

Make Decisions Easier

Why is it important?

Being able to make the right call at the right time, often while under pressure, is a key requirement for any HR manager or team leader. We make dozens of decisions every day, but when it comes to important workplace choices, too many 'bad' decisions or regular displays of indecisiveness could lead to a loss of credibility with employees and could have a detrimental effect on your career prospects.

Where do I start?

Confirm that the decision is both yours to make and worthy of your attention. Avoid the trap of micro-managing every decision that falls under your control - if one of your charges can do it then let them make the call.

Establish whether anyone else needs to be consulted and how long you have to make the decision. Make sure the problem (and its impact) is clearly defined and that you are aware of any underlying objectives and/or the wider business context of the decision.

Then detail each concern you want the decision to address and the end-result you wish to achieve.

"If you're clear about what you're doing and why, you will be able to communicate your thinking and get buy-in from all stakeholders, including those responsible for its smooth implementation," says Rob Barham, chief executive of sales management training and development consultancy Tack International.

Consider your options

Once you have sized up the situation using all the information available, you need to work through the alternatives and assess their potential consequences. Weigh up each idea against your stated objectives and grade them accordingly. Consider the pros and cons, the level of risk involved and the worst that can happen. There are techniques and models available that can provide a more structured approach to evaluating the options, such as paired comparison analysis or decision trees.

Consult widely

Be prepared to cast your net far and wide when investigating possible solutions, as selecting from a restricted range of options may not deliver the best result. The same applies to falling back on safe or previously proven choices. Involve others who you know will have opposing views and different perspectives from you, as they may arrive at solutions you would never envisage. Always make known the rationale for any decision you make. Encourage stakeholders to give feedback and highlight inherent weaknesses in your decision-making methods.

Monitor the outcome

It is essential to track the effect of your decisions, especially since action taken based on unreliable data or an incomplete picture of the situation could throw up fresh problems

further down the line. Set up a framework for follow-up and evaluation with anyone your decision affects.

Spot the patterns

Aim to make better and more dependable choices by becoming an honest judge of the effectiveness of your decisions. Get into the habit of regularly appraising your recent performance, particularly where you were required to make some critical decisions.

Recording these episodes will help you spot patterns and learn how to make your mind up more effectively in the long run.