Unit B: Decision Making

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DECISION MAKING

A decision is needed anytime there is a choice between two or more courses of action or ways of doing things. Since there are a number of ways of doing almost everything in school food service, each manager must make a constant series of decisions. This unit has been designed to help managers develop their skill in making decisions.

Objectives

Upon completing this unit you should be able to do the following:

1. List the steps in the decision-making process.
2. Describe "routine" and "exceptional" decisions.
3. Describe the importance of quality and acceptance in decisions.
4. Use appropriate procedures to make decisions in school food service.
5. Understand the role of the manager in group problem solving with technicians.

Steps in Decision Making

In technician training you learned the steps in problem solving. Those same basic steps are used in the decision-making process. The steps are as follows:

A. **Define the problem.** Before you can solve a problem, you must determine the cause of the problem.

2. **Get the facts.** Collect ideas and information that relate to the problem or to its solution.

3. **Think of solutions.** Develop at least two ways to solve the problem.

4. **Choose the best solution.** Rate solutions as to cost, time required, skills needed, student acceptance, worker acceptance, and management acceptance. Consider the consequences of each course of action and choose the solution that will best help the organization meet its goals.

5. **Put the solution into effect.** Each step in the solution and the time in which it should be completed must be determined; then someone must be assigned the responsibility for implementing the solution.

6. **Check the solution.** Establish a procedure to follow up the solution at regular intervals to determine its effectiveness.

Review the Phase I unit, *Communication and Group Problem Solving*, if you have any questions on the steps to use in making a decision.
Types of Decisions

Decisions can be divided into two types—"routine" and "exceptional."

Routine Decisions

Routine decisions occur frequently and are decided by habit or "standard operating procedures," either written or unwritten. With "habit" decisions, such as what time to get up for work in the morning or which route to take to work, the decision-making process is used the first time the decision is made and the solution is repeated each time. Other routine decisions involve solving minor problems in which the quality, or rightness, of the decision is not critical. If a routine decision proves to be incorrect, it is relatively easy and inexpensive to correct it. An example of a routine decision is deciding how the cafeteria serving line should be set up. If the decision should prove incorrect, that is, if food colors clash or if serving is awkward, it is a simple matter to rearrange the serving line.

Management makes an effort to limit the number of decisions that must be made daily by managers in establishing policies and procedures of operation. The policies and procedures describe how certain aspects of the business are to be carried out, thus limiting the need for decisions in those areas. Central menus, for example, relieve managers of decisions involving what food items to prepare, how much to serve, whether the menu meets federal meal requirements, and whether the menu meets the criteria of good menu planning.

Exceptional Decisions

The second type of decision is the "exceptional" decision. Exceptional decisions involve situations that are new, complex, or out-of-the-ordinary. Decision making for exceptional situations requires managers to possess judgement, creativity, and problem-solving ability. Each step in the decision-making process should be followed when making decisions that are new, complex, or out-of-the-ordinary.
REVIEW A

Directions: Complete the following. If necessary, review the previous material.

A. List the six steps in the decision-making process.

1. __________________________________________
2. __________________________________________
3. __________________________________________
4. __________________________________________
5. __________________________________________
6. __________________________________________

B. Mark with an R if the following would be a routine decision; E if an exception decision.

______ 1. Arrangement of food on the tray
______ 2. Serving size for mashed potatoes
______ 3. Program for parent/teacher group
______ 4. Temperature setting for milk cooler
______ 5. Development of plans for salad bar

TURN THE PAGE AND CHECK YOUR ANSWERS
ANSWERS -- REVIEW A

Directions: Complete the following. If necessary, review the previous material.

A. List the six steps in the decision-making process.

1. Define the problem
2. Get the facts
3. Think of solutions
4. Choose the best solution
5. Put the solution into effect
6. Check the solution

B. Mark with an R if the following would be a routine decision; E if an exception decision.

R 1. Arrangement of food on the tray
R 2. Serving size for mashed potatoes
E 3. Program for parent/teacher group
R 4. Temperature setting for milk cooler
E 5. Development of plans for salad bar
Characteristics of Decision

Two characteristics of decisions are quality and acceptance.

Quality

Quality refers to the degree of “rightness” of a decision that is worth of the decision in meeting the organization’s goals. When the decision is of high quality, it actively assists the organization in meeting its goals.

