

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
UNITED STATES FIRE ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL FIRE ACADEMY**

FOREWORD

The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), an important component of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), serves the leadership of this Nation as the DHS's fire protection and emergency response expert. The USFA is located at the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and includes the National Fire Academy (NFA), National Fire Data Center (NFDC), National Fire Programs (NFP), and the National Preparedness Network (PREPnet). The USFA also provides oversight and management of the Noble Training Center in Anniston, Alabama. The mission of the USFA is to save lives and reduce economic losses due to fire and related emergencies through training, research, data collection and analysis, public education, and coordination with other Federal agencies and fire protection and emergency service personnel.

The USFA's National Fire Academy offers a diverse course delivery system, combining resident courses, off-campus deliveries in cooperation with State training organizations, weekend instruction, and online courses. The USFA maintains a blended learning approach to its course selections and course development. Resident courses are delivered at both the Emmitsburg campus and the Noble facility. Off campus, courses are delivered in cooperation with State and local fire training organizations to ensure this Nation's firefighters are prepared for the hazards they face.

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, creativity in the fire service environment, and managing the multiple roles of the Company Officer level.

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PROBLEM SOLVING: IDENTIFYING NEEDS AND PROBLEMS

OBJECTIVES

The students will:

- 1. Identify services provided by a typical fire/emergency medical services (EMS) 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.*

I. GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMPANY OFFICER

- A. Mission accomplishment.
- B. Linkage.
- C. Transform goals to actions.
- D. Resource allocation.
- E. Problem solving.

II. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERVICE DELIVERY AND NEEDED RESOURCES

- A. Services.
- B. Resources needed for delivery of services.
- C. Relationship between services and resources.
- D. Processes within the department.
- E. The community provides inputs (resources) and the fire/emergency medical services (EMS) department provides processes in order to achieve outputs (services).

III. PROBLEM SOLVING: A CRITICAL SKILL

- A. Company Officer (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 and the CO must establish problem solving priorities.
- B. Is identifying and solving problems a company or management responsibility?

IV. IDENTIFYING AND PRIORITIZING PROBLEMS

- A. What is a problem?
- B. Multiple problems.
- C. Level of participation in problem identification.
- D. Use a group process for problem identification and prioritization.
- E. Techniques for increasing effectiveness of groups.
 - 1. Brainstorming.
 - 2. Nominal Group Technique (NGT).

V. BRAINSTORMING

- A. Rules.
 - 1. Record all ideas.
 - 2. Anyone may speak at any time.
 - 3. No criticism.
 - 4. Encourage unusual ideas.
 - 5. Piggy-backing is allowed.
 - 6. Evaluate and prioritize **after** all ideas are listed.

B. NGT is a simple five-step process:

1. Silent generation of ideas.
2. Recording ideas.
3. Clarification.
4. Voting.
5. Scoring.

C. Advantages of NGT.

1. Assures participation of each group member.
2. Prevents domination of the group by any one person.
3. Each person has an equal vote on the final outcome.
4. The structured process prevents unproductive discussions, arguments, etc.
5. Many ideas are generated.

Demonstration of Nominal Group Technique

What is Nominal Group Technique?

- 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 5 to 10 group members.
- Requires from 60 to 90 minutes.

How to Prepare

1. Formulate the NGT question.
 - a. Keep it simple.
 - b. 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?"

2. Assemble supplies (easel pad, easel, markers, masking tape, index cards).
3. Write the question clearly on an easel pad and post on front wall.
4. 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 Nominal Group Techniques 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.
4. Allow about five minutes for completion of this step.

Step 2: Round-Robin Recording of Ideas

1. Go around the room and have each person say one idea from their list.
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 making it 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 index cards.
2. Ask members to select the five most critical problems 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 and to write the item itself across the center 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 that received votes of 2, 1, 1, 1, would have a total of 5, but would carry more weight than an item that received a single vote of 5.

VI. CHECKING PRIORITIES

- A. Who benefits?
- B. Is it cost-effective?
- C. What is the impact on company performance?

VII. PROBLEM SOLVING METHODS

- A. Intuitive.
- B. Minimum effort.
- C. Politically-based.
- D. Systematic.
- F. Level of participation.

VIII. 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.

IX. FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS

Five steps:

- A. Define the problem and goal.
- B. List driving forces.
- C. List restraining forces.
- D. Estimate relative strength of each force.
- E. Estimate your ability to influence the forces.

Three possible conditions:

- 1. Driving forces outweigh restraining forces so it is okay to proceed.
- 2. Restraining forces outweigh driving forces and you have little potential for influencing restraining forces. You need to reconsider.
- 3. Driving and restraining forces are about equal. Work on eliminating or reducing restraining forces.

Activity PS.1

Generating Alternative Strategies

PURPOSE

To use brainstorming and force field analysis to decide on priority strategies for problem solving.

