

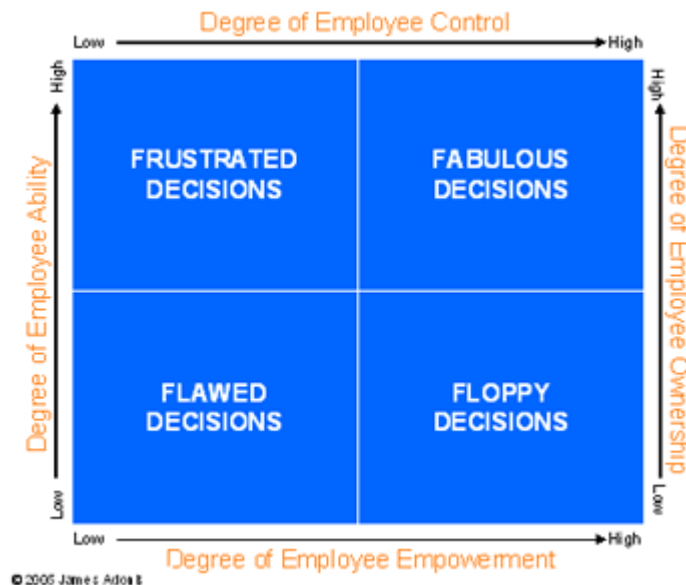
Stop Making Decisions!

Hundreds of decisions are made in the workplace every single day. If just a fraction of these are pushed down by managers to employees, engagement levels will skyrocket.

Employees need to feel as if they're making a significant contribution to the team's success, and enabling them to own decision-making within the team is at the core of engagement. However, managers must ensure that they create the perfect environment and framework to enable this to occur splendidly, or else the outcome could be disastrous.

The *Decision-Making Matrix* is the first comprehensive analysis of the link between the work environment and the impact this has on effective decision-making. It uses four degrees of scale to measure the effectiveness of the decision-making process:

- Employee ability
- Employee control
- Employee ownership, and
- Employee empowerment



The degree of employee empowerment is a direct reflection of the level of decision-making a manager is willing to give an employee.

How much discretion is the employee allowed to have? Is the employee restricted to making decisions only on how long to spend in the bathroom, or is the manager allowing the employee to decide on matters that have a financial impact on the business?

Managers need to be wary that empowering employees only marginally will create only a marginal result. Take a risk and see what happens. Trust your employees to make big decisions that have an effect on all aspects of the working environment: customer service, teamwork, business direction, etc.

Employee ability

The first step in creating an environment conducive to excellent decision-making is *employee ability*.

Do your employees have the capability, skills, resources, training, and support they need to be able to make effective decisions?

This is often the biggest hurdle that managers encounter. It seems like it takes so much effort just to get employees 'ready' to make decisions on their own that it's probably faster and more efficient if we did it ourselves.

Whilst it is the easy option, it's also the option that leads to disengagement amongst employees. It's the option that results in employees feeling that decisions are thrust upon them rather than being involved in the process.

Employee control

How controlling are you as a manager? Are you constantly breathing down your employees' necks? Do they see you and get a fright? Do they talk to you with nerves in their tone and body language, or are they calm, together, and themselves?

Relinquish some of this control and pass it on to your employees. Employees will see the gift of empowerment as fake and insincere if it's not accompanied by *employee control*.

If you see them headed for failure and you know from your previous experience that the decision they've made has only one outcome and that outcome is a crash, let it happen. I can almost hear you cry "WHAT!" as you read this, but just let it happen. People by nature need to make mistakes to learn. If they don't make the mistake today, they're going to make it eventually anyway, so let it happen. Whilst we've all heard a million times the line "people learn from their mistakes", what we don't hear is that people learn even more from having to "fix their mistakes". So let them happen.

Employee ownership

Who's ultimately responsible for the outcome of the decision? Is it you? Is it your manager? Is it the team?

No, it's the employee who's been empowered and placed in control of the decision, and he or she needs to know it. This is where the third element of decision-making comes into play - *employee ownership*.

If an employee feels that accountability will be passed onto someone else if the decision turns sour, it will result in half-hearted decisions. If an employee has the impression that they will not be questioned over a decision gone bad, it will result in unnecessarily risky decisions.

So if you're going to push decisions down, and this article overwhelmingly suggests you do so, then also hand over ownership as well.

Employee empowerment

The outcome of an empowered workforce is employees who take pride in their work, employees who put thought into the consequences of their actions, employees who are so involved that they feel the business is their own.

This is an immensely powerful environment to build and it truly rests with this empowerment phase. Don't be superficial in the responsibilities you give your employees; be generous and let them run wild. Sure, bad decisions will be made, and these can easily be reigned in.

Now have a think about all the brilliant decisions that can also be made and imagine how far the business will be propelled as a result.

It's the combination of these four elements, *employee ability, employee control, employee ownership, and employee empowerment* which create the *Decision-Making Matrix*. And it's achieving a high degree in each of these areas that results in a place in the top right quadrant, the quadrant where fabulous decisions are made. Any other combination results in decisions that are either flawed, floppy, or frustrated, and landing in one of these quadrants can make a genuinely good idea a disastrous one.

Employee engagement is critical to organisational success. Studies around the world are consistently highlighting the vast differences in profit between organisations with high levels of engagement and those where engagement is low. Pushing decisions down is a golden way, a big step, and a sure-fire way of getting to the top. But unless you're also creating the right framework and environment for this to occur, then you're only halfway there.

Author: James Adonis is a leading expert on engagement and the author of 'Love your team: How to halve your employee turnover in less than 90 days!'. He specialises in getting managers to engage their employees so that they become loyal high-performers. James provides organisations around the world with easy-to-implement solutions that help managers to get their employees to love their jobs, adore their company, and to go the extra mile. For further information visit www.jamesadonis.com.