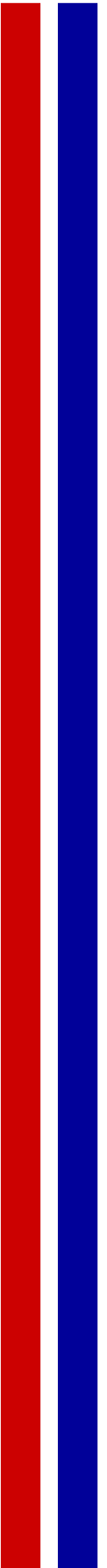


# USING CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING WORKBOOK



**USING  
CONSENSUS  
DECISION  
MAKING  
WORKBOOK**

**A BASIC BUSINESS VICTORY GUIDE**

**This book was developed by James H. Saylor**

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This book is part of the VICTORY series. For over 30 years, the pursuit of a simple, easy-to-use, proven, inexpensive management system for any organization has been my focus. MANAGING FOR VICTORY™ is this system. MANAGING FOR VICTORY™ system includes:

**V**isioning creates a common focus

**I**nvolving everyone establishes a superior organization

**C**ontinuously improving achieves excellence

**T**raining, educating, coaching, facilitating, mentoring develops a learning culture

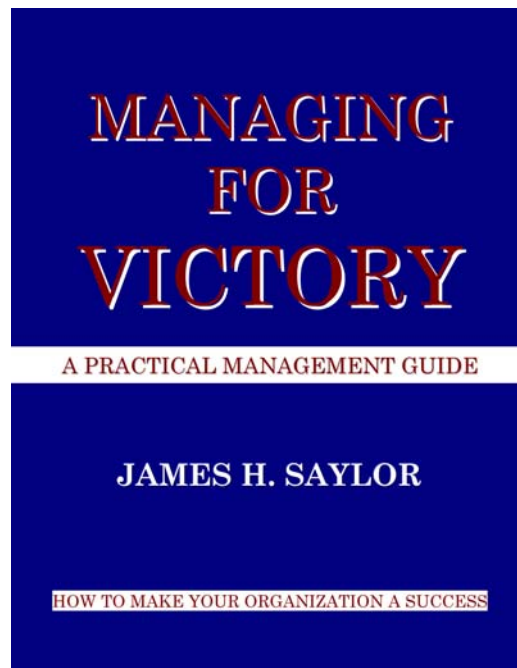
**O**wning the work fosters empowerment

**R**ecognizing and rewarding builds high performance

**Y**earning ensures success

Customers drive VICTORY

Progressive Leaders guide VICTORY



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James H. Saylor is the founder of The Business Coach, an organization focusing on helping other organizations achieve their specific VICTORY. He has assisted many organizations in discovering, designing, developing and doing successful management systems. In addition, he has led, managed, coached, trained and facilitated many individuals and organizations in achieving their specific VICTORY. Jim has over 30 years experience in operations, organizational development, sales, marketing, training, project management, quality and logistics. He has prepared and presented many highly proclaimed training seminars and workshops globally. Jim is a widely recognized leading champion of Total Quality Management in the 1980s and 1990s. Jim is the author of the *TQM Simplified*, and co-author of *Customer-Driven Project Management* published by McGraw-Hill. Jim's latest book is MANAGING FOR VICTORY™. For further information about Jim's books, guides and workshops see websites: [www.managingforvictory.com](http://www.managingforvictory.com) or [www.thebusinesscoach.org](http://www.thebusinesscoach.org) or email [coachjim@thebusinesscoach.org](mailto:coachjim@thebusinesscoach.org).



# CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING

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Consensus decision making means everyone on the team accepts and supports the decision. This does not mean everyone wants the same decision, but everyone on the team agrees to go along with the decision. Consensus equals commitment to the decision. Consensus can only be reached by open and fair communication among all team members. Consensus is critical when developing a code of conduct, vision, mission, charter, and values; selecting a process to improve, problem to solve, mission to accomplish, opportunity to pursue, the recommendation, and a solution. Consensus requires understanding and discussion among all stakeholders. Once understanding and discussion takes place, the group or team can proceed with the process of arriving at a consensus decision.

## Consensus Considerations

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**C**ommunicate

**O**pen team members minds to new ideas

**N**urture ideas of all team members

**S**hare information

**E**ncourage everyone's participation

**N**urture active discussion; don't vote

**S**upport ideas that are best for everyone

**U**nderstand that differences are strength

**S**eek win/win solutions



## When To Use Consensus Decision Making

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Consensus decision making is the most desirable decision making method when making critical decisions requiring commitment and support. However, it is not always the most desirable decision making method. In making a decision, the timing, significance, and necessary support of the outcome should be considered. A consensus decision takes time. However, a group will be more committed to success if the decision is reached by consensus. Consensus decision making targets a win/win outcome. Decisions reached by any method other than consensus can result in a win/lose situation. A win/lose decision equates to not having total commitment and support for the selection. Therefore, it is important to use consensus decision making when seeking total commitment for organization-wide results. For instance, consensus decision making should be used when:

- developing a focus (vision, mission, charter, goal)
- formulating a code of conduct
- selecting an issue, problem, or opportunity
- deciding on a solution to implement