Directions

You will follow brainstorming rules to generate ideas on how to increase or decrease high-impact forces, which are asterisked on the posted lists.

X. SUMMARY

- A. General responsibility of the CO.
- B. Relationship between service delivery and needed resources.
- C. Problem solving: a critical skill.
- D. Identifying and prioritizing problems.
- E. Brainstorming.
- F. Checking priorities.
- G. Problem solving methods.
- H. Situation analysis.
- I. Force field analysis.

GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMPANY OFFICER

The most important Company Officer responsibility is to carry out an assigned mission within the department. The CO is the link between the fire/EMS department administration and the firefighters/emergency medical technicians (EMTs) 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/EMS 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. 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. When allocating resources, which are often inadequate, to satisfy needs and 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. 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 may 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 is needed from company members in order to identify and prioritize company problems.

Advantages

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 so 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; and
- generates subordinate interest in solving company problems.

Disadvantages

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 may 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.

Generating Alternative Strategies

Alternative strategies are actions that could reduce or eliminate the difference between the actual and 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?

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 the quality of service, cost of operations, or company performance, then the problem is questionable as a valid priority.

PROBLEM SOLVING METHODS

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; and
- 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.

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 driving the problem toward solution. These forces may be individual, organizational, or external.
- List the restraining forces 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:

1. If the driving forces outweigh the restraining forces, simply proceed.
2. 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.
3. 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, focus on reducing or eliminating the restraining forces.

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 that 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.

DECISIONMAKING

STYLES

Objectives

The students will:

- 1. Differentiate among the three decisionmaking styles and the five processes identified.*
- 2. Match appropriate decisionmaking styles to given situations using the Vroom-Yetton-Jago model.*
- 3. Cite the advantages and potential disadvantages of group decisionmaking.*

Activity DM.1

Selecting a Decisionmaking Style, Part 1

Purpose

To differentiate between decisionmaking styles.

Directions

In each of the following situations a decision needs to be made. Assume you are the Company Officer (CO) or Station Officer (SO) described. For each situation, select one of the styles listed below for determining a final decision.

Style A (Autocratic) CO makes decision without input from others.

Style C (Consulting) CO makes decision after consulting with one or more subordinates.

Style G (Collaborative) The whole group makes the decision together (CO and subordinates).

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. This subordinate 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?

Decisionmaking Style _____

Applicable Guideline(s) _____

Inappropriate Style(s) _____

Situation 2

A new policy has been implemented by the department; firefighters/emergency medical technicians (EMTs) will now perform building inspections in their down time. Initially, your crew was opposed to the new policy but they 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?

Decisionmaking Style _____

Applicable Guideline(s) _____

Inappropriate Style(s) _____

Situation 3

You are the captain of a volunteer fire department/emergency medical service (EMS). One of your subordinates has been somewhat obnoxious lately. You've just now noticed a heavy odor of alcohol as this subordinate attempts to mount the engine to respond to a fire. Some action needs to be taken. Which style will you use?

Decisionmaking Style _____

Applicable Guideline(s) _____

Inappropriate Style(s) _____

Situation 4

Department policy is for crews on duty on Christmas Day TO 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 within one week about what time dinner will be served at the station. As SO, which style will you use?

Decisionmaking 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/EMT 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?

Decisionmaking Style _____

Applicable Guideline(s) _____

Inappropriate Style(s) _____

Situation 6

The department has hired its first female firefighter/EMT and she is 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 to protect the new firefighter's/EMT's right to privacy. Which style will you use?

Decisionmaking Style _____

Applicable Guideline(s) _____

Inappropriate Style(s) _____

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Definitions.

1. A decision is a choice made between two or more alternative options.
2. Decisionmaking is the process of deliberation which leads to a final course of action.
3. Not making a decision is, in fact, decisionmaking.
4. Data gathering and evaluation of assembled information is not a decision.

- B. Decisionmaking process.
 - 1. Define the problem.
 - 2. Collect information.
 - 3. Generate alternative options.
 - 4. Evaluate alternative options.
 - 5. Select one option.

- C. Relative importance of decisions 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. Types of negative consequences:
 - 1. Physical harm.
 - 2. Psychological harm.
 - 3. Loss or misuse of money.
 - 4. Loss of leadership credibility.
 - 5. Decreased productivity.
 - 6. Decreased morale.
 - 7. Negative impact on department mission.

- E. The importance of decisionmaking.
 - 1. Decisions can positively or negatively affect others.
 - 2. Effective decisions are based on a logical process.

II. THE LEADER'S ROLE IN DECISIONMAKING

- A. Effective decisionmaking:
 - 1. Does not necessitate making every decision yourself.
 - 2. Requires ability to use different styles appropriately.
- B. Controlling decisionmaking processes.
 - 1. Amount of participation by subordinates.
 - 2. Type of participation.
- C. The Vroom-Yetton-Jago Decisionmaking Model.
 - 1. Style A--Autocratic.
 - 2. Style C--Consulting.
 - 3. Style G--Collaborative.
- D. Variations in leaders' influence styles.

