

Reading 3 "Group Decision Making"**Advantages of Group Decision Making**

- P1** → Committees, task forces, and ad hoc groups are frequently assigned to identify and recommend decision alternatives or, in some cases, to actually make important decisions. In essence, a group is a tool that can focus the experience and expertise of several people on a particular problem or situation. Thus, a group offers the advantage of greater total knowledge. Groups accumulate more information, knowledge, and facts than individuals and often consider more alternatives. Each person in the group is able to draw on his or her unique education, experience, insights, and other resources and contribute those to the group. The varied backgrounds, training levels, and expertise of group members also help overcome tunnel vision by enabling the group to view the problem in more than one way.
- P2** → Participation in group decision making usually leads to higher member satisfaction. People tend to accept a decision more readily and to be better satisfied with it when they have participated in making that decision. In addition, people will better understand and be more committed to a decision in which they have had a say than to a decision made for them. As a result, such a decision is more likely to be implemented successfully.

Disadvantages of Group Decision Making

- P3** → While groups have many potential benefits, we all know that they can also be frustrating. **A** One obvious disadvantage of group decision making is the time required to make a decision. **B** The time needed for group discussion and the associated compromising and selecting of a decision alternative can be **considerable**. **C** Time costs money, so a waste of time becomes a disadvantage if a decision made by a group could have been made just as effectively by an individual working alone. **D** **Consequently**, group decisions should be avoided when speed and efficiency are the primary considerations.
- P4** A second disadvantage is that the group discussion may be dominated by an individual or subgroup. Effectiveness can be reduced if one individual, such as the group leader, dominates the discussion by talking too much or being closed to other points of view. Some group leaders try to control the group and provide the major input. Such dominance can stifle other group members' willingness to participate and could cause decision alternatives to be ignored or overlooked. All group members need to be encouraged and permitted to contribute.
- P5** → Another disadvantage of group decision making is that members may be less concerned with the group's goals than with their own personal goals. They may become so sidetracked in trying to win an argument that they forget about group performance. On the other hand, a group may try too hard to compromise and consequently may not make optimal decisions. Sometimes this stems from the desire to maintain friendships and avoid disagreements. Often groups exert tremendous social pressure on individuals to conform to established or

expected patterns of behavior. Especially when they are dealing with important and **controversial** issues, interacting groups may be prone to a phenomenon called *groupthink*.

P6 → Groupthink is an agreement-at-any-cost mentality that results in ineffective group decision making. It occurs when groups are highly cohesive, have highly directive leaders, are insulated so they have no clear ways to get objective information, and—because they lack outside information—have little hope that a better solution might be found than **the one** proposed by the leader or other influential group members. These conditions foster the illusion that the group is invulnerable, right, and more moral than outsiders. They also encourage the development of self-appointed “mind guards” who bring pressure on dissenters. In such situations, decisions—often important decisions—are made without consideration of alternative frames or alternative options. It is difficult to imagine conditions more conducive to poor decision making and wrong decisions.

P7 Recent research indicates that groupthink may also result when group members have preconceived ideas about how a problem should be solved. Under these conditions, the team may not examine a full range of decision alternatives, or it may discount or avoid information that threatens its preconceived choice.

27. In paragraph 1, the author states that groups frequently

- (A) generate more options than individuals
- (B) agree on the way that the problem should be approached
- (C) make recommendations instead of decisions
- (D) are chosen to participate because of their experience

Paragraph 1 is marked with an arrow [→].

28. According to paragraph 2, why do group decisions tend to be more successful?

- (A) When more people are involved, there are more ideas from which to choose.
- (B) People are more accepting of decisions when they have been involved in them.
- (C) Implementing ideas is easier with a large number of people to help.
- (D) People like to be participants in decisions that are successful.

Paragraph 2 is marked with an arrow [→].

29. The word **considerable** in the passage is closest in meaning to
- (A) valuable
 - (B) significant
 - (C) predictable
 - (D) unusual
30. The word **Consequently** in the passage is closest in meaning to
- (A) About now
 - (B) Without doubt
 - (C) Before long
 - (D) As a result
31. According to paragraph 3, group discussion can be problematic because
- (A) individual decisions are always more effective
 - (B) it takes more time for a group to arrive at a decision
 - (C) it costs more to pay all of the group members
 - (D) interaction among group members can be a problem

Paragraph 3 is marked with an arrow [→].

32. What can be inferred about a group leader?
- (A) A good leader will provide goals for the group to consider and vote on.
 - (B) The purpose of the leader is to facilitate the participation of all of the members.
 - (C) A group leader should be the dominant member of the group.
 - (D) Expectations for group behavior must be presented by the group leader.
33. The word **controversial** in the passage is closest in meaning to
- (A) accepted
 - (B) debatable
 - (C) recent
 - (D) complicated
34. According to paragraph 5, how does the author explain compromise in a group?
- (A) The group may try to make a better decision by compromising.
 - (B) A compromise may be the best way to encourage groupthink.
 - (C) Compromising may allow the group members to remain friends.
 - (D) To compromise can help one member to reach a personal goal.

Paragraph 5 is marked with an arrow [→].

35. The phrase **the one** in the passage refers to
- Ⓐ solution
 - Ⓑ information
 - Ⓒ hope
 - Ⓓ leader
36. What does the term “mind guards” refer to?
- Ⓐ People who conform to the group opinion without thinking
 - Ⓑ Group members who try to force others to agree with the group
 - Ⓒ Members of the group who are the most ethical and influential
 - Ⓓ Those people who disagree without offering an alternative view
37. According to paragraph 6, why are alternative solutions often rejected in groupthink?
- Ⓐ Dissenters exert pressure on the group.
 - Ⓑ Group leaders are not very creative.
 - Ⓒ Information is not made available.
 - Ⓓ The group is usually right.

Paragraph 6 is marked with an arrow [→].

38. Look at the four squares [■] that show where the following sentence could be inserted in the passage.

In fact, the traditional group is prone to a variety of difficulties.

Where could the sentence best be added?

Click on a square [■] to insert the sentence in the passage.

39. **Directions:** Complete the table by matching the phrases on the left with the headings on the right. Select the appropriate answer choices and drag them to the advantages or disadvantages of group decision making. TWO of the answer choices will NOT be used. ***This question is worth 4 points.***

To delete an answer choice, click on it. To see the passage, click on **View Text**.

Answer Choices

- A Sometimes a strong leader will dominate the group.
- B Sometimes personal objectives dictate the outcome.
- C Most of the time people are happier with the decision.
- D It is usually possible to gather more data.
- E It will probably take much longer to arrive at a decision.
- F The group may tend to make decisions based on friendship.
- G Discussion is required before a decision is made.
- H Implementation is often much easier after the decision.
- I A group member may disagree with the majority opinion.

Advantages

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Disadvantages

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