



## Decision Making: Facilitation Essentials for Leaders

Have you ever had an experience where you think you've gotten a group to commit to a plan, only to find that after the meeting everyone does their own thing?

Chances are that the team members weren't clear about the decisions made in the meeting, and their role in implementing them.

In virtually every meeting, there are decisions being made. They could be as simple as planning the agenda for the next meeting, or as detailed as determining a product strategy.

As the facilitator, you need to understand what those decisions are so that you can clearly communicate them to the group. Then you need to determine how those decisions will be made. The table in this article describes the possible options.

You want to be sure everyone at the meeting has a shared understanding of the decision-making process being used. **Use the opening minutes of the meeting to:**

### **Share how the decisions will be made during this meeting:**

Even if it seems obvious to you, it may not be to your team. Taking a minute up front to let the team members know how decisions will be made (consensus, gather input and leader decides, etc.) can save time and reduce confusion. Take the time to make sure your definition is the one they're applying.

### **Explain why you chose a particular method for making decisions:**

Perhaps you're tight on time and need a decision made quickly. That's a perfectly valid reason to steer clear of consensus and use one of the other methods listed. Let your team members know that up front. Left to draw their own conclusions, they may assume you made your choice because you didn't value their input. Once your team members understand your reasoning, they may be more likely to buy-in to the method you've chosen.

### **Get agreement on the method you've chosen before going forward:**

Your team can appear to follow your lead, only to head in a different direction once the meeting adjourns. By simply asking, "Who can't agree to making decisions by consensus?" you can quickly identify those folks that don't agree with your choice. Better to identify and work through that dissension up front, than to let it fester into passive-aggressive behavior that stalls meeting progress.



You have the option to choose a method you feel is best, and not all options are right for all situations.

As a meeting leader, you not only want to share where the team members are headed, but how they're going to get there. If you do, you'll find you'll have more engaged passengers who will stay on course long after the meeting is over.

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## HOW DECISION IS MADE

## DEFINITION

### Leader decides

The leader makes the decision independently, and then communicates it to the team.

### Individual input

The leader gets input from *individuals* on the team, decides independently and communicates decision to the team.

### Team input

The leader gets input from the *entire* team, decides independently and communicates decision to the team.

### Consensus

The leader and the *whole* team come to a group decision. It is a decision that everyone can live with and support once they leave the room.

### Delegate with constraints

The leader passes the decision making to the team, and states criteria by which their decision must adhere (for example, time and budget constraints).

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