III. SELECTING THE RIGHT STYLE

- A. Factors to consider.
- B. Decisionmaking guidelines. (See Matrix)

Decisionmaking Style Selection Guide

The following matrix may provide insight into the decisionmaking process. It is designed to help you select an appropriate decisionmaking 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		Collaborative Style G
	A-1	A-2	C-1	C-2	G-2
1. Is an immediate decision required?	P	P	N	N	N
2. Does the leader lack adequate expertise?	N	N	P	P	P
3. Do subordinates lack adequate knowledge?	P	P	P	P	N
4. Are subordinates apt to sabotage goals?	P	P	P	P	N
5. Is the problem complex with little available information?	N	N	N	P	P
6. Is commitment by subordinates critical to implementation?	N	N	N	P	P
7. Are autocratic decisions likely to be rejected and/or is there conflict among subordinates?	N	N	N	N	P
8. Will decisions impact most subordinates?	N	N	P	P	P
9. Will decisions impact only select subordinates?	N	N	P	P	N

Activity DM.2

Analyzing Decisionmaking Styles

Purpose

To match appropriate decisionmaking styles to given situations using the Vroom-Yetton-Jago Model.

Directions

1. Watch Scenario 1 from the video "Analyzing Decisionmaking Styles."
2. Each group should answer the question: What decision is required?
3. Discuss at your table group the answers to the guideline questions, referring back to the Decisionmaking Style Selection Guide.
4. Be prepared to recommend the appropriate style.
5. This process will be repeated for video Scenarios 2 and 3. Scenario 4 may be a role play or large group discussion.

Video Scenario 1

What decision is required: _____

1. Is an immediate decision required?
2. Does leader lack adequate expertise?
3. Do subordinates lack adequate expertise?
4. Are subordinates apt to sabotage goals?
5. Is problem complex with little available information?
6. Is commitment by subordinates critical to implementation?
7. Are autocratic decisions likely to be rejected and/or is there conflict among subordinates?
8. Will the decision affect most subordinates?
9. Will the decision affect only one or a select few subordinates?

Most appropriate style: _____

Video Scenario 2

What decision is required: _____

1. Is an immediate decision required?
2. Does leader lack adequate expertise?
3. Do subordinates lack adequate expertise?
4. Are subordinates apt to sabotage goals?
5. Is problem complex with little available information?
6. Is commitment by subordinates critical to implementation?
7. Are autocratic decisions likely to be rejected and/or is there conflict among subordinates?
8. Will the decision affect most subordinates?
9. Will the decision affect only one or a select few subordinates?

Most appropriate style: _____

Video Scenario 3

What decision is required: _____

1. Is an immediate decision required?
2. Does leader lack adequate expertise?
3. Do subordinates lack adequate expertise?
4. Are subordinates apt to sabotage goals?
5. Is problem complex with little available information?
6. Is commitment by subordinates critical to implementation?
7. Are autocratic decisions likely to be rejected and/or is there conflict among subordinates?
8. Will the decision affect most subordinates?
9. Will the decision affect only one or a select few subordinates?

Most appropriate style: _____

Activity DM.2 (cont'd)

Role-Play Scenario 4

What decision is required: _____

1. Is an immediate decision required?
2. Does the leader lack adequate expertise?
3. Do subordinates lack adequate expertise?
4. Are subordinates apt to sabotage goals?
5. Is the problem complex with little available information?
6. Is commitment by subordinates critical to implementation?
7. Are autocratic decisions likely to be rejected and/or is there conflict among subordinates?
8. Will the decision affect most subordinates?
9. Will the decision affect only one or a select few subordinates?

Most appropriate style: _____

Role-Play Exercise: Scenario 4

*The scenario is inside a firehouse break room, where a **LIEUTENANT** and **three FIREFIGHTERS/EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIANS (EMTs)** are seated at a conference table. The **LIEUTENANT** is finishing up the meeting with the last item on his/her 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 transmitting personal alarm safety system (TPASS) for us to test out for a couple of months.

FIREFIGHTER/EMT #1

A what?

LIEUTENANT

An additional personal alarm safety system, a "TPASS." It's one of those new little pieces of equipment you attach to your self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA). If you get lost, it can send a signal to the Incident Commander (IC), or if you're unconscious and can't move around, the IC will receive a message and we'll be able to find you.

FIREFIGHTER/EMT #1

I've heard about that. They are like a PASS, but send a signal to a receiver monitored by the IC.

FIREFIGHTER/EMT #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/EMT #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 to 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/EMT #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/EMT #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 personnel.

