

Decision Making – A Framework

Effective leadership requires sound decision-making. Generally, this can be based on active collaboration with others (team members, peers, etc) from which will emerge the collective wisdom regarding the optimum solution. Sometimes, however, the leader will be required to make the final call, to do so promptly to expedite business outcomes, and to be able form an evidence-based decision rather than one strongly affected by emotion or personal preference. To achieve sound decisions, a framework of enquiry can be valuable, such as the seven steps presented below.

1. What is the situation and the decision to be made?
2. Who are all the parties with a stake in the outcome? What is of most importance to them?
3. What are the underlying principles/values that will shape the decision?
4. How may I be entangled emotionally with this decision? What can I do to regain objectivity?
5. What are the options for a solution? What are other options I may have missed?
6. What are the benefits/drawbacks of each option?
7. What is your recommendation?

Leaders are also often faced with the challenge of developing the decision-making capabilities of their team. Team members may be reluctant to make decisions themselves, preferring to refer decisions to the leader as a way of minimising their own level of risk. The above framework of enquiry can be used by the team leader to step team members through the decision-making process. With practice, team members should be expected to develop these skills themselves and refer to their leader only the higher-level decisions.

