

Decision Making in a Political Environment

**Institute of Government for
County Officials**

Level II

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Political
Environment**

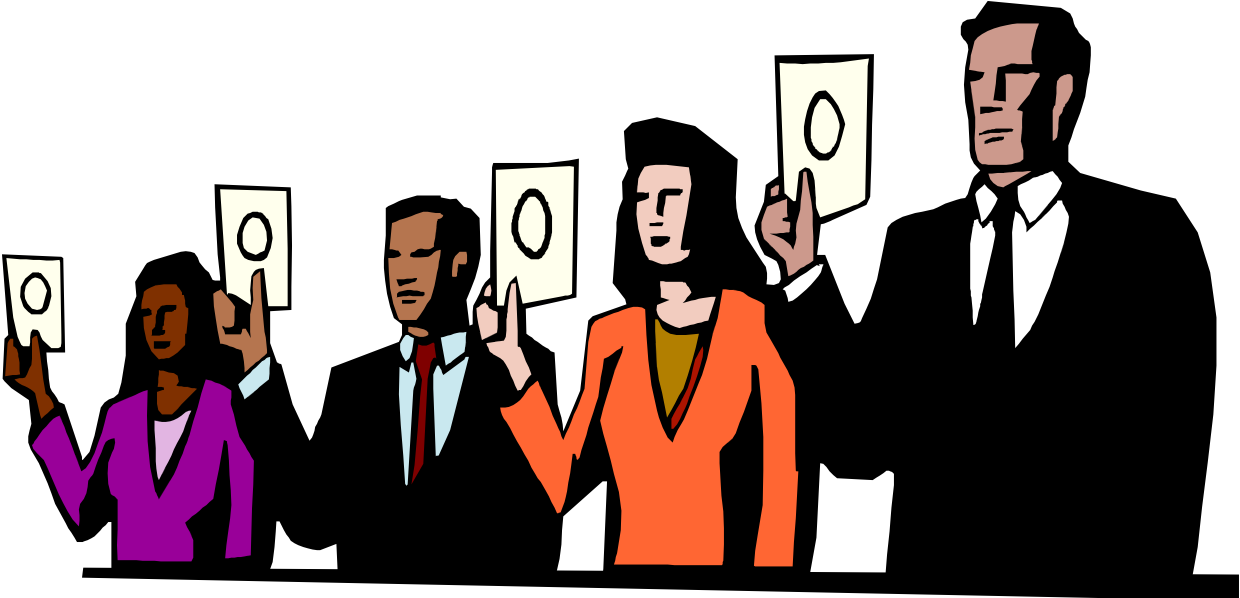
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**Presented by:
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What is a Decision?

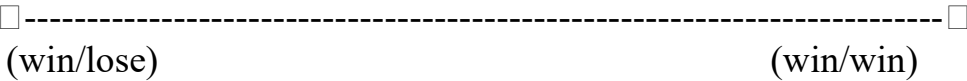
- A choice of one course of action over another
- “Non-decisions” – deciding to do nothing is still a choice
- All decisions involve a process

How Decisions are Made:



Winner take all
Coalition

Everyone wins something
Consensus



Your Role in Decision Making

Who do you represent?

- Those who voted for you
- The citizens in your district
- The county
- Those with whom you do business

Are you reactive or proactive?

What are your sources of information?

The Political Environment

- Is it different than other settings in which we make decisions?
- Does it change the way we make decisions?
- What role do citizens play in the process?
- What role do staff play in the process?
- What influences your decision-making?

Decision Making Steps

Problem/Issue Identification

Focus on the “what” not the “how”

Determines needs vs. wants

Examples:

- We have a transportation challenge vs. we need a new car
- We would like it to be easier to work with the county vs. we need to change the form of government
- We have a crime problem vs. we don't have enough police officers

Considering Alternatives

You may want to consider some of the following categories when developing evaluation factors:

- ◆ **Citizens** – What do they expect? How will the decision affect them?
- ◆ **Employees** – Will we need more? Less? Will they need training?
- ◆ **Policy makers** – Political “hot buttons”? Deal-breakers?
- ◆ **Your organization** – Is what you are deciding consistent with the strategic plan?
- ◆ **Other organizations** – Will other local governments be affected by the decision?
- ◆ **Money** – What is the true cost of implementing this decision? Of doing nothing?
- ◆ **Laws/ordinances/regulations** – Will we comply if we make this decision?
- ◆ **Time** – How quickly can the decision be implemented?
- ◆ **Material; Equipment; Facilities** – Will anything new be required?
- ◆ **Productivity** – Will the decision reduce or increase the workload?

Evaluating Consequences

Potential Problem Analysis - to consider all possible threats and problems that could occur if an alternative were implemented.

How to Use:

1. For an alternative, list the potential problems or things that could go wrong if it were to be implemented.
2. For each potential problem, list the probability or likelihood that it will occur. You may want to use a simple three-point scale such as “Very Likely” or “Likely” or “Not Likely”.
3. For each potential problem, list the seriousness of the consequence if the problem did occur. Again, you may want to use a simple three-point scale.
4. For those problems that are likely or very likely to occur and have serious consequences, go through a problem-solving process to determine the causes and solutions for addressing the problem.