FIREFIGHTER/EMT #1

I'd like to test it.

FIREFIGHTER/EMT #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.

(Gets up from the table and leaves the room.)

FIREFIGHTER/EMT #2

I want to do it because I . . .

FIREFIGHTER/EMT #1

You always get the special jobs.

FIREFIGHTER/EMT #2

No . . .

END

IV. USING GROUPS EFFECTIVELY

- A. Three levels of group participation:
 - 1. Advisory (Style C-2).
 - 2. Shared decisionmaking (Style G-2).
- 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 (NGT).
 - 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.

Activity DM.1 (cont'd)

Selecting a Decisionmaking Style, Part 2

Purpose

To differentiate among the three decisionmaking styles and five processes identified.

Directions

Refer to the Activity Worksheet used at the beginning of the module. Also, refer to the Decisionmaking Style Selection Guide.

VI. THREE DECISIONMAKING PRINCIPLES

- A. Make the decision.
- B. Implement and evaluate.
- C. Recognize that you probably cannot satisfy everyone.
- D. Recognize you have the **organization** to think about now. You are a fire/ EMS leader!

VII. SUMMARY

- A. Decisionmaking affects all other leadership functions.
- B. Rational decisionmaking involves using:
 - 1. A systematic process.
 - 2. An appropriate decisionmaking style.
- C. Effective decisionmakers:
 - 1. Are aware of own strengths and limitations.
 - 2. Seek to improve the quality of their decisions.
 - 3. Accept responsibility for decisions.
 - 4. Know that due to circumstances beyond their control, they are masters of their fate and captains of their souls.

NATURE AND OVERVIEW OF DECISIONMAKING

Planning, problem solving, goal-setting, and decisionmaking share much in common. These and the remaining management functions must be predicated on meeting the stated mission of the fire/EMS department. Planning, problem solving, and goal-setting involve decisionmaking. Decisionmaking is the one managerial function at every level of the organization that directly affects and overlaps all others. Ultimately, the effectiveness of the fire/EMS agency depends upon the decisions 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. Decisionmaking 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 decisionmaking requires the following steps:**

- define the problem;
- collect information;
- generate alternative options;
- evaluate alternative options; and
- select one option for implementation (make the decision).

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

A CO is judged by the results of the decisions made. 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 on 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 on which to draw? Trial and error? Hunch? The effective decisionmaker, on the other hand, consistently uses a purposeful and rational decisionmaking approach, matching the decisionmaking style to the situational characteristics.

THE LEADER'S ROLE IN DECISIONMAKING

Relationship Between Leadership and Decisionmaking

While leadership and decisionmaking are separate and unique, leadership obviously necessitates decisionmaking, 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 decisionmaking?

The leader's role in decisionmaking, 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, *Decisionmaking and the Leadership Process*, *Journal of Contemporary Business*, Autumn, 1974).

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

Three Decisionmaking 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.

Variations in Influence

As the leader moves from Style A to Style G, his/her influence over the final decision drops from 100 percent 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.

Factors to Consider

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

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

Decisionmaking Guidelines

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

Guideline 1 (Time): If an immediate decision is required, Styles C and G 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 Style G should not be considered.

Guideline 4 (Goal Compatibility): If subordinates do not appear to share organizational goals, Style 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, Style A 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 that 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 decisionmaking process. Avoid Style A.

Guideline 9 (Individual Consequence): If a decision affects only one individual or a select few, styles that 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. *Decisionmaking as a Social Process, Decision Sciences 5* (1974): 749.

USING GROUPS EFFECTIVELY

Approaches to Group Decisionmaking

Group decisionmaking 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 decisionmaking 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 and it reaches the leader, 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 onset.

With the group's role in the decisionmaking process clearly delineated, the second issue requires comment. In a democratic group process, decisions are made on the basis of majority votes. Although sometimes necessary to reach a decision, the democratic decisionmaking 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 decisionmaking is a collaborative approach in which all involved in the decisionmaking 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 Decisionmaking

Group decisionmaking offers a number of potential advantages over individual decisionmaking. The first advantage is the greater potential, total knowledge, information, and/or opinion it offers. With each group member bringing into the decisionmaking 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 decisionmaking 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 decisionmaking 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 decisionmaking also contributes to the professional growth of the members. They not only learn and practice decisionmaking 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 decisionmaking 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 decisionmaking. Because of the greater number of input sources, and often greater diversity of opinions going into the group decisionmaking process, groups typically need greater amounts of time to move through the decisionmaking 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 decisionmaking are lost. 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 functions and/or in overtime. The leader must consider using group decisionmaking from a cost-effective viewpoint in determining whether or not to use it.

