

Leadership I: Strategies for Company Success

LS I-Student Manual

1st Edition, 1st Printing-January 1994



FEMA

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**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
UNITED STATES FIRE ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL FIRE ACADEMY**

FOREWORD

On March 1, 2003, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. FEMA's continuing mission within the new department is to lead the effort to prepare the nation for all hazards and effectively manage federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates proactive mitigation activities, trains first responders, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration.

FEMA's U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) serves as the agency fire protection and emergency response community expert. It is located at the National Emergency Training Center in Emmitsburg, Md., and includes the National Fire Academy and the Emergency Management Institute. The mission of the USFA is to save lives and reduce economic losses due to fire and related emergencies through research and training, public education and coordination with other federal agencies and fire protection and emergency service personnel.

To achieve the USFA's legislated mandate (under Public Law 93-498, October 29, 1974), "to advance the professional development of fire service personnel and of other persons engaged in fire prevention and control activities," the USFA's National Fire Academy offers a diverse delivery system. Courses are delivered at the Emmitsburg campus and throughout the nation in cooperation with state and local fire training organizations.

Designed to meet the needs of the company officer, this course of Leadership provides the participant with basic skills and tools needed to perform effectively as a leader in the fire service environment. This course addresses ethics, use and abuse of power at the company officer level, creativity in the fire service environment, and managing the multiple roles of the company officer.

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COURSE SCHEDULE

MODULE

Decision-Making Styles

Problem-Solving I: Identifying Needs and Problems

Problem-Solving II: Solving Problems

Running a Meeting

DECISION-MAKING STYLES

OBJECTIVES

The participants will:

- 1. Differentiate among the four decision-making styles identified.*
- 2. Match appropriate decision-making styles to given situations using the Vroom-Yetton model.*
- 3. Cite the advantages and potential disadvantages of group decision-making.*

ACTIVITY 1

SELECTING A DECISION-MAKING STYLE

In each of the following scenarios a decision needs to be made. Assume that you are the company officer (CO) or station officer (SO) described. For each scenario, select one of the styles listed below for determining a final decision.

- Style A** -- CO makes decision without input from others.
(Autocratic)
- Style C** -- CO makes decision after consulting with one or more subordinates.
(Consulting)
- Style G** -- The whole group makes the decision together
(Group Process)
(CO and subordinates).
- Style D** -- CO delegates the final decision to another person or to the group (CO does not participate in the decision-making).
(Delegating)

NOTE: For this activity, ignore the questions on "Applicable Guideline(s)" and "Inappropriate Style(s)." These will be covered later in the module.

Situation 1

As a CO, you have a problem with a subordinate. He has been extremely tense and antagonistic for the past few shifts. You have reason to believe family problems are the cause of this behavior. Some action needs to be taken. Which style will you use?

Decision-making style _____

Applicable guideline(s) _____

Inappropriate style(s) _____

Situation 2

A new policy has been implemented by the department; firefighters will now perform building inspections in their down time. Initially, your crew was opposed to the new policy but are now resigned to the idea. You have a 30-day deadline for submitting a 12-month plan for conducting inspections in your district. Which style will you use?

Decision-making style_____

Applicable guideline(s)_____

Inappropriate style(s)_____

Situation 3

You are the captain of a volunteer fire department. One of your subordinates has been somewhat obnoxious lately. You've just now noticed a heavy odor of alcohol on his breath as he attempts to mount the engine to respond to a fire. Some action needs to be taken. Which style will you use?

Decision-making style_____

Applicable guideline(s)_____

Inappropriate style(s)_____

Situation 4

Department policy is that crews on duty on Christmas Day may invite family members to the station for dinner between 2 and 5 p.m. Each SO has been requested by headquarters to make a final decision for his/her station within one week. As SO, how will you decide?

Decision-making style_____

Applicable guideline(s)_____

Inappropriate style(s)_____

Situation 5

You are a brand new CO in charge of a truck company. Your crew are seasoned veterans with excellent skills. Your experience as a firefighter was limited to rescue. The department is developing a new performance-based evaluation system. You have been requested to recommend performance standards for your crew. Which style will you use?

Decision-making style _____

Applicable guideline(s) _____

Inappropriate style(s) _____

Situation 6

The department has just hired its first female firefighter and she will be assigned to your company. Company members resent the department's decision to hire females and you've overheard them discussing ways to make her life miserable. The station has one large open bathroom/shower area. The chief has ordered you to work out a procedure which will protect the new firefighter's right to privacy. Which style will you use?

Decision-making style _____

Applicable guideline(s) _____

Inappropriate style(s) _____

OUTLINE

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Definitions.
 - 1. A decision is a choice made between two or more alternative options.
 - 2. Decision-making is the process of deliberation which leads to a final course of action.
- B. Decision-making process.
 - 1. Define the problem.
 - 2. Collect information.
 - 3. Generate alternative options.
 - 4. Evaluate alternative options.
 - 5. Select one option.
- C. Types of decisions (discussion).

Relative importance depends on:

 - 1. How many people affected?
 - 2. Is there an impact on mission, goals, etc.?
 - 3. What would be the consequences of a bad decision?
- D. Decision-making is a critical skill.

II. THE LEADER'S ROLE IN DECISION-MAKING

- A. Effective decision-making:
 - 1. Does not necessitate making every decision yourself.
 - 2. Requires ability to use different styles appropriately.
- B. Controlling decision-making processes.
 - 1. Amount of participation by subordinates.

2. Type of participation.

C. Four decision-making styles.

1. Style A--Autocratic.

2. Style C--Consulting.

3. Style G--Group Process (using consensus).

4. Style D--Delegating.

D. Leader influence on the final decision decreases with each style listed above.

III. SELECTING THE RIGHT STYLE

A. Factors to consider.

B. Decision-making guidelines.

(See Matrix on DM-8)

DECISION-MAKING STYLES

DECISION-MAKING STYLE SELECTION GUIDE

The following matrix may provide insight into the decision-making process. It is designed to help you select an appropriate decision-making style. Ask the guideline questions listed in the left-hand column. If you answer "yes" to any question, eliminate consideration of those styles which have an "N."

Remember, these are guidelines, not absolutes. Your choice of style will be dependent upon your situation, group culture, and what you know about your subordinates.

"N" = Not Recommended

"P" = Potentially Productive

GUIDELINE QUESTIONS		DECISION STYLES			
		AUTOCRATIC STYLE A	CONSULTING STYLE C	GROUP STYLE G	DELEGATING STYLE D
1	Is an immediate decision required?	P	N	N	N
2	Does leader lack adequate expertise?	N	P	P	P
3	Do subordinates lack adequate knowledge?	P	P	N	N
4	Are subordinates apt to sabotage goals?	P	P	N	N
5	Is problem complex with little available information?	N	P	P	N
6	Is commitment critical to implementation?	N	P	P	P
7	Is commitment critical; serious conflict likely?	N	N	P	P
8	Will decision impact most subordinates?	N	P	P	P
9	Will decision impact only select subordinates?	N	P	N	P

ACTIVITY 2

ANALYZING DECISION-MAKING STYLES

Instructions:

As each video scenario is shown or after the role play is done, define the required decision, then answer the questions listed. Eliminate inappropriate styles and select the most appropriate style (the one illustrated in the video or role play).

Video Scenario #1

Decision Required: _____

<u>Question</u>	<u>If Yes, Eliminate Style(s)</u>
Is an immediate decision required?	C, D, G
Does leader lack expertise?	A
Do subordinates lack expertise?	D, G
Are subordinates apt to sabotage intended results?	D, G
Is problem new and/or complex, with little available information?	A, D
Is subordinate commitment necessary?	A
Is subordinate commitment necessary and is serious conflict between subordinates likely?	A, C
Will the decision affect most subordinates?	A
Will the decision affect only one or a select few subordinates?	A, G
MOST APPROPRIATE STYLE?	

DECISION-MAKING STYLES

Video Scenario #2

Decision Required: _____

Question	If Yes, Eliminate Style(s)
Is an immediate decision required?	C, D, G
Does leader lack expertise?	A
Do subordinates lack expertise?	D, G
Are subordinates apt to sabotage intended results?	D, G
Is problem new and/or complex, with little available information?	A, D
Is subordinate commitment necessary?	A
Is subordinate commitment necessary and is serious conflict between subordinates likely?	A, C
Will the decision affect most subordinates?	A
Will the decision affect only one or a select few subordinates?	A, G
MOST APPROPRIATE STYLE?	

Video Scenario #3

Decision Required: _____

Question	If Yes, Eliminate Style(s)
Is an immediate decision required?	C, D, G
Does leader lack expertise?	A
Do subordinates lack expertise?	D, G
Are subordinates apt to sabotage intended results?	D, G
Is problem new and/or complex, with little available information?	A, D

DECISION-MAKING STYLES

Is subordinate commitment necessary?	A
Is subordinate commitment necessary and is serious conflict between subordinates likely?	A, C
Will the decision affect most subordinates?	A
Will the decision affect only one or a select few subordinates?	A, G
MOST APPROPRIATE STYLE?	

Role-Play Scenario #4

Decision Required: _____

Question	If Yes, Eliminate Style(s)
Is an immediate decision required?	C, D, G
Does leader lack expertise?	A
Do subordinates lack expertise?	D, G
Are subordinates apt to sabotage intended results?	D, G
Is problem new and/or complex, with little available information?	A, D
Is subordinate commitment necessary?	A
Is subordinate commitment necessary and is serious conflict between subordinates likely?	A, C
Will the decision affect most subordinates?	A
Will the decision affect only one or a select few subordinates?	A, G
MOST APPROPRIATE STYLE?	

