

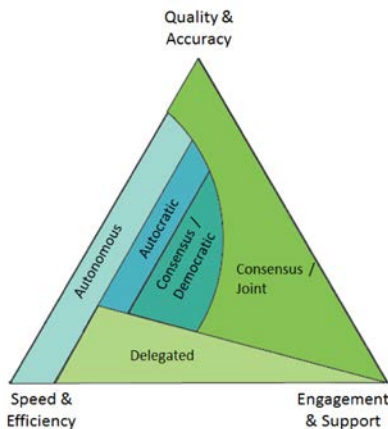
# North Star Insights

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## Situational Leadership and Decision Making

by Robert Broesler

Inviting your staff to participate in action teams or other decision making activities is excellent for empowerment and generally leads to effective implementation of the decisions and plans your staff makes. At the same time, however, such engagement takes time, which means it is costly. The question therefore becomes: When is it most wise to make a decision yourself as a leader and when is it wise to engage your team?



We suggest you start by asking three questions of the issue around which a decision must be made:

**1. How fast does the decision need to be made?** Increased time is essential for increased participation. A tip: take a moment to ask "Do I truly need to act immediately?" You may be surprised how often you could delay.

**2. What level of quality and accuracy is required?** Do you have sufficient information to make a high quality decision on your own? How important is the technical quality of the decision?

**3. Is this an opportunity to increase staff engagement and participation?** How important is subordinate buy in to the decision?

The following model, adapted from Vroom, Yetton and Jago, identifies five decision-making styles. We have added applications of the model in common life experiences of addressing medical problems.

Decision Making Style	Description
Autonomous	Leader decides, alone as the head of a team / department / program without consultation or involving anyone else. Informs the team of the decision. <i>Example: Person decides to stay home from work because they are sick. Informs manager and co-workers.</i>
Autocratic	Leader requests information from members of the team without clearly stating why they want such information. Makes the final decision. <i>Example: Mom is deciding how best to care for her sick child. She asks whether his throat or tummy hurts and takes his temperature.</i>

Consultative	Leader shares information with team, gathers input from members of the team and then makes the final decision. <i>Example: Dad cuts his finger and is trying to decide whether or not to get stitches. He asks his wife who says wait a bit to see if it stops bleeding. He asks his daughter who suggests going to the nearby urgent care.</i>
Consensus	Leader consults at a high level with team &/or key stakeholders and facilitates the process to come to acceptance of the decision. Everyone supports the decision even if it may not be everyone's first choice. <i>Example: Hiking group member twists their ankle. The hiking leader convenes the group to determine whether to continue on, split up, call for help or turn back.</i>
Delegated	Decision made by a team, individual or groups as a whole without manager involvement, other than the manager providing parameters or boundaries from the leader. <i>Example: Person has heart pains and calls an ambulance. He delegates his medical care to the emergency care team.</i>

Each of these styles is called for in different situations, reflective of a situational leadership approach to decision making.

In complex situations, a facilitator can be useful for the Consensus style of decision making. Please let us know if you have any questions about optimizing quality, engagement and effort by using situational leadership and different styles of decision making.