

Factors Favoring a Consensus Approach to Decision Making

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Factors Favoring a Consensus Approach to Decision Making

1. **Lead Time.** There is sufficient time before action has to be taken to engage in the open-ended discussions needed to clarify respective interests, iron out substantive differences and craft consensus solutions.
2. **Negotiable Issue.** The participants are willing and able to define the issue at hand as a problem-solving situation for which there is no “one right answer” (rather than a non negotiable requirement to be implemented literally or a fixed resource to be carved up competitively).
3. **Reciprocal Vulnerabilities.** No participant can afford to ignore the likely actions or reactions of one or more other participants if a unilateral decision is made by one of the participants.
4. **Multilateral Complexity.** The ultimate decision must incorporate varied perspectives and satisfy numerous interests.
5. **Rigor Required.** The content of the ultimate decision is very important to the participants and their constituencies and therefore must be of high quality.
6. **Relationship Risks.** There is a high need to manage discussions about the issue in ways that will either improve or at least not damage on-going working relations among the participants and the constituencies they represent.
7. **Buy-in Essential.** The decision’s effectiveness depends heavily on commitment to its implementation by all participants and the constituencies they represent.
8. **Involvement Desirable.** Participants’ satisfaction with the decision process and their role in it is important.
9. **Empowered Participants.** The participants are authorized (or have an efficient process for obtaining authorization) to make real-time decisions that are binding on the constituencies they represent.
10. **Open Minds.** The participants are open to views different from their own.
11. **Participative Orientations.** The participants would value their membership in a consensus-formation group.
12. **Collaborative Predispositions.** The participants have mutual-gain (“win-win”) attitudes toward the consensus formation process.