Course: *Leadership:
Strategies for Company Success*

Unit: Decision-Making Styles

Role-Play Exercise: Activity 2, Scenario 4

*The scenario is inside a firehouse break room, where a **lieutenant** and **three firefighters** are seated at a conference table. The **lieutenant** is finishing up the meeting with the last item on his agenda.*

*Notes or instructions for the reader are **not indented** and should not be read out loud. Dialogue, or text to be read in the role-play exercise, is indented under the name of each character.*

LIEUTENANT

Okay, here's the last item of interest. The chief is going to bring a new personal alarm device for us to test out for a couple of months.

FIREFIGHTER #1

A what?

LIEUTENANT

A personal alarm device--a "PAD." It's one of those new little pieces of equipment that you attach to your SCBA. If you get lost, it'll make a sound, or if you're unconscious and can't move around, we'll be able to find you.

FIREFIGHTER #1

I've heard about that. It makes a loud "beep, beep, beep..."

FIREFIGHTER #2

Are you going to test it, Lieutenant?

LIEUTENANT

That's the problem. We're only getting one, so instead of me testing, I'm going to give it to one of you. You three are going to have to decide who will use it.

FIREFIGHTER #3

What's this test all about?

LIEUTENANT

OK, here are the parameters we want. Whoever uses it is going to have to keep a log--let us know what fire calls it was used on and how it performed. The big problem we've been having is, say you're pulling a hoseline and stop in a hall to listen, sometimes they're "falsing," you know, going off when they shouldn't. We need to get your thoughts on exactly how you feel about the thing, whether the batteries are acting up, or whether it's falling off the SCBA. We need a complete log/diary of this device.

FIREFIGHTER #2

Do we get in trouble if we break it?

LIEUTENANT

No, in fact checking its endurance will go along with the test, so hang in there and see if you can destroy it.

FIREFIGHTER #2

Any more money for testing it?

LIEUTENANT

No, no more money involved. It's just a test to see if we're going to get them for all the SCBAs.

FIREFIGHTER #1

I'd like to test it.

FIREFIGHTER #2

I wouldn't mind doing it either.

LIEUTENANT

Tell you what, why don't you go ahead and discuss it before you get to your housework and get back to me immediately.

LIEUTENANT gets up from the table and leaves the room.

FIREFIGHTER #2

I want to do it because I...

FIREFIGHTER #1

You always get the special jobs.

FIREFIGHTER #2

No....

END

IV. USING GROUPS EFFECTIVELY

- A. Three levels of group participation.
1. Advisory (Style C).
 2. Shared decision-making (Style G).
 3. Group without leader (Style D).
- B. Set the stage.
1. Tell group what role they're playing.
 2. Set Style C ground rules.
 3. In Style G, explain consensus.
- C. Advantages of group participation.
- D. Potential disadvantages.
- E. The leader as facilitator.
1. Time limits.
 2. Brainstorming or Nominal Group Technique.
 3. Gatekeeping.
 4. Objectivity and logic.
 5. Devil's advocate.
 6. What if...

V. CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE DECISIONMAKERS

- A. Synoptic.
- B. Dissatisfied.
- C. Sensitive.
- D. Catalytic.
- E. Opportunistic.
- F. Skill-directed.
- G. Innovative.
- H. Forward-thinking.
- I. Resourceful.
- J. Evaluative.
- K. Expedient.
- L. Courageous.

VI. DECISION-MAKING PRINCIPLES

- A. Make the decision.
- B. Implement and evaluate.
- C. Recognize that you probably cannot satisfy everyone.

VII. SUMMARY

- A. Decision-making affects all other leadership functions.
- B. Rational decision-making involves using:
 - 1. A systematic process.
 - 2. An appropriate decision-making style.

- C. Effective decision-makers:
1. Are aware of own strengths and limitations.
 2. Seek to improve the quality of their decisions.
 3. Accept responsibility for decisions.

NATURE AND OVERVIEW OF DECISION-MAKING

Planning, problem-solving, goal-setting and decision-making share much in common: these and the remaining management functions must be predicated upon meeting the stated mission of the fire department. Planning, problem-solving, and goal-setting each involve decision-making. Decision-making is the one managerial function at every level of the organization which directly affects and overlaps all others. Ultimately, the effectiveness of the fire service agency depends upon the decisions that are made, be they rendered by the chief officer, the first-line supervisor, or the group.

Any **decision is a choice made between two or more possible alternative actions.** Therefore, **decision-making is the process of deliberation** which leads to a final course of action. Less important decisions may sometimes be made intuitively--relying on hunches or gut feelings. However, more important decisions require a more rational, logical approach. **Systematic decision-making requires the following steps:**

1. Define the problem.
2. Collect information.
3. Generate alternative options.
4. Evaluate alternative options.
5. Select one option for implementation (make the decision).

As a general rule, the most important decisions are those which will impact many people, those which impact on departmental mission or goals, and/or those which could potentially cause serious negative consequences. Thus, quite often such decisions are referred to as "high risk" decisions.

A CO is judged by the results of the decisions he/she makes. Few make mostly wrong decisions. Effective **leaders** make many high-quality decisions; they seldom make mistakes and on the few occasions that they do, they learn from those errors. Inexperienced decisionmakers and COs who make poor and mediocre decisions, often rely upon their personal experiences and preferences, previous decisions, or upon what others have done (past practice) or are doing (imitation). While past experience and tradition may be an invaluable source of data for reference (**assuming quality decisions were made**), what happens when a new question or problem arises for which there is no precedent upon which to draw? Trial

and error? Hunch? The effective decisionmaker, on the other hand, consistently utilizes a purposeful and rational decision-making approach, matching the decision-making style to the situational characteristics.

THE LEADER'S ROLE IN DECISION-MAKING

Relationship Between Leadership and Decision-making

While leadership and decision-making are separate and unique, leadership obviously necessitates decision-making--be it on the fireground or at the station. While leader-made decisions are obviously necessary on the fireground, are leader-made decisions necessary and/or desirable in noncritical situations? What is the role of the leader in decision-making?

The leader's role in decision-making, too, has been variously described. Vroom suggests we might view it as **controlling the processes by which decisions are made in that part of the organization for which he or she is responsible** (Victor Vroom, "Decision-Making and the Leadership Process," **Journal of Contemporary Business**, Autumn, 1974).

How do leaders control the decision-making processes? Essentially by determining the **extent and type of opportunity provided to subordinates to participate** in making decisions.

DECISION-MAKING STYLES:

Style A--Autocratic

The leader makes the decision alone. Discussion is limited to collecting relevant information.

Style C--Consulting

The leader shares the decision issue with one or more subordinates--seeking ideas, opinions, and suggestions--and then makes a decision. All suggestions are carefully and objectively considered by the leader. The final decision may or may not be influenced by subordinate input.

Style G--Group Process

The leader and the subordinates work together (as a group) until they arrive at a consensus decision. (All group members have an equal opportunity to air their opinions and argue for their point of view.) All suggestions are carefully and objectively considered by each group

member. All group members **accept** the final decision and are **committed** to supporting its implementation.

Style D--Delegating

The leader sets the parameters, then delegates the final decision to one or more subordinates. The leader is not involved in making the final decision but he/she supports the decision.

VARIATIONS IN INFLUENCE

As the leader moves from Style A to Style D, his/her influence over the final decision drops from 100% to almost zero. Yet, no matter which style is used, the leader retains ultimate responsibility and accountability! Thus, it's important to understand **when** to use various styles in order to maximize potential success.

Questions in Determining Style

Obviously, some decision-making styles are more appropriate for certain situations. Key questions affecting the leader's choice of a decision-making style would include the following:

1. Do you have a reasonable amount of time?
2. Does the leader have enough expertise to make a quality decision?
3. Do subordinates have enough expertise to make a quality decision?
4. Do the subordinates share the organizational goals to be attained by solving the problem?
5. Is the decision area complex with many possible solutions?
6. Is commitment to the decision by subordinates critical?
7. Is the decision likely to cause serious conflict among subordinate(s)?
8. Will the decision directly impact most subordinates?
9. Will the decision directly impact only a select few?

GUIDELINES

The preceding questions have been converted to a series of guidelines which assist leaders in selecting an appropriate style.

Guideline 1 (Time)

If an immediate decision is required, Styles C, G, and D should not be considered.

Guideline 2 (Leader Expertise)

If the leader does not possess adequate expertise to make a quality decision, Style A should not be considered.

Guideline 3 (Subordinate Expertise)

If the subordinate(s) lack(s) the knowledge or expertise necessary to make a quality decision, then Styles G and D should not be considered.

Guideline 4 (Goal Compatibility)

If subordinates do not appear to share organizational goals, Styles D and G should not be considered.

Guideline 5 (Degree of Complexity)

If the decision issue is complex and little information is available, and if the problem is ill-defined--for a quality decision, Styles A and D should not be considered.

Guideline 6 (Commitment)

If commitment of subordinates is critical to effective implementation and/or autocratic decisions are likely to be rejected by subordinates, Style A should not be considered.

Guideline 7 (Commitment With Conflict)

If commitment is critical to effective implementation, if autocratic decisions are likely to be rejected, and/or if there is likely to be serious conflict among subordinates in methods to attain goals, Styles A and C should not be considered. The selected style must allow for the venting of differences and resolution of the issue with full knowledge of the situation by everyone involved.

Guideline 8 (Group Consequence)

If a decision will have similar and nearly equal impact upon a number of individuals, styles which involve only one or a few of those affected should be eliminated from consideration. Each of those affected should have the opportunity for input and influence in the decision-making process. Avoid Style A.

Guideline 9 (Individual Consequence)

If a decision is to affect only one individual or a select few, styles which introduce uninvolved subordinates should be eliminated from consideration. Opportunity for the affected individual to influence the decision should be provided to maximize his/her acceptance and commitment to the decision. Avoid Styles A and G.

Vroom, V. H. and A. G. Jago. "Decision-making as a Social Process, Decision Sciences" 5 (1974): 749.

