

Title: Decision Making Styles: Understanding Collaboration

Introduction

Most people have a distinct and dominant preferential decision-making style. Just as some of us are left-handed and some are right-handed we have a dominant or preferred style in decision making. Understanding these styles and recognizing our dominant style and recognizing the dominant style of those we interact will help us understand the group dynamics of the people around us, help us maximize learning experiences and help us become better leaders and decision makers.

| Knowledge (Outdoor leaders know & understand...) | Skills (Outdoor leaders can...) | Dispositions (Outdoor leaders are disposed to...) |
|--|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the four distinct decision making styles of collaboration work 2. the contributions of each decision making style to collaborative work 3. the pitfalls of each decision making style to collaborative work 4. how to communicate in the language of each decision making style 5. the implications of decision making styles for debriefing, assessing, planning lessons and expedition behavior 6. the link between decision making styles and leadership 7. the conflict and pain inherent in collaborative work 8. that diversity includes difference of opinion, philosophy, style and personality not just culture, ethnicity and religion | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. recognize the characteristics of each decision making style 2. communicate effectively in the language of each decision making style 3. debrief and assess from the perspective of each decision making style 4. plan and deliver lessons that reflect an understanding of each decision making style 5. use the IP3 to create a Full-Value Contract 6. analyze and address group conflict through the lens of decision making styles | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. be empathetic and appreciate the contributions of each decision making style 2. be patient, tolerant, accepting and ultimately supportive of individuals of different decision making styles 3. be aware of the dynamics of group conflict as it relates to decision making styles |

I. Content

a. The four decision making styles (*are they really styles?*)

- i. **Ideas** The “ideas” decision maker see the big picture, is frequently visionary and creative. Ideas decision makers want to know what the possibilities are their favorite question is, “*What if...*” They need flexibility and dislike rigidity.

1. Contributions “ideas” decision makers to collaborative work
 - a. They are visionary
 - b. They are risk takers
 - c. They are flexible and comfortable with chaos
 - d. They operate intuitively
 - e. In the extreme their greatest strength is their ability to come up with visionary and creative ideas
2. Pitfalls of “ideas” decision makers
 - a. They sometimes don’t always follow the rules
 - b. They frequently struggle to focus on just one idea and follow through on it. As a result they may look unorganized or inconsistent
 - c. They are not too concerned with details and frequently don’t like people who are
 - d. They need their ideas validated by others
 - e. They can be perceived as impulsive and unrealistic
 - f. They tend to be impulsive and dramatic
 - g. In the extreme their greatest weakness is their tendency to be an “arsonist” i.e., they go around planting ideas (starting fires) but not following through and frequently not allowing others to follow through so nothing gets done
3. How “ideas” decision makers communicate
 - a. **Yes** – When the “ideas” decision maker says yes they actually mean **maybe**. The reason for this is that they will most likely come up with a new and what they think is a better idea shortly after they have okayed the existing idea or project.
 - b. **No** – when the “ideas” decision maker says no they mean **no** because they already have a better idea in mind.
4. How you should communicate with an “ideas” decision maker
 - a. Ask them what they think and what their ideas are
 - b. If you have an idea you want them to approve, try to get them to come up with it and let them make it “their” decision
 - c. Avoid disagreeing with them. They tend to need people to support their ideas.
- ii. **People** – this decision maker values people and focuses on relationships. They want to know *who* is involved in the decision and *whom* the decision will affect. “People” decision makers crave harmony and dislike divisiveness and conflict.
 1. Contributions “people” decision makers make to collaborative work

- a. They are sensitive to peoples' feelings
 - b. They like to build community
 - c. They value cooperative efforts and enjoy being part of a team
 - d. They bring harmony and include people
 - e. In the extreme their greatest strengths is caring about people
2. Pitfalls of "people" decision makers
- a. They sometimes appear wishy-washy because people don't know where they stand
 - b. They don't want to offend people and as a result they don't always share their true feelings
 - c. They don't like hard fast rules that can divide people
 - d. They tend to be slow to react until they have checked everyone else's opinion
 - e. They avoid risk taking and tend to avoid pressure situations
 - f. In the extreme their greatest weakness is their ability to be a "soaped fish" i.e., no can get a handle on them and see where they stand
3. How "People" decision makers communicate
- a. **Yes** – when the "people" decision maker says yes they usually mean **maybe**. They don't want to commit to a decision until they have checked with others.
 - b. **No** – when the "people" decision maker says not they also mean **maybe** for the same reason. They don't want to commit to a decision until they have checked with others.
4. How you should communicate with a "people" decision maker
- a. Let the person know who already supports your idea or plan
 - b. Speak in terms of consensus building regarding your task
- iii. **Product** – This decision maker values achievement, focus and quality. "Product" decision makers want to know *what* needs to be done. They need results and dislike drift.
1. Contributions "Product" decision makers make to collaborative work
- a. They value performance and producing a quality product
 - b. They are committed to getting the job done
 - c. They take pride in being task-oriented and getting many things accomplished

