributions is sufficient to enable thoughts and initial reactions to be freely expressed, to get an idea of the opinions and viewpoints. This round can also be used to make some amendments before going any further in the process, or to use this opportunity to examine possible objections before reaching the “good enough for now” and “safe enough to try” stage.

5-OBJECTION ROUND

This is the objection round. It is useful to have a show of hands to see initially whether there are any objections or concerns, before moving on to formulate the objections.

Objection: Reasons which would place the organization in danger if the proposal were adopted or which ignore an opportunity (which can be incorporated from this point on) for improving its efficiency. Objections are validated by reasons which everyone can understand.



6-AMEND AND CLARIFY

Here, the objections are used to improve the proposal. The aim is to achieve “good enough for now” and “safe enough to try”.

Some ways of incorporating objections:

- Ask the following question to those who have objections: “If it were only down to you, how would you solve the problem?”
- Initiate a short discussion between 2 or 3 people.
- The facilitator amends the proposal.
- Initiate a round on “How would you solve this?”
- Re-work/pass on the objections to the individual or team who drafted the proposal.

7-CELEBRATE

Announce approval of the proposal and take time to acknowledge this moment.

8-LISTEN TO CONCERNS

Concerns: anticipated situations which may signal a risk. They may indicate approaches that are not certain to improve a proposal, and they can equally be based on an individual’s beliefs or false ideas.

They can still influence the progress of the (current) agreement, and can similarly be recorded and used for evaluating agreements.