

TEAM DECISION FRAMEWORK

Purpose

Clarify when to use different decision approaches to improve both decision quality and team buy-in.

Instructions

Use this worksheet to establish clear decision-making processes for your team or for specific projects.

Part 1: Decision Landscape Assessment

Current Decision Patterns

How are decisions typically made on your team? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Leader decides without input
- ☐ Leader decides after gathering input
- ☐ Consensus (everyone must agree)
- ☐ Majority vote
- ☐ Delegation to individuals
- ☐ Delegation to sub-teams
- ☐ Unclear/inconsistent process

What challenges do you experience with current decision processes?

What works well in your current approach?

Decision Inventory

List 5-10 typical decisions your team faces:

Decision Type	Frequency	Current Approach	Working Well?
			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partly
			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partly
			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partly
			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partly
			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partly
			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partly
			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partly
			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partly
			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partly
			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partly

Part 2: Decision Method Options

Review these common decision-making approaches:

Command Decision

- **Description:** Leader makes decision alone
- **Best for:** Crisis situations, routine decisions, clear authority requirements
- **Benefits:** Speed, clarity, accountability
- **Limitations:** Limited perspective, potential buy-in issues
- **Process:** Leader gathers necessary information, decides, communicates decision clearly

Consultative Decision

- **Description:** Leader decides after gathering input
- **Best for:** Complex decisions where one person has clear accountability
- **Benefits:** Broader perspective while maintaining clarity, moderate speed

- **Limitations:** Input may not be fully utilized, potential for "false consultation"
- **Process:** Leader seeks input from relevant parties, integrates perspectives, decides, explains rationale

Consensus Decision

- **Description:** All team members must agree on the decision
- **Best for:** High-impact decisions requiring maximum buy-in, small teams
- **Benefits:** Strong commitment, thorough exploration of options, shared ownership
- **Limitations:** Time-consuming, potential for lowest-common-denominator solutions
- **Process:** Collaborative discussion, proposal development, testing for agreement, addressing concerns

Democratic Decision

- **Description:** Majority determines outcome (voting)
- **Best for:** Clear options, time constraints, large groups
- **Benefits:** Perceived fairness, definitive outcome, moderate speed
- **Limitations:** Creates winners and losers, may not address minority concerns
- **Process:** Define options, discuss briefly, vote, respect outcome

Delegated Decision

- **Description:** Authority given to individual or subgroup
- **Best for:** Decisions requiring specific expertise, distributing leadership
- **Benefits:** Develops team capabilities, appropriate expertise applied
- **Limitations:** Potential misalignment, quality dependent on delegate's skill
- **Process:** Clearly define scope of authority, establish constraints, provide resources, review outcome

Advice Process

- **Description:** Decision-maker must seek advice before deciding
- **Best for:** Balancing autonomy with collective wisdom
- **Benefits:** Clear accountability with diverse input, develops judgment
- **Limitations:** Quality depends on advice-seeking skill, potential for rubber-stamping

- **Process:** Identify decision-maker, decision-maker consults those with expertise and those affected, decides, communicates

Part 3: Decision Criteria Development

For your team context, define what makes different decision approaches appropriate:

Impact Assessment

How do you evaluate a decision's impact? Consider:

Impact on mission/objectives:

Financial implications threshold:

Reversibility considerations:

Time horizon significance:

Expertise Requirements

How do you determine what expertise is needed? Consider:

Technical knowledge areas:

Stakeholder perspective needs:

Experience relevance:

Buy-in Importance

How do you assess when stakeholder commitment is critical? Consider:

Implementation dependency factors:

Culture and morale implications:

Change management needs:

Speed Requirements

How do you determine when quick decisions are necessary? Consider:

Opportunity cost of delay:

External deadline factors:

Risk escalation potential:

Part 4: Decision Matrix Development

Based on the criteria above, create a decision framework for your team:

Decision Types Matrix

Categorize common decisions by type and appropriate approach:

Decision Type	Impact	Expertise Needed	Buy-in Importance	Speed Requirement	Recommended Approach
	Low/Med/High	Low/Med/High	Low/Med/High	Low/Med/High	
	Low/Med/High	Low/Med/High	Low/Med/High	Low/Med/High	
	Low/Med/High	Low/Med/High	Low/Med/High	Low/Med/High	
	Low/Med/High	Low/Med/High	Low/Med/High	Low/Med/High	
	Low/Med/High	Low/Med/High	Low/Med/High	Low/Med/High	
	Low/Med/High	Low/Med/High	Low/Med/High	Low/Med/High	
	Low/Med/High	Low/Med/High	Low/Med/High	Low/Med/High	

RACI for Key Decisions

For critical decisions, clarify roles using RACI:

- **R** = Responsible (does the work)
- **A** = Accountable (ultimately answerable)
- **C** = Consulted (provides input)
- **I** = Informed (kept updated)

Decision Type	Team Member 1	Team Member 2	Team Member 3	Team Member 4	Team Member 5
	R/A/C/I	R/A/C/I	R/A/C/I	R/A/C/I	R/A/C/I

R/A/C/I	R/A/C/I	R/A/C/I	R/A/C/I	R/A/C/I
R/A/C/I	R/A/C/I	R/A/C/I	R/A/C/I	R/A/C/I
R/A/C/I	R/A/C/I	R/A/C/I	R/A/C/I	R/A/C/I

Part 5: Decision Process Documentation

For each decision approach your team will use, document the specific process:

Approach 1: _____

When this approach is used:

Step-by-step process:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Expected timelines:

Documentation requirements:

Approach 2: _____

When this approach is used:

Step-by-step process:

1. _____

2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Expected timelines:

Documentation requirements:

Approach 3: _____

When this approach is used:

Step-by-step process:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Expected timelines:

Documentation requirements:

Part 6: Decision Clarity Commitments

As a team, establish commitments around decision-making clarity:

Decision Rights Transparency

How will we ensure decision authority is clear?

How will we document and communicate who makes which decisions?

Process Communication

How will we signal which decision approach is being used in a given situation?

How will we manage transitions between input gathering and decision-making?

Decision Documentation

How will we record important decisions and their rationale?

How will we communicate decisions to stakeholders?

Part 7: Decision Review and Learning

Effectiveness Evaluation

How will we assess if our decision-making approaches are working?

What metrics will indicate successful decision processes?

Process Improvement

How often will we review and update our decision framework?

Who will be responsible for maintaining decision clarity?

Additional Context:

Effective team decision-making balances several competing values:

- **Quality and speed** - Getting the best answer quickly enough
- **Autonomy and alignment** - Enabling individual ownership while maintaining coherence
- **Input and efficiency** - Gathering diverse perspectives without endless discussion
- **Clarity and flexibility** - Having clear processes while adapting to different situations

Remember that decision-making approaches work best when they are:

- **Explicitly chosen** rather than defaulted into
- **Clearly communicated** so everyone understands their role
- **Consistently applied** to build trust in the process
- **Appropriately matched** to the decision type
- **Regularly reviewed** to improve over time

The Fellowship of the Ring demonstrated fluid decision-making—sometimes Gandalf made command decisions, sometimes the group reached consensus, sometimes decisions were delegated to those with relevant expertise. This adaptability, combined with clear understanding of when different approaches were appropriate, enabled effective decisions despite their diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

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