- d. They value expert knowledge
 - e. In the extreme their greatest strength is getting high quality results
2. Pitfalls of “Product” decision makers
 - a. They are stubborn, tend to do things their way and to work along
 - b. They hate meetings and would rather just get on with the job
 - c. They tend to be authoritative
 - d. They tend to see one “right” answer and don’t like to “waste” time exploring creative alternatives
 - e. They are considered insensitive because they worry more about getting the job done correctly than people’s feelings
 - f. They can be too rigid and defeated by their own perfectionism
 - g. In the extreme their greatest weakness is their tendency to be a “lone-ranger” workaholic. Since they believe they have the best solution and can do the best job they tend to want to do it all.
 3. How “product” decision makers communicate
 - a. **Yes** – when the “product” decision maker says yes they mean **yes**. They are very literal and have difficulty understanding why others aren’t.
 - b. **No** – When the “product” decision maker says not they mean **No** for the same reason as explained above.
 4. How you should communicate with a “product” decision maker
 - a. Speak in terms of the clear task or “problem to solve”
 - b. Propose clear solutions that can be approved and implemented
 - c. Be clear, succinct and don’t waste time
- iv. **Process** – This decision maker values procedure. They want to know *how* something is going to be done. They need structure and dislike chaos.
1. Contributions “process” decision makers make to collaborative work
 - a. They usually well organized and self-disciplined
 - b. They attend to details and get things running smoothly
 - c. They are practical & direct
 - d. In their extreme their greatest strength is bringing order out of chaos
 2. Pitfalls of “process” decision makers

- a. They don't like surprises or changes to plans
 - b. They generally are not tolerant of "rule breakers"
 - c. They tend to be insensitive to people and allow rules to be more important than people
 - d. They sometimes appear inflexible
 - e. They are reality oriented and can be impatient with those who are considered to have their "heads in the clouds"
 - f. In the extreme their greatest weakness is the ability to become a "bean counter" where the details are more important than the overall goal.
3. How "process" decision makers communicate
- a. **Yes** – When the "process" decision maker says yes they mean **yes**. They are satisfied that rules have been followed, criteria met and individuals have worked within the system.
 - b. **No** – When the "process" decision maker says no they mean **maybe**. If the rules are followed and if the criteria are met and if you work with in the system you can change a no to a yes.
4. How you should communicate with a "process" decision maker
- a. Make an appointment and be on time
 - b. Talk of solving problems and accomplishing tasks within the existing system
 - c. Allow time for the person to reflect and process your proposal
 - d. Have a clear plan
- b. Conflict and pain inherent to collaborative work
- i. The four decision-making styles create natural conflict and pain. When the needs of one decision-making style are being met then others are in pain. It is virtually impossible to meet everyone's needs at the same time.
 - ii. Conflict – As the four types of decision-making styles work together their differences are amplified and conflict results. Conflict is not necessarily bad and in fact we believe it is essential if groups are to work to their highest potential.
 - iii. Trust & Mutual Respect – Appreciation and respect of the decision-making styles creates an atmosphere of mutual respect. Over time mutual respect builds trust and a willingness to put up with the pain inherent in group work because they know that at some point in the process their needs will be met.
 - iv. Collaboration vs. Cooperation – Collaboration is a higher level of cooperation. Cooperation is the ability to work together for a common goal. In cooperation there is an understanding and willingness to tolerate the pain of group work. In collaboration

there is not only an understanding and willingness to tolerate the pain but there is a recognition and celebration of the diversity necessary for the highest levels of collaborative work. In other words in cooperation there is a tolerance of the decision-making styles but in collaboration there is a celebration of the decision-making style differences.

- c. The link between decision making styles to leadership, group dynamics, lesson planning and debriefing
 - i. Leadership
 - 1. Understanding your own decision making style allows you to realize Paul Petzoldt's axiom, "Know what you know and know what you don't know." As usual Paul was ahead of his time. This concept is now called "metacognition" or "thinking about thinking." This will allow you to clarify areas in which you are strong and areas of weakness.
 - 2. Understanding your followers' decision-making style allows you to gage your group's strengths and weaknesses. It will ultimately assist you in decision making because you will have better knowledge of your group.
 - ii. Group Dynamics/Expedition Behavior
 - 1. Group Development and Conflict – Understanding decision-making styles allows group members to better comprehend conflict and its role in group development. (See group development chapter X) Participants will be better prepared to anticipate where conflict will come from. It will not eliminate the "storming" stage of group development but will permit leaders to understand it and strive to create an atmosphere that celebrates diversity of style and breed mutual respect and trust.
 - 2. Creating a Full Value Contract – Understanding decision-making styles can help create a Full Value Contract. Using the IP3 Planning Tool (diagram X & sample Full Value Contract diagram X) you can have the course participants brainstorm (see Decision Making Chapter X for more on brainstorming) each of the four IP3 Planning questions and distill them down to a Full Value contract. It is important that the criteria are clear, unambiguous and observable.
 - 3. Planning Collaborative Work – The IP3 Planning Tool can also be used for planning any activity that requires the group to carefully consider their process.
 - iii. Lesson Planning – Knowledge and understanding of decision-making styles is invaluable in planning learning experiences. The challenge is to be able to explicitly describe how in your lesson that you are meeting the needs of each type of decision maker.
 - iv. Debriefing
- d. Cautions and Reminders about Decision Making Styles

- i. Don't pigeonhole people. We all have some of each decision making style.
- ii. Don't use this information as a crutch. We all have to learn to stretch.
- iii. Stretch during practice and play to your strengths at crunch time.
- iv. High functioning teams need representatives from each decision making style. Understand the difference between cooperation and collaboration.
- v. Conflict is an essential ingredient when producing the highest quality but it is only valuable in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.
- vi. To *empower* make decisions by consensus. For *quality* implement decisions autocratically.
- vii. Use sarcasm with great caution.

Group Members:

IP³

Project Name/Date:

PLANNING COLLABORATION

DIRECTIONS: Please consider the challenges you've had in the past as opportunities to learn about effective collaboration. Based on these experiences, please respond to each of the follow question as you plan for this upcoming collaborative effort

| IDEAS | PEOPLE |
|--|---|
| What will you do to ensure that all ideas are hear/considered? | What will you do to invite all group members to participate actively and feel valuted? |
| PROCESS | PRODUCT |
| What will you do to ensure that your group is well organized and that you use available resources efficiently? | What will you do to ensure that your final product is of the highest quality given the resources available? |

IP³ Helps Us Keep our Bearing

