

Clarifying Roles in Decision-Making

One cornerstone of effective decision-making is being clear about what role each person or group is being asked to play. This also helps nurture respect, trust, and a sense of belonging and teamwork.

There are three basic roles people or groups can play:

1. Receiver of information
2. Provider of input or responses to an idea or proposal, leaving the decision-making power in the hands of someone else (often the person/people presenting)
3. Maker of all or part of the decision, which can take multiple forms -
 - a. Be delegated decision-making power (usually within a set of parameters defined by the person or group doing the delegating);
 - b. Delegate part of the decision-making to another person or group (set the parameters)
 - c. Make a full decision (nobody beyond the group plays a role in the decision)

When bringing an item or task to a given group (working group, team, board, committee, etc.), it is critical to communicate clearly about what role is being assigned/invited when presenting an item for discussion. Thinking you are being asked to play one role and then discovering later that you were being asked to play a different one creates confusion, frustration, and mistrust.

The roles requested or assigned should be reflected in whatever written materials are connected to the item or task – meeting agendas, minutes, memos, emails, etc. If you don't know ahead of time what role you want a particular group to play in a process, make sure the decision-making about the role(s) happens early in the process, and is transparent and understood by all. It is far better to know at the beginning of a process whether there are disagreements about each person/group's role in the process, so you can clarify or negotiate that at the start, rather than having the process questions get tangled up in the content conversations.

You will find more tools for effective and inclusive decision-making and organizational development at <http://www.Tasha-Harmon.com/resources>.