

Strategies for Transparent and Inclusive Decision-making

Inclusive and transparent decision-making practices can help to ameliorate cultures that alienate diverse and historically marginalized perspectives.

What are teams looking for in a transparent decision-making process:

- A leader who hasn't made up their mind, who comes to the problem in question ready to learn
- A leader who respects their staff's experience.
- A leader who is willing to guide the process so all voices are heard from.
- A leader who is open about the goals and parameters of a given project or decision
- A leader who really listens.
- A leader who is open to feedback
- A leader who can adapt
- Understanding how and why the decisions are made
- Understanding how and why they can participate in the actual decision

What do teams gain from transparent decision-making processes:

- Trust in the process and one another
- Understanding that decision making is a process.
- Understanding that the goal of the process is—which may not be the goal of the entire staff or shared by the entire staff.
- Respect for minority viewpoints.
- Buy-in through collaboration

What do leaders gain from transparent decision-making processes:

- Trust with their teams
- Collaboration and support
- Increased credibility

Common excuses for lack of transparency - Stretch yourself to check the validity of these!

1. Information is too sensitive
2. Information is too distracting, others don't need to know
3. Challenges your assumptions and comfort level as a leader

Areas to practice transparency with:

1. Open positions, Position descriptions, interview teams and processes
2. Selection process for promotion
3. Team organizational goals
4. Managerial performance appraisals - who gets to provide feedback and how do they get to do it?
5. Tools used to perform the work

Process for Transparent Decision-making:

1. Communicating the decision framework starts with some fundamental questions
 - Who participates in decision-making, at what point(s) in the process, whose feedback is sought and incorporated? Who has the opportunity to review or “sign off”?
 - Who is impacted by the decision? A people across different identities and experiences impacted in a disparate manner?
 - How is the decision currently made (factors, timing, process, etc.) ?
 - What are we attempting to maximize and minimize with our decision?
 - What is our path for continuous improvement with this decision making process?
 - Where is the decision-making process documented so that all constituents can know about it and access it?
 - What assumptions are made in the process?
 - What happens with the outputs of the decision? Are decisions shared broadly?

2. Encourage feedback
 - Post the process and allow for feedback, group or one-on-one
 - Provide a timeframe for feedback and send reminders
 - Be open to iterations based upon the feedback you receive
 - If you don't agree with a suggestion, question why, and evaluate the merits of the suggestion(s)
 - Document feedback, when appropriate, to demonstrate accountability for change
 - If you are not hearing from some constituents, reach out

3. Implement the feedback
 - Set a timeline for implementation and share with constituents
 - Assess whether the changes addressed the needs and opportunities; Those impacted by decisions are often the best to determine whether those decisions were effective.
 - Assess improvements in experiences in transparent decision-making among the team; How can the decision making process be improved in the future?

References

- Cutler, J. (2016, March 27). *Decision making transparency(The why)*. Medium. <https://medium.com/@johnpcutler/decision-making-transparency-the-why-7f90e48fded>
- Knuth, S. (2017, September 28). *A 3-step process for making more transparent decisions*. Opensource.Com. <https://opensource.com/open-organization/17/9/exercise-in-transparent-decisions>