

Method Card 16

Decision Making

Five kinds of decision rules

Unanimous Agreement

Powerful if time is given to understanding each others views, and decision at hand can be informed by advancing innovative proposals that arise from understanding.

Majority Vote

Produces Win/Loose solutions through an implicitly adversarial process, useful when expedience is more important than quality.

Person-incharge decides after discussion

High stakes ('bet the company') decisions often use this rule, and it works well if people say what they really think.

Flip a coin (or other arbitrary random method)

Not useful in important decisions, but how much discussion is really needed to decide on if to break now or in half an hour?

Person-in-charge decides without discussion

Useful in the middle of a crisis, when lack of a decision would be a catastrophe, in general the higher the stakes the more risky it is for the decision to be made with no discussion.

Decision Making

DESCRIPTION

A decision is the point between thinking / discussion and action.

It is the point of authorisation for the actions that follow. Different kinds (high stakes v low stakes) of decisions are best served by different decision rules.

Common mistakes are lack of shared understanding about exactly what the decision is, lack of clarity about which decision rule is being employed, lack of time/ poor process design and discipline to allow consensus based decision rules.

The (largely) unconscious win/lose mindset is another common mistake to watch for.

HOW?

1. Clarify the kind of decision rule the meeting objectives require.
2. Design the meeting process accordingly, bearing in mind that different decision rules require quite different amounts of time.
3. Promote common understanding by ensuring all participants understand the decision in the same way - Questions for clarification are helpful.
4. Clarify the kind of decision rule that is being used.
5. Apply the rule.
6. Learn. Use the learning piece at the end of the meeting to learn about the upsides and the costs of the decision rule you have used.