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

Potential Drawbacks (Disadvantages) of Group Decisionmaking

Group decisionmaking 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 may interrupt the group decisionmaking 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 may emerge in group decisionmaking is hidden agendas or 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 decisionmaking, but also can impact the members' morale, enthusiasm, and 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 decisionmaking may unduly raise the expectations of subordinates with reference to outcome of the decision (overnight changes) and future involvement. It is important the CO helps subordinates keep their involvement in perspective.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE DECISIONMAKERS

The success of a CO is not a matter of luck or fortune. It's a composite of knowledge, 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. They 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 draw upon the creativity and strengths of others.

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

Resourceful: They use the expertise and ideas of others, involving them in decisionmaking as appropriate.

Evaluative: They know what they are doing, ask the right questions and pursue 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.

The professional fire/EMS officer will compare decisionmaking characteristics to that of effective decisionmakers. Doing so enables one to identify areas to strive for growth, enhancing decisionmaking skills. Dare to improve yourself and your decisionmaking skills. Make a decision **to do so** and act!

THREE DECISIONMAKING PRINCIPLES

The confident CO knows there are three summary principles involved in effective decisionmaking regardless which style of decisionmaking is used.

Make the Decision

First, the CO makes a rational decision. In making nonprogrammed decisions, the CO follows the purposeful decisionmaking process and adapts the decisionmaking style to match the nature of the decision. A decision is made.

Implement and Evaluate

After reaching a high-quality decision, the effective decisionmaker implements it, and monitors its impact. The effective decisionmaker 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 decisionmaker recognizes that in reality, one cannot expect to satisfy everyone every time a decision is made. The decisionmaker realizes 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 firefighter/EMT service. The CO doesn't try to satisfy everyone. The CO will be judged by the quality of the decisions made.

SUMMARY

Decisionmaking is the one managerial/leadership function that directly affects and overlaps all other functions.

Rational decisionmaking 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 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. **Decisionmaking:** A process of deliberation that leads to a final decision.
3. **Rational Decisionmaking:** A systematic process that relies on defining the problem, collecting information, generating multiple alternatives, and analyzing various alternatives in order to select the most appropriate decision.
4. **Consensus Decisionmaking:** 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.

PLANNING SKILLS FOR THE COMPANY OFFICER

OBJECTIVES

The students will:

- 1. Discuss the planning process used in the fire services/emergency medical services (EMS).*
- 2. Identify three types of plans.*
- 3. Describe the effect plans have on the Company Officer (CO).*
- 4. Develop goals and objectives needed for planning.*
- 5. Identify components of an action plan.*

I. TYPES OF PLANS

- A. Strategic Plan and Master Plan.
- B. Staffing plan, training plan, fire prevention plan, public education plan, and vehicle maintenance plan.
- C. Incident Action Plan (IAP).
- D. Disaster Plan.
 - 1. Pre-event plan.
 - 2. Broad-based approach.

Activity PL.1

Types of Plans

Purpose

To identify the types of plans currently used.

Directions

- 1. List and discuss, in your small group, all of the plans you develop, use, or impact your daily events.
- 2. Place answers on an easel pad and select a group spokesperson to present the group's findings.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. Strategic Planning.
 - 1. Management tool.
 - 2. Used for only one purpose, to do a better job.
 - 3. Disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it, with a focus on the future. (Adapted from *Bryson's Strategic Planning in Public Nonprofit Organizations*.)
 - 4. Process is strategic.
- B. Master Plan.

III. ALL PROGRAMS SHOULD HAVE A PLAN

- A. Training.
- B. Staffing Plan.
- C. Fire Prevention Plan.
- D. Vehicle Maintenance Plan.
- E. IAP.
- F. Disaster Plans.

IV. ESTABLISHING GOALS

- A. Focus on a solution.
- B. A goal is a broad statement of what you wish to accomplish.
- C. Goal: to improve company performance at structure fires.
- D. Evaluate your goal.

V. SETTING OBJECTIVES

- A. Writing objectives.
 - 1. An objective is a specific description of an expected outcome to be attained over an identified period of time.
 - 2. An objective must spell out the "ABCDs."
 - 3. Objectives should define what you intend to accomplish as specifically as possible.
 - 4. Example: "By November 1st, our crew will successfully complete four structure fire drills at the training tower."

VI. DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING ACTION PLANS

- A. Developing action plans.
- B. Implementing the plan and putting the plan to work.
- C. While the present alternative is being implemented, think of the next alternative to try if this one doesn't work.