Acceptance

Acceptance refers to the degree with which those involved in carrying out the decision can agree with it. When there is a high acceptance, those involved adopt the decision as their own and work actively and willingly toward carrying it out.

Decision-Making Procedures

Procedures for making a decision will depend upon the kind of decision to be made.

Type of Decision

When a manager is faced with a problem that requires a decision, the manager must decide what actions need to be taken. First, the manager must decide if the decision to be made is routine or exceptional. If the problem is routine, the manager will handle it according to habit or established policies and procedures, or will quickly make a decision using the information at hand. Since the routine decision is relatively easy and inexpensive to correct if it proves wrong, the amount of time an effort used in making those decisions should be kept to a minimum. If the problem is exceptional, the manager will need to determine who should make the decision. Should the problem be handled by the manager alone, referred to the supervisor, or handled by the manager with input from subordinates?
Decisions for the Supervisor

Some decisions should be made by the supervisor, not the manager. These include decisions that:

1. involve a conflict with federal, state, or local policy or system-wide procedure,
2. require information not available to the manager,
3. may cause controversy

Exceptional decisions that are not made by the supervisor should be made at the school level. Whether the decision should be made by the manager alone, by the manager with input from the group, or by the group, depends on the requirements for quality and acceptance of the decision. Figure 1 illustrates the characteristics of exceptional decisions and the decision making actions that should be taken.

High Quality

The manager must make those decisions that are of high quality, but do not require high acceptance by the employees. Examples of decisions that require high quality but not high acceptance are:

1. the estimation and ordering of food and supplies,
2. the planning of food production and cleaning,
3. the evaluation of food quality and worker performance, and
4. the interpretations of policies and procedures.

High Acceptance

The manager should request input from subordinates in situations that require a decision which must have high acceptance by employees. Decisions requiring high acceptance by employees can be divided into two types:

1. those decisions requiring high acceptance and high quality, and
2. those decisions requiring high acceptance but the quality of the decision is not as important.
High Quality Essential

When a decision must have high acceptance and high quality, managers will want employee input but will want to make the decision themselves. Examples of situations that require decisions having high quality and high acceptance are the decision to implement a new work simplification method or the decision to begin an energy conservation program. A new work simplification method or energy conservation program would be doomed to failure if it did not take into consideration the needs of employees. But, turning either decision completely over to the employees might produce results that would not meet the goals of management.

The manager must decide the amount of employee input which would be most beneficial to the decision, that is, should employees serve only as assistants in collecting the information, or should they participate further in the decision-making process by formulating solutions and making recommendations? The degree of employee involvement selected by the manager would depend on the ability of the group to provide timely, helpful input. Since a high quality, high acceptance decision is required; the manager must make the decision of follow the employees' recommendations only if the manager concurs.

High Quality Not Essential

When a decision requires high employee acceptance but does not require high quality, the manager may choose to have employees make the decision as a group by using the group problem-solving method. Examples of decisions that require high acceptance but not high quality are:

1. the selection of promotional activities for school food service that involve employee participation,
2. the selection of holiday decorating schemes, and
3. the adoption of new employee uniforms or smocks.
FIGURE 1

EXCEPTIONAL DECISION MAKING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTERISTICS OF EXCEPTIONAL DECISIONS</th>
<th>REQUIREMENT OF DECISION</th>
<th>DECISION-MAKING ACTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Decision Needs High Quality but not High Acceptance</td>
<td>Decision made by Manager. no employee input.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>Decision needs High Quality And High Acceptance</td>
<td>Input from group; decision made by manager.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decision needs High Acceptance but not High Quality</td>
<td>Group problem-solving techniques; decision made by group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Directions: Mark with T if correct, F if false. If necessary, review the previous material.

1. The quality of a decision refers to the support given to it by the technicians.
   -

2. Time spent making a routine decision should be kept to a minimum.
   -

3. Decisions that may cause controversy should be made by the supervisor, not the manager.
   -

4. Considerable technician input is essential for decisions that require high quality but not high acceptance.
   -

5. The manager must make or concur with decisions that need to be of high quality.
   -

6. A manager may accept a decision made by employees, even if the manager does not agree with the decision, if high acceptance is important but high quality is unimportant.
   -

TURN THE PAGE AND CHECK YOUR ANSWERS
ANSWERS -- REVIEW B

Directions: Mark with T if correct, F if false. If necessary, review the previous material.