GROUP DECISION-MAKING

Approaches to Group Decision-making

Group decision-making occurs when a group of people discuss the problem or decision issue and render a decision. The decision may be advisory or actual; the decision may be by democratic process (majority) or consensus.

Both of the latter points need to be clearly spelled out at the beginning of any group decision-making activity. If the group decision is to be advisory, group members should be made aware of this at the outset; otherwise, a number of advantages may be lost and impair future group productivity as well as leader-subordinate relations. By the same token, if the group is told the leader will support and abide by the decision it reaches, the leader should in fact follow through and abide by it. Any parameters within which the group must work should be clearly specified at the outset.

With the group's role in the decision-making process clearly delineated, the second issue requires comment. In democratic group process, decisions are made on the basis of majority votes. Although sometimes necessary to reach a decision, the democratic decision-making process may create disharmony, conflict, and even divisiveness among coworkers.

The manager should be alert to the symptoms of a win-lose mind set and intervene before it becomes a reality and a problem.

Consensus decision-making is a collaborative approach in which all involved in the decision-making process work together **as a team** and work through differences of opinion without generating a win-lose atmosphere. Everybody is heard; everyone listens. Everybody concurs with the decision (although it may be no one's real preference) and agrees to support it, and, everyone wins, including the organization. Because of the common goal orientation, the problem-solving (collaborative) focus and common frame reference emerging, understanding and support of and commitment to the decision is enhanced.

Whether the decision is to be democratic or consensus, any parameters surrounding an acceptable decision must be defined (limit to spending, limits on other resources, etc.).

Advantages of Group Decision-making

Group decision-making offers a number of potential advantages over individual decision-making. The first advantage is the greater potential, total knowledge, information, and/or opinion it offers. With each group member bringing into the decision-making his/her own background knowledge and experience, frame of reference, and creativity, possibilities are multiplied with each member.

The same factors contribute to the probability of a more thorough examination of the issue and a greater number of ideas, approaches, and alternatives being generated. Analysis and evaluation of alternatives will tend to be more thorough and complete. The result: the probability of a better decision as opposed to a "satisficing" one. Because they have been involved from the beginning in the decision-making process, group members will better understand and appreciate the decision, accept the decision, and commit themselves to the decision.

Apart from resulting in better decisions and greater commitment to the decision, there are other advantages. Group decision-making is a highly motivational tool. You, the leader, have shown your trust in their knowledge, ability and judgment (self-esteem). You have given them some control over their lives in the workplace (stress-reduction benefit).

Reaching a decision, especially on a problem lacking clear definition and structure, provides them with a real sense of accomplishment (achievement). Group decision-making also contributes to the professional growth of the members. They not only learn and practice decision-making skills to help prepare them for leadership roles, but also

increase their understanding and tolerance for diversity. They learn to examine ideas from perspectives other than their own--including the management perspective.

Potential Advantages and/or Disadvantages

Several phenomena associated with group decision-making may well be positive attributes--unless they go too far. These factors are disagreement (versus conflict), time, and risk-taking.

One of the advantages most frequently cited is greater input. Because of the scope and diversity of viewpoints, it is assumed the best choice will emerge. Honest disagreement, controversy, and exchange are healthy. What happens when conflict becomes counterproductive? Group process may break down. Even if an excellent decision is made, negative feelings may persist. The skilled group leader/facilitator will watch for symptoms of impending conflict and strive to defuse the potential crisis. Separating the people from the problem and focusing on interests, not positions, are two guidelines the leader must practice in his/her own interactions with group members and stress to group members to thwart vocal disagreement from becoming a detriment to group progress.

Time requirements can also be an asset or a liability in group decision-making. Because of the greater number of input sources, and often greater diversity of opinion going into the group decision-making process, groups typically need greater amounts of time to move through the decision-making process. Because of the **greater time expended** in generating and evaluating alternatives, and the more thorough analysis and discussion, the quality of the decision may well be higher. But if the process is rushed, the advantages of group decision-making are lost. Hence, if minimum time is available to reach a decision, an individually made decision may be the better style.

The potential liability is simply stated: cost. Cost in time away from regular job function and/or in overtime. The leader must consider the utilization of group decision-making from a cost-effective viewpoint in determining whether or not to use it.

Earlier the issue of system versus risk in decision-making was addressed. Groups tend to be more willing to take risks in decision-making. Change necessitates risk; however, change for the sake of change may neither be productive nor healthy. Careful evaluation of alternatives is essential by the group to ensure calculated risk-taking.

Potential Drawbacks (Disadvantages) of Group Decision-making

Group decision-making is not without several potential drawbacks. Social pressures (apart from group think) may be involved. Social pressure is a major factor in conformity. Within groups, members of social cliques or work crews may feel the necessity of supporting the informal leader or most vocal member of their twosome or threesome and hence fail to be totally open and honest in sharing their ideas and opinions. There is the possibility of less than professional trade-offs on the part of the group members to gain support for their decisions.

Interpersonal obstacles such as personality conflicts, unique psychological needs of some individuals (such as the need to dominate), even the overly talkative can interrupt the group decision-making process. The leader/facilitator must be alert to impending problems in this area, and if necessary, talk with the responsible individual(s) in private.

Another problem that can emerge in group decision-making is that of hidden agendas, an ulterior motive. Often this ulterior motive entails a vested self-interest in the outcome of the group's decision. This person may dominate, intimidate, or refuse to be cooperative with others in arriving at a collaborative decision. The presence of this individual cannot only impede the progress of the group in rational decision-making but also can impact the members' morale and enthusiasm, resulting in a less-than-optimal decision. The discussion leader should be aware of those with such hidden agendas.

In regard to the preceding obstacle potentials, it must be remembered that groups tend to bring out the **best** and the **worst** in individuals. The use of group decision-making may unduly raise the expectations of subordinates with reference to outcome of the decision (overnight changes) and future involvement. It is important that the CO help subordinates keep their involvement in perspective.

QUALITIES OF EFFECTIVE DECISIONMAKERS

The success of a CO is not a matter of luck or fortune. It's a composite of knowledges, skills, effort, and personal attributes. Sometimes described as movers, shakers, goers, and doers, effective leaders also make effective decisions. Marvin identifies what he believes to be the 12 most common characteristics of effective decisionmakers. Effective decisionmakers are:

Synoptic.

They focus on the big picture, considering all possible opportunities and potentials.

Dissatisfied.

They have an inherent preoccupation to make the best better.

Sensitive.

They continuously and consistently exercise acute sensitivity to others and their environment.

Catalytic.

They make things happen and assume personal responsibility to do so.

Opportunistic.

They take advantage of opportunities and even create opportunities where there seemingly are none.

Skill-directed.

They do not play trial and error; they rely on things they do well and make the most of available inputs and resources.

Innovative.

They are creative and they draw upon the creativity and strengths of others.

Forward thinking.

They look to the future and search for (more) opportunities.

Resourceful.

They utilize the expertise and ideas of others, involving them in decision-making as appropriate.

Evaluative.

They know what they are doing, asking the right questions and pursuing the answers to those questions.

Expedient.

They get things done.

Courageous.

They take calculated risks and they act, accepting responsibility for the things they do.

For reference, see P. Marvin. Developing Decisions for Action (1971) p. 46.

The professional fire service officer will compare his/her decision-making characteristics to that of effective decisionmakers. Doing so enables one to identify areas in which he/she can strive for growth, enhancing decision-making skills. Dare to improve yourself and your decision-making skills. Make a decision **to do so** and act!

THREE DECISION-MAKING PRINCIPLES

The confident CO knows that there are 3 summary principles involved in effective decision-making regardless which style of decision-making is used.

Make the Decision

First, he/she makes a rational decision. In making non-programmed decisions, he/she follows the purposeful decision-making process and adapts the decision-making style to match the nature of the decision. A decision is made.

Implement and Evaluate

After reaching a high-quality decision, the effective decision-maker implements it. He/She not only implements the decision but also monitors its impact. He/She is alert for unforeseen consequences and acts to avoid unnecessary disruption caused by the decision. He/She implements the decision and evaluates results.

Recognize That You Probably Cannot Satisfy Everyone

The effective decision-maker recognizes that in reality, one cannot expect to satisfy everyone every time one makes a decision. He/She realizes that even with the collaborative consensus approach some will likely be less than enthusiastic about any given decision.

The effective CO is not striving to win a popularity contest, or to be one of the group. The ultimate decision must reflect and contribute positively to the good of the group and the fire service. He/She doesn't try to satisfy everyone. The CO will be judged by the quality of the decisions he/she makes.

SUMMARY

Decision-making is the one managerial/leadership function which directly affects and overlaps all other functions.

Rational decision-making requires the decisionmaker to use a systematic process along with the appropriate style.

Effective decisionmakers are aware of their own strengths and limitations. They seek to improve the quality of decisions made and accept responsibility for their decisions.

They understand that the well-known adage applies to them:

"Due to circumstances beyond my control, I am master of my fate and captain of my soul."

GLOSSARY

1. **Decision**--A choice made between two or more alternative options.
2. **Decision-making**--A process of deliberation which leads to a final decision.
3. **Rational Decision-making**--A systematic process which relies on defining the problem, collecting information, generating multiple alternatives, and analyzing various alternatives in order to select the most appropriate decision.
4. **Consensus Decision-making**--A collaborative approach in which everyone is heard and all views are carefully considered. Everyone supports the final decision even if it is not their preferred solution.

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PROBLEM-SOLVING I: IDENTIFYING NEEDS AND PROBLEMS

OBJECTIVES

The participants will:

- 1. Identify services provided by a typical fire company (outputs), and resources needed to provide these services (inputs) and understand their interrelationship.*
 - 2. Describe advantages and disadvantages of individual and group problem-solving.*
 - 3. Demonstrate nominal group technique (NGT).*
 - 4. Describe four methods by which problems are solved.*
 - 5. Outline the critical steps in a problem-solving model.*
 - 6. Apply force field analysis as an aid to diagnosing a problem.*
-

- C. What internal processes assure the department's ability to deliver required services?

