

Effective Decision-Making

Decisions need to be capable of being implemented, whether on a personal or organisational level. You do, therefore, need to be committed to the decision personally, and be able to persuade others of its merits.

An effective decision-making process, therefore, needs to ensure that you are able to do so.

What Can Prevent Effective Decision-Making? There are a number of problems that can prevent effective decision-making. These include:

1. Not Enough Information If you do not have enough information, it can feel like you are making a decision without any basis.

Take some time to gather the necessary data to inform your decision, even if the timescale is very tight. If necessary, prioritise your information-gathering by identifying which information will be most important to you.

2. Too Much Information The opposite problem, but one that is seen surprisingly often: having so much conflicting information that it is impossible to see 'the wood for the trees'.

This is sometimes called analysis paralysis, and is also used as a tactic to delay organisational decision-making, with those involved demanding ever more information before they can decide.

This problem can often be resolved by getting everyone together to decide what information is really important and why, and by setting a clear timescale for decision-making, including an information-gathering stage.

3. Too Many People Making decisions by committee is difficult. Everyone has their own views, and their own values. And while it's important to know what these views are, and why and how they are important, it may be essential for one person to take responsibility for making a decision. Sometimes, any decision is better than none.

4. Vested Interests Decision-making processes often founder under the weight of vested interests. These vested interests are often not overtly expressed, but may be a crucial blockage. Because they are not overtly expressed, it is hard to identify them clearly, and therefore address them, but it can sometimes be possible to do so by exploring them with someone outside the process, but in a similar position.

It can also help to explore the rational/intuitive aspects with all stakeholders, usually with an external facilitator to support the process.

5. Emotional Attachments People are often very attached to the status quo. Decisions tend to involve the prospect of change, which many people find difficult.

6. No Emotional Attachment Sometimes it's difficult to make a decision because you just don't care one way or the other. In this case, a structured **decision-making** process can often help by identifying some very real pros and cons of particular actions, that perhaps you hadn't thought about before.

Many of these issues can be overcome by using a structured decision-making process. This will help to:

Reduce more complicated decisions down to simpler steps; See how any decisions are arrived at; and Plan decision making to meet deadlines. Many different techniques of decision making have been developed, ranging from simple rules of thumb, to extremely complex procedures. The method used depends on the nature of the decision to be made and how complex it is.

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