

# Effective Decision-Making

The purpose of this lesson is for students to comprehend issues surrounding decision making, and the preferred model for making decisions.

## Desired Learning Outcomes

1. Define the term "decision."
2. Describe the decision-making process.
3. Discuss the implications of making (or not making) a decision.

**Scheduled Lesson Time:** 30 minutes

## Introduction

Whether you are working alone or with others, many of the decisions you make are related to achieving the goals and performing the tasks of the team. As such, you should be concerned with the effectiveness of your decision-making. That is, whether or not the decision will solve the problem on which you are working.

### **1. Describe the definitions and concepts of decision and decision making.**

Wikipedia defines **Decision making** as an outcome of mental processes (cognitive process) leading to the selection of a course of action among several alternatives. Every decision making process produces a final choice. The output can be an action or an opinion of choice.

## What is a decision?

Webster's New World Dictionary defines decision as follows:

1. the act of deciding or settling a dispute or question by giving a judgment.
2. the act of making up one's mind.
3. a judgment or conclusion reached or given.
4. determination; firmness of mind [a man of *decision*].
5. *Boxing* a victory on points instead of by a knockout.

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While there are many definitions of decision, for the purpose of this lesson, a "decision" is defined as a determination arrived at after careful and systematic consideration. Therefore, a decision becomes the best choice of a course of action to achieve objectives. Making that choice requires some form of decision analysis. Many decisions made in life can be categorized as major (greater in importance) or minor (lesser in importance).

# Types of Decisions

1.	<b>Major Emergency Discrepancies</b>	<b>Components of Major Emergency Decisions</b>
	<p><b>Greater in Importance</b></p> <p><b>Emergency is defined as:</b></p> <p>"An unforeseen combination of circumstances that call for immediate action" ...and has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Implications</b></li> <li>• <b>Ramifications and therefore Consequences</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Implication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an implicating or being implicated</li> <li>• an implying or being implied</li> <li>• something implied, from which an inference may be drawn</li> <li>• <i>Logic</i> a formal relationship between two propositions such that if the first is true then the second is necessarily or logically true</li> </ul> <p><b>Ramification</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a ramifying or being ramified; specif., the arrangement of branches or offshoots, as on a plant</li> <li>• the result of ramifying; specif., <i>a</i>) a branch or offshoot <i>b</i>) a derived effect, consequence, or result [the <i>ramifications</i> of an act]</li> </ul> <p><b>Consequence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a result of an action, process, etc.; outcome; effect</li> <li>• a logical result or conclusion; inference</li> <li>• the relation of effect to cause</li> <li>• importance as a cause or influence [a matter of slight <i>consequence</i>]</li> <li>• importance in rank; influence [a person of <i>consequence</i>]</li> </ul>

## The outcome of implications, ramifications, and therefore

<p><b>The definition of liability is:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the state of being liable</li> <li>• anything for which a person is liable</li> <li>• [<i>pl.</i>] <i>Accounting a</i>) the debts of a person or business, as notes payable or long-term debentures <i>b</i>) the accounts on a balance sheet showing these</li> <li>• something that works to one's disadvantage</li> </ul>	<p><b>The primary consequence of any decision is a liability of some sort. For an individual, liable means:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• legally bound or obligated, as to make good any loss or damage that occurs in a transaction; responsible</li> <li>• likely to have, suffer from, etc.; exposed to or subject to [<i>liable to heart attacks</i>]</li> <li>• subject to the possibility of; likely (</li> </ul>
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		to do, have, get, etc. something unpleasant or unwanted) [ <i>liable to cause hard feelings</i> ]
2.	<b>Minor (Non-Emergency) Decisions</b>	<b>Components of Minor Decisions</b>
	Lesser in importance	Although it has some implications and ramifications.....they need no immediate action... <b>and therefore... No big thing in terms of consequences</b>

CAP has provided regulations surrounding most major decisions that are to be made by leaders in the organization. In doing so, there has been adequate attention given to the liability of those decisions. The aforementioned chart provided a look at the components of a decision, and the fact that there are implications to any decision we make, and therefore consequences.

## Example: Captain Rudder

### PROBLEM SOLVING HYPOTHETICAL

You are the mission base commander at an emergency services mission base at the Earthquake County Airport in the great State of Distress. You report to the CAP Mission Coordinator who in turn reports to the Distress Wing Commander. The scenario below has been presented to you by Cadet Tom Jones, who has been manning the sign in desk since the base opened early on Day Two.

The base was opened following an earthquake which severely weakened an earthen dam. Floodgates were opened to prevent collapse of the dam and accidental flooding. The dam eventually collapsed, flooding hundreds of homes and forcing evacuation of the families that lived in the area downstream from the dam.

