

# Involving People in Your Decision-Making Efforts

## Introduction

“Managing Involvement®” is a process that will help you make effective choices about whom to involve in resolving your concerns and the depth of their participation. “Managing Involvement” answers such questions as:

- When should you involve your manager, workers, customers, vendors, and peers to resolve a concern?
- Should these people be included in reaching consensus or only be queried for information?

On the one hand, there are many benefits to involving individuals, teams, and organizations in the decision-making process. Participation can provide better solutions, build commitment for successful implementation, increase job satisfaction, develop individuals, and increase teamwork.

On the other hand, participation uses costly time and resources and requires skills in analysis, communication, and conflict resolution. Involving others means that a leader must be willing to risk some loss of control. (For a more complete discussion on involving others, see Using Rational Process with Others.)

## Leader Behaviors

Involving people means assuming a leadership role. A leader is the person responsible for resolving a situation or for recommending a resolution. Decisions about participation depend on the issues that need to be resolved. In some situations, consensus might be the most appropriate route to resolve an issue; in others, meeting separately with several individuals might work best. And of course, there will be times when no participation is required.

There are five types of leader behaviors. Each behavior represents a different degree of participation from other individuals. To match the appropriate behavior to the situation you’re dealing with, you must first understand the five behaviors. They are: Resolve Alone (A1), Question Individuals (A2), Consult Individuals (C1), Consult Group (C2), and Resolve as Group (G2).

### 1. Resolve alone (A1)

As the leader, you resolve the issue alone using the information you already have. Your behavior is time-efficient, autocratic, and requires no participation. It’s referred to as A1 behavior because it’s the more autocratic of the two A-type behaviors. Analysis skills and sufficient information are required. An example of A1 behavior would be developing a project schedule and giving each team member a copy.

### 2. Question individuals (A2)

As the leader, you obtain information from the appropriate person(s) individually without explaining the issue and then you resolve the issue. Your behavior is less time-efficient, less autocratic, and does not require the people involved to participate in the analysis. It’s referred to as A2 behavior because it’s the less autocratic of the two A-type behaviors. Analysis, questioning, and listening skills are required. An example of A2 behavior would be asking each team member about his or her work schedule and then developing the project schedule.

### 3. Consult individuals (C1)

As the leader, you explain the issue to the appropriate person(s) individually, request information and analysis, and then resolve the issue. Your behavior is less time-efficient, consultative, and requires more participation from other individuals than A1 and A2. It’s referred to as C1 behavior because it’s the less consultative of the two C-type behaviors. Analysis, questioning, and listening skills are required. An example of C1 behavior would be meeting with each team member individually to discuss how the project should be scheduled, then developing the project schedule.

### 4. Consult group (C2)

As the leader, you share information about the issue with the appropriate group of people, request information and analysis, encourage an exchange of information and ideas, and then resolve the issue. Your behavior is more time-consuming, more consultative, and requires more participation from other individuals than A1, A2, or C1. It’s referred to as C2 behavior because it’s the more consultative of the two behaviors. Analysis, questioning, listening, facilitation, and conflict-resolution skills are required. An example of C2 behavior would be asking the project team to meet to discuss the project schedule, then developing the schedule after the meeting.

## 5. Resolve as group (G2)

As the leader, you share information about the issue with the appropriate group of people after having set ground rules for the meeting and criteria for an acceptable solution. The leader is a part of the group and agrees to accept and implement the group's conclusions. The group works together to resolve the issue. Your behavior is the most time-consuming and consensus-oriented, and requires the most participation from other individuals. It's referred to as G2 behavior, with the G standing for group. Analysis, questioning, listening, facilitation, conflict-resolution, boundary-setting, and consensus-building skills are required. An example of G2 behavior would be meeting with the group and developing the project schedule during the meeting.

### A Three-Step Process for Choosing Leader Behavior

To resolve any situation successfully, you must determine which leader behavior (A1, A2, C1, C2, or G2) will provide you with the best solution and implementation possible. To do this, you'll need to define the situation, assess the variables, and then select the appropriate behavior.

#### **Step 1: Define the situation**

The first step in choosing the appropriate behavior is defining the situation. Be careful how you define the situation—vague or incorrect definitions can lead to improper leader behavior. For example, to “implement fire prevention procedures” you may require the commitment of the group (C2 or G2 behavior) whereas to “find the cause of yesterday's fire” you may need to question individuals (A2 behavior).

To develop a clear, concise definition of the situation, either conduct a Situation Appraisal or ask yourself two questions: “What specific concern needs to be resolved?” and “What end result needs to be achieved?” If you've framed a Decision Statement or Action Statement as a result of completing a Situation Appraisal, you'll have already defined the situation.

#### **Step 2: Assess the variables**

Variables are characteristics that change from situation to situation. To determine the degree of participation needed, answer the following questions about the seven key situational variables. The “yes” or “no” responses will determine the appropriate choice of leader behavior:

1. Superior solution: Does it make a big difference which course of action is adopted?
2. Information: Do you have adequate information to analyze this situation?
3. Structure: Do you know exactly what information is missing, how to get it, and how to analyze it?
4. Commitment: Is the commitment of others—either for judgment, action, or creativity—critical to effective implementation?
5. Commitment without participation: Will others commit to a decision made without their active participation?
6. Goal agreement: Is there general agreement about goals between the group and the organization in this situation?
7. Conflict about alternatives: Is there likely to be conflict about alternatives within the group?

