APPENDIX 17 (QIIP, 2009)

Activity 9.2: Deciding How to Decide

Preparation:
- Review Part A, Module 9

Activity Time Required:
- 30-35 minutes

Materials:
- Handouts
- Pens

This activity requires the following handouts for participants:
- Participant Worksheet
- Effective Team Decision-Making
- Strategies for Reaching a Decision

Steps:
1. Ask the team members to recall a decision-making process that they were unhappy with. (The example can be drawn from a current or a previous work situation or from a personal situation.)
2. Ask for a few volunteers to share their example and discuss with the group.
3. Review the way the decision was made in relation to the information presented in Effective Team Decision-Making handout. Ask the team:
   - What were the elements of the process that made it unsatisfactory?
4. Review the Strategies for Reaching a Decision handout. Ask team members to come up with answers to the following questions regarding each of the options for the same decision discussed above.
   - What might be the pros and cons of each method?
   - When would you use each method?
   - How would power imbalances within a team affect this type of decision making?
   - If possible, provide examples based on your teamwork and/or recent decisions.
Activity 9.2: Deciding How to Decide

Participant Worksheet

Step 1: Identify a decision-making process (personal or professional) from the past with which you were unhappy. Describe this situation:

Step 2: Read Effective Team Decision-Making handout.
   o How do these suggested decision-making processes differ from the way the decision was made in your situation?
   o What were the elements of the process that made it unsatisfactory?

Step 3: Review the Strategies for Reaching a Decision handout.
Consider how the strategies from this handout would have influenced the situation you described above:
   o What might be the pros and cons of each method?
   o When would you use each method?
   o How would power imbalances within a team affect this type of decision making?
   o If possible, provide examples based on your teamwork and/or recent decisions.
Activity 9.2: Deciding How to Decide

Effective Team Decision-Making

Teams are particularly effective in problem solving as they are comprised of people with complementary skills. These complementary skills allow team members to examine issues from various angles, as well as see the implications of their decisions from a variety of perspectives. In this section we will look at a process that can help teams solve problems and make ‘good’ decisions.

In essence, teams make decisions using problem solving techniques. Thus, the process largely rests on the selection of a course of action following the evaluation of two or more alternatives. To effectively navigate this path, the following step-by-step approach can be used (Lafferty, J.T. 1988).

1-Recognize the Problem: Teams must see and recognize that a problem exists and that a decision needs to be made to move forward. While on its face this step appears elementary, many teams do not always recognize that there is an issue that needs to be addressed due to issues such as group think.

2-Define the Problem: In this stage, teams must map out the issue at hand. During this step, teams should:
   - State how, when, and where members became aware of the problem;
   - Explore different ways of viewing the problem – different ways of viewing the problem can lead to an improved understanding of the ‘core’ problem;
   - Challenge any assumptions that are made about the problem to ensure that the team fully sees the ‘real’ issue at hand;
   - Identify any deadlines.

3-Gather Information: Once the problem has been defined, teams need to gather information relevant to the problem. Why do teams need to perform this step? Two reasons: (1) to verify that the problem was defined correctly in Step 2; and (2) to develop alternative solutions to the problem at hand.

4-Develop Alternative Solutions: While it can be easy for teams to ‘jump on’ and accept the first solution, teams that are effective in problem solving take the time to explore several potential solutions to the problem. Some ways to generate alternatives include:

   a. Brainstorming - Teams are encouraged to come up with as many ways as possible to solve the problem at hand. While brainstorming can help
generate creative solutions to problems, a few guidelines are needed to help it work most effectively:

- No criticism of any ideas during the brainstorming phase;
- All ideas, no matter how silly, get recorded; and
- Get past the sillies – sometimes very creative, and viable, solutions come after people have made what appear to be ‘silly’ suggestions.

b. **Ask Questions** - Network with colleagues internal and external to the organization to get their ideas and suggestions.

c. **Explore** - Read journals/books, go to networking functions, and attend conferences that cover similar issues. Also be prepared to go outside of the healthcare domain. Other industries may have faced similar issues and their solutions can provide insights for you.