#### DAY ONE - THE DAY OF THE DAM COLLAPSE

Capt. Roger Rudder, Commander Squadron 4077, was part of a work party at his Squadron Headquarters, a 4 ½ hour flight from Flood River Junction, the epicenter of the earthquake, when radio traffic went out alerting all emergency services personnel. His work party included ten cadets and two male senior members.

Without further request by radio or otherwise, Rudder obtained a flight release to the

anticipated mission base at Flood River Junction. He and three cadets, dressed in t-shirts, blue jeans, combat boots and field jackets, boarded the Squadron 4077 Cessna 182 and flew to the anticipated mission base.

Lt. Fred Fibbs agreed to contact the parents of Rudder's passengers regarding the mission and drive to the mission base the next day. He intends to bring with him whatever ES rated personnel available, along with uniforms for Rudder's passengers.

It was dark when Rudder and his passengers, Cadets Kaye Dett (age 18), Serge Sergeant (age 17) and Wayne Wolfe (age 15) arrived at Flood River Junction and the base had not been set up. There was no telephone accessible when they arrived. He and the cadets slept under the airplane, utilizing the survival blankets from the aircraft survival kit.

## **DAY TWO**

The following morning there were no additional CAP personnel at the airport. Capt. Rudder used the telephone at the FBO as soon as it opened to call the Mission Control Officer. He learned that traffic has been issued requesting that all available emergency services personnel report to the mission base at Earthquake County Airport (instead of Flood River Junction), a 20 minute flight away.

The FBO graciously allowed the cadets the opportunity to call home and advise their parents of their whereabouts. The parents asked to speak with Rudder and expressed their being upset at not having been consulted before their children flew off to a disaster area, but also expressed their gratitude that their children had an opportunity to play a role in helping the disaster victims.

The FBO advised Rudder that there was no fuel available because the earthquake cracked his fuel tanks and the flood waters have contaminated his fuel supply. Furthermore, electrical power has been disrupted which prevents the use of the fuel pumps.

Rudder and his cadets boarded the Cessna 182 and flew to Earthquake County Airport. As Cadet Fleagle directed the aircraft to a parking place the engine died from fuel exhaustion.

Rudder and his cadets signed into the mission base and were immediately put to work. Rudder and the aircraft were dispatched to take officials from the Distress Emergency and Disaster Service, a State agency, on a flight over the flood stricken area to survey the damage and take aerial photographs. The Air Force had not approved any MOU with the State agency.

The cadets were assigned to distribute food and water to the lines of flood victims,

load supplies onto vehicles for transport to remote areas, man telephones and provide security for the mission base.

On the evening of Day Two, Rudder was summoned home due to a family emergency. He explained that he would return the next evening. Lt. Fibbs has had difficulty navigating around the flood plane to get to the mission base and is expected to arrive early on the morning of Day Three.

In the course of Day Two, Serge and Kaye work side by side for 16 hours and develop a deep affection for one another. That evening they talked softly late into the night and eventually take the blankets from their cots in the base and seek privacy in the hanger used for storage of the relief supplies.

### **DAY THREE**

Upon rising in the morning, Cadet Jones notices the absence of Serge and Kaye and then observes their bleary-eyed arrival, walking into headquarters with their blankets in hand.

At lunch, Jones discussed his observations with Fleagle who mentions the fuel exhaustion issue.

You have just convened a de-briefing meeting with the bulk of the mission staff and Jones informs you of all of the above.

Upon learning of these details the Wing Commander immediately suspends Rudder pending investigation for purposes of membership termination. Unable to reach Rudder at home, he leaves word with Rudder's employer of the suspension.

(Created by Colonel Theodore Chavez, National Legal Advisor)

In the chart provided on the next page, utilize the Captain Rudder case to practice distinguishing between Major Emergency Decisions and Minor Decisions, as well as identifying the components of the Major Decisions (following the example given)

**Example: Captain Rudder Worksheet (using your general knowledge of CAP Regs)**

**Major Emergency Decision 1: Radio communication goes out.....**

<b>Component: Implications</b>	<b>Component: Ramifications</b>	<b>Component: Consequences</b>	<b>Component: Liabilities</b>
Communication will be down Guidance from base will be gone 2 male adults, and 10 cadets (mixed)	Base will have no communication with site The crew at the site will be operating on their own Supervision of cadets could be very loose	Base will have no knowledge of decisions made at the site Base will have to rely on Captain Rudder's judgment There is not enough Senior Members there to adequately supervise Cadets	Whatever goes on is still the responsibility of base How reliable is Capt Rudder's training and judgment CAP Regulations are precise as to the ratio of Seniors to Cadets.