- D. The community provides inputs (resources) and the fire department provides processes in order to achieve outputs (services).

III. PROBLEM-SOLVING: A CRITICAL SKILL

- A. CO challenges.
 - 1. CO is responsible for efficient service delivery.
 - 2. CO must allocate available resources.
 - 3. CO must be sensitive to company needs.
 - 4. CO must prioritize and balance individual and group needs.
 - 5. CO must determine whether existing processes are meeting existing needs.
 - 6. If not, there's a problem.

- B. Is identifying and solving problems a management or company responsibility?

**DEMONSTRATION
NOMINAL GROUP TECHNIQUE (NGT)**

What is NGT?

Method of structuring small group meetings.

Helpful in identifying problems, exploring solutions, and setting priorities.

Assures participation of each person.

Neutralizes power/status differences among group members.

Eliminates domination of the process by any individual.

Works best with five to ten group members.

Requires from 60 to 90 minutes.

HOW TO PREPARE

Formulate the NGT question.

1. Keep it simple.
2. Phrase it in such a way that you're sure to get the type of response you want.

A poor NGT question would be: "What's bothering you?"

A good NGT question would be: "What problems are reducing our company's effectiveness?"

Assemble supplies (easel pad, easel, markers, masking tape, 3x5 cards).

Write the question clearly on a easel pad and post on front wall.

Arrange chairs in a U shape, if possible.

THE OPENING STATEMENT

Emphasize the importance of the task.

Note the value of each person's contributions.

Explain the goal of the meeting.

Briefly summarize the process.

THE NGT PROCESS

Step 1

Silent generation of ideas in writing.

1. Read question aloud.
2. Tell group members to respond to the question in writing.
3. Group members must work silently and independently.

Allow about 5 minutes for completion of this step.

Step 2

Round-robin recording of ideas.

1. Go around the room and get one idea from each person.
2. Write ideas on easel pad.
3. **Allow no discussion.**
4. Keep going around the room until all ideas are listed.
5. Number items as you record.
6. Encourage hitchhiking. (When someone else's idea triggers you to think of another idea you hadn't considered.)
7. Group members may pass and reenter on the next round.
8. As you fill up a sheet, tear it off and tape it on wall so that it's visible to everyone.

Step 3

Clarification of listed ideas.

1. Clarify each idea.
2. Cut off discussion of an idea as soon as it is understood by the group.
3. Do not allow arguments or justifications--each person will have an opportunity to vote in next step.
4. Combine duplicate items.
5. Eliminate inappropriate items (personnel problems, problems which cannot be solved at company level).

Step 4

Voting.

1. Each person receives five 3x5 cards.
2. Ask members to select the five most important ideas and write one of them in the center of each card.
3. Advise them to write the item's number from the list in the upper left-hand corner of each card.

For example:

20
Poor Performance At Structure Fires

4. Have group members spread all five cards out in front of them on the table.

5. Select the most important card and write **5** in the lower right-hand corner. Turn the card over.
6. Select the least important of the remaining cards. Write **1** in the lower right-hand corner. Turn the card over.
7. Select the most important of the remaining cards. Write **4** in the lower right-hand corner. Turn the card over.
8. Select the least important of the remaining cards. Write **2** in the lower right-hand corner.
9. Write **3** in the lower right-hand corner of the remaining card.

20

Poor Performance
At Structure Fires

3

Step 5

Recording and scoring.

1. Collect cards and shuffle.
2. Record all votes on easel pad.
3. Lead a discussion on voting pattern.
4. Resist suggestions to add individual rankings to get a consolidated score for each item. (An item which received votes of 2, 1, 1, 1 would have a total of 5, but would carry more weight than an item which received a single vote of 5.)

V. CHECK PRIORITIES

- A. Who benefits?
- B. Is it cost-effective?

- C. Impact on company performance?

VI. PROBLEM-SOLVING METHODS

- A. Intuitive.
- B. Minimum effort.
- C. Politically-based.
- D. Systematic.

VII. A SYSTEMATIC PROBLEM-SOLVING MODEL

- A. Critical steps.
 - 1. Identify and prioritize problems.
 - 2. Establish goals.
 - 3. Situation analysis.
 - 4. Set objectives.
 - 5. Develop action plans.
 - 6. Implement.
 - 7. Monitor.
 - 8. Evaluate.
- B. Determine level of subordinate participation.

VIII. ESTABLISHING GOALS

- A. Convert problem to goal. A goal is a broad statement of what you wish to accomplish.

Example:

Problem: Poor company performance at structure fires.

Goal: To improve company performance at structure fires.

- B. Evaluate the goal.
 - 1. Realistic?
 - 2. Important?
 - 3. Challenging?

IX. SITUATION ANALYSIS

- A. Determine causal factors.
 - 1. Ask lots of questions.
 - 2. Separate symptoms from causes.
- B. Identify assets.
- C. Force Field Analysis is a useful tool for this step.

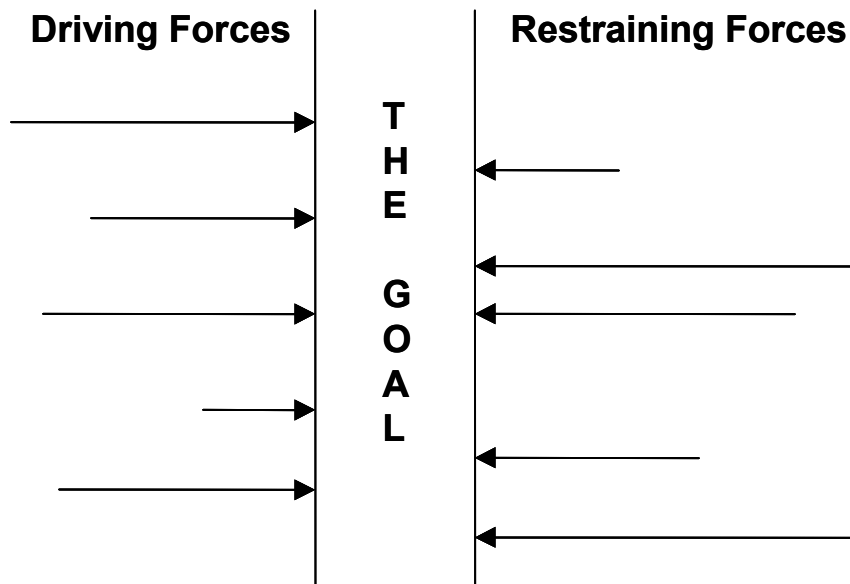
X. FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS

- A. Five steps:
 - 1. Define the problem and goal.
 - 2. List driving forces.
 - 3. List restraining forces.
 - 4. Estimate relative strength of each force.
 - 5. Estimate your ability to influence the forces.
- B. Three possible conditions.
 - 1. Driving forces outweigh restraining forces--okay to proceed.
 - 2. Restraining forces outweigh driving forces and you have little potential for influencing restraining forces--reconsider.
 - 3. Driving and restraining forces are about equal--work on eliminating or reducing restraining forces.

ACTIVITY 1

FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS

A force field analysis is a useful way of identifying pressures for and against change which must be considered in a problem-solving situation. The pressures for change (the driving forces) are listed and their strength is estimated. The length of each arrow represents the strength of that particular pressure in the mind of the person doing the analysis. The pressures which resist change (the restraining forces) are also listed and their strengths are estimated. The driving and restraining forces can then be arranged in a diagram similar to the one shown below.



This technique does not make decisions. Rather, it helps the problem-solver to visualize the forces at work and the individual and cumulative strengths of each force. A more sound decision can be made when pertinent factors are identified.

Step #1: Define the problem and goal.

The Problem:

Poor company performance at structure fires.

The Goal:

To improve company performance at structure fires.

Step #2

Individually list the forces driving the problem toward a solution (these may be individual, organizational, or external). In short, they are things you have going for you in reaching your goal.

1. Good ICS in place in department.
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Step #3

Individually list the restraining forces that are preventing movement toward solution (these forces can also be individual, organizational, or external). In short, they are things which are contributing to the problem.

1. Lack of "hands-on" experience.
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Step #4

Estimate the relative strength of each driving and restraining force (high, medium, or low).

Step #5

Estimate your ability to influence each force, particularly the high impact restraining forces. Assess your ability to reach the goal based on this analysis.

GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CO

The most important company responsibility is to carry out an assigned mission within the department. The CO is the link between the fire department administration and the firefighters and is responsible for transforming departmental goals into specific actions. The CO, therefore, must allocate available resources to meet company needs.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERVICE DELIVERY AND NEEDED RESOURCES

The community depends on the fire department for effective and efficient delivery of essential services. In order to assure availability of such **services** or **outputs** (EMS, fire suppression, fire prevention, etc.), the community provides necessary **resources or inputs** (personnel, apparatus, equipment, etc.) to the department. The department must manage available resources in a way that assures its ability to deliver required services effectively. This is accomplished by establishing and maintaining **effective managerial processes** throughout the department. Thus, the CO is responsible for such processes at the company level.

PROBLEM-SOLVING: A CRITICAL SKILL

In order to fulfill the basic responsibility of contributing to the efficient operation of the fire and life safety system, the CO must allocate resources to meet needs. Before allocating resources, the CO must be able to identify the needs of the company. Allocating resources--which are often inadequate, to satisfy needs--which are often overwhelming, is one of the greatest challenges to managers of all levels. The CO must establish priorities. Problems arise when the needs of individuals or groups cannot be met, especially when their priorities are different from those of the allocator.

The CO has to make judgments/decisions about whether existing processes are adequately meeting individual and group needs of the company. Problems generally arise when existing processes fail to meet existing needs. Then the CO must establish problem-solving priorities.