Other methods of decision making also exist. These types of decision making methods may be necessary at times when consensus decision making is not appropriate. In many instances, time constraints, insignificance of the decision, or other considerations make consensus decision making unrealistic. In certain situations, the organization uses an alternate method of decision making from the methods below:

- **Decision by majority.** This is a decision by more than half of the representatives.
  - **Decision by leader or minority.** In some cases, the leader or owner makes the decision.
  - **Decision by management.** Management sometimes must make the decision.
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## How to Reach a Consensus Decision

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Consensus is reached by allowing everyone the opportunity to express their ideas about a decision. The action process for reaching a consensus decision is as follows:

1. **Present the decision to be made.** The decision statement should include the what, when, and why. The decision statement should not be given as a either/or alternative.
2. **Write the decision statement along the top of a flipchart.**
3. **Review background information.** Provide a common foundation of information to all participants or team members.
4. **Decide how the decision should be made.** Conduct a discussion to determine if consensus is the best decision method for this situation. Review the considerations for consensus decision making.
5. **Brainstorm selection criteria.** First, each team member takes five minutes to write items for selection criteria. . Second, the team conducts a round robin brainstorming session to list items on the flipchart. This involves each team member in-turn providing one item from their sheet of paper. This is continued until all items from the individual sheets of paper are listed on the flipchart. Third, the list is added to by a freewheeling brainstorming session. This opens the list to everyone to add more items.

### Note

Use the rules for brainstorming.

BRAINSTORMING RULES
Record all ideas Use creative, innovative thinking Limit judgment until discussion Encourage participation by everyone Solicit quantity

6. **Clarify ideas.** Discuss each item requiring explanation.

7. **Agree on selection criteria for the decision.**

The team needs to decide which items should be included in the decision selection criteria. Command media (laws, regulations, policy, etc.) should be considered as essential selection criteria.

- a. Evaluate each item as a yes, no, or maybe for criteria.
- b. Resolve the maybe items.
- c. Add command media items to list.

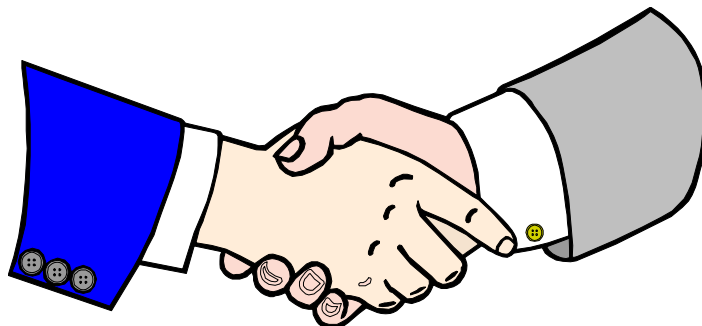
8. **Brainstorm alternatives.** Write the alternatives on a flipchart.

9. **Evaluate each alternative against selection criteria.** In some cases, it may be necessary to use selection techniques to focus alternatives to a manageable number (between 2 and 5). Selection techniques include: voting, selection matrix, and selection grid.

10. **Agree on a decision.** Write the final decision on a flipchart and post.

11. **Get each team member's personal commitment to the decision.** Ask each team member individually do they agree with the decision.

12. **Implement the decision.** Develop an action plan with the what, when and who to implement the decision. Conduct periodic reviews to follow-up.



## Consensus Decision Making Worksheet

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### 1. Present the decision to be made.

The Team Leader prepares a draft decision statement. The decision statement should include the what, when, and why. The decision statement should not be given as a either/or alternative.

#### Draft Decision Statement

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### 2. Write the decision statement along the top of a flipchart.

The draft decision statement is written on a flipchart. The team agrees with or modifies the decision statement.

#### Decision Statement

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### 3. Review background information.

What background information does the team need to make the decision? The team leader provides a common foundation of information to all participants or team members. The team members contribute additional information. The team decides if the information is sufficient to start the decision making process. In some instances, the team may need to gather more information.

List the essential information needed to make a decision.

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**4. Decide how the decision should be made.**

Determine why consensus decision making would be the best method for this decision.

List the reasons for striving for a consensus decision

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**5. Brainstorm selection criteria.**

Selection Criteria

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6. **Clarify ideas.** Discuss each item requiring explanation.

7. **Agree on the selection criteria for the decision.**

Selection Criteria or Guidelines for Decision

**Command Media Non-Negotiable Items**

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**Essential Items**

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**8. Brainstorm alternatives.**

**Alternatives**

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**9. Evaluate each alternative against selection criteria.**

**Item(s) Selected**

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10. Agree on a decision.

**Decision**

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11. Get each team member's personal commitment to the decision.

NAME	AGREE



12. Implement the decision.

**Action Plan**

WHAT	WHO	WHEN



# LEARN HOW TO USE CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING

This is a self guided workbook for any team, group, and committee seeking to use consensus decision making. Specifically, consensus decision making considerations include:

- C**ommunicate
- O**pen team members minds to new ideas
- N**urture ideas of all team members
- S**hare information
- E**ncourage everyone's participation
- N**urture active discussion; don't vote
- S**upport ideas that are best for everyone
- U**nderstand that differences are strength
- S**eek win/win solutions

This VICTORY Guide provides:

- 9 reasons to use consensus decision making
- 4 critical times to use consensus for decision
- 3 other methods for decision making
- 12 step process to reach a decision by consensus
- step-by-step worksheet to guide consensus decision making
- and more!