See example on next page of an Action Plan.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY		Goal: 5-2 Bicycle Safety and Helmet Program Program Manager: Comm. Risk Officer												Accreditation Criterion "Risk Management" Accreditation Category:			
Objective: By June 201__, the station commander at the Cleveland Park station, with assistance of coalition, will conduct two rodeos per year.														Estimated Startup Cost: \$1,200 Estimated Annual Cost: \$400			
Task#	Task	Responsibility	Days	Cost	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	
1	Research rodeo criteria	Comm. Risk Officer	6	\$100	X												
2	Develop training manual	Comm. Risk Officer	4	\$200		x											
3	Develop/ Build rodeo prop	Planning Group	7	\$500			x										
4	Train fire/ coalition personnel	Comm. Risk Officer	1/2					x									
5	Schedule rodeo	Station Commander	1/2					x				x					
6	Publicize event	Publicity Chair	14	\$300					x				x				
7	Conduct rodeo	Fire/Coalition personnel	2	\$100						x				x			
Totals			32	\$1,200													

VII. MONITORING AND EVALUATING

- A. Monitoring the plan.
- B. Evaluating, did it work?
- C. Monitoring and evaluating may indicate discrepancies in the plan that necessitates 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.

Activity PL.2

Developing a Plan

Purpose

To identify goals, objectives, and components of an action plan.

Directions

1. A presidential visit is being planned for your community in 90 days. In your group, discuss and decide the type of plans needed to be in place to manage this event from a fire department's point of view.
2. Develop goals and objectives for your plan.
3. What needs to be included in your action plan?
4. What do you need to monitor?
5. Select a spokesperson to report on group findings.

VIII. CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD PLANNERS

- A. Leadership skills.
- B. General management skills.
- C. Communication skills.
- D. COs may not be as involved in the process as chiefs, but are integral in plan development and the execution of the plan.

TYPES OF PLANS

Strategic Plan and Master Plan

- Departmentwide;
- Mission;
- Vision;
- Goals; and
- Objectives.

Staffing Plan, Training Plan, Fire Prevention Plan, Public Education Plan, Vehicle Maintenance Plan

- more Company Officer (COs) oriented;
- affects daily routine;
- lays out a pattern;
- detail oriented; and
- understood by all.

Incident Action Plan

- incident specific; and
- used to mitigate situation.

Disaster Plan

The disaster plan is a pre-event plan that creates a framework of response for an event. This is a broad-based approach.

DEFINITIONS

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is a management tool used for only one purpose--to do a better job. It is helpful in focusing energy and ensuring members are working toward the same goals. This planning may be used to assess and adjust an organizations direction in response to a changing environment.

Strategic planning is a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it, with a focus on the future (Adapted from *Bryson's Strategic Planning in Public Nonprofit Organizations*).

The process is strategic. It involves preparing the best way to respond to the circumstances of an organization's environment, whether or not its circumstances are known in advance. Fire department/emergency medical services (EMS) often must respond to dynamic and even hostile environments. Strategic planning is about being clear about organization's objectives. Strategic planning requires being aware of an organizations resources and incorporating both into being consciously responsive to a dynamic environment.

Master Plan

A comprehensive master plan is based on the following fundamental vision:

A master plan describes the broad vision for the city's future. It is the core philosophy that directs all development activities. It guides where and in what form development occurs in the community and frames the city's capital improvement projects. It is used to test the appropriateness of both public and private development proposals. During the life of the plan, decisions will be made on land use issues and budget priorities. These decisions will be judged by the extent to which they correspond with the master plan.

The master plan is a compilation of goals, policies, and recommendations for each of the subject areas it covers. The goals are conceptual, broad, and long range. The policies are guides to the achievement of the goals. Recommendations define specific actions needed to accomplish the overall goal as well as policies.

A master plan has a 20-year timeframe. Some States mandate the master plan be reviewed or amended every six years. This helps ensure the document is updated to reflect conditions and philosophy.

ALL PROGRAMS SHOULD HAVE A PLAN

Training

- yearly;
- quarterly;
- monthly;
- by topic; and
- mandated training takes priority.

Staffing Plan

- Per memorandum of understanding (MOU)/contract;
- or based on National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1710, *Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments* and 1720 *Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments*;
- or based on your departments standard operating procedures (SOPs);
- long range growth, retirements, hiring; and
- short range minimum staffing.

Fire Prevention Plan

- fire prevention bureau staff;
- company inspections;
- volunteers;
- occupancy overload inspections; and
- development and community growth.

Vehicle Maintenance Plan

- annual;
- quarterly;
- monthly; and
- daily.

Incident Action Plans

The IAP formally documents incident goals (known as control objectives in the National Incident Management System (NIMS)), operational period objectives and the response strategy defined by incident command during response planning.

The IAP contains general tactics to achieve goals and objectives within the overall strategy, while providing important information on event and response parameters.

The IAP facilitates dissemination of critical information about the status of response assets themselves. Because incident parameters evolve, action plans must be revised on a regular basis (at least once per operational period) to maintain consistent, up-to-date guidance across the system.