Often all problems are blamed on management. Perceived problems often focus on lack of personnel or equipment (resources) and overlook how things are working (processes). While such an approach offers an easy way out for the CO, it simply avoids the real issues. In actuality, many problems can and should be solved at the company level without management involvement or support.

Admittedly, a few problems cannot be solved without management intervention, particularly ones which are caused by insufficient resources. But even these problems can be influenced in ethical and productive ways from the company level. Participative management implies that employees from all levels within an organization participate in and contribute to the problem-solving process. (Participation in this context can mean giving input, rather than being the actual problem-solver.)

It's the CO's responsibility to identify and solve problems which can be taken care of at the company level and to inform management about other critical problems which require upper-level attention.

IDENTIFYING AND PRIORITIZING PROBLEMS

The CO has needs and priorities to be satisfied and resources to be allocated, and, when these cannot be properly balanced, problems often result.

What is a problem? A problem exists when there is a difference between the actual situation and the desired situation. A problem exists whenever there is a gap between the way things are and the way they ought to be. The greater the gap, the bigger the problem.

The CO has to decide how much input he/she needs from company members in order to identify and prioritize company problems.

There are distinct advantages to getting a maximum amount of input from all company members. Using a group process:

- Allows the CO to hear about problems from company members' perspectives.

- Generates more ideas--the CO gets a better picture of all problems.

- Meets subordinates' need to be involved.

- Heightens subordinates' awareness of conflicting needs and the complexity involved in trying to balance such conflicts.

- Generates subordinate interest in solving company problems.

But, there are also some potential disadvantages to the group process:

- Usually takes more time.

Cliques and conflicts sometimes develop.

Individuals may have little interest in participating.

Interacting groups may waste time on interpersonal relationships.

Ideas are sometimes evaluated prematurely.

Conformity may inhibit idea generation.

Certain people can dominate discussion and some are not heard.

Two techniques have been designed to overcome the disadvantages listed above: Brainstorming and NGT. Both techniques can be used effectively for identifying problems and/or generating solutions. The NGT is particularly helpful in identifying a number of problems **and** establishing priorities for problem-solving efforts.

CHECKING PRIORITIES

After problems have been prioritized the CO needs to do a final check before committing resources to solving identified problems. The following questions will help determine whether solving a problem is worth the required time and effort.

Who will benefit if the problem gets solved? Highest priority should go to problems which impact on the public (quality of service, etc.).

Will it save money?

What's the impact on company performance? Will solving the problem enhance company effectiveness?

If solving the problem will not have a direct or indirect effect on quality of service, cost of operations, or company performance, then the problem is questionable as a valid priority.

METHODS OF SOLVING PROBLEMS

The first method is intuitive, which is based on hunches, gut feelings, and is not systematic. The second is minimum effort. Judgments are based on a limited number of alternatives. An alternative is selected because it is

good enough, rather than the best one. This method is sometimes called "satisficing."

The third method is politically based. The problem is diagnosed in terms of preferences and power of other parties affected by decision. Consequences of alternatives are assessed in terms of acceptance or resistance by other parties. Judgments are based on compromise, and implemented in a way that considers stake and political position of involved parties.

The fourth method is systematic. The problem-solver:

Relies on measurable objectives to achieve a goal.

Has explored all possible alternatives.

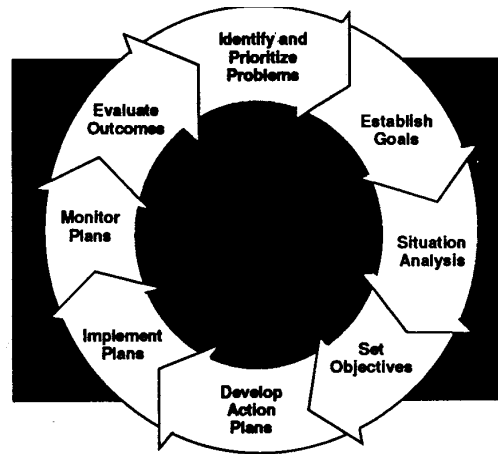
Knows relative pros and cons of each.

Always chooses the alternative(s) that maximize(s) the attainment of the goal.

There are a fixed number of steps in the process. This method represents the ideal.

A SYSTEMATIC PROBLEM-SOLVING MODEL

The figure below depicts an eight step model of a problem-solving process. The circle serves as a visual reminder that the problem-solving process is evolutionary in nature. Thus, it often becomes necessary to cycle back to earlier steps if difficulties arise or if solutions initially attempted fail to reach the established goal.



If a systematic problem-solving approach is required, the CO again needs to decide how much subordinate input is required to solve the problem. The CO should consider maximum participation throughout the entire process if:

The subordinates know more about the problem than the CO.

The subordinates will be affected in some way by the solution.

The CO needs subordinate cooperation in order to achieve the goal.

SETTING GOALS

After problems have been identified, convert each problem into a goal. A goal is a broad statement of what you wish to accomplish. For example; Problem: Poor company performance at structure fires. Goal: To improve company performance at structure fires.

Then evaluate your goal. Is it realistic (achievable)? Is it important (worth our time)? Is it challenging (do we care)?

SITUATION ANALYSIS

First, determine causal factors. For example: What are the symptoms? Who is involved? What is the standard? What exactly is happening? Where is the problem occurring? When does it occur?

Some problems will have only one cause; others will have several. Many errors in problem-solving can be traced to confusing symptoms with causes. Symptoms are what happened such as, decreased productivity, lower quality, poor morale, and communication breakdowns. Causes are why it happened.

Next, identify factors which can contribute to reaching your goal (assets).

Finally, explore alternative strategies for reaching your goal and prioritize.

FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS

Force field analysis is a tool for organizing and analyzing information during the situation analysis step.

It may be used individually or by a group.

The procedure is as follows:

Clearly define the problem and goal by stating the difference between the actual and the desired situation.

List the forces that are driving the problem toward solution. These forces can be individual, organizational, or external.

List the restraining forces that are preventing movement toward solution. These forces can also be individual, organizational, or external.

Make estimates of the relative strength of each of the driving and restraining forces.

Make estimates of your ability to influence each force.

One of three conditions will result:

If the driving forces outweigh the restraining forces, simply proceed.

If the restraining forces heavily outweigh the driving forces and if you do not have any possibility of reducing restraining forces, you should probably reconsider your goal because your probability of success is limited.

If the driving and restraining forces are about equal you should resist the temptation to push harder on the driving forces because the restraining forces will push back even harder. Rather, work to weaken or eliminate some of the restraining forces.

SUMMARY

Let's recap for a moment and review our progress up to this point with the problem-solving model. We recognize that a problem exists. We then decide the appropriate level of participation of others in working toward a solution. Next we determine a problem-solving method (intuitive, minimum effort, political or systematic). The problem is converted to a goal. After determining a goal, we identify factors contributing to the problem (causal factors) and identify factors driving us toward a solution (assets).

The model will be completed in Problem-Solving II.

Glossary and Bibliography are located after Problem-Solving II.

PROBLEM-SOLVING II: SOLVING PROBLEMS

OBJECTIVES

The participants will:

- 1. Complete the force field analysis begun during Problem-Solving I.*
 - 2. Demonstrate brainstorming.*
 - 3. Describe the steps that must be carried out in a problem-solving process after the problem has been identified and analyzed.*
-

I. REVIEW (OPTIONAL)

- A. CO responsibilities.
- B. Identifying and prioritizing problems.
- C. Problem-solving methods.
- D. A systematic problem-solving model.
- E. Establishing goals.
- F. Situation analysis.

II. FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS--CONTINUED

- A. Identify and estimate the strength of driving forces.
- B. Identify and estimate the strength of restraining forces.
- C. Estimate your ability to influence the strongest forces.
 - 1. Which driving forces can you use?
 - 2. Which restraining forces can you eliminate or significantly reduce?
Which ones are beyond your control?
- D. What's your potential for solving the problem?
- E. Generate alternative strategies.

III. BRAINSTORMING RULES

- A. Record all ideas.
- B. Anyone can speak at any time.
- C. No criticism.
- D. Encourage unusual ideas.
- E. Piggy-backing is O.K.
- F. Evaluate and prioritize after all ideas are listed.

IV. SETTING OBJECTIVES

- A. Convert priority strategies to objectives.
1. Each strategy needs an objective.
 2. An objective is a specific description of an expected outcome to be attained over an identified period of time.
 3. Spell out:
 - a. Audience (who).
 - b. Behavior (what).
 - c. Conditions (by when, where, how).
 - d. Degree (quantity and quality).

Example:

Problem: Poor performance at structure fires.

Restraining force: Lack of hands-on experience.

Strategy: Provide hands-on training.

Objective: By November 1 our crew will successfully complete four structure-fire drills at the training tower.

GOAL				
=				
OBJ. #1	+	OBJ. #2	+	OBJ. #3

ACTIVITY 2

SITUATION ANALYSIS AND SETTING OBJECTIVES

Instructions:

1. Each group will be assigned one of the problems and goals from the NGT exercise.

Your Problem: _____

Your Goal: _____

2. Complete a Force Field Analysis on your assigned problem.
 - a. **Brainstorm** and list on easel pad paper all the driving forces you can think of. (Things you have going for you which will drive you toward reaching the goal.)
 - b. **Brainstorm** and list on easel pad paper all the restraining forces you can think of. (Things which are contributing to the problem.)
 - c. **Evaluate** the impact of each listed force (high or low).
 - d. For each high-impact force, estimate your ability to increase or decrease the force. Place an asterisk beside those forces which you can effectively use.
3. Brainstorm and list on easel pad paper alternative strategies for increasing or decreasing the asterisked forces. (Combine forces where appropriate.)
4. Select those strategies you need to implement in order to solve the problem.
5. Convert **one** of your strategies into an objective. Write the objective on easel pad paper.
6. Select a spokesperson to make a report to the class.

