

DECISION-MAKING: DECIDING HOW TO DECIDE
by Marilyn Alleman, L.C.S.W., CPC

“In any moment of decision the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing.” - Theodore Roosevelt

Decision-making is an important skill in the workplace and extremely important if you wish to be an effective leader. Avoiding bad decision making requires critical thinking and a systematic, structured approach. Whether you are deciding which strategy to pursue, a supplier to use, or a person to hire, being able to make a good decision based on available information is vital. A good manager or team leader will implement an organized and systematic decision-making process which leads to better decision choices and successful leadership.

Managers are constantly called upon to make decisions in order to solve problems. Everyday, personally or professionally, we each generate ideas, make decisions, draw conclusions and evaluate many situations. Deciding how to decide and problem solve are ongoing processes of evaluating situations, considering alternatives, making choices and following up with the necessary actions. We know that decision-making requires careful critical thinking. Critical thinking is a tool by which one can arrive at conclusions based on a reasoned, structured process. The process incorporates passion and creativity, but is guided by discipline, practicality and common sense. Decision-making can be exciting, but also stressful. The entire decision-making process is dependent upon the right information being available to the right people at the right times. A systematic approach to decision-making aids you in addressing the critical elements that end in a good decision. Using an organized approach lessens the risk of missing important factors in making an effective decision.

Effective decision-making requires a number of critical steps. The creation of a constructive environment is important. This can be done by establishing the objective, agreeing on the process, involving the right people, allowing opinions to be heard, and making sure you are asking the right questions. Be sure to accurately define the issue/problem so that all of the steps that follow are based on accurate information. Generating good alternatives is critical to the successful decision-making process. This can be accomplished through a process called brainstorming. In brainstorming, a group works together to generate ideas and alternative solutions. The assumption is that the group dynamic stimulates thinking, as one person's ideas, no matter how outrageous, can generate ideas from the others in the group.

Once reasonable alternatives have been identified they need to be evaluated. In evaluating the alternatives, which can be the most consuming part of the decision-making process, there are three key factors to consider: 1) There is some risk involved in most decisions. It is important to evaluate and understand the risks and make the best choice possible. Spend some time, think ahead and determine exactly what will make the decision “right.”; 2) No one can predict the outcome or implications of a decision with 100% accuracy. However, being careful and systematic in the way you identify and evaluate possible consequences will help ensure that you make the best choice;

and, 3) Make sure the choice is feasible, realistic and implementable. Take a look at the decision you've made as objectively as possible, to ensure that your process has been thorough.

Communicating your decision and taking action is also important. It is critical to communicate clearly and concisely the decision you have made to those affected by it and to those who will be involved in implementing it. Remember, many things can affect the final impact of your decision, so establishing a strong foundation of decision making, identifying good alternatives and evaluating them you will improve the quality of your decision. Following the implementation of your decision, **review and evaluate** whether the issue of situation has been resolved. If it has been resolved then congratulations! If it has not, you may need to review your process, seek feedback, gather more detailed information and discover additional alternatives on which to base your revised decision.

While many of us sometimes avoid or delay the decision making process, we as managers and leaders, must address decisions in a timely and careful manner. Very few, if any, situations solve themselves and only our actions will bring about the correct solutions we require for success. Be decisive and succeed!

About the Author:

Marilynn W. Allemann is a highly qualified executive and personal coach, organizational consultant, trainer, and licensed clinical social worker. Following many years in the corporate environment and as a psychotherapist in private practice she founded Masters Executive Coaching. She has worked with leaders of organizations, management teams, sales executives and individuals since 1996. In her role as a coach Marilynn provides individual and executive team coaching and training in the areas of transitions, individual performance, career development, leadership, executive development and team and corporate performance. Marilynn brings a competent and collaborative approach to successfully working with her clients.

Marilynn W. Allemann, L.C.S.W., C.P.C
Masters Executive Coaching
www.MWAExecCoach.com
www.MWAExecCoach.wordpress.com