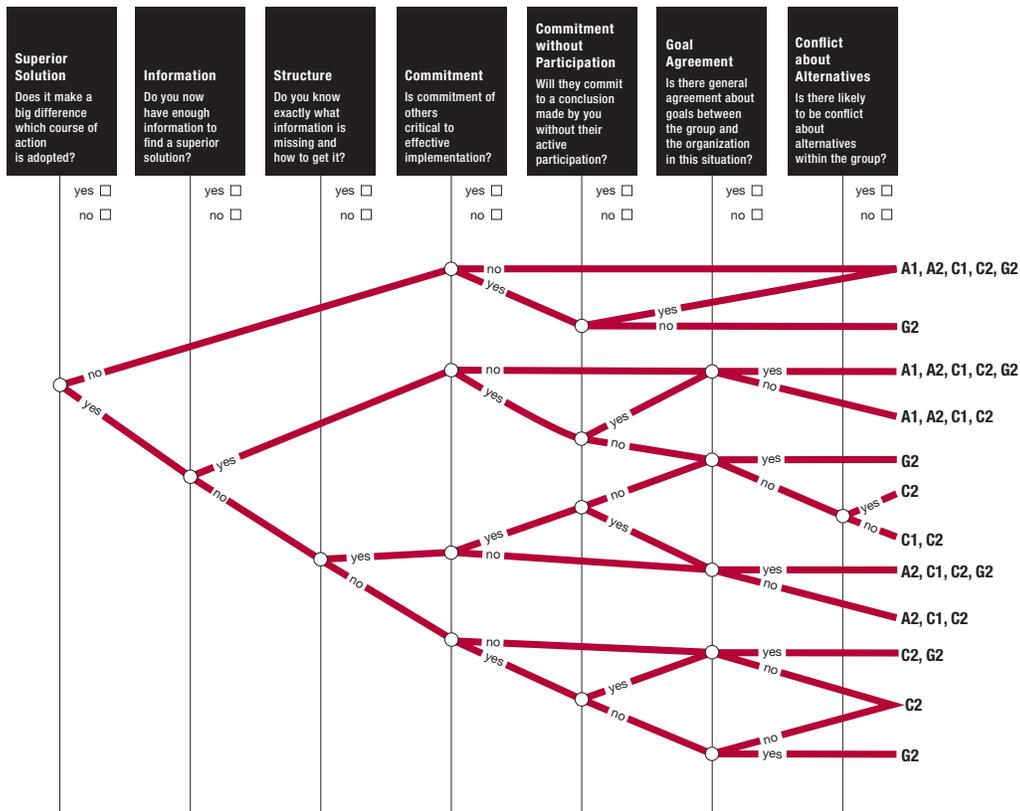
For example, if you're asked to purchase a critical piece of production equipment and you don't have a good understanding of the production process or of the alternatives available, you would answer:

1. “Yes, it does make a big difference which course of action I adopt.”
2. “No, I don't have enough information to make the best possible decision.”
3. “No, I don't know what information is missing or how to get it.”
4. “Yes, I need the judgment of others to help me implement the decision.”
5. “Yes, they will accept my decision.”
6. “Yes, there's agreement on objectives for the purchasing decision.”
7. “Yes, especially on which alternative to choose.”

The Leadership Tree (discussed on the next page) is a job aid that will help you determine which leader behavior you should choose depending on your answers to the seven questions.

### Step 3: Select the behavior

Combinations of variables determine which leader behaviors are likely to succeed. The combinations of all seven variables produce the following diagram called the Leadership Tree.



To use the Leadership Tree, start at the left and ask the question for the superior solution variable. Follow either the “yes” or “no” branch for the superior solution variable, then follow either the “yes” or “no” branch for each of the remaining variables until you reach the recommended leader behaviors. The Leadership Tree usually indicates more than one leader behavior. Any one of the recommended behaviors has the potential for success.

To select which leader behavior would work best, consider the time available, the development needs of individuals and work teams, and other factors such as skills, cultural norms, and geographic constraints. Finally, think about what could go wrong-or better than expected-with your plan for involving people. These questions may help you decide:

- Will this behavior build sufficient commitment?
- Do I have the skills needed for this behavior?
- What logistical difficulties need to be handled?
- What boundaries will I need to establish if I use a G2 behavior?
- Will I be able to handle conflict or will I need a facilitator?

### Summary

If you’re responsible for resolving a concern, you face several difficult tasks. Not least among them is deciding which leadership style you will embrace in order to involve-or not involve-other people. “Managing Involvement” is a three-step method for you to select the best leadership behavior, given your situation. (The five leadership behaviors range from completely autonomous to fully group-oriented.) The first step in “Managing Involvement” asks you to clearly define the situation. The second encourages you to review all of the variables in the situation that impact who should be involved-and how much you should involve them. And finally, the third step guides you through the leadership tree to select the type of behavior that will be successful, given the situation and its variables.