The following should be considered for inclusion in an IAP:

- Incident goals (where the response system wishes to be at the end of response).
- Operational period objectives (major areas that must be addressed in the specified operational period to achieve the goals or control objectives).
- Response strategies (priorities and the general approach to accomplish the objectives).
- Response tactics (methods developed by Operations to achieve the objectives).
- Organization list with Incident Command System (ICS) chart showing primary roles and relationships.
- Assignment list with specific tasks.
- Critical situation updates and assessments.
- Composite resource status updates.
- Health and safety plan (to prevent responder injury or illness).
- Communications plan (how functional areas may exchange information).
- Logistics plan (i.e., procedures to support Operations with equipment, supplies).
- Responder medical plan (providing direction for care to responders).
- Incident map (i.e., map of incident scene).
- Additional component plans, as indicated by the incident.

Disaster Plans

Natural Disasters

- earthquake;
- fire or wildfire;
- flood and dam failure;
- hurricane and high wind;
- landslide;
- thunderstorm;
- tsunami;
- volcano;
- extreme cold; and
- extreme heat.

Manmade Disasters

- bioterrorism;
- chemical agents;
- pandemics and diseases;
- radiation emergencies; and
- terrorism.

ESTABLISHING GOALS

Focus on a solution when you are establishing goals. A goal is a broad statement of what you wish to accomplish.

Goal: To improve company performance at structure fires.

Evaluate the goal by asking questions: Is it realistic? Is it important? Is it challenging?

SETTING OBJECTIVES

Writing objectives

An objective is a specific description of an expected outcome to be attained over an identified period of time. An objective must spell out "ABCD":

Audience - who will do it?

Behavior - what must be done?

Conditions - by when, where, how?

Degree - quantity and quality expected.

Objectives should define what you intend to accomplish as specifically as possible. For example: "By November 1st , our crew will have successfully completed four structure fire drills at the training tower."

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 plan requires you:

- determine and assign tasks;
- assign responsibility for monitoring;
- plan for evaluation;
- determine timeframes;
- identify needed resources; and
- document completion of each task.

Implementing the plan

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

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. 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.

Evaluating--Did it Work?

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 **outcomes** and **processes**.

Possible questions include:

- 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 you were unaware of. Thus, the process begins again.

Monitoring and evaluating can indicate discrepancies in the plan that necessitates 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.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD PLANNERS

Leadership Skills

- vision and strategy;
- establishing direction;
- aligning people;
- communicating;
- negotiating;
- motivating and inspiring;
- influencing organizations; and
- overcoming barriers to change.

General Management Skills

- planning;
- finance and accounting;
- personnel administration;
- technology;
- organizational development;
- delegation;
- team building;
- conflict management; and
- solving problems.

Communications Skills

- writing;
- listening;
- speaking;
- presenting;
- media relations;
- public relations; and
- meeting management.

COs may not be as involved in the process as chiefs, but are integral to plan development and execution of the plan.

COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE COMPANY OFFICER

Objectives

The students will:

1. *Describe different types or methods most commonly used to communicate.*
2. *Discuss what makes communication effective given different situations.*
3. *Identify organizational tattoos that prevent effective communication.*

I. TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

A. Verbal: how we speak.

1. Language.
2. Vocabulary, slang, industry terminology.
3. Simply the words.

B. Nonverbal.

1. Body language.
 - a. Face.
 - b. Arms, hands.
 - c. Movement, posture.
2. How we stand or face each other.
 - a. Males typically at 90-degree angles.
 - b. Women stand more face-to-face.

C. Para verbal: it's not **what** you say, but **how** you say it.

1. Tone of voice.
2. Volume.
3. Enunciation.
4. Sarcasm can be sensed.
5. Emphasis on the wrong word can give different meaning.
6. Pausing.

- D. Written communication.
 - 1. Business writing.
 - 2. Report writing.
 - 3. Personnel documentation.
 - 4. Personal correspondence.
 - 5. Email.
 - 6. Social networking sites and blogs.

Activity CM.1

How Do You Communicate?

Purpose

To discuss what makes communication effective in different situations.

Directions

1. Complete Part 1 of the activity individually.
2. Complete Part 2 in small groups.
3. Be prepared to report on your group's discussion with the class.

Part 1

1. List three recent conversations you thought "went well."

2. List three recent conversations you thought "didn't go very well."

3. What are the differences in the two lists?

Part 2

1. In your group, discuss how you typically communicate with your:
 - a. Supervisor.
 - b. Subordinates.
 - c. Spouse or significant other.
 - d. Children.
 - e. Authority figures (judges, legislators).
 - f. Friends.
2. Are they different? How? Why?

I. ORGANIZATIONAL TATTOOS

- A. Informal monikers.
 1. Reputation.
 2. Behavior.
 3. Education.
 4. Association with others.
- B. You give them; you probably have one (or more).