**Minor Decisions**

**None is this decision!**

**Major Emergency Decision 2:**

<b>Implications</b>	<b>Ramifications</b>	<b>Consequences</b>	<b>Liabilities</b>

**Minor Decisions**

**Major Emergency Decision 3:**

Implications	Ramifications	Consequences	Liabilities
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Minor Decisions	
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Major Emergency Decision 4:
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Implications	Ramifications	Consequences	Liabilities
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Minor Decisions	
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## 2. Describe the decision-making process.

As a CAP leader, there are many instances that we are called upon to make the simplest decision. With people, decisions become a complex mine field. What must be avoided are some common causes of bad decisions, and they are:

- a. **Uncertainty** - There is a lack of conviction, and some question and doubt.
- b. **Ambiguity** - The decision is capable of being interpreted in more than one way.
- c. **Conflict** - There is a clash of opposing ideas and interests.

When you encounter difficulty in making a decision, follow this **decision-making process to avoid bad decisions**:

- a. **WHAT** exactly are you trying to decide? When you are in a group, spend some time checking to see if everyone has the same interpretation of the decision the team is working on.

b. **WHO** needs to be involved? Ask yourself who has the necessary and valid information to make the decision so that it is logically sound? Make sure that those who have to carry out the decision are involved in some way also so that they will be committed to it.

c. **HOW** should people be involved? In order to most effectively manage the involvement of people in decision making, it is useful to consider several different levels of involvement:

- i) Directly - They actually make a decision.
- ii) Consulted - They are involved before the decision is made so that they can give needed information and opinions.
- iii) Informed - They are told about a decision so that it will not come as a surprise to them later on.

**(Note: See the chart below - DLO3)**

**3. When will the decision be made?** Set up a timetable so people know when to expect a decision. Give one person the responsibility to manage the decision-making process.

If you were the Wing Commander in the Captain Rudder case, would the above process have helped in your decision making?

**4. Discuss the implications of making (or not making) a decision.**

Although all decisions are not the same, here is a guide that will make your job easier.

### Types of Decision-Making Styles

Type	Your Choice	Your Subordinates	Your Responsibility
<b>A1 (Autocratic)</b>	<b>You make the decision yourself using information available to you at the time.</b>	You do not tell subordinates what the concern or issue is.	You make the decision which solely reflects how you think.
<b>A2 (Autocratic)</b>	<b>You obtain necessary information from subordinate(s), and then decide</b>	You may or may not tell subordinates what the concern or issue is when	The role played by your subordinates is clearly one of providing the necessary information to you, rather than

	<b>on a solution yourself.</b>	getting information from them.	generating or evaluating alternative solutions.
<b>C1 (Consultation)</b>	<b>You share the concern or issue with relevant subordinates individually</b>	You are getting their ideas and suggestions, including possible solutions, without bringing them together as a group.	Then you make the decision which may or may not reflect your subordinates' influence.
<b>C2 (Consultation)</b>	<b>You share the concern or issue with your subordinates as a group.</b>	You are collectively obtaining their ideas, suggestions, and possible solutions.	Then you make the decision which may or may not reflect your subordinates' influence.
<b>G1 (Group)</b>	<b>You share the concern or issue with your subordinates as a group.</b>	Together you generate and evaluate alternatives and attempt to reach agreement (consensus) on a solution.	Your role is much like that of a chairperson. You do not try to influence the group to adopt "your" solution, and are willing to accept and implement any solution which has the support of the entire group.

**Note: None of the five styles on the subordinate participation continuum is universally best. A "perfect" leader would assess the situation at hand, and select the style which will be most effective.**

**Reasons for selecting a style that is associated with higher or lower subordinate's participation level.**

**Higher**

- Leads to an increased number of ideas being considered, because different alternatives likely will be introduced by different subordinates; hence, the belief that the best alternatives will have been considered.
- Creates greater acceptance of decisions which results in better

	<p>implementation. That is, "people support what they help build".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leads to growth and development of subordinates.</li> </ul>
<b>Lower</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involving subordinates in discussions is costly in terms of time. That is, autocratic decision making styles are faster than group decision making, and thus, are of value in emergency and crisis situations.</li> <li>• Relevant information needs to be distributed to the participants so that they are knowledgeable about the situation which, again, takes time.</li> <li>• Participants with different interests in or goals for the decision situation will be in conflict with each other.</li> </ul>

**Note: The five styles** can be placed on a continuum that measures the degree to which, ranging from low to high, as a leader allows/permits/encourages subordinate participation in decision making.

Adapted from: Victor H Vroom, " Leadership Revisited." In *The Organizational Behavior Reader*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, David A. Kolb, Joyce S. Osland, and Irwin M. Rubin, editors, 1995, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall. Pp. 453-464.

## Lesson Summary and Closure

Whether you are working alone or with others, many of the decisions you make are related to achieving the goals and performing the tasks of the team. This lesson introduced the member to issues surrounding decision making, and provided methods of making sound decisions.