**5-Select the BEST Alternative:** Once all the alternatives are in, the team needs to determine the alternative that best addresses the problem at hand. For this to be effective, you need to consider both rational and human elements and the implications for the team.

- **Determine the desired end state:** Here, teams need to clearly define what success looks like.
- **Evaluate alternatives against the desired state:** Here, teams discuss the merits of each alternative and the extent to which each can move the team to the desired state. To help on this step, some teams rate each alternative on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is low and 5 is high
- **Discuss potential adverse consequences of each alternative:** Here, teams need to discuss the potential downsides of the options. To facilitate an objective examination of adverse consequences, some teams use a mathematical formula.

Specifically, they assess the severity of the adverse consequences in terms of the formula:

\[
\text{Adverse Consequences} = \text{Likelihood} \times \text{Severity}:
\]

- **Likelihood** = the likelihood of the adverse consequence occurring (using a 5-point scale where 5 is high)
- **Severity** = severity if the consequence does occur (using a 5-point scale where 5 is high)

**Consider personal issues that may affect decision making. These can include:**

Quality Improvement & Innovation Partnership
Active listening - This requires that team members:
- Pay attention to the dialogue and anticipate where the conversation is going;
- Objectively weigh out what’s been said;
- Try to understand what the other person is saying; and
- Review and summarize what has been said.

Supporting each other’s ideas - Most people tend to focus on what is wrong versus right. Being supportive requires that you:
- Assume that others have valid points;
- Point out the useful aspects of what has been said;
- Build on these useful points;
- Avoid unnecessary criticism.

Being comfortable presenting differing views - Remember that group think is a key concern for teams. To effectively present differing views make sure that you:
- Clearly state your differing view;
- Focus on the reasons for the differences;
- Treat differences as a source of ideas rather than a source of interpersonal conflict.

Participating - To fully take advantage of the complementary skills present in a team, all team members must participate. Sometimes, one or two people dominate team decision making processes because of their interpersonal style (i.e. extraverted vs. introverted), their need for recognition, or their presumed status/position. This can have a negative effect on the team in terms of its ability to make effective decisions. When this occurs, the team needs to address this issue – especially as they face this problem as a team.

Implementing the best alternative - Once the alternative has been chosen, the team needs to implement its decision. This requires effective planning as well as communicating the decision to all the stakeholders that may be impacted by this decision.

Evaluating the outcome - Remember that teams and team building is a learning process. It is critical that the team examine whether the proposed plans of action were achieved in an effective way and resulted in positive outcomes.
Activity 9.2: Deciding How to Decide

Strategies for Reaching a Decision

In team processes, final decisions can be made in a number of ways (Building Better Teams AOHC 2007):

1. Command Decisions. Here the team lead, or expert, makes the decision. This is most effective when a quick decision needs to be made, in which case it is critical that the leader share the decision, and the rationale with the rest of the team. The downside is that you may not have the ‘best’ decision as you did not seek expertise that resides in the team.

2. Individual Consultation. Here the team lead still makes the final decision but (s)he consults a member of the team prior to making the decision. An advantage of this technique is ‘time’ as only one person is consulted allowing for some input from the team. A disadvantage is that there is no opportunity for group brainstorming. Buy-in from team members who were not consulted can also be a problem. The key here is for the leader to explain the criteria for the decision, how others will be involved and what input is needed. If possible, the leader should ask the individuals being consulted to meet with the larger team before meeting with the team leader so that (s)he has a broad perspective of the issue.

3. Team Consultation. Here the team lead makes the decision only after the entire group is consulted. Thus, this technique can facilitate group input, buy-in and commitment. However, the process will take more time and team members can become frustrated if they were consulted and the final decision appears to contradict the prevailing views expressed in the team consultation process. The key here is to explain the decision criteria, the type of feedback being sought, how this information will be used, and the fact the leader will make the final decision. Should the leader’s decision appear to contradict the views expressed in the session, (s)he should go back to the team and express the rationale for the decision made.