- C. A one-time incident may lead to a lifetime tattoo. Do what you can to obtain a positive one.
1. Ethical.
 2. Fair.
 3. Good listener.
 4. Good trainer.
 5. Team player.
- D. Negative tattoos are often destructive to individuals and cause organizational dysfunction.
1. Opportunities are missed because we can't see past someone's tattoo.
 2. Good ideas are discounted simply because of the person who offered it.
 3. Bad ideas are embraced for the same reason.
 4. Good people are not allowed to grow to their full potential.
- E. How to get rid of organizational tattoos.
1. Stop the behavior that got you there in the first place.
 2. Allow the time to pass to have the tattoo "fade."
 3. Replace a negative tattoo with a positive one.
 4. Supervisors must discourage placing negative tattoos on their people.

Activity CM.2

Organizational Tattoos in Practice

Purpose

To identify organizational tattoos that prevents effective communications.

Directions

1. Place six to eight chairs in a circle in the center of the room. These six to eight people represent a fire/EMS department management team and are going to be asked to hold a meeting to discuss and solve a problem. The fire/EMS chief is unable to attend the meeting, but has tasked the group to discuss the issue thoroughly and provide him/her with a recommendation.
2. Each member of the group will receive a hat to put on prior to the discussion starting. On the hat is the organizational tattoo that person has in the fire department. **You are not allowed to look at your own hat.** You will know everyone else's tattoo, but you will not know your own. Respond to other students based on their tattoo. It may become apparent to you what it is as the discussion progresses.
3. The group will have 20 minutes to discuss the issue and generate a recommendation for the fire/EMS chief.

TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

Humans communicate in many ways and most of the time do a pretty good job of knowing what is said and what is meant. However, there are so many ways in which we communicate; we can't use just one sense or one sensor to determine the actual meaning of communications.

Company Officers (COs)/Supervisors have to set the example in effective communication for their crew. Be aware of how you communicate - not just talk.

Verbal

Verbal communication is how we speak. It is simply the words. This includes our language vocabulary, slang, and industry terminology. Different regions of the country have different meanings for a lot of what we do as an industry. This is one reason why the Incident Command System (ICS) clear text is so important.

Nonverbal

Scientists have discovered over 65% of the messages we send are done so via nonverbal communications. We say so much without saying a thing. Nonverbal communication may come through body language, face, arms, hands, movement, or posture.

Another nonverbal communicator is the way we stand or face each other. Males are typically at 90-degree angles. For males, facing each other is perceived to be hostile or an attempt to dominate. Women tend to stand face-to-face. To women, this is not a confrontational position.

Para verbal

Para verbal is not **what** you say, but **how** you say it. This includes things like the tone of voice, volume, and enunciation. Sarcasm can be sensed. So can a condescending tone or anger. Emphasis on the wrong word may give the sentence a different meaning. In these days of having to be so politically correct, a supervisor cannot take the chance of being accused of harassment simply by how something is said.

Pausing can change the meaning of what is being said as well.

Written Communications

All written communications, especially documentation of work-related events are extremely critical for the CO.

Business Writing

COs need to know how to write a professional letter, a memorandum, and a formal thank you letter.

Report Writing

Fire/Emergency medical services (EMS) department reports are read by many people--lawyers, insurance adjusters, news media, medical professionals and judges. Your reports need to be

- complete;
- accurate;
- factual;
- legible;
- consistent;
- per policy; and
- objective, not subjective.

Personnel Documentation

"If you didn't write it down, it didn't happen."

All of the elements listed above for reports hold true for personnel documentation. In many cases, this documentation arises when there is administrative or legal action pending against the employee.

Personal Correspondence

Personal correspondence includes personal notes, thank you notes, and letters of commendation. These are best if handwritten. Make sure they are legible and short, but from the heart.

Email

If you are at work, keep your email professional. Both grammar and spelling are important. Do not use "texting" shorthand when writing work-related emails.

Most work email is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and may be retrieved through legal discovery, all of it. Check with your legal counsel for your State's laws.

Social Networking Sites and Blogs

Be very careful about what you say. You are not as anonymous as you think you are.

ORGANIZATIONAL TATTOOS

Organizational tattoos are informal monikers we pick up during our career. Most of the time we are unaware of these and when and where we got them, because most of them are negative and obtained through a variety of factors:

- reputation;
- behavior;
- education; and
- association with others.

It only takes a one-time incident to get a lifetime tattoo. By understanding we are all going to end up with one at some point, you can decide to make yours a positive one:

- ethical;
- fair;
- good listener;
- good trainer; and
- team player.

Negative tattoos are destructive to individuals and cause organizational dysfunction. Opportunities are missed because we can't see past their tattoo. Good ideas may be discounted simply because of the person who offered them. Bad ideas may be embraced for the same reason. Good people are not allowed to grow to their full potential.

How to get rid of organizational tattoos:

- Stop the behavior that got you there in the first place.
- Allow time to pass to have the tattoo "fade."
- Replace a negative tattoo with a positive one.
- Supervisors must discourage placing negative tattoos on their people.