

Generate the options that could be compared with your specifications. Do not forget to include the status quo and inaction as options. Compare your options with your essential factors.

3. Collect information with regard to the benefit and risk factors for the remaining options and assess the degree of satisfaction that each option provides. Identify the benefit-risk area for each option to be considered. Describe your best-balanced choice.

New Charter School

Jannell Adami is the new principal of a recently inaugurated charter school. She has many challenges ahead of her given that she is working in a community with many needs. Her board has given her a series of priorities to implement during her first year, and she has promised to make a difference in the lives of as many children as possible. Her first priority is to address the educational needs of the children in her community, but she recognizes that she cannot address the educational needs without getting to know the community better. Because she has limited funds, she would like to maximize her resources by determining the most critical and prevalent needs that affect the children in this community. Before the beginning of the school year, she will go to the community and ask what the critical needs are before making decisions on programs to implement. Through a variety of sources, she is able to identify 20 individuals who would serve as a starting point for the discussion. She likes the idea of using focus groups to generate ideas with the community groups. She has asked you for advice. What recommendations would you provide her in setting up the focus groups?

Using the Decision Tree for Levels of Participation

Max Herbert heads a unit of the state transportation department charged with developing a new traffic flow design for the busiest intersection in the largest city in the state. Max earned an MPA and had several years' experience in the state's budget office before moving to the transportation department, where he has worked for a year and a half. His staff consists primarily of traffic engineers and planners, most of whom are considerably older than Max and have far more experience in transportation than he does. Max recognizes their expertise, although he believes that his staff members have become a bit tradition bound, tending toward "safe" solutions to traffic problems. He recognizes that different staff members are likely to have different approaches to solving the problem they face, although he also believes that in the end they will arrive at an acceptable compromise and probably one that is "safe."

Delays and bottlenecks caused by the current traffic pattern have made the issue of a new design a fairly high-profile issue, so Max is concerned about his group producing a high-quality product, one that will be technically sound as well as politically acceptable. Although he is not a traffic engineer, Max has done his homework and learned a lot about transportation issues

opportunity for promotion. Interviews with those who have left the organization, and with those who have remained, might suggest instead that turnover is due to the lack of resources available to complete the work required.

2. *Use the problem to generate solutions.* You might find that well-defined problems have implied solutions. For example, if the problem is dissatisfaction in the workplace and the problem includes inadequate facilities, then the alternative solutions will begin with how to improve the inadequate facilities.
3. *Prevent premature evaluations of solutions.* Continue brainstorming until all possible alternatives have been generated. When alternatives are evaluated, the idea generation for possible solutions typically ceases.
4. *Provide a climate that values disagreement.* As we will see in Chapter 11, healthy conflict is helpful in generating ideas. Make sure that you seek input from those who disagree with you as well as those who agree with you. Consider all alternatives equally.
5. *Provide a climate that values diversity.* Valued and well-managed diverse environments enhance creativity in decision making and divert groupthink.
6. *When possible, gain consensus from all of those affected while avoiding premature consensus building.* Solutions will be much more likely to be accepted if all of those affected have been involved in the decision-making process. For example, you might find that the solution to the facilities problem requires moving to a new location. Employees will be more satisfied with the move if they have been kept informed of the options and have contributed to the decision.

Thinking in Action

A Decision-Making Framework

Using a community service project, an internship, or a work experience, use the following framework adapted from Philip (1985, pp. 84–91) to analyze the process of decision making.

1. Clarify your objectives.
Describe the situation on which you are working. State your precise objective.
2. Consider the factors that will influence your choice of action.
List the factors that are important to you and to those affected by the decision. Extend the factors into statements that specify the results expected, resources available, or constraints that might exist.
Classify the statements that will have to be regarded as essential.
Assess the importance of the remaining factors and list them in descending order of importance.