

# Problem Solving & Decision Making

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What determines success – whether for manager or company: the quality of decisions – all actions are simply the result of decisions made by managers. These skills are absolutely fundamental.

This is a very practical course that will use a combination of real-world participant issues and case studies. Before, during and after the workshop, participants will be provided with resources to help them apply their learning to actual work situations.

Since decision-making requires thought, the course begins by considering how we think - and in particular, the automatic, unconscious processes that filter our perceptions, direct our attention and taint our 'rational', conscious thinking. One of the major problems in decision-making is that people jump too readily to a supposed solution. In fact, this so-called ability to make quick decision is often held up as a virtue. While there is no doubt that there are times when immediate decisions and action are required, too often it is the wrong issue that is being addressed. Or an underlying cause is ignored to treat a superficial symptom. Most situations benefit from a structured approach and our six-step process ensures effective decision-making.

Issues come in many forms and sometimes a more integrated, less sequential approach is required. We will explore a number of tools and past experience suggests that many participants will adopt these techniques in many different areas of their professional and personal lives.

Decision-making has many challenges and we will review the major pitfalls and obstacles - and how to avoid or overcome them.

Finally, we consider how to communicate proposals and decisions to stakeholders.

This course will help you to improve the speed, quality and efficiency of your decision-making. As ever, this is a generic outline that can be adapted to your specific requirements.

## Course Outline

### *The benefits of effective decision-making*

How managers make decisions has a major impact on how they are perceived by their staff and so their overall effectiveness as a leader

### *The human brain and individual thinking styles*

- recognising that we all have a filtered perception of the world and fall prey to habitual thinking patterns that may not be conducive to good decision-making
- system 1 and System 2 thinking styles and how they impact approaches to decision making
- managing our hard-wired cognitive biases - anchoring, availability, optimism, confirmation, mistaking correlation for cause ...
- the role of emotion
- the impact of individual preferences and triggers - from personality through to working styles
- the value of checklists

### *A six-step process for effective problem-solving and decision making*

- context
  - understanding the 'strategic' perspective
  - recognising individual starting points (values, goals, motivators)
  - creating the right environment, processes
  - developing commitment and an effective 'mindset' for decision making
- framing - gaining a true understanding and ensuring that the right problems / opportunities are being addressed (5 Whys, Root Cause Analysis etc), challenging data
- generating options – increasing the chances of making the right decision (using techniques such as Lotus Blossom, Affinity Mapping, 6 Hats, Da Vinci Matrix)
- evaluating alternatives
  - using techniques such as Weighted Matrix, Probability and Decision Trees, Forcefield, and PMI
  - the analysis and mitigation of risk
  - cost-benefit analysis - balancing long and short-term, and, hard and soft costs and benefits
  - triangulation to establish cause and effect

- playing 'Devil's Advocate'
- selection and acceptance (true internal commitment)
- action – ensuring effective implementation of solutions

### *Integrated approaches*

- systems thinking
- left and right column thinking
- visible thinking
- mind-mapping

### *Pitfalls and barriers to effective decision making*

### *Communication of proposals to stakeholders*

- understanding the different needs of stakeholders
- preparing executive summaries
- Transfer of learning to the workplace

### *identifying actions*

- making commitments
- peer support

### *Approach*

Participatory and involving with an emphasis on the practical application of skills and knowledge. Workshops, combining group discussion, case studies, video, what-if scenarios, the application of models and tools and presentations, can be supported with online learning and coaching to ensure the transfer of insights and skills to the workplace.

More information: [commercial-awareness.com](http://commercial-awareness.com)