F 1. The quality of a decision refers to the support given to it by the technicians.

T 2. Time spent making a routine decision should be kept to a minimum.

T 3. Decisions that may cause controversy should be made by the supervisor, not the manager.

F 4. Considerable technician input is essential for decisions that require high quality but not high acceptance.

T 5. The manager must make or concur with decisions that need to be of high quality.

T 6. A manager may accept a decision made by employees, even if the manager does not agree with the decision, if high acceptance is important but high quality is unimportant.
Role of the Manager in Group Problem Solving

With group problem solving, the group follows the steps in decision making and develops its own solution. The manager adopts and implements the decision even if it is different from that of the manager. When the group decision-making process is used, managers should function as the group leader but should not attempt to impose their own opinions on the group.

When managers choose the group problem-solving method, there are certain steps that they, as leaders, should follow to help the group function effectively. The steps are as follows:

1. Announce the meeting early and state what the topic will be. Let the employees know in advance what will be discussed to relieve anxiety about the purpose of the meeting and to allow prior consideration of the problem by the members of the group.

2. Begin the meeting by introducing the topic and discussing the goals of the discussion. Briefly give background information on development of the problem.

3. Define the employees’ area of freedom and their authority to act. Will they be allowed complete freedom to make the decision which you as manager will implement, regardless of your agreement or disagreement? Will they be allowed to make the decision only if you concur? Will they be serving only as advisors?

4. Keep the discussion orderly and organized and keep the group goal directed. Ask questions to provoke or redirect thought if the group bogs down on an insignificant point. If the group gets sidetracked on other topics, remind them of the purpose of the meeting.
5. Encourage participation by all members to do all the talking for the group. Watch for indications from quieter members that they would like to speak, then say “Mary, would you like to comment on that?” or “Carrie, would you like to add anything to that?” You can ask for other opinions by saying, “Well, we know how Patricia and Sally feel, what do the rest of you think about that?”

6. Encourage the group to be creative and to build upon one another’s ideas.

7. See that all the steps for decision making are being followed. Point out any phase that is being overlooked.

8. If the group seems to be deadlocked, look for a basis on which to compromise. Try finding similarities in the different points of view that would help the group reach agreement.

9. Keep track of time and remind the group of time limits, if necessary. If you notice a lot of repeating with nothing new being added, conclude the meeting by summarizing the discussion and asking if the group feels ready to make a decision.

If the group remains indecisive, further assignments to study the problem should be made and a new meeting scheduled.
REVIEWS C

Directions: Underline the correct answer. If necessary, review the previous material.

1. For a group problem-solving session, the manager should announce the meeting (early, just before it is to start.)

2. The manager should (define the group’s authority to act, allow the group freedom including making recommendations contrary to USDA policy).

3. If the group gets sidetracked on other topics, the manager should (allow them the opportunity to discuss various topics, remind them of the purpose of the meeting).

4. If the group gets deadlocked (let the two groups “fight it out,” look for a basis of compromise).

5. The manager should (keep the meeting on time, allows everyone to talk as long as they wish).

TURN THE PAGE AND CHECK YOUR ANSWERS
ANSWERS -- REVIEW C

Directions: Underline the correct answer. If necessary, review the previous material.

1. For a group problem-solving session, the manager should announce the meeting early, just before it is to start.

2. The manager should (define the group’s authority to act, allow the group freedom including making recommendations contrary to USDA policy).

3. If the group gets sidetracked on other topics, the manager should (allow them the opportunity to discuss various topics, remind them of the purpose of the meeting).

