

Activity 2

Decision-making styles

Purpose

To explore personal decision-making styles and consider alternative decision-making styles; to examine the appropriateness of each main style.

FOR PREVIEW ONLY

Activity 2

Decision-making styles

Introduction

We all have different styles of managing and, therefore, we all have different styles of making decisions – some of which are more helpful than others.

Participants will use this opportunity to explore their own personal style of decision making and check how appropriate it is to their work.

Purpose

To explore personal decision-making styles and consider alternative decision-making styles; to examine the appropriateness of each main style.

Application

This activity can be used in any programme concerned with decision making, management training or personal development.

What happens

You start the activity by asking the participants to complete an individual assessment questionnaire. They then share the results with a partner. Then you introduce the decision-making continuum and the whole group discuss the different decision-making styles.

Next, the participants test their individual decision-making skills by means of case studies and then discuss their findings in small groups.

The activity ends with the participants exploring the importance of flexibility in decision making.

Time

Overall time required: 1 hour 40 minutes

- Introduction: 2 minutes
- Personal style: 45 minutes
- Decision-making processes: 45 minutes
- Learning points: 5 minutes

Materials & resources

- 1 OHT master:
 - 2.1 *Decision-making continuum*
- 4 Handout masters:
 - 2.2 *Personal style*
 - 2.3 *Decision-making continuum*
 - 2.4 *Decision-making processes*
 - 2.5 *What would you do?*
- Overhead projector and screen
- Flipchart and stand or whiteboard
- Marker pens for trainer
- Paper and pens for participants
- Space for small-group work

How do I do it?

INTRODUCTION

Explain that the purpose of this activity is to explore the issue of different decision-making styles.

PERSONAL STYLE

In introducing this exercise, make the point that every manager has their own way of managing and so has their own unique decision-making style.



Distribute Handout 2.2

Personal style

Explain that they will first work individually on this handout for 15 minutes and then work with someone else in the group. They will then have 10 minutes each (a total of 20 minutes) to share their answers with their partner.

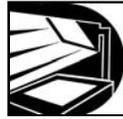
After 35 minutes, bring the participants back together. Spend about 10 minutes taking feedback on the experience. You may, for example, use questions to prompt them, such as:

What did you discover?

What were the main learning points for you in this exercise?

This is essentially a time for sharing personal discoveries, so you can expect any type of response. Reinforce the point that we are all different and so use different styles.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES



Show OHT 2.1

Decision-making continuum

Talk through this OHT by referring to the items from left to right and adding the comments shown in italics below:

- *Autocratic means making decisions alone without consulting anyone and imposing those decisions on the rest of the team.*
- *Democratic means you are genuinely willing to listen to the opinions and ideas of others and take them into account when making decisions. To all intents and purposes you make the decision together, by consensus; though if true consensus is not possible you may, as the manager, take the final decision.*
- *Delegated means that you actually delegate the task of making decisions to others (probably your team or some team members). You do not delegate the responsibility which remains yours as the manager.*
- *We use different styles at different times.*
- *We probably use a mix of styles.*
- *This is a continuum along which we move all the time.*



Distribute Handout 2.3

Decision-making continuum

Ask each participant to look at the continuum on the handout and mark where they think they are on this continuum when it comes to decision making.

Go round the group and ask each participant to say where they have put themselves. Allow a brief discussion if appropriate.



Distribute Handout 2.4

Decision-making processes and

Handout 2.5

What would you do?

Tell them that Handout 2.4 is for reference whilst they complete the exercise in Handout 2.5. Explain that Handout 2.5 gives different decision-making scenarios for which they must select the most appropriate style. They are to work individually for 10 minutes.

After 10 minutes divide the participants into groups of three and tell them that they have 15 minutes to discuss their responses.

After 15 minutes bring the participants back together and invite feedback on the exercise. Allow 15 minutes for this.

You can expect a number of different responses to the case studies but generally the 'answers' will be the following:

1. democratic.
2. delegated.
3. autocratic.

