

# Decision Poker



## Why Decision Poker?

In a dynamic world that is characterized by complexity and surprises, it is necessary that decisions are made quickly by people with the right competence and expertise.

Teams are increasingly organizing their work themselves. In doing so, they often reach their limits, as lengthy discussions and a lack of courage for pragmatic decisions restrict the necessary degree of adaptability.

**Decision Poker** is therefore helpful to look at different decision-making techniques in order to make decisions as pragmatically and quickly as possible, while giving decisions the required amount of time.

## What is Decision Poker?

This card game from Kurswechsel offers one of the most important elements of modern teamwork: **Making decisions**, step by step, in a protected space.

The results help teams identify specific ways to take on more responsibility collectively. Depending on the matter's degree of complexity, each individual team member can use the various types of decision-making to establish the best possible decisionmaking processes.

Who has which responsibilities and competencies for specific situations? In the end, generally applicable decision principles can be determined. Decision Poker creates transparency in the decisionmaking process and saves teams and employees valuable time.

Decision Poker thus facilitates discourse on the various possibilities of decision-making processes, clarifies their respective advantages and disadvantages, and creates a common understanding of decision-making.

## Instructions

Ideally, all team members should participate in the game. Other individuals, such as team leaders, facilitators, or external coaches, may also participate.

Each player receives a set of Decision Poker cards. The facilitator briefly introduces the different decisionmaking processes and answers questions. The game begins.

Each player writes down decision-making scenarios from their everyday work on sticky notes, which are then placed in a sequence.

**Each decision-making scenario follows the same procedure:**

1. **Introduction:** A participant or facilitator presents the decisionmaking scenario
2. **Clarification:** The presenter clarifies questions concerning the context to ensure a common understanding of the scenario
3. **Selection:** Each player chooses their most suitable decision-making process card and places it face down in front of them
4. **Reveal:** On the facilitator's cue, all participants reveal their cards
5. **Discussion:** With the support of the facilitator, all players discuss the differences and similarities between the individual cards
6. **Agreement:** The players identify, define, and document guiding principles or agreements for future decision-making processes that can be derived from the results

**The following key questions can help the facilitator in her reflection process:**

- Which noticeable choices become obvious in the decision-making procedures?
- Do certain cards appear particularly frequently or rarely?
- How will the results influence real decision-making in the organization?
- What exactly does the choice of cards imply for the boldness of making decisions independently and pragmatically?
- What does the choice of cards mean regarding mutual trust within the team?
- Can any decision-making principles be derived from each decision scenario?

**Decision principles** can help build mutual trust and embolden team members to make decisions within their teams instead of leaving these decisions to external „higher powers“. Examples of decision principles include:

»Pragmatic decisions by an individual always precede lengthy discussions in the whole team«

»We want to make as many team-relevant decisions as possible ourselves without the involvement of the management«

»Integrating objections (consent) is fundamentally preferable to a consensus«

# Decision Processes

## Majority vote

A simple majority vote is one of the best known and most commonly used decision-making processes. Its aim is to find an absolute or relative majority for a specific decision proposal. Each member involved in the decision has one or more votes, and the decision proposal with the most votes is considered acceptable.

Compared to the "Querying the resistance", this decision-making process often has the disadvantage that "winners" and "losers" arise.

## Consensus

A consensus decision is made when a solution to a specific need for decision requires the unconditional approval of all members involved in the decision.

Decisions reached by consensus are usually particularly robust, but often require a considerable amount of time to weigh the merits and discussions.

## Arbitrary individual decision

An arbitrary individual decision is made by a self-empowered person with authority. This is particularly useful if the speed of the decision plays an important role: e.g., in emergency or crisis situations.

In addition, many organizational structures and processes involve clearly defined types of decisions which all stakeholders can decide independently, in good conscience, and taking common decision principles into account. This is often a characteristic of a supportive organizational culture and an efficient organization.

## Querying the resistance

Querying the resistance is a suitable tool to select one of several suggestions. Scarce results in majority votes often result into dissatisfaction with the chosen solution. Querying the resistance aims to make solutions as viable as possible and with the least possible resistance. The process is as follows:

1. Present suggestions: The various decision proposals are introduced briefly and any questions are clarified for better understanding.
2. Obtain additional suggestions: The proposer/ facilitator asks if there are any further suggestions. (Maintaining a status quo is a decision, too!)
3. Measure resistance: Everyone states their resistance for each proposed decision. A potential scale could range from 1 = no resistance to 5 = extremely high resistance ("over my dead body"). The values are summed up for each suggestion.
4. Finalize the result: The proposal with the lowest resistance value (sum) is accepted.

