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Professional Growth Articles



LEADER DECISIONS VS. TEAM DECISIONS

Who should make what kinds of decisions?

May 2021



(Leader Decisions)



(Team Decisions)

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I often talk with leaders about how much more
**effective, engaged and motivated their teams will be
if they are involved in the decision-making.**

There are also times when the leader needs to lay out
certain decisions in very clear terms.

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HOW DO YOU KNOW WHICH DECISIONS

FALL INTO WHICH CATEGORIES?

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Step 1: Understand the goals and strategic plan of your organization.

If you are a leader, it is your job to understand the goals and strategic plans of the organization and how the work of your team fits into that plan. What are goals that have been handed down to you because they align with that plan and what else can you do to support the goals of both the organization generally and your boss specifically?

Step 2: Understand the goals of your boss.

Have you asked your boss what his/her goals are and if there are specific goals for you or your team that will feed into your boss's success? One sure way to make yourself and your team look good is to take on work that supports the goals of your boss and helps him/her to succeed and look good.

Step 3: Determine where you have options.

What other goals might your team consider that will support the strategic plan and support those above you. There will be some things that are clear and specific for your team and others that give you and your team options of how you can accomplish the general work with which you are tasked.

General Rule for the Leader to Set Goals:

Where goals are clear, necessary and specific to support the organization's goals and/or those of your boss, then those are goals you, as the leader need to set forth to your team. That still may allow for the team to make choices about how you reach each of those goals.

When you do have to set the goals, lay out the goals in the right context:

Even when a team can't be involved in choosing a goal/task, it is important that they can see the vision of the organization, the strategy behind that vision and how they fit into that bigger picture. It's also important for your team to understand the WHY behind the goals. If you don't know, ask, so that you can articulate those reasons clearly to your own team. For folks to be motivated, it makes a huge difference when you can show them how their specific job favorably impacts the ultimate customer. Storytelling is a great tool for illustrating it. How do you find those stories – by following the chain of the work your team does from their desks all the way to the client and understanding

how what they do fits into the chain and the how it impacts the ultimate outcome.

Why Allow Your Team to Be Part of the Decision-Making:

This might seem obvious, but I know that it isn't to everyone. So think about it this way – how much more motivated are you when you are included in decision-making than if you are just handed a task. When you include your team in decisions, you are sending the message that their voice is heard, that their thoughts and ideas and talents are important – that they are valued and that the decision will be better with them involved! Feeling valued is a huge motivator. Different things motivate different people and for many, being integrally involved in a team that collaborates and shares ideas is equally important. Joint decision-making motivates on many levels.

High Risk Decisions

Where the decision is high-risk and there is a lot at stake for you as a leader, you may wish to involve the team, but let them know up front you will make the ultimate decision. If you tell them on the back end, they may feel misled, that you were dissatisfied with their work or that you're just pulling rank. It's better that they know the ground rules up front about who has the ultimate decision. If it is high-stakes, while you may want the final say, the value of your team may be especially important in helping you see multiple perspectives, ideas and have a better overall view for making the best decision.

Step 4: Facilitate Team Input and Decision-Making



Context first: To have a productive team discussion about what goals/tasks they might collectively choose or any other relevant decisions in which you can involve them, start with laying out the context so they have a clear understanding of why you are putting this decision on the table, and how it fits into the big picture. It might be a choice about how they tackle a goal rather than choosing a goal. It might be about methods. Whatever it is, they need to see the big picture first.

Criteria Second: To avoid unnecessary conflict, where there can be a lot of choices and different opinions, it helps, at the beginning of the process, before you start into discussion of options, to create criteria against which options will be judged. That helps the team to think through things more deeply from the beginning. So, for example, if you're choosing a restaurant for a group dinner, what should be the criteria? Some criteria options might include, a maximum number of miles drive home for anyone, close to public transportation if some of your team members don't drive, and one that includes food to accommodate various allergies or dietary needs or restrictions. Another might be a certain type of theme or atmosphere to make it fun.

Method Third: Does your team have an agreed-upon process for decision-making? If not, how will they make the decision? There are a lot more choices than just majority rule. It narrows the options in a logical way if you are first judging them against the criteria. If you need some help, email me and we can chat.

Below is a link to a process I have shared with many teams,
called "**Fist to Five**".

It's awesome, quick and powerful!

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**Involving your team in
decision-making
is a deliberate act of
team-building.**
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FIST to FIVE



Click [here](#) for the link to the consensus decision-making method I often use, called “Fist to Five”.

I will share a story of how powerful this tool can be. Years ago, I was facilitating a strategic planning team which was one of many teams that were part of the bigger organizational strategic planning process. We were tasked with creating the vision and strategies for a specific segment. We had only one weekend to do this, after the first weekend of team-building for our group.

We started creating the vision statement, which took the better part of the first day. It was important for sure. We were almost there, but really struggling with the wordsmithing of it. So, we felt we all knew what we meant, and could come back to it later, but thought it was time to move on. It was already getting close to dinner and we were all pretty tired. So, I asked for a “fist to five” on letting the wording of the vision statement sit temporarily and move on to strategies for the time being. Everyone seemed pretty much in agreement and then one of the members put up a fist. The rule of putting up a fist, is having an alternative suggestion. The individual proposed that the vision statement was important enough to do this first and get it right, AND, he suggested a slightly different approach to the wording we had been using.

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One thing led to another and we ended up with a completely different and far superior vision statement than the one we thought we were all pretty much in agreement about.
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Furthermore, it impacted the strategies significantly, so, had we continued on without finalizing the original vision statement, our work would not have been nearly as successful.

That sold me on the “Fist to Five” process and I use it often. Obviously, it takes teamwork and commitment to the process for the “fist” not to be misused.



Joy Conley Kacik

Joy is a conference speaker, team and leadership development consultant, customized trainer and facilitator and a Certified Professional Coach with expertise in personal career coaching, job offer and salary negotiations and executive coaching.

As an Insights Discovery® licensed practitioner, Joy provides clients the added value of the Discovery® Portfolio of tools when working with individuals, teams, leaders and organizations to create inspiring visions for collaborative, cohesive teams to produce superior results.

www.kacikconsulting.com
joykacik@kacikconsulting.com
[| View LinkedIn Profile |](#)



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2408 West St. Brookfield, VT 05036

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