Decision-Making Styles Guide

Decision-making Style	Use when:	Strengthen this style by:
Directive *"I decide"*	• You are under time pressure • You are the one with all the relevant information and responsibility • Decisions are related to inconsequential matters, with little impact	• Explain why the decision was made • Let people know how to get more information, ask questions • Be willing to listen to feedback and possibly adjust or change decisions if it makes sense • If made in an emergency situation, use it as a learning opportunity; what was or wasn't effective
Consultative *"I decide with input from you"*	• You have the primary responsibility for action and a lot of the relevant information • You need others' expertise to make a better decision • The group values both clear authority for decisions and participation • You don't have the time to negotiate consensus • You need some level of commitment	• Provide structure to the type of feedback you are seeking • Be clear that the final decisions rests with you • Confirm and communicate the final decision to the group • Tell the group how their feedback impacted your decision-making
Democratic *"One person, one vote"*	• You're okay with all the options • You don't anticipate major resistance from those who "lose" • When you need to narrow down the field of alternatives • Large numbers of people need to be involved	• Make sure enough information is shared so that group can make an informed choice • Create an opportunity for discussion about pros and cons; make sure multiple perspectives are heard • Get group member agreement to comply with the final decision even if they are not in favor • Consider using two-thirds rather than 51% if you need greater commitment
Consensus *"We decide and we support the decision"*	• You want high quality input and commitment, with follow-through • There is group understanding of the issues and team members are willing to share opinions openly • The team is making a decision on behalf of the entire organization	• Use a structured process that allows plenty of time for exploring all options, thoughts and feelings relative to the decision • Understand the consensus does not mean that everyone has to "love" the decision, but they do need to fully support the decision once it's made