

Effective Decision Making

By Joel Levitt

The importance of this section was stated very clearly in an article published over 25 years ago called How Profitable Decisions Are Made by Gail Crawford, Executive Vice President of Ringsby System:

"The success or failure of most businesses is determined by the sum of hundreds of small, good decisions made by lower management people. And in addition, of course, the relatively few major decisions made by top management."

Maintenance supervisors make hundreds of decisions that will have direct, indirect, short term and long term effects on the organization. This section will help you in your decision making and (possibly more importantly) clear the decks of decisions that should be made by others to give you time for the more important decisions.

Most supervisors have limited time. Decisions have to be made on a rapid basis, frequently without adequate preparation. This section describes several methods to improve your decision making efficiency.

Frequently, making the decision IS the issue. Many decisions must be made and the rightness/wrongness is not at issue. This is especially hard for newer supervisors because your crew's total productivity is frequently tied to your ability to decide the course of action.

Walt Lacy, a leading trainer in this area, makes the analogy that making decisions is like trying to steer a car without power steering: it's very hard to steer until the car is moving. Once the car is moving, it's easy to steer. Once any decision is made, it's much easier to change course.

When decision making is a problem, how does the problem show-up? Remember your personal style inventory and try to relate your personal style to the three avoidances below (review your personal style inventory and relate it to decision making):

1. Too many decisions to make don't have time.
2. Constant worry about decisions, you never know when you might make a mistake.
3. Put off making decisions.

Guideline for decisions:

Establish the goals of your work group. What is your group's mission, reason for existence? If your work group doesn't have clear goals, consult the appendix for this Chapter for ideas.

Guidelines for better Quick decisions:

- ✓ Your choice should alter the work group's goals the least
- ✓ Set aside normal delegation
- ✓ Take control
- ✓ Take full responsibility
- ✓ Act



This is not the time to observe all of the niceties of discussion, or of consensus type supervision. You must take control, take responsibility and act.

Maintenance emergencies frequently require this type of decision making.

When was the last situation that required this type of decision making?

Rate your decision in terms of your workgroup's goals:

Ten steps to better long term decisions:

1. Define problem, is there really a decision to be made?
2. Collect knowledge, knowledge should pass the BAR (Brief, Accurate, Relevant)
3. List all possible alternatives, involve as many members of your team as makes sense.
4. Prioritize, choose best one, and make sure choice is in line with overall goals.
5. Don't discard the other ideas; they can be used as contingency plans
6. Inform all members of your team what the change means, why it was chosen, how it will work.
7. If a change to a formal procedure is required tell everyone what to do and give it time to sink in. Hopefully members of your team were part of the decision process.
8. Take action.
9. Monitor progress and the achievement of milestones.
10. Compare outcome with goals for your work group. Did you achieve your goals and increase quality and efficiency?

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