You have 45 minutes to complete this activity.

V. DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING ACTION PLANS

A. Writing action plans.

1. A step-by-step outline of work that needs to be done.
2. Each objective requires a separate action plan.

GOAL					
=					
Obj. #1	+	Obj. #2	+	Obj. #3	
Action Plan		Action Plan		Action Plan	
1. _____		1. _____		1. _____	
2. _____		2. _____		2. _____	
3. _____		3. _____		3. _____	
4. _____		4. _____		4. _____	
5. _____				5. _____	
6. _____					

3. Action plan requirements.
 - a. Determine and assign tasks.
 - b. Assign responsibility for monitoring.
 - c. Plan for evaluation.
 - d. Determine timeframes.
 - e. Identify needed resources.
 - f. Document completion of each task.

PROBLEM-SOLVING II: SOLVING PROBLEMS

Let's see what an action plan for our structure-fire objective might look like.

ACTION PLAN

DATE _____

Goal: To improve each crew member's ability to perform during a structure fire.

Objective: By November 1, each crew member will successfully complete four structure fire drills at the training tower.

Step #	Action	To be Completed by	Person Responsible	Resources Needed	Date Completed
1	Review crew members' vacation schedules. Develop list of dates when total crew is expected to be on duty.	07/08	FF Green		
2	Coordinate with training center to reserve four dates.	07/15	FF Green		
3	Get necessary approval for out-of-service time on drill days.	07/31	Lt. Smith		
4	Publish schedule of drills to all crew members.	08/05	Lt. Smith		
5	Determine equipment needed.	08/15	FF Jones		
6	Secure necessary equipment.	09/01	FF Jones		
7	Conduct drill number 1.	09/15	Lt. Smith		
8	Conduct drill number 2.	10/01	Lt. Smith		
9	Conduct drill number 3.	10/15	Lt. Smith		
10	Conduct drill number 4.	11/01	Lt. Smith		

Notes for the future: _____

Use "Notes for the Future" to document problems encountered, and unanticipated events or changes you would make next time.

VI. MONITORING AND EVALUATING

A. Monitor.

1. Make sure tasks are completed correctly and on time.
2. Amend action plan when necessary.
3. Keep work group informed.

B. Evaluate.

1. Did we meet our goal?
2. What did we do right?
3. What did we do wrong?
4. What could we have done better?

VII. SUMMARY

REVIEW OF PROBLEM-SOLVING I

The CO has a responsibility to recognize the relationship between **resources** (inputs) and **service delivery** (outputs). In order to balance inputs and outputs the CO must establish and maintain effective company-level **processes**. Finally, the CO has a responsibility to monitor internal processes by identifying and solving company-level problems.

IDENTIFYING, DEFINING, AND PRIORITIZING PROBLEMS

A problem exists if there is a gap (difference) between what is desired and what actually exists. After a problem has been identified, you must decide whether resources should be committed to attempt a solution. This decision is based on the urgency and importance of the problem and whether you have the authority to act.

The CO must also select an appropriate level of participation for others in carrying out problem-solving activities. There are three general levels of involvement: 1) none; 2) some input from group; and 3) group working together. Different levels may be used in different parts of the problem-solving process. The effectiveness of problem-solving depends on both the selection of the right level of participation and on the process used. Who is involved depends upon the importance and complexity of the problem, the required degree of acceptance by group, time available, whose values should be considered and what weight they should be given.

The nominal group technique (NGT) is an effective process for identifying and prioritizing problems.

Priority problem-solving efforts should be given to those problems which have a direct or indirect impact on quality of service, cost of operations, and company performance.

There are four methods of solving problems: 1) **Intuitive** which is based on hunches; 2) **Minimum effort** which involves forming a judgment based on a limited number of alternatives and choosing an alternative that is good enough--not necessarily the best; 3) **Political**, and 4) **Systematic** which is a rational process with a fixed number of steps. This process is time-consuming, exploring **all** possible alternatives and choosing the alternatives that maximize the attainment of the goal. The key to selecting the proper method is to select the one which takes the least time and resources to arrive at a satisfactory solution to the problem.

A systematic problem-solving model includes several critical steps:

1. Identify and prioritize problems.
2. Establish goals.
3. Situation analysis.
4. Set objectives.
5. Develop action plans.
6. Implement plans.
7. Monitor.
8. Evaluate outcomes.

The problem-solving process is an evolutionary process. It often becomes necessary to cycle back to earlier steps as difficulties arise or if alternative solutions initially attempted do not bring about a satisfactory solution.

REVIEW OF FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS

Force field analysis is a useful way of identifying pressures for and against change in a problem situation.

The technique:

Pressures for change (their driving forces) are listed and their strength is estimated. The pressures which resist change (the restraining forces) are also listed and their strength is estimated. The relative strength of the particular pressure is indicated by the length of the arrow. The driving and restraining forces are then arranged in a diagram similar to the one shown in Problem-Solving I.

The technique does not make decisions.

Rather, it helps you to visualize the forces at work and their individual and cumulative strengths. In order to solve the problem, it is necessary to evaluate the impact of each force and the probability of increasing or decreasing it.

GENERATING ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES

Alternative strategies are actions that could reduce or eliminate the difference between the actual and the desired situation. For each driving and restraining force, identify actions you must take in order to increase or reduce the force.

CHOOSING FROM ALTERNATIVES

Evaluate each of the alternative strategies.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?

Do you have the resources necessary?

Are group members committed?

Is it cost-effective?

Which one(s) are critical to reaching your stated goal?

SETTING OBJECTIVES

Convert each critical strategy to a written objective.

An objective is a specific description of an expected outcome to be attained over an identified period of time.

An objective must spell out the ABCD's (Audience, Behavior, Conditions, Degree).

Objectives should define what you intend to accomplish as specifically as possible.

Example:

One of the causes of poor performance at structure fires is "lack of hands-on experience."

Converting this to an objective might produce something like:

"By November 1, 1988, our crew will successfully complete four structure fire drills at the training tower."

You now have a strategic plan for reaching your stated goal.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} & & & & \text{GOAL} & & \\ & & & & = & & \\ \text{OBJ. \#1} & + & & \text{OBJ. \#2} & + & & \text{OBJ. \#3} \end{array}$$

Before moving on, take a final look at your problem-solving plan. If you accomplish all of your objectives can you reasonably assume that you'll reach your goal and eliminate the problem? If not, consider additional and/or different strategies (objectives).

DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING ACTION PLANS

An action plan is a step-by-step outline of work that needs to be done in order to meet the stated objective. Each objective requires its own action plan.

A good action plan requires that you:

- Determine and assign tasks.
- Assign responsibility for monitoring.
- Plan for evaluation.
- Determine timeframes.
- Identify needed resources.
- Document completion of each task.

Now you have a complete set of objectives for reaching a specific goal. Each objective has a clear and concise action plan. Individuals can now go to work on their assigned action plan steps. Remember, coordination and communication are essential.

GOAL					
=					
Obj. #1	+	Obj. #2	+	Obj. #3	
Action Plan		Action Plan		Action Plan	
1. _____		1. _____		1. _____	
2. _____		2. _____		2. _____	
3. _____		3. _____		3. _____	
4. _____		4. _____		4. _____	
5. _____				5. _____	
6. _____					

While the present alternative is being implemented, think of the next alternative you will try if this one doesn't work.

MONITORING AND EVALUATING

The CO needs to monitor each activity to make sure tasks are completed correctly and on time. Amend the plan where necessary (unanticipated events, inability to meet specified deadlines, etc.). Keep all work group members informed of progress. Monitoring and evaluating can indicate discrepancies in the plan that necessitate cycling back to earlier parts of the process. The problem-solving model is a continuing process, not one where you follow the steps once and are automatically successful.

Completion of the problem-solving process requires an in-depth evaluation. Evaluation is taking a "lessons learned" approach. This allows you to capitalize on noted strengths and weaknesses in your next problem-solving venture. Bring the work group back together and evaluate the total project in terms of both **outcome** and **process**.

The following are possible questions which can be used to determine "Did it work?"

Did we meet our stated goal?

What did we do right?

What did we do wrong?

What could we have done better?

Almost no project ends without bringing to light additional problems of which you were unaware. Thus, the process begins again.

ACTION PLAN

DATE _____

GOAL:

OBJECTIVE:

STEP #	ACTION	TO BE COMPLETED BY	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	RESOURCES NEEDED	DATE COMPLETED

NOTES FOR THE FUTURE:

GLOSSARY

1. **Force Field Analysis**--A tool for organizing and analyzing information during a problem-solving process.
2. **Goal**--A broad statement of what you wish to accomplish.
3. **Intuitive method of problem-solving**--Based on hunches, gut feelings.
4. **Minimum effort method of problem-solving**--A process where alternatives are investigated only until a satisfactory solution (one that minimally satisfies the objectives) is found.
5. **Nominal group technique**--A technique for structuring group meetings which assures participation and neutralizes power/status differences.
6. **Objective**--A specific description of an expected outcome to be attained over an identified period of time.
7. **Political method of problem-solving**--A process which selects a solution based on the preferences and power of parties affected.
8. **Problem**--A difference that exists between an actual situation and a desired situation.
9. **Problem-solving**--A process that results in eliminating the gap between desired performance and actual performance.
10. **Systematic method of problem-solving**--A rational process whereby the problem-solver knows his/her objectives and has them ranked in order of importance, has explored all possible alternative solutions, knows the relative pros and cons of each, and always chooses the alternative(s) that maximize(s) potential attainment of the goal.