The participants may also say that the decision-making processes chosen were obvious. Make the point that these examples are taken from everyday situations facing managers rather than more complex situations but that they demonstrate the need for flexibility in decision making.

Ask them to look again at Handout 2.3 Decision-making continuum, and see if they would now change where they put themselves on this continuum and, if so, to do it now.

LEARNING POINTS

To round off this activity, get the group to identify the key learning points. Ask them what they think these are and list their contributions on a sheet of flipchart paper. You should aim to extract points along these lines:

- Everyone has their own personal style of decision making.
- These range along a continuum.
- It is important to be flexible when making decisions and to adapt the decision-making process used to the circumstances.

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Decision-making continuum

Autocratic ——— Democratic ——— Delegated

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Personal style

Managers use many different decision-making strategies but there are usually one or two that they use more often which could therefore be described as their personal decision-making style.

Look at the ten different styles listed below. Which is the nearest to the way you make decisions? Allocate 100 per cent between the styles according to your use of them.

You have 15 minutes for the first part of the exercise, after which you will have 20 minutes to discuss this with someone else in the group (10 minutes each).

- **Impulsive**

Little prior thought or examination, taking the first alternative, don't 'look before you leap'.

- **Fatalistic**

Letting the environment decide, leaving it up to fate, 'it's in the cards'.

- **Autocratic**

Never consult, you always know the right decision to make, 'I know best'.

- **Compliant**

Let someone else decide, following other people's plans.

- **Delaying**

Postponing action, putting off until tomorrow, 'I'll cross that bridge later'.

- **Agonising**

Getting lost in the data, overwhelmed by analysis of alternatives, 'don't know what to do'.

Continued ...





Personal style

... continued

- **Planning**

Using method or procedure to make decision, rational approach, 'weighing the facts'.

- **Intuitive**

What feels right, 'I have a hunch'.

- **Paralysis**

Unable to act, 'can't face up to it'.

- **Deviant**

Getting other people's advice and doing the opposite, 'I'm going to do it my way'.

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Decision-making continuum

Autocratic ————— Democratic ————— Delegated

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Decision-making processes

- **Autocratic**

You solve the problem yourself or make the decision yourself using the information available to you at present. You do not consult with anyone and, once you have made the decision, impose it on everyone without discussion.

- **Democratic**

You share the problem with your team. Together you generate and evaluate alternatives and attempt to reach consensus on the decision. You genuinely want to hear your team's ideas and are willing to consider them. You provide the group with information and ideas you have but without pressing them to adopt your ideas. You are willing to accept whichever decision has the support of the entire team.

- **Delegated**

You delegate the decision-making task to the team, team member or members. You trust them to gather facts, sift through alternatives and make the 'right' decision. You give them the authority and the resources to do this; but you retain your overall accountability and responsibility for the decision.

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What would you do?

Look at the case studies below. Which decision-making process would you adopt? Autocratic, democratic or delegated?

You have 10 minutes to answer individually and then a further 15 minutes to discuss in a small group.

1. You are the despatch manager in a company that makes electronic components. You encourage your staff to work together at all times and to consider themselves a team. Your company is going to set up a new customer-care policy, which will ensure a more rapid response to queries and introduce a complaints system. This will put pressure on your department, which is already under-staffed. The decision has to be made as to how to implement the changes. What would you do?
2. You are the manager of a team of eight: your deputy and seven section heads. You encourage your staff to work together at all times and to consider themselves a team. You are moving to new, open-plan offices which will give you all more space and better working conditions. The decision has to be made on space/desk allocation. What would you do?
3. You are a ward manager in a hospital (a role formerly known as 'Sister'). You encourage your nurses to work together at all times and to consider themselves a team. You like to involve them in the decision making of the ward and you have regular meetings to discuss problems and find solutions. It's Consultant's Rounds and all your nurses are busy. You notice a patient who is having breathing difficulties. What do you do?

