Decision Making Styles for Project Managers and Teams

Decision Making Styles

As leaders we tend to have a preferred style that we use most of the time. Not every style is best suited for the given situation.

It is useful to understand the several decision making styles that may be used by a leader. Keep in mind that team members involved in the decision making process affecting their work are more likely to buy in to the decisions.

Here are several decision making styles, listed from least participatory to most participatory. .

- o **Decide and inform (autocratic)**
  This style is best suited for <u>time sensitive decisions</u> where the team probably already supports the decision. Examples would be removing a team member, changing the project scope – "I have decided not to implement the requested change control".
  It is always best to check out team thinking ahead of time.

- o **Gather input from team, then decide**
  This style is useful when an <u>expert opinion</u> is needed. The team members provide input and suggestions. The project manager then makes the decision. An example would be coming up with the best solution to a difficult design decision.

- o **Consensus**
  This style implies <u>acceptance </u>of the idea by team members, <u>but not necessarily agreement</u> with it; it is a deliberate process where everyone is heard and some may change their position to reach consensus as long as values are not compromised. Reaching consensus takes longer than other styles; on the flip side, high team involvement leads to strong support for the idea.

- o **Consensus with fallback**
  This style attempts to achieve consensus with a <u>pre-set course of action</u> to be followed if no consensus decision is possible in reasonable period of time. This is an effective way to implement consensus decisioning, especially for controversial topics or immature teams.

- o **Set constraints and delegate decision**
  This style uses <u>delegation</u> without abdicating the project manager's responsibility for the final decision. The leader sets some constraints (money to be spent, time needed for a decision, or people to be involved) and lets the delegated team members make the decision. It helps to share responsibility between the manager and subordinates.