

Advantages of Consensus Decision Making

Dear President Lambert: I am writing to you suggesting a new leadership model for our school. As the assistant principal I enjoyed serving on your staff. At the end of this year you stated as a school we must improve our leadership. I responded by researching as well as talking to other faculty members. The faculty at school is tired of our current bureaucratic process. I speak for the faculty in saying we are all stakeholders in this institution's future. With this in mind individuals want input on decisions as well as changes in all areas of our school. The following is my proposal for the newest and most innovative leadership model available entitled consensus decision making. I strongly believe this leadership style would be a great fit for our organization.

Leadership today is more difficult because of challenges that are not just complicated but unpredictable. Such challenges demand people and organizations fundamentally change, and make it virtually impossible for an individual leader to sufficiently act alone. What is needed is a more inclusive and collective model. Individuals need to be part of a bigger picture connecting them to a bigger purpose. It is hard to get a group of people who do not share a common set of values and perspectives behind a common direction ¹ Through group leadership many obstacles are resolvable.

Consensus decision-making is not an exact progression a school follows but a blue print of decision-making. Essentially committees are formed then given areas of responsibility. The committee members work together in making the best possible decisions. Importantly this does not mean individuals get their way. All parties

¹ Drafft, W. H. (2003). Leading together: Complex challenges require a new approach. *Leadership In Action* 23 (1), 3-7. http://www.ccl.org/leadership/pdf/publications/lia/23_1leadingtogether.pdf

compromise their ideas into the best possible agreement. This agreement results in a course of action all shared parties accept.²

In the past members of our school simply half heartedly went through the dictated motions of superiors. Through teachers dictating school policy they can support their own ideas through authentic leadership. This genuine leadership transforms the educational environment. Teachers will understand their purpose and values they represent. This enlightenment allows teachers to guide students with their heart. Heart felt guidance develops into well connected relationships between faculty and students.³ Reconciling the division between pupil and professor will revolutionize our school.

The genius of Great Groups is they get remarkable people -- strong individual achievers -- to work together to get results. But these groups serve a second and equally important function: they provide psychic support and personal fellowship. They help generate courage. Without a sounding board for outrageous ideas, without personal encouragement and perspective when we hit a roadblock, we'd all lose our way.⁴ In the leadership groups established in our school teachers would form close bonds. Through this collaboration a unified culture would develop with faculty holding each other accountable in achieving stated goals. Thus teachers ultimate responsibility would be to each other in executing their plans.

² General Consensus Data and Decision Making by Jerry Jennings

³ George, B. (2004). "The journey to authenticity." *Leader to Leader*, No. 21 . The Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management.
<http://www.pfdf.org/knowledgecenter/journal.aspx?ArticleID=75>

⁴ Bennis, W. G. (1997). "The secrets of great groups." *Leader to Leader*, No.3. The Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management.
<http://www.leadertoleader.org/knowledgecenter/journal.aspx?ArticleID=140>

Another advantage of consensus decision making is clarified roles. Within the groups established responsibility is delegated to everyone. In turn all members task are equally important. Peter Drucker, a practitioner of consensus decision making, states: "No knowledge ranks higher than another; each is judged by its contribution to the common task rather than by any inherent superiority or inferiority. Therefore, the modern organization cannot be an organization of boss and subordinate. It must be organized as a team." Therefore all parties are active participants in the decision making process. With this mindset horizontal teamwork is established. In this team model individuals set aside their egos and simply focus on fulfilling their team responsibility. No longer are individuals focused on themselves but on the vision of the school.⁵

Before I go any further I want to provide an example of consensus decision-making. The constitution of the United States developed from the minds of many framers. Naturally many disagreements existed on America's future. Jefferson, Adams, and Hamilton provided conflicting yet brilliant ideas for the founding document. Fortunately James Madison combined their ideas into one the greatest governmental documents in history. This document is the driving force holding America together through adversity. Lets face it great minds do not always think alike but in combining thoughts extraordinary feats can be accomplished.

As I stated earlier consensus decision making is a process without standard steps. As you read this I am sure you are wondering how this would function at Ridgemont High School. I think the best plan of action for our school follows. Allow the teachers

⁵ Seifter, H. (2001). The conductor-less orchestra. *Leader to Leader*, No.21. The Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management.
<http://www.pfdf.org/knowledgecenter/journal.aspx?ArticleID=110>

in each department to vote on a department head. Within these departments they will dictate course offerings, policies, and procedures for their department. Importantly their stated procedures will be documented and put on file in our office. Each nine weeks all departments will voluntarily meet and express their opinions on all topics within the school. Also at this time they can vote on any issue brought up in the department head meetings. The department heads will form another sub group. Following departmental meetings all of the department heads will meet together and discuss their individual content area meetings. I as the assistant principal will take part in the departmental discussions. Following the discussion I and one female and male representative will meet directly with you to discuss the necessary content of these meetings. I want you to know I am open to any alterations of this plan and want to expediently meet with you about opening up the communication lines and sharing leadership responsibility in our school. A true mark of a leader is not what he/she does but what they enable others to achieve Sincerely- Madison William Taylor

Consensus decision-making is a valuable asset for all people to understand. This is the fastest growing leadership model. Honestly it revolutionized the way I view leadership as well as leaders. By practicing this difficult situations can easily be solved and allow peoples career paths to be revolutionized. This leadership style can be applied to all organizations or groups of people. Although it requires much patience in the end everyone will be more successful and happier with group leadership. No longer will the leader be wondering why will they not follow me? Conversely the follower will not be wondering why should I bother? For the first time leader and follower will be placed on the same team working towards the same goal.