

Decision Making and Communications: A Tool for Team Leads

Making and communicating decisions is essential to effective leadership, and a defining characteristic of highly performing teams. As companies grow in size of employees, the need for clarity around how decisions are made *and communicated* becomes even more important, as missteps here have big consequences. We urge the leaders and teams we work with to have conversations within their teams about how decisions are made, and to have clearly defined ways that decisions are communicated all the way down to the factory floor. An essential piece of that plan is the discussion around what to do *when a previously made decision is altered*. Being good at this means you run a sophisticated, efficient, highly productive organization.

Here is what we see when these plans are not in place:

- Decisions get made and communicated, and people around the organization begin work to execute on the decision. Then the decision gets changed, but ineffectively communicated. This results in wasted energy and zapped motivation because people continue to work on something that is not a priority anymore, or they come to find out, is not even the right thing to be working on.
- Decisions do not get made because leaders are unclear about who can or should make the decision. This creates delay and confusion.
- Decisions are made, but the right people have not been involved and thus unanticipated problems come up and perhaps others are not bought in to or don't support the decision.

In the next few pages we provide suggested discussion starter questions to use with your team, and a tool for creating a decision making process. Get them to think about the effect that poor decision making has had in the past. You want them committed to improving, and hold you the leader, and each other accountable to improving decision making and communicating processes. Often the leader is clear on the decisions, and knows when they are changed, and can be out of touch with what messages is actually getting cascaded down the org; it



should be everyone's responsibility to be constantly improving the way messages are communicated.

Questions to use with your team to facilitate a conversation about this:

1. What are examples of decision making that stand out as highly effective? What are the elements that made these examples work?
2. Discuss a specific example of a decision that you were a part of, that changed after the initial decision was communicated. What happened? What dysfunction did this create?
3. Discuss a specific example of the failure to make a clear and timely decision. What were the ramifications of the indecision?
4. How clear are you on what decisions you are empowered to make?
5. Agree to use a version of DACI tool (outlined below) and agree to use it as a model for effective decision-making.
6. What 3 specific actions can we commit to starting today to dramatically improve our decision-making effectiveness and reduce the number of times decisions are revisited/ reopened or not made?

DACI Decision-Making Model: A Tool to Use or Adapt for Your Team

The DACI Decision-Making Model is a tool for outlining the steps of a process and who will own them.

In the DACI model, every task has one **Driver**, the person responsible and accountable for the task, one or more people who need to **Approve** decisions, **Contributors** who support the task or provide input and, those who need to be **Informed** about progress along the way.

Driver:

A single *Driver* of the overall project. The person steering the car. This person is responsible and accountable for delivering on the task or initiative.

Approver:

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One or more *Approvers* must approve the key decisions made by the Driver; likely the senior leader who is ultimately responsible.

Contributors:

Are jointly responsible for the deliverables, and with whom there is two-way communication. Additional *Contributors* may be identified as '*must provide input*' before decisions are finalized; but are not directly involved in driving the project.

Informed:

Those who are impacted by the project and are provided status and informed of decisions, and with whom there is one-way communication. ALL communication has a two-way component to it but those who are *Informed* are not contributing to or driving the task or initiative.

Example:

Initiative	Driver	Approver(s)	Contributor(s)	Informed
Hiring Regional Sales Managers	Matt	Bill	Beth, James, Ethan. Lynn (provide input)	Barak, Bill Stuart,

In the example above, Matt is the driver and ultimately responsible for hiring a high performance Sales Manager. Bill retains ultimate approval, so Matt needs to keep Bill up to date on the search, Beth and others are contributors and perhaps Lynn needs to provide input (in this case Lynn's input would be a requirement). Barak and others should be kept informed if their areas are potentially impacted.

The Team can meet, agree to implement some version of the DACI format and identify the top initiatives that need decision-making clarity. Start with +/- 5 Initiatives, try it, see how it is working and refine and extend.