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RUNNING A MEETING

OBJECTIVES

The participants will:

- 1. Discuss the necessity for having planned meetings.*
 - 2. Identify three types of meetings.*
 - 3. Describe the requirements for running an effective meeting.*
 - 4. Analyze a meeting agenda.*
 - 5. Take effective meeting minutes.*
-

I. THE NECESSITY FOR HAVING MEETINGS

A. A meeting is an assembly of persons for a specific purpose.

B. The self-preservation syndrome.

Meetings are:

1. Inevitable.
2. Desirable.
3. Self-preservation oriented.

C. Leader options.

1. Communication options.
 - a. Oral.
 - b. Written.
 - c. Nonverbal.
2. Oral options.
 - a. One-on-one.
 - b. Group.

ACTIVITY 1

CATEGORIZING MEETINGS

List meetings you have attended recently.

II. TYPES AND PURPOSES OF MEETINGS

- A. Types of meetings.
 - 1. Informational.
 - 2. Decisional.
 - 3. Critique.
 - 4. Combination.
- B. When in charge, take charge!
- C. Leader responsibilities.
 - 1. Get task accomplished.
 - 2. Get team to work well together.
- D. Perceptions and expectations of leader and group must match.

ACTIVITY 2

WAYS TO RUN OR RUIN A MEETING

Ways to ruin a meeting:

Ways to run a meeting:

III. SEVEN REQUIREMENTS FOR RUNNING MEETINGS

- A. Every meeting must have a purpose.
- B. Everything has its own time and place.

MEETING SETUP CHECKLIST

Facilities:

- Room reserved
- Table and chairs arranged
- Appearance professional

Attendees:

- Invited to attend
- Informed of time and place
- Attendance acknowledged

Equipment/Materials:

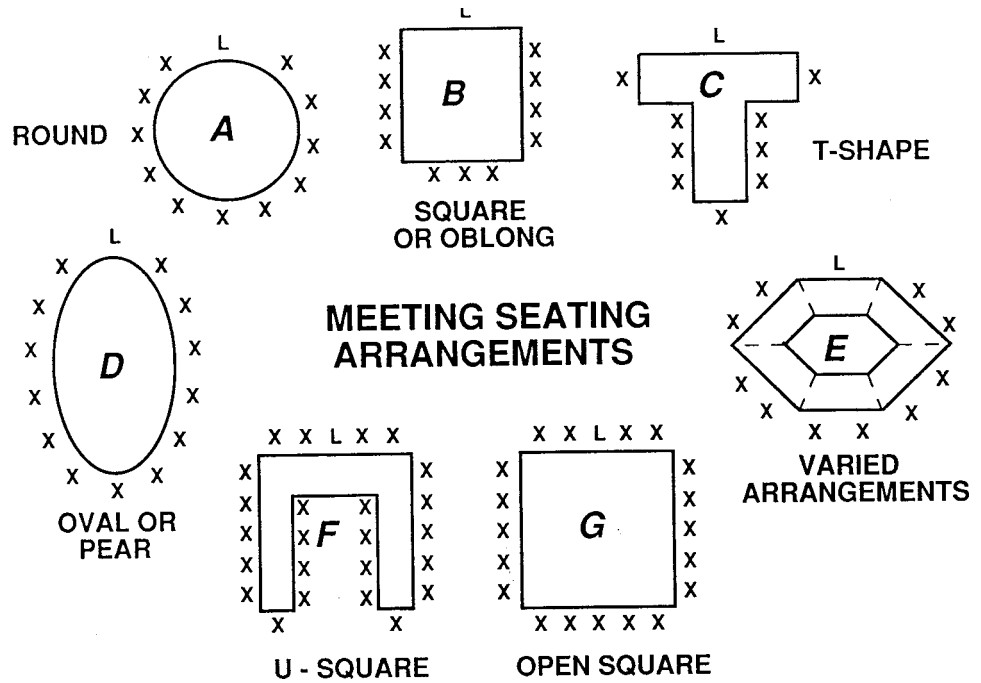
- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Audiovisual equipment tested and in place | <input type="checkbox"/> Masking tape |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chart paper/easel | <input type="checkbox"/> Handouts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Film/Cassette | <input type="checkbox"/> Agenda |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pens (markers and others) and Paper | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting documents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nametags | |

Household:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coffeepot | <input type="checkbox"/> Key to room |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Instant coffee, tea, chocolate | <input type="checkbox"/> Lights (location, use, switches) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sugar and cream | <input type="checkbox"/> PA system (use, controls) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spoons and stirrers | <input type="checkbox"/> Restrooms (location, handicapped facilities) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cups | <input type="checkbox"/> Temperature (heat and/or A.C. controls) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Napkins or paper towels | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wastebasket | |

- C. Every individual is important.
 - 1. Only invite those necessary.
 - 2. Anticipate attributes and likely responses of each participant.
 - 3. Plan ahead.
 - 4. Call key players in advance.
- D. Prepare an agenda.

- E. Where you sit or stand is important.



- F. Implement ground rules.
 - 1. Time limits.
 - 2. Listen.

3. Avoid interruptions.
4. Control problem individuals.
 - a. The show-off.
 - b. The argumentative heckler.
 - c. The rambler.
 - d. The enemy.
 - e. The off-base participant.
 - f. The silent one.
- G. Put it in writing.
 1. Keep a written record.
 2. Summarize key issues.

IV. SMALL VERSUS LARGE MEETINGS

- A. Seven requirements apply to both.
- B. Small meetings may be more difficult to manage.
- C. The "stand-up" meeting.

V. PREPARING A MEETING AGENDA

SAMPLE MEETING AGENDA

Type of Meeting: Weekly crew meeting

Purpose: Informational/Decisional: #2

Date/Time: November 9, 19_____ (2-2:30 p.m.)

Place: Crew meeting area

Agenda:

1. Explain policy on AIDS.
 - a. No policy at present.
 - b. Political budget issue: chief/city/union.
 - c. Hand out proposed policy.
2. Holiday work schedule.
 - a. Alternatives.
 - b. Pros and cons.
 - c. Decision.
3. Community Day Open House.
4. Selection of firefighter of the month.
 - a. Criteria posted.
 - b. Vote: Crimmons or Heavel.
5. Changes to daily work schedule.
6. Issues from crew.

VI. MEETING MINUTES

- A. Prepare and distribute within 24 hours.
- B. Minutes provide clear concise summaries of key agenda items.
- C. Two categories.
 - 1. Action items specify:
 - a. Decision(s) made.
 - b. Agreement(s) reached.
 - c. Assignments made. (Person(s) responsible and target dates.)
 - 2. Progress items specify:
 - a. Accomplishments since last meeting.
 - b. What's happening now.
 - c. Future expectations.

ACTIVITY 3

SUMMARIZING A MEETING

Description of video: One lieutenant and his crew participate in a regularly scheduled crew meeting. The chairs are arranged around a rectangular table offering face-to-face communications. The agenda items are first read by the lieutenant as an overview. The 30-minute time allocated is stated as basically fixed due to a scheduled crew change. The lieutenant goes through each of the items on the agenda.

MEETING MINUTES

Attendees:

Date/Time of meeting:

Agenda item #: 1

Summary of action taken:

Assignments made: Who? What? When?

Agenda item #: 2

Summary of action taken:

Assignments made: Who? What? When?

Agenda item #: 3

Summary of action taken:

Assignments made: Who? What? When?

Agenda item #: 4

Summary of action taken:

Assignments made: Who? What? When?

Agenda item #: 5

Summary of action taken:

Assignments made: Who? What? When?

Agenda item #: 6

Summary of action taken:

Assignments made: Who? What? When?

ACTIVITY 4

WHAT IS YOUR MEETING IQ?

Your correct responses to the statements and questions that follow constitute a summary of this module on running a meeting. Select the one best answer; five points for each correct answer:

Excellent = 90-100

Good = 80-89

Fair = 70-79

Poor = 69 or below

1. Whether or not you or I like meetings or hate them,
 - a. We are destined to spend some of our time attending them.
 - b. Determines whether or not we should have meetings.
 - c. Indicates whether or not they are necessary.
 - d. Is the key to a successful meeting.

2. When you disseminate information verbally, is it best to discuss it while meeting with one person at a time or with a group all at the same time?
 - a. One at a time.
 - b. With a group at the same time.
 - c. It depends on the situation.
 - d. None of the above.

3. What are the major advantages of having a **group** meeting?
 - a. Get discussion; observe multiple reactions.
 - b. Explain details; time efficient.
 - c. Both a and b.
 - d. Everyone enjoys group meetings.

4. What is meant by the "self-preservation syndrome" of attending meetings?
 - a. You attend my meetings for your own protection.
 - b. I will attend yours to find out what you are up to.
 - c. You may complain and I may object, but we will go.
 - d. All of the above.

5. The skills involved in running a successful meeting rather than ruining one are:
 - a. Learned.
 - b. Likely to improve with knowledge and practice.
 - c. Basically something you are born with or without.
 - d. Both a and b.

6. The **primary** benefit in running a meeting well, rather than avoiding a meeting or having it run you, is that you influence the actions of others and
 - a. Time is not wasted.
 - b. Everyone always has their say.
 - c. The best ideas always get adopted.
 - d. You don't have conflicts.

7. Which type of meeting is most common?
 - a. Decisional.
 - b. Critique.
 - c. Formal.
 - d. Informational.

8. If the leader misleads group members into thinking he/she wants recommendations (decisional meeting) but has already made the decision, most likely:
 - a. Morale will be improved as a result of participation.
 - b. This will cause conflict and/or confusion.
 - c. The end will justify the means.
 - d. The leader can probably mislead others to think they contributed to the decision.

9. As a leader of a meeting you have two basic leadership **roles** to perform:
 - a. Task accomplishment.
 - b. Referee and umpire.
 - c. Keep members working well together.
 - d. Both a and c.

