Co-operantics
Co-operative skills for everyone

Different decision-making methods

The table shows 'locations' where decisions can be taken (individual, sub-group) and methods of decision making (command, democratic vote, consensus and consent decision-making (Sociocracy)

Decision making method	description	advantages	disadvantages
Command or centralised	• individuals are directly responsible for every decision within a specified area • authority may lie in their job description or in policy documents	enables quick, co-ordinated action, particularly when a deadline is imminent	• deprives others of the responsibility, learning and personal rewards of making decisions themselves • can result in inefficiency or bottle-necks if review needed before others will take action
Delegation or distributed	• decision-making is delegated to subgroups • needs clear terms of reference, autonomy and lines of accountability	• improves efficiency by reducing the number of people required for each decision • delegated decisions best taken by those the decision is most likely to affect (subsidiarity)	• enhances responsibility for consequences by those who take decisions • will not of itself ensure effective decision making without clear authority and lines of accountability
Democratic or majority vote	One member one vote (OMOV) Proposals receiving more than 50% of the total votes are carried	• can involve large numbers of people in decision-making • can initiate debate between people with comparable power and strong views • decision guaranteed, as long as there's a tie-breaker process	• not ideal when the co-op needs everyone to implement a decision enthusiastically • nearly half the participants can end up on the losing side, and be expected to implement the decision • voters may be swayed by apathy, inaccurate information, or the influence of charismatic individuals
Consensus	• an agreement acceptable to everyone • decisions taken reflect the ideas and thought of all team members	• ensures decisions are explored thoroughly and strong disagreements resolved • maximizes commitment and	• compared to delegation or command, consensus can take longer • may not result in support for any specific course of action, which could

	• it is not unanimity (the outcome may not be everyone's first choice) nor a majority vote • It requires: * *time* * *communication skills including listening, probing, conflict management* * *viewing disagreements and conflicts as part of the process* * *keeping an open mind and thinking creatively*	'buy-in' during decision making and implementation • fosters a sense of goodwill that increases patience, flexibility, and willingness to participate in damage control • encourages discussion of potential obstacles, facilitating development of alternatives • can be very efficient from a cost per decision standpoint	be frustrating for someone who wants to see immediate action • can lead to '[groupthink]' (a mode of thought whereby individuals intentionally conform to what they perceive to be the consensus of the group)
Consent decision making ([Sociocracy])	a decision is made when there is no objection from group members with authority to make the decision. The method: 1. Design and present a proposal for decision 2. Clarification round (questions about the proposal) 3. Quick reactions round (first reactions) 4. Consent round (do you have any objections to the proposal?) Final steps are either to announce the decision or to amend the proposal.	• gives a group a way to move forward without unanimity, but respecting dissent • can help to avoid group think since the group becomes accustomed to members raising objections in order to improve the proposal • ensures everyone's ideas are taken on board • ensures proposals are examined in depth before moving to a decision • acknowledges that things change	• members may not be familiar with this approach • takes time to learn • needs practice and all team members may not recognise the potential benefits so may not be willing to put the time in