

TEAM DECISION MAKING

WORKSHOP GUIDE



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This session aims to help attendees to appreciate and use the team's knowledge in the decision making process.

INTRODUCTION

This guide is designed for a manager or a facilitator to deliver a short workshop featuring videos from the Video Arts Leadership Essentials Series. Each video comes with a series of activities around the following structure:

LOOK - watch the video and reflect on the content and message.

THINK - activities and questions linking the video to their own experience and workplace.

REMEMBER - a summary of the key learning points.

These activities will take about 15 minutes to complete. At the end of this guide is a practical exercise to help bring all of the learning points together.

FEATURED VIDEOS

- Avoid the ego barrier (I didn't go wrong! It was bad luck...)
- One question, several possible answers ('Any ideas'?! is not a sharply focussed question)
- Imagine the best and worst case outcomes (It's the coolest thing since roller skates)

VIDEO 1 – AVOID THE EGO BARRIER

LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

It's easy to let our egos take over when we think we know best. Removing this obstacle will help your team share their ideas.

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

Ask the group to discuss how leaders can avoid the ego barrier and get the whole team thinking.

Feedback should include the following:

- **Set an agenda for meetings.** Plan out how the problem is going to be framed. Tell the team their ideas are important and that you'll be asking for their contribution.
- **Make sure everyone contributes.** Leave the floor open; let people voice their opinions and ideas.
- **Keep your ego in check.** Listen to your team's ideas carefully before telling them yours. If you barge in with your ego on show, you'll shut the team down and come out with just one idea – yours.
- **Get a consensus.** Remember, team decision is just that – a 'team' decision.

REMEMBER (recap, 2 minutes)

- Avoid the ego barrier to decision making.
- Don't take it all upon yourself - you're looking for team decisions.
- Recognise that your ego could be a big obstacle to team thinking.

VIDEO 2 – ONE QUESTION, SEVERAL POSSIBLE ANSWERS

LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

Team decision-making needs to start with a sharply focussed question. Otherwise, how do you know what you're deciding?

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

How can leaders focus their questions?

Ask questions that generate ideas. Explain to the group that if you ask vague questions, you will get vague answers. Ask them to look at the following questions:

- Vague: Why are social networking sites harmful?
- Focused: How are online users experiencing or addressing privacy issues on social networking sites like Facebook?
- Vague: What is the effect on the environment from global warming?
- Focused: How are melting glaciers affecting penguins in Antarctica?

When asked vague questions, most people will come up with vague answers. But asking sharply-focused questions, or reframing questions, will generate a more focused response.

Think first. Before you attend a team decision meeting, suggest they write down the questions they want to ask. Don't worry if they are vague at first, you can work on reframing them as you answer them yourself.

REMEMBER (recap, 2 minutes)

- Develop a sharply focussed question.

VIDEO 3 – IMAGINE FUTURE BEST AND WORST CASE SCENARIOS

LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

Imagine the worst and best case scenarios when looking at alternatives and weighing up options.

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

How can leaders anticipate the consequences of their decision?

Responses could include;

- What's the worst that might happen?
- What's the best that might happen?
- Ask 'What if?' questions.

REMEMBER (recap, 2 minutes)

- Give yourself choices.
- Imagine future worst and best case outcomes.

TEAM DECISION MAKING – PRACTISE

This exercise provides participants with an opportunity to practise the skills discussed in the films. The activity also allows participants to make plans for better decision-making meetings in the future.

Divide participants into groups of 5-8 and appoint a leader in each. In choosing leaders, look to identify people who will benefit from the opportunity to practice the skills, but will not be too overwhelmed by the pressure.

The task for each group is to come up with a framework for better decision-making meetings at work. Allow them at least 20-30 minutes to accomplish this. They should look to put into practice the skills discussed in the films.

After they have completed the exercise, pass each group a checklist that they can use to reflect on their performance. In particular they should review the extent to which they...

- were specific about the question they were answering
- were all involved in defining the question
- all contributed to ideas for answering the question
- avoided taking oppositional positions
- listened to each other with open minds
- sifted out ideas that did not meet their criteria
- assessed the risk and rewards associated with each of the remaining ideas

Then, have the groups come back together.

Ask each group to first present highlights of their solutions. Look for differences between the solutions and try to establish reasons for these.

Finally, ask each group to report on how well they themselves used the skills of team decision-making when they carried out the activity. What did they do well? What went less well? What stopped them using the techniques?