

Chapter 1: The Role of Decision Making in Management

Key points of chapter

This chapter presents an overview of the book and the history of management. It says that making decisions and solving problems is a universal requirement of managers and of people in general. Management is traced from Adam & Eve through Moses to the current time, with the point that even though it's happened throughout history, we didn't start to study it until the late nineteenth century. Participative and team-based management are compared in a very simple form with the old autocratic styles.

Answers to Study Questions

1. All of them
2. (a) Ever since two or more people began to work together on one project. (b) In the late nineteenth century with Fredrick Winslow Taylor.
3. Mentioned by name in this book are Taylor, Fayol, The Hawthorne Studies, and Herzberg. Certainly that's a very short list. Students should be able to do much better based on the readings from their other texts.
4. Besides being asked to use their technical expertise, members of self-managed work teams are also asked to use some management skills.
5. Because through self-managed teams, decentralization, and various other reasons, lower level workers are likely to be more involved in making decisions and solving problems than they have been in the past.

Answer to Exercise

(Individual work – no common answer exists.)

Other Materials

A pre-test of knowledge about decision making is included in the materials at the end of this chapter. (The answers are listed in the chapter 2 supplemental materials.) Also, the form has space to complete the end of chapter exercise right on it.

Also, many of the quotes from the book (and a few extras) are provided in a separate page titled "Philosophies about Decision Making and Problem Solving."

Pretest on Decision Making

Circle either true or false:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| T | F | 1. We all make hundreds of decisions every day. |
| T | F | 2. All decisions are made in an essentially similar pattern. |
| T | F | 3. Choices should be evaluated as they appear. |
| T | F | 4. Decision making applies to all phases of management or supervision. |
| T | F | 5. Creativity is not necessary in <i>most</i> decision making, |
| T | F | 6. Intuition is more important than rational thought in the early stages of decision making. |
| T | F | 7. Limits should be established early in the decision making process. |
| T | F | 8. Tolerance for risk influences decision making for managers. |
| T | F | 9. Good decisions are both properly made and effective. |
| T | F | 10. Organizational decisions tend to be more "convoluted" than "straightforward" in nature. |

List several decisions which you either have made in the past couple of weeks or which you will need to make in the next several weeks. These will serve as the basis for discussion during this program.

Philosophies about Decision Making & Problem Solving

Selected Quotes from *Decision Making and Problem Solving in Management* © 2008 by Robert H. Vaughn

"Cheshire Puss, would you tell me, please, which way I ought to walk from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where ---" said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you walk," said the Cat.

"--- so long as I get somewhere," Alice added as an explanation.

"Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if only you walk long enough."

- Lewis Carroll

If your only tool is a hammer, you tend to see all problems as nails. Having a versatile, well stocked toolbox is essential for a good manager.

- Bob Vaughn, *Decision Making & Problem Solving in Management* © 2008

"More than any time in history, mankind faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness, the other to total extinction. Let us pray that we have the wisdom to choose correctly."

- Woody Allen

Always look for the second right answer -- or maybe the third.

- Bob Vaughn, *Decision Making & Problem Solving in Management* © 2008

"Trust yourself. You know more than you think you do."

-- Benjamin Spock, M.D

"The pure and simple truth is rarely pure and never simple."

- Oscar Wilde

"If you have always done it that way, it is probably wrong."

- Charles Kettering

"Too often, our minds are locked on one track. We are looking for red – so we overlook blue. Many Nobel Prizes have been washed down the drain because someone did not expect the unexpected."

- John D. Turner

"Life is full of choices.... and sometimes all of them are yucky!"

- Joanne Lee

"Did you ever have to make up your mind? Say 'yes' to one and leave the other behind? It's not often easy; it's not often kind. Did you ever have to make up your mind?"

- The Lovin' Spoonful

"It is much more pleasant to make the decision than to justify it."

- Malcolm Forbes

Acquisition of facts does not constitute knowledge.

-Anonymous (From Vaughn, *Decision Making & Problem Solving in Management* © 2008)

"Often a choice is made early in the process, with the subsequent activity devoted to confirming the early choice."

- McCall & Kaplan (From *Whatever It Takes ...* © 1990)

"Skilled decision makers aren't overloaded with data; they can focus on high payoff information."

- Klein & Weick (From "Decisions" in *Across the Board* © 2000)