

Advice on Good Decision Making

At Faith Baptist we recently had one of the two 5-ton Air Conditioning units which cooled the sanctuary die. I have two trustees who participated in the decision-making process in developing a recommendation for the congregation in a business meeting. One took more of the lead and presentation role and one led in the move to follow the recommendation. Now when you are spending either \$0 or \$15,800, a good decision-making process is needed. Here are the steps we followed.

1. Establishing a Positive Decision-Making Environment

If you've ever been in a meeting where people seem to be discussing different issues, then you've seen what happens when the decision-making environment hasn't been established. It's so important for everyone to understand the issue before preparing to make a decision. I worked with one of our trustees through the bidding process and presentation process to establish this.

You also must address key interpersonal considerations at the very beginning. I knew Faith Baptist did not have a strong record of spending money in the past, but a year ago had spent \$800 on a new sound board (after much debate and explaining). Now we needed to spend \$15,800 or some portion of that.

2. Generating Potential Solutions

Another important part of a good decision process is generating as many good alternatives as sensibly possible to consider. If you simply adopt the first solution you encounter, then you're probably missing a great many even better alternatives. We had 3 alternatives.

- Attempt to limp along through the remaining of the summer on one unit. Actually, the Sunday we took the vote, it was cool enough that one unit took care of the Sanctuary. This carried a price tag of \$0.00
- Replace only the bad unit and pray the second unit lasted a while. Price tag - \$7,900
- Replace both units which were approx. 20 years old. Price tag - \$15,800

Remember, the congregation was not in the practice of spending money on projects.

3. Evaluating Alternatives

The stage of exploring alternatives is often the most time-consuming part of the decision-making process. While getting quotes from 3 separate companies, the trustee in charge and I discussed the following:

- **Risk** – Most decisions involve some risk. However, you need to uncover and understand the risks to make the best choice possible. Would the congregation make the motion to spend \$15,800 or would they want to spend less and assume some risk? The trustee presented the choices in such a way, there really was not a choice.
- **Consequences** – You can't predict the implications of a decision with 100% accuracy. But you can be careful in the way that you identify and evaluate possible consequences. Since

the trustee was going to be presenting the recommendation, I made sure he spelled out the consequences of each decision possibility.

- **Feasibility** – Is the choice realistic and implementable? The fact is, we had enough money in the savings to pay for the full project.

4. Deciding

Deciding means taking a look at what's most important in a good decision.

Take the time to think ahead and determine exactly what will make the decision “right.” I know I have watched “Frozen II” with my granddaughters a dozen times and my favorite phrase and song in the movie is “Do the next right thing.”

5. Checking the Decision

Remember that some things about a decision are not objective. The trustee discussed everything with the congregation.... answered questions, and made the recommendation.

If the decision is a significant one, and it was, it's also worth auditing it to make sure that your assumptions are correct and sound. This was confirmed from the positive nature of the questioning and immediate motion and second to the recommendation that we purchase a complete system (that is 2 complete units).

6. Communicating and Implementing

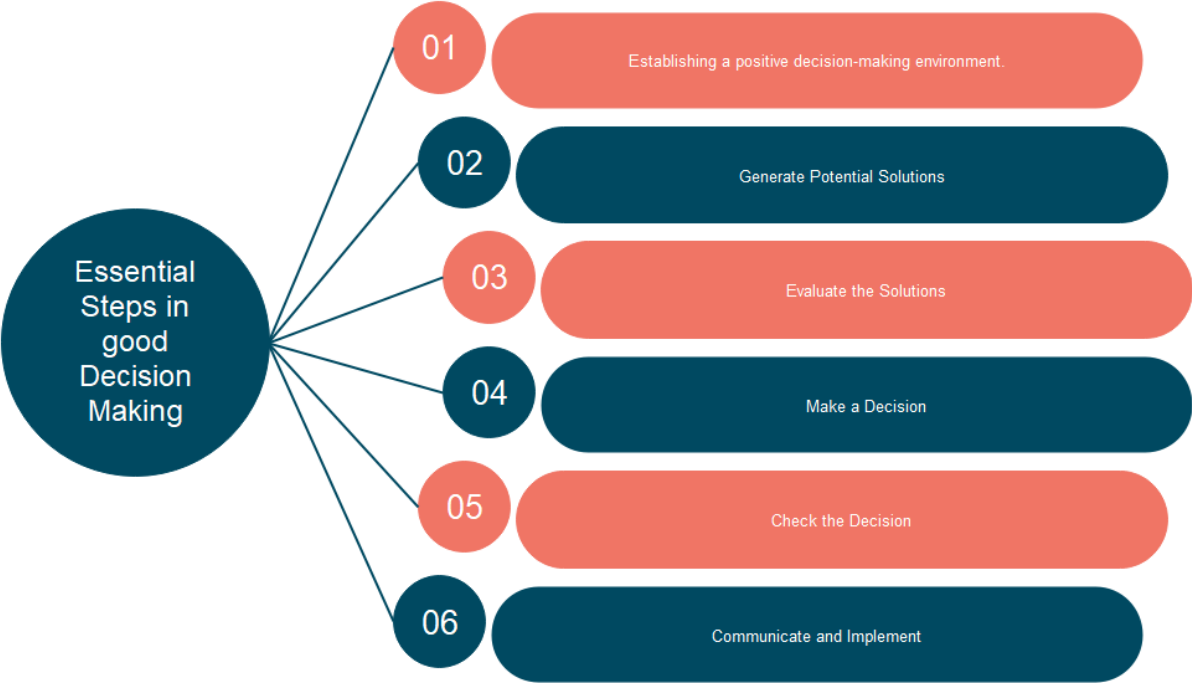
The last stage in the decision-making process involves communicating your choice and preparing to implement it. We never tried to force your decision on others by demanding their acceptance. The trustee simply explained how and why we reached the recommendation. For most decisions – particularly those that need participant buy-in before implementation – it's more effective to gather support by explaining your decision.

We were able to get the entire Sanctuary system replaced before the following Sunday service. And pricing...the next lowest bid was \$23,000. God had taken care of His church.

So, here are the steps used in the decision process:

Good Decision Making

Decision Making for Leadership Meetings



A Landscape Word Document or PDF is available with this decision-making process. Please let me know if you would like a copy.

Cliff Myers