Leading Strategic Decision-Making
Sample Course Syllabus

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This is a highly interactive course, where participants learn by doing. Role plays of various team situations provide opportunities for practice. Participants gain insight into their own decision leadership capabilities and areas for potential improvement through in-class exercises and feedback from coaches.

What is Decision Leadership?
Analytically and organizationally complex decisions need leadership to ensure timely, high-quality results. Typically, decision-makers delegate the responsibility of managing the decision staff and the “homework” required to make high-quality decisions to decision leaders. In this session, we discuss decision leadership and the role of the decision leader to guide a team to a high-quality decision. Ultimately, the decision leaders must share responsibility with the team and the decision-makers for the quality of the decision.

Decision Quality and Organizational Assessment
The concept of decision quality (DQ) brackets the beginning and the end of the decision process for the decision leader. Decision leaders must see DQ as a destination before they embark on the process and ensure that they have delivered it at the end of the process. In this session, we review the elements of DQ and assess the decision-making norms in participants’ organizations. Participants work in teams on a case exercise to identify what decision-makers will need to achieve quality in a challenging situation.

Case Exercise: Requirements for Decision Quality
Participants work on a case exercise to identify what decision-makers will need to achieve quality.

Managing Team Conflict
Every team has conflict. In this session, Dr. Pamela Hinds, an expert on geographically distributed work teams and collaborative technologies defines conflict, describes three types of conflict and their effects, and discusses various conflict management styles.
**Diagnose the Situation and Design the Decision Process**

Effective decision leaders diagnose the decision situation in order to determine the best decision process. This entails determining the nature and scope of the decision to be made and identifying the organizational, analytical, and content obstacles that may arise. Decision leaders then face the challenging task of selecting the appropriate approach, tools, and schedule to use for a decision situation—all of which are key to achieving DQ. The process differs greatly from one situation to another, but it must drive to commitment to action that achieves DQ. In this session, we discuss the crucial questions that decision leaders need to answer in diagnosis, which also lead to the initial framing of the overall situation. We also describe how to design an effective and efficient decision process. Participants work in teams on a case exercise to diagnose and design a process for a decision situation.

**Leadership Styles**

Effective decision leaders orchestrate and lead the activities necessary to achieve decision quality. This requires leadership and facilitation skills, as well as knowledge of what analytical tools to employ. In this session, we describe various leadership styles, and participants practice the visionary style to gain someone’s commitment to spearhead a decision effort.

**Facilitative Leadership and Group Dynamics**

Decision leaders need to be skilled in both neutral facilitation and facilitative leadership. They must be able to lead the project team and decision board through effective working sessions and productive dialogue, facilitating agreement and clarity of action despite the group’s interpersonal and organizational dynamics. Managing group dynamics is particularly important in the decision context, because of the presence of organizational complexities, and because of the many biases and distortions that can impact the group’s interactions. In this session, we describe and practice facilitative leadership, management of group dynamics, and facilitation of key tools in the dialogue decision process.

**Power: Why Some People Have It – And Others Don’t**

Dr. Jeffrey Pfeffer, one of today’s most influential management thinkers, describes the true paths to power and career success.

**Leading Decision Boards**

Successful decision leaders coach decision boards to understand and embrace DQ. This requires understanding board members’ perspectives, as well as leadership and facilitation skills. In this session, we discuss how to understand these perspectives, build commitment to DQ, and plan and conduct decision board meetings. Participants work in teams to prepare for and conduct a framing dialogue with decision-makers with diverse perspectives. They lead the decision board through a thorough consideration of the decision frame and its quality, enabling dialogue and facilitating agreement.