10. The seven requirements apply to large and small meetings.
 - a. True.
 - b. False.

11. Interpersonal problems are likely to impact more on large meetings than on small meetings.
 - a. True.
 - b. False.

12. A typical "stand-up meeting" lasts less than 10 minutes.
 - a. True.
 - b. False.

13. Anticipating the likely responses of each participant usually enhances the leader's effectiveness during the meeting.
- a. True.
 - b. False.
14. In terms of "positioning power," meetings are most successful when members see each other face-to-face.
- a. True.
 - b. False.
15. Which of the following statements is false?
- a. When in charge, take charge.
 - b. Speak with key players in advance.
 - c. Prepare an agenda.
 - d. Never start before key players have arrived.
16. Routine but important planning details can be handled best:
- a. On a case-by-case basis.
 - b. From memory.
 - c. With a checklist.
 - d. By someone else.
17. To determine the purpose of a meeting, you should ask which of the following questions:
- a. What are you trying to accomplish (purpose)?
 - b. To what extent will the group control final outcomes?
 - c. What are arrangements for an appropriate time and place?
 - d. Both a and b.

18. Advantages of recording in writing the business conducted during a meeting include the following:
- a. It forces clarification of the issues.
 - b. It fixes specific responsibilities.
 - c. It ensures all important items are remembered.
 - d. All of the above.
19. What is meant by hidden agendas?
- a. Personal issues that are not openly expressed.
 - b. Competition between group members that is "hidden."
 - c. Being for or against something for a reason never stated.
 - d. All of the above.
20. The essential points to be recorded as a summary of a meeting typically include:
- a. Agenda item # and description of action taken.
 - b. Details of the discussion(s).
 - c. The vote count for issues decided by vote.
 - d. All of the above.

THE NECESSITY FOR HAVING MEETINGS

A meeting is an assembly of persons for a specific purpose.

The following is paraphrased from William Carnes, an authority on communications and running meetings.

If **you** call a meeting, I'll **have** to be there. Whether you or I like meetings or hate them, we are both destined to spend some of our workday attending them.

You attend my meetings (for your own protection) and I will attend yours (to find out what you are up to). You may complain and I may object, but we will go.

TYPES AND PURPOSES OF MEETINGS

As the leader, it is important to recognize the **type** and **purpose** of the meeting in order to lead others, get the task accomplished, and get the team to work well together. You **and** all other participants **need** to know the purpose of the meeting.

All business meetings fall into one of four basic types: informational, decisional, critique, or combination.

The **perceptions** and **expectations** of the group membership, if similar, can keep the meeting moving in the right direction. If the fire officer is having an **informational** meeting and firefighters think it is a **decisional** meeting, then unnecessary conflict or confusion can be present.

If the fire officer misleads self or others in thinking recommendations are being asked for (**decisional** meeting) but he/she already "knows" the decision that will be made, then there is more potential for conflict and confusion.

SEVEN REQUIREMENTS FOR RUNNING MEETINGS

First requirement: Every meeting must have a purpose.

If the leader does not know the purpose of the meeting or cannot communicate its purpose to participants, there is no point in having a meeting. To determine the purpose of your meeting, answer these questions:

What are you trying to accomplish? What is the extent of the group's control over the final outcomes.

Second requirement: Everything has its own time and place.

The time and place for your meeting competes with the time and place for doing something else or being somewhere else.

It is simple to take care of the planning and execution of details with regard to the setup of the meeting. By neglecting setup details, you risk "being run by the meeting" rather than "running the meeting."

Third requirement: Each individual is important.

It is vitally important that everyone who should be invited, **is** invited and anyone who should not be invited, **is not** invited. Prior to the meeting, take time to think about the attributes and likely responses of each participant. Plan necessary actions to best accomplish task and have good interpersonal relationship with each participant. Inform them you want them to know key issues. Solicit support or their views.

Fourth requirement: Prepare a meeting agenda.

Preparing a list of topics in advance to be presented during the meeting is a powerful leadership tool.

Fifth requirement: Where you sit or stand is important.

A lot of differing communication messages take place with regard to where a person sits or stands during a meeting. The most appropriate arrangement of table and chairs should be considered in relation to each particular group and its purpose for meeting. Meetings are most successful when members see each other face-to-face. When there is a large number of participants, or when the leader needs to assert more control over the meeting process, alternate arrangements are required. Being alone and center stage prescribes a not-so-subtle position of influence for the leader. In the circle arrangement, no matter where the leader sits, the influence by seating arrangement is equally dispersed among participants. When it is desirable to place some people on the fringe of influence, some seats are far removed from the center of mass or from the leader.

In summary, position is related to influence and where one sits or does not sit changes the environment of the meeting from an open environment to a closed environment. The leader needs to plan and execute the right

environment according to the purpose and the participants of any given meeting.

Sixth requirement: Implement ground rules.

Fix time limits; start on time, and end on time. This is essential for meetings that occur frequently. Leaders need to listen more, speak less. Much can be communicated well when the leader uses good listening skills. Enforce listening strategies while someone else is speaking. Encourage those who habitually are silent to express their views. Override interruptions. Except for emergencies, the only interruptions to be permitted are visits (perhaps telephone calls) from someone who outranks the meeting leader. The time of many people and the focus on many items for this meeting deserve top priority. Adopt ground rules, as you deem appropriate.

Controlling problem individuals at a meeting is sometimes necessary for a leader. The following list categorizes some of these problem types and a possible method of effectively handling these disruptive individuals.

The show-off

Toss him/her a difficult question or say "that's an interesting point, lets see what the group says."

The argumentative heckler

Remain calm. Agree with and affirm good points. Toss bad points to group for discussion. Heckler will be quickly rejected.

The rambler

At a pause in his/her monologue, thank him/her, restate relevant points and go on.

The enemy (personality clash)

Emphasize points of agreement, minimize differences.

The off-base participant

Take the blame yourself. Say: "Something I said must have led you off the subject; this is what we should be discussing."

The silent participant

- a. Ask a provocative question.

- b. Ask direct, easy-to-answer questions from time to time.

Seventh requirement: Put it in writing.

Because memories are faulty and because sometimes you "kind of" have a decision but it is not really clearly defined, having to keep a written record forces clarification of the issues. Some procedures for summarizing a meeting follow. Appoint a competent person to take notes during meetings. Go around the group at the apparent conclusion of a key point and ask a member to summarize the issue points. Place those points on the chalkboard or easel pad, and then get consensus/agreement from the group on that summary. It will help, especially after "heated" discussions, to have as many group members as possible participate in the summary. The goal of the minutes is to be complete, clear, and brief. Record any desired actions that need to be taken. The most practical way is for the leader to assign someone during the meeting to complete the task and file a report within a short period of time. Follow through and check on the progress and quality of the work assigned.

SUMMARY OR MEETING MINUTES

Minutes should be prepared and distributed within 24 hours of a meeting whenever possible and/or appropriate. This helps reaffirm the importance of the meeting and helps reduce errors due to faulty memories.

These minutes should provide clear concise statements of decisions made, actions taken, actions to be taken. By whom and deadlines.

Minutes can be divided into two categories, the first, **action items**, where decisions are made, agreements reached, and assignments made along with who is responsible and their target dates for completion. The second, **progress items**, with information on what has been accomplished since the last meeting, what is being worked on, and what the next accomplishments should be and their target dates.

SMALL VERSUS LARGE MEETINGS

The seven requirements apply to both small and large meetings. In small meetings it is more difficult to get tasks done and to keep personal relationships in good order.

There are several reasons why small meetings are difficult to manage. Small meetings are more personal; offensive words are more apt to be spoken. The leader seems inclined to postpone the start of the meeting until all participants have arrived. There seems to be more inclination to interrupt the leader. Two or more participants are likely to keep talking at the same time. The informal and freer atmosphere of the small meeting makes it difficult to adhere to rules.

Small meetings can take the longest time for even the simplest business. Don't be frustrated with the small meeting's inefficiencies but rather, plan ahead for the meeting. Use the seven requirements with freedom to deviate and direct the flow of the meeting without stopping the spontaneity of the **small** group meeting.

The "stand-up meeting" is one successful way to have a small, informal meeting. It can work well in a routine way such as at the start of a shift. The leader has the crew stand in a circle. There is no eating, leaning, or other distractions. Then, for 10 minutes or less, the leader refers to his/her notebook and disseminates information. Brevity, informality, and simplicity of topics, make it appropriate for using the leader's notebook as the single source of the agenda **and** the written record of the meeting.

PREPARING A MEETING AGENDA

"Preparing a Meeting Agenda," is such an important tool for successful leadership in a group meeting that its basics and subtleties warrant special consideration. Planning ahead is a leadership responsibility. Agenda basics follow:

- Date, time, and location shown
- Written in short phrases
- Items are listed in sequence
- Information is not sufficient to tell you much

Agenda subtleties are found in who controls the agenda, what is discussed and when.

Hidden agendas are usually controversial or personal issues that the leader or other participants have not openly expressed. Often feelings run strong on these issues, and certain members may want to modify the agenda, for example, by introducing proposals for "a solution" before the issue has been fully discussed by all. Competitive feelings between members, some

situation that has been a previous point of contention, or the desire to take up a subject because of some personal attachment can all lead to hidden agendas. The best rule of thumb is to know that hidden agendas may exist. Usually, it is best not to permit someone else's hidden agenda item(s) to be part of the discussion. (For example, indicate that you want to stick to the agenda item(s) at this meeting.)

GLOSSARY

1. **Agenda**--A list of topics that will be covered at the meeting and the sequence in which they will occur.
2. **Critique meeting**--A review of the good points and bad points of prior actions.
3. **Decisional meeting**--Focuses on items that need input from the group before a decision is made.
4. **Hidden agendas**--Unexpressed personal or controversial issues.
5. **Informational meeting**--Focuses on items that people need to know.
6. **Minutes**--Clear, concise statements of decisions made, actions taken, or progress of on-going tasks.
7. **Stand-up meeting**--Leader gathers group members around him/her and using notebook covers the agenda. (10 minutes or less.)

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