

Synergistic decision making



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Synergistic decision making, or SDM, is a model of decision making consisting of two aspects: problem solving and interpersonal relations. One of the basic aspects of SDM is that group members need to delay their decision making until all ideas have been evaluated. Group members should not try to debate the merits of an idea without first hearing all ideas. Also, group members need to come together with open minds in relation to the other group members.

If group members A has judged member B because of what they are wearing, etc, then the process is stifled. The rational problem solving process is designed to help slow down the tendency of the group to jump to a conclusion and take action without evaluating courses of action. Group members must first decide on a process to solve the problem and what questions actually need to be answered by the group. Group members must then analyze the situation from all aspects. Outcomes and objectives must be noted to keep the group focused on the task. After the outcomes are reached, a course of action needs developed and selected.

This process is usually easier said than done. Usually when two prevailing course of action arise someone usually plays the advocacy role and begins debating with the others. At that point, groups usually rule out all other options besides those two, so it stifles the group process. After developing a course of action, the group must then discuss the obstacles and adverse consequences that may be faced with their decisions and how to overcome them. The second aspect is the interpersonal process consisting of active listening clarifying, supporting and building, and confronting and differing.

Active listening is most noticeable by its absence. (23) Group members are not listening to one another if they are constantly interrupting each other, etc. Vital information gets lost in the shuffle if group members are not active listeners. Being supportive and building other group members up is also an integral part of SDM. Group members respond better to a supportive climate than a negative one.

Confronting and differing is where a lot of groups break down. A lot of times group members make assumptions and then argue for or against an idea or solution, which can hinder group progress. Using synergistic decision making as a model for problems solving groups can come to a rational, focused, group decision, based on evaluated ideas.