## Objection integration

Objection integration – also known as consent (with „t“) – is a moderated decision-making process that aims to create a concrete decision proposal. It takes concerns into account, as well as discrepancies, in order to create a viable solution. The facilitation of the objection integration follows a defined process:

1. Information round: The proposer presents the problem that needs to be solved and presents her decision proposal.
2. Obtain opinions: Everyone involved has the opportunity to express their opinion in turns.
3. Validate opinions: In the next round, everyone has the chance to give their views on what has been said, to ask questions, and to suggest ideas.
4. The proposer has the opportunity to adjust her original decision proposal in order to integrate what has been said, to take into account conflicts, and to make a final decision proposal.
5. Decision: The proposer asks whether the proposed decision is „safe enough to try“. Everyone involved in the decision now takes turns signalling their approval with a thumbs up. To signal that there is no unconditional approval, but rather support of the proposal, an open hand is extended. Thumbs down signals a veto. In this case, the proposed decision is considered to be rejected.

If no veto is given, the proposed decision is considered to be accepted.

## Top-down decision

The top-down decision is made by individuals or groups who are appropriately equipped with formal decision-making authority. This makes the decision-making process clear and helps to centralize decisions. In other cases, however, this procedure is also used to withdraw from responsibility as a team and to delegate decisions.

## Commissioned case decision

In commissioned case decisions, an individual or group is fully commissioned to find a solution for a specific decision requirement. This procedure is often linked to the convention of consulting experts and those affected by the decision.

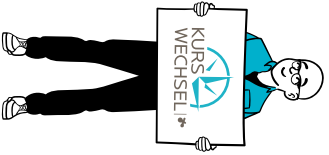
Important questions in this context are:

- How is the decision-maker/ are the decision-makers chosen?
- What exactly is the decision to be made?
- Which general conditions need to be considered (budget, preconditions, etc.)?
- When shall the decision be made?
- Who needs to be informed about the decision?
- Shall the decision be reviewed afterwards? If yes: In which group?

It is wise to document this.

Individual decision, querying the resistance, objection integration and commissioned case decision contain ideas from: Bernd Oestereich and Claudia Schröder | kollegiale-fuehrung.de

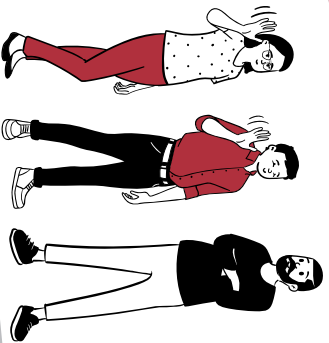
## Decision Poker



A game for the reflected handling of decision-making processes in teams and organizations.

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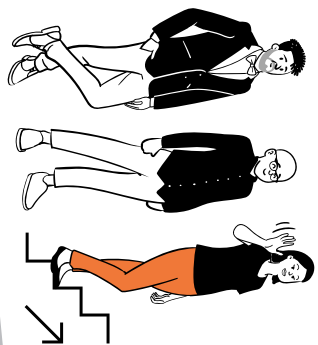
## Majority vote



Decision by simple majority vote.

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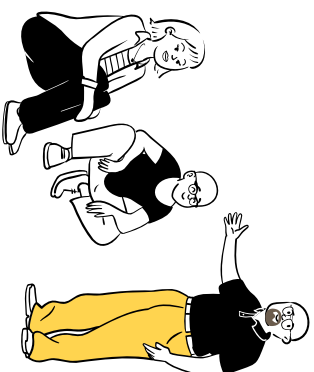
## Arbitrary individual decision



Decision by an individual without coordination with the team.

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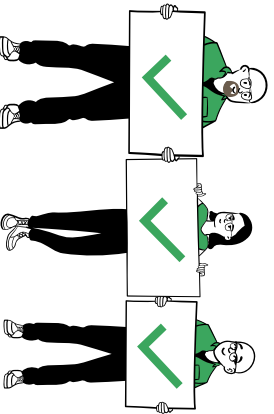
## Top-down decision



Decision by someone with higher formal decision-making authority.

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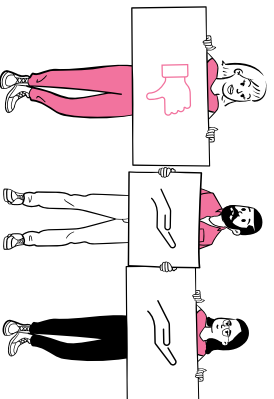
## Consensus



A joint decision with which everyone agrees.

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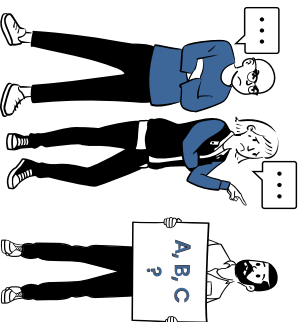
## Objection integration



Find a proposal with minimal objection without a veto.

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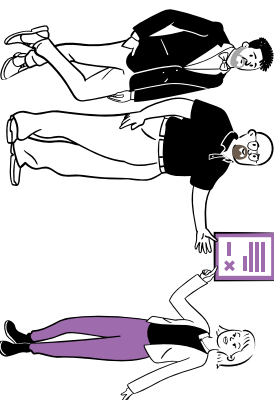
## Querying the resistance



Choosing the option with least resistance.

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## Commissioned case decision



Decision is transferred to one or more people.

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