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Making decisions

Situation

PSF is an international company operating worldwide. It has recently started a new project which will introduce a single standardised software package across its organisation, replacing the different softwares used by countries at the moment. Rachel is the project leader with Lucas and Gabriella in her team, supported by Eric, who is an external consultant.

The team is trying to take a decision about the right time to move from Phase 1 of the project to Phase 2.



Rachel



Lucas



Gabriella



Eric

A Introduction

DISCUSS

Read how people describe the approach to decision making in their organisations.

- 1 Match each approach to a word from the box which best summarises it.

independence consultation speed hierarchy

- a *This is a retail organisation. We don't like to spend time talking about things in meetings. We want quick decisions so we can get on with serving our customers.*
- b *Decision making here is top down. There are meetings, but these are less for discussion and more for briefing the team about a decision already made by management.*
- c *We're a small consulting company. The culture is very entrepreneurial, so you get the freedom and trust to take key decisions alone, even the wrong decisions sometimes!*
- d *The most important thing about decision making here is to involve everyone who could be affected. This takes time, but going slowly means you don't make mistakes. And once you take a decision you have something everyone will stick to.*

- 2 Which of these approaches to decision making have you experienced, either in your own organisation or in others? Have you experienced any others?

VIEW (0.40–2.01)

Watch Bob talking about decision making across cultures.

- 1 Which of the above decision-making styles does he mention?
- 2 What does he say are possible reasons for these different styles?
- 3 What does he describe as the possible impact of these differences on teamwork?

REFLECT

What other differences in decision-making style could create problems among team members in meetings?

B Discussing Phase 2

VIEW (2.02–3.50)

Now watch the team trying to decide if it's the right time to move from Phase 1 to Phase 2 of the project. Complete the table below with each person's opinion about what they should do.

Person	Opinion
Eric	
Lucas	
Gabriella	
Rachel	

REFLECT

Consider the team's discussion.

How effectively do you think they discussed the issue? How else do you think the team could have managed this discussion?

C What happened?

VIEW (3.51–5.22)

Watch Bob's comments on the meeting where he analyses the different decision-making styles of the team members. How does he describe their different styles?

Person	Decision-making style
Lucas	
Gabriella	
Rachel	
Eric	

REFLECT

In this meeting, the different decision-making styles in the team create a problem for communication. Could differences like this also be an opportunity for teams? If so, how?

PRACTICE

Use the following three-step process to reflect on your own decision-making style and think about how you may need to adapt this style to work more effectively with others.

Step 1

Think about the important decisions you have taken at work and what it tells you about your priorities when taking decisions. Write down some sentences which describe your decision-making style (or styles), using some of the key words in the box to help you, e.g. costs: *I always like to do a detailed cost-benefit analysis when taking a decision.*

analysis approval from manager consultation customers freedom
intuition logic costs long-term risk results speed

My decision-making style(s)

- *I like to*
- *I usually*
- *When giving arguments, I tend to focus on*
-
-

Step 2

Now think about some of the most important people you have to work with: colleagues, managers, customers. Consider how their styles are similar in style to yours and how they are different.

People	Similarities in decision making	Differences in decision making
Management		
Colleagues		
Customers		
Others		

Step 3

Finally, brainstorm three ways in which you could adapt your own decision-making style in order to work more effectively with these key people.

How I could improve my own decision-making style

- *One thing I need to do is*
- *It would be useful to focus more on*
- *I could try to say things differently, for example,*
-

D Reflections

DISCUSS

How do you think the team members might reflect on the meeting you have just watched?
How might each of them decide to approach decision making in the project team in the future?

VIEW (5.23–7.37)

Now watch the team members reflecting after the meeting and deciding how to take decisions in the future. How do their conclusions compare with your predictions?

Person	Conclusions
Gabriella	
Lucas	
Rachel	
Eric	

REFLECT

What do you think of the conclusions made by each team member and their approach to future decision making? Were they the right conclusions? Why / Why not?

E Conclusions

VIEW (7.38–8.48)

Watch Bob's assessment of factors to take into account when dealing with different decision-making styles of colleagues.

- 1 How do his opinions compare to yours?
- 2 Which tips does he give to handle diverse decision-making styles in teams more effectively?

REFLECT

Do you think Bob's ideas on decision making will work across all cultures? Why / Why not?

PRACTICE

Work in small groups of three or four. Hold a meeting to discuss the situation below and decide on a course of action. Decide whether to follow your natural style of decision making or to adopt a more flexible approach which you think better suits the style of others in the meeting.

Take notes about the decision-making styles of the other participants in the meeting.

Afterwards, describe each style and say what you found positive and problematic about each style.

Situation

Your organisation wishes to introduce 'hot desking', a form of flexible office environment where no employee has a fixed desk. People simply arrive in the morning at the office and sit at an available desk. Management have calculated that this initiative can deliver significant cost savings, as under-used parts of the office building can be sublet and generate income of the company. They also believe that such a working system promotes networking and knowledge sharing.

However, there have been significant complaints during the pilot process. Employees have complained about not having a regular and personal space. Many have pointed out that those arriving early in the morning always have the best desks. Those taking children to school often arrive later and find that they have to take what they describe as 'the worst working places which nobody else wants'.

A decision needs to be taken on what to do next. The cost savings are clear but complaints are significant.