

ownership of decisions they have had a voice in making. Conversely, they feel little ownership of decisions made by others. The autocratic approach works best for decisions where the individual parties don't feel a need to contribute, or the time for making the decision is very short.

Democratic Decision Making

"Let's take a vote," is the hallmark of the democratic approach to decision making. The majority wins and the minority loses.

This is a good procedure for decision making in large groups, but may also split the family. The minority may not support or may even sabotage the decision. Also, the minority may criticize the decision if it does not do well.

However, if the other methods cannot produce a decision, voting may be the only viable alternative.

Consensus Decision Making

Consensus building relies on the belief that opponents will gravitate to your solution when they are provided with the right information. It involves educating the opposing party and having confidence that individuals will re-evaluate their position.

Consensus building works best when facts are used to outline the pros and cons of the decision. However, many decisions are not based on facts but on attitudes, perceptions, and emotions. Also, as the number of issues used for advocating or opposing a decision increases, it becomes increasingly difficult to achieve a consensus.

Collaborative Decision Making

Collaboration is a process. With collaboration all parties join together to constructively explore their differences in search of solutions that go beyond their separate visions. By debating the various perspectives, the complexity of the problem is recognized by all parties and new alternatives are discussed that consider the positions of everyone. All suggestions are considered before alternatives

are ranked. No single position is sacrificed at the expense of another alternative. This process is sometimes called "brain storming". Although collaborative decision making is the most time consuming, it is often the preferred method for making major business decisions.

Summary of Decision Making Methods

- **Autocratic** - Use for routine decisions where others don't feel a need to be involved.
- **Democratic** - Use for large group decision making, or where consensus or collaborative decision making is inappropriate or unsuccessful.
- **Consensus** - Use for decisions where facts can be used to outline pros and cons, and alternatives ranked.
- **Collaborative** - Use for making major business decisions which require the support of everyone involved to be successful.

Emotional Bank Account

A basic element of strong family relationships is trust. Trust can be built into a relationship by using the metaphor of an *emotional bank account*. Deposits made into the bank account build trust. Deposits can be courtesy, kindness, honesty, and the habit of keeping commitments. As trust in the account increases, it can be drawn upon. An account high in trust makes communications easy, instant, and effective.

Withdrawals from the account are discourteousness, disrespect, overreaction, betrayal, and threats. If withdrawals exceed deposits, the level of trust drops and the account eventually becomes overdrawn. Instead of a relationship rich in trust and communication, an overdrawn account becomes one of accommodation where the team members are drawn away from each other and pursue independent goals. To have a strong family relationship, the members must build their *emotional bank accounts* with each other so that trust will be high and communications flourish.

... and justice for all

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