Factors Influencing Decisions

Cialdini's Six Principles of Influence

- *Reciprocity* - "I'll support you on this issue if...."
- *Commitment/Consistency* - "I did sign that no-tax pledge...."
- *Social Proof/Comparison* - "All other counties are doing it...."
- *Liking* - "My friend on council supports this...."
- *Authority* - "The expert says its true...."
- *Scarcity* - "If we don't act on this immediately...."

Influence Principles Quiz:

1. _____ TV laugh tracks

2. _____ Tupperware parties

3. _____ Robert Young selling Sanka

4. _____ An organization sends you return address labels in the mail

5. _____ If you signed a petition of support for an organization, you must be willing to make a donation.

6. _____ Home shopping networks' screen counters

A Two Step Method Using Reciprocity and Consistency in Negotiations

The first step is to make a request to get the person in the right frame of mind. The second step is the real request you want to make. There are two ways of accomplishing this. The first method uses the power of the concession in reciprocation. Sometimes it is referred to the “door-in-the face” technique:

First Step	Second Step
get No! (large request)	get Yes! (real request)

A woman approaches you at the shopping mall one day and politely asks if she can have a minute of your time. You stop and say, "Yes." She goes on to describe the importance of the local blood bank to the safety and well-being of your community. Then she gets to the point:

"Would you be willing to be a blood bank volunteer? You'd have to give ten hours a week for the next year and solicit blood donations from the people of our community by contacting them over the phone or face-to-face. Will you give us your time?" You think to yourself, "Ten hours a week? For a year?! That's crazy. Volunteering is important, yes, but no one should have to give up that kind of time!"

And so you politely tell the stranger, "No." The stranger looks a little disappointed and says: "Well, if you can't give your time, could you at least give a unit of blood right now? We have a station set up right down this hall." "Well, if you can't give your time, could you at least give a unit of blood right now? We have a station set up right down this hall." Now this is a more reasonable request. And even though you've never given blood before you find yourself walking down that hallway with this stranger . .

The second method depends on the need for consistency once a commitment is made and is sometimes called the “foot-in-the-door” technique:

First Step	Second Step
get Yes! (small request)	get Yes! (real request)

We ask someone if she would sign this petition here that offers public support for the local blood bank. That should work. It is a small request. It takes no time to sign a petition. It is for a worthy cause; everybody supports it. Almost everyone would sign that petition, wouldn't they?

Then as soon as the ink dries on the signature, the requester follows up with, "Well since you obviously support the blood bank and are willing to say so on this public petition, maybe you'd like to show a little more support and give a unit of blood right now. We have a station set up . ."

More on Authority and Power

Power distorts others' perspective; it may be because you do have power, you appear to have power, you possess a scarce resource, you have others supporting you, etc.

The Power of Obedience

The Appearance of Authority/Power

- Title
- Clothes
- Trappings
- Body language

How should power be used?

Other things you need to know about what influences decisions:

- Social Judgment (Ego Involvement)
- Relevance
- Inoculation

Relevance

- Direct experience
- Transportation theory of anecdotal evidence – the more powerful the narrative of an anecdote, the more it will seem like a direct experience
- Statistics and other data
- Stories vs. data – people are generally better at assimilating stories than they are statistics
- Stories and data – Counter explanation stories increase the dependency on the data
- Questioning – people are more alert to information when they are asked questions; make sure the facts are on your side

Inoculation

Inoculation Theory

The term, "Inoculation Theory," is drawn from the public health practice of giving shots to prevent serious diseases. Interestingly, the shot actually gives the person a weak dose of the virus. This in turn activates the body's immune system. The immune system fights off this weak attack and the immune system actually becomes stronger. The next time the virus attacks, the immune system can handle an even larger assault.

If we want to strengthen existing attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, inoculation theory suggests that we should present a weak attack on those attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. The key word here is, "weak." If the attack is too strong, it will cause the attitude, belief, or behavior to get weaker or even move to the opposite position. The attack has to be strong enough to challenge the defenses of the receiver without overwhelming them.

An Example of Inoculation

New research shows that you can inoculate voters in political campaigns. For example, the Republican party would send out literature to potential Republican voters warning them that the Democrats are likely to attack the Republican candidate on various issues. The literature would provide a weak version of the attacks that the voter would easily defeat. Then when the real Democrat attack comes, the potential Republican voter would fight it off.

Question Your Decisions

Have I defined the problem accurately? Am I defining needs or wants?

How would I define the problem if I were on the other side of the fence?

How did this situation occur in the first place?

Where do my loyalties lie?

Do the facts support my decision?

Am I confident that my position will be as valid over a long period of time as it seems now?

Could I disclose without qualm my decision or action to anyone who asks?

What is the symbolic potential of my actions?

Will I allow exceptions to my position?