

The Episcopal Church's



Decision Making for Church Leaders

There are:

- many styles of decision making.
- several factors to consider in determining which style might be best for your leadership body.

It is essential to be clear about the ways decisions will be made and how they will be communicated.



Decision Making Methods

- There are several methods for making decisions:
 - Unilateral
 - Unilateral with input
 - Majority
 - Delegate the decision
 - Consensus



Clarity is Key



- Clarity in how a decision will be made is essential to effective decision making and successful planning
- Clarity can help build trust, encourage motivation and lead to healthy implementation of your decision.

Pray without ceasing...

Prayer is the first step in any decision making process.



Understanding Your Role in Decision Making

- Am I the decision maker?
- Have I been asked to make a recommendation – or a decision?
- Will I be asked for my opinion – but not make the final decision?
- Will my opinion be valued?
- Will I be informed?
- Do I need to be informed?
- Do I have the authority to make the decision?
- What is the source of my authority?
- Will I be called to “choose my battle” in this decision?

In Your Small Church Setting:

- What role does the size of our church play in how we make decisions?
- Is our new clergy leader going to be comfortable with our decision making habits?
- What changes do we need to consider as we “gather around the ministry and not around the minister”?

Realities to Consider:

- Is decision quality important?
- What is the level of leader's expertise?
- How informed is the group?
- Is acceptance by all members of the group critical?
- What is the likelihood that the group will accept the leader's decision?
- What is the likelihood of conflict?
- Are the people making the decision going to have to live with it?

Unilateral Decisions

- Most authoritarian model for decision making
- Leader decides unilaterally and announces the decision.
- Leader's information and/or expertise are key.
- Level of trust for the leader must be high or outcome of decision low in importance/impact.
- Has this model been used in your congregation? How? With good results?

Unilateral...with Input

- Leader seeks council from selected people or large group prior to making final decision
- Leader must lay the groundwork: describes the issue to be decided; state that you are only seeking input and not finality
- Especially important for fast-changing organizations or matters that require a quick “turn-around” response

Majority Rule

- Leader must be willing to accept a majority decision even if outvoted.
- Leader gives up veto power.
- Not appropriate if acceptance by all group members is critical



Delegating the Decision

- Delegate the decision to another group or individual
 - Turn the decision over to another group with **very clear parameters**
 - Make sure you are not attached to a specific outcome when using this method because it is least directive about the outcome
 - Often used in fast-moving organizations

Consensus

- Is not unanimity
- Represents a course of action to which all in the group can give their consent
- Is used to gain assent of a community and not getting everyone to agree
- Is disciplined – requires a clear process

More about Consensus

- Takes more time than other methods and requires more skill from participants
- Requires a willingness to be honest and work through differences of opinion
- Use of this method depends on quality of the decision being made; use it when the decision has significant import to many people.

3 Guidelines for Decision Making – a Recap

- 1) Decide which style you will use.
- 2) Make this choice clear to all involved.
- 3) Invite opinions or questions about the decision making style you have announced.

Remember...

- All decision making styles have both positive and negative aspects.
- The best leaders learn to use them all.
- Overuse of any one style can be disastrous.
- All styles are participatory – just to differing degrees.
- You may even decide...not to decide!

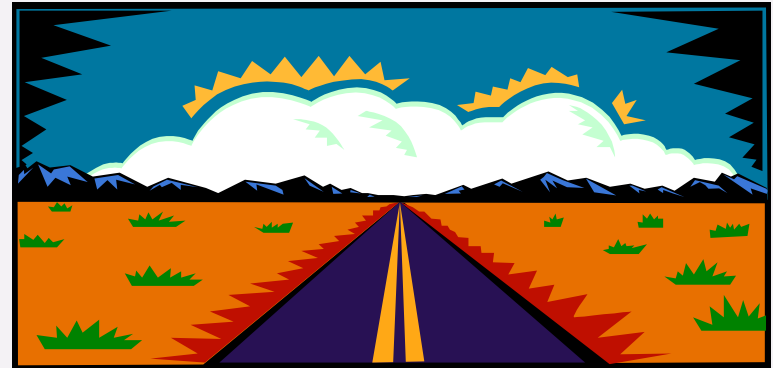
Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

When making decisions, effective leaders must consider who needs to know about the decision.



Coming up...

- What decisions are on your “leadership horizon”?
- Who might you invite into the decision-making process?
- Who might you invite to pray with and for you during this process?



References used:

- Walking The Empowerment Tightrope - Balancing Management Authority and Employee Influence by Robert P. Crosby, published by Organizational Design and Development, Inc. 1992.
- *What is Consensus?* an unpublished article by The Rev. Steve Hopkins, Anglican Church of Canada, Diocese of Niagara, 2002