4. Compromise. A negotiated approach when there are two or more distinct options and members are strongly polarized (neither side is willing to accept the solution put forward by the other side). A middle position is created that incorporates issues from both sides. Everyone wins a few of their favorite points but also loses a few items they liked. The outcome is something that no one is totally satisfied with. In compromises, no one feels that they got what they wanted so the emotional reaction is often, “It’s not really what I wanted but I am going to have to live with it.”
5. **Multi-Voting.** This is a priority setting tool that is useful in making decisions when the group has a range of options before them and ranks the options based on a set of pre established criteria. Democracy is an example of multi-voting.

6. **Majority Rule.** This is a decision making process where all parties, including the leader, have an equal say in the final decision. In essence, it involves a 'vote' where the alternative that gets the most votes is implemented. An advantage of this technique is that it is quick and easily understood. The disadvantage is that people’s rationales may not be heard if the vote is not accompanied with full discussion. The key here is to ensure that all team members understand the rules of voting and the alternatives being voted on.

7. **100% Agreement (Unanimous Agreement).** Again, all team members have equal say in the decision. In this case, all must agree on the final decision. Disadvantages include the time needed to make the decision and the fact that it may not be possible to get all members to have 100% agreement on one alternative. As such, this technique should only be used on rare occasions.

8. **Consensus.** In this technique, all team members have equal say in the final decision. The key here is that team members must be able to live with and support the final decision. Note that this does not mean that the final decision is each team member’s first choice they just need to be able to support the decision and live with it. Advantages of this technique are that it often ensures commitment and a higher quality decision which all members can support. Thus, this is often the preferred problem solving/decision making technique for teams. The downside is the time needed to make the decision.
Activity 9.3: Making Decisions

Preparation:
- Review Part A, Module 9

Activity Time Required:
- 30-35 minutes

Materials:
- Handouts
- Pens

This activity requires the following handouts for participants:
- Participant Worksheet
- Effective Team Decision-Making Process
- Strategies for Reaching a Decision
- Methods for Reaching Consensus

Steps:
1. If necessary, divide the larger group so that there are groups of 5 to 6 people. Identify two “observers” to be part of each group.
2. After reviewing the three handouts, ask the teams if there are other things they would like to add, based on their experience.
3. Provide each decision-making group with a scenario of a decision that you are likely to have to make or that you commonly do make in your FHT. Set a time limit, so that it mirrors your actual experience.
4. At the end of the allotted time:
   - Ask the participants to comment on the group process.
   - Ask observers to give feedback to the group and to individual members on what they observed. This exercise can be replicated with another problem with the observers and participants switching roles.
5. Facilitate a closing discussion that generates a list of the changes that you could now use in decision-making.
Activity 9.3: Making Decisions

Participant Worksheet

Step 1: Review the following handouts with your team members:
- Effective Team Decision-Making Process
- Strategies for Reaching a Decision
- Methods for Reaching Consensus

Based on your experience, are there others things you would add to any of them?

Step 2: With your team, discuss the decision-making scenario provided to you by your facilitator.

Step 3: Comment on the decision-making process that occurred in your group. Do you have any feedback to give to your group/individual members of your group about the process that you experienced together?

Step 4: Generate a list of the changes that you could now use in your decision-making processes.


Activity 9.3: Making Decisions

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Activity 9.3: Making Decisions

Methods of Building Consensus

In terms of methods for building consensus, we can examine three elements: guidelines that can be used during the decision making process; signs that can be used to recognize when the team may be at consensus; methods of testing for consensus.

Consensus Guidelines

The following guidelines can be used by teams and team leaders to facilitate the attainment of consensus: (Biech, E. 2001)

1. Contribute to the discussion rather than defending your position.
2. Seek out ‘win-win’ solutions that satisfy the needs / concerns of all team members.
3. Use active listening skills and summarize what others are saying.
4. Seek to get the rationale for a person’s view.
5. Avoid voting or averaging to get an answer.
6. Don’t be afraid to disagree - address your differences in terms of the idea being presented, not the person.

Signs of Consensus

During the dynamics of team discussions, it can be tough to see if the team is at consensus. If you can answer "yes" to the following questions, your team may well be at consensus.

1. Has each person been honestly listened to?
2. Have team members listened and understood the views of others?
3. Can each person summarize the alternative?
4. Do team members seem supportive of the alternative being discussed?
5. Has it been a while since any new opinions/views were presented?