4. If the group gets deadlocked (let the two groups “fight it out,” look for a basis of compromise).

5. The manager should (keep the meeting on time, allows everyone to talk as long as they wish).
SUMMARY

1. Decision making is a major part of a manager’s job.

2. Step 5 in decision making are as follows:
   - Define the problem
   - Get the facts
   - Think of solutions
   - Choose the best solution
   - Put the solution into effect
   - Check the solution

3. Routine decisions:
   - Occur frequently
   - Usually are decided by habit or by standard operating procedures
   - Should require a minimal amount of time

4. “Exceptional” decisions:
   - Are new, complex, or out-of-the-ordinary
   - Require judgment, creativity, and problem-solving ability

5. Quality is the worth of the decision in terms of the organization’s goals.

6. Acceptance is the degree of agreement and support from those involved in carrying out a decision.

7. Procedures for making decisions may vary with the situation.
   - The supervisor should make decisions involving conflicts with established procedures, information the manager does not have and controversial issues.
   - Decisions which require high quality, but not high acceptance, should be made by the manager.
   - Input from employees helps increase support that is beneficial for decisions needing high acceptance and high quality.
   - Managers may accept a decision with which they do not concur in a situation in which high acceptance is essential, but high quality is not.
8. The manager should control a group problem solving session so that it is effective.
   - Announce time and topic early
   - Provide goals and background
   - Define area of freedom
   - Keep session orderly and goal directed
   - Encourage creativity and participation by all
   - Follow all steps of the decision-making process
   - Try to find basis for compromise if the group is deadlocked
   - Maintain time schedule

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

This unit has presented information about decision making for the school food service manager. The purpose is to train you to use appropriate decision making procedures.

General Instructions

The following learning activities must be performed to successfully complete the unit. Your preceptor will provide guidance as you carry out the activities. The activity checklist indicates steps where approval is necessary.

You should use a notebook to record the steps in the activities. Describe your plans and report the results of the activities. Be sure to include suggested changes. Mistakes may be the best teacher, so do not worry about being perfect. Just concentrate on improving your skills.

Specific Activities

Specific activities are described which will enable you to apply the information in the unit. Follow the steps listed to develop your skill in decision making.
Activity 1. Identify Appropriate Procedures for Decision Making

1. Working with your preceptor, make a list of situations in which exceptional decisions related to school food service would need to be made. A source of information for typical situations may be your manager or preceptor.

2. Classify the decisions into one of the following four categories:
   - High Quality Essential and High Acceptance Unessential (made by manager alone)
   - Both High Quality and High Acceptance Essential (made by manager with employee input)
   - High Quality Unessential and High Acceptance Essential (may be made by employees without concurrence of manager)
   - Inappropriate for manager (made by supervisor)

3. Discuss classifications with your preceptor and make changes if recommended.

4. When you and your preceptor are satisfied with your ability to identify appropriate procedures for decision making, have your preceptor date and initial your activity checklist.
Activity 2. Lead a Group Problem Solving Session

1. Working with your manager, identify an area in which a group problem-solving session would be appropriate. Some suggestions include ways of increasing serving speed; the mechanism for having attractive, effective bulletin boards in the cafeteria; ways to increase efficiency in cleaning equipment; and methods of planning an activity to honor the band.

2. Have your preceptor approve the topic.

3. Plan a group problem solving session.
   a. List the goal.
   b. Outline background information.
   c. Plan a time schedule.

4. Conduct the session.
   a. Announce the time and topic early.
   b. Give the goal and a brief background.
   c. Define the area of freedom for the group.
   d. Keep the session orderly and goal-directed.
   e. Encourage participation and creativity.
   f. Follow the steps in the decision-making process.
   g. Look for a basis for compromise if a deadlock develops.
   h. Maintain the time schedule.

5. When you and your preceptor are satisfied with your skill in leading a group problem-solving session, have your preceptor date and initial your activity checklist.
## Activity Checklist Decision Making

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<th>Initials</th>
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<td>I. Identifies appropriate procedures for decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1._________</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>1. Lists decision-making situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2._________</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>2. Classifies type of decision (high quality essential and high acceptance unessential; both high quality and high acceptance essential; high quality unessential and high acceptance essential; inappropriate for manager)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3._________</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>3. Modifies, if recommended</td>
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|                |          | II. Leads group problem solving session |
|                |          | 1. Identifies problem |
| 1._________    | _____    | 2. Plans session |
| 2._________    | _____    | a. Lists goals |
|                |          | b. Outlines background information |
|                |          | c. Plans schedule |
| 3._________    | _____    | 3. Conducts session |
| a._________    | _____    | a. Announces time and topic in advance |
| b._________    | _____    | b. Gives goal and background |
| c._________    | _____    | c. Defines area of freedom |
| d._________    | _____    | d. Keeps session orderly and goal-directed |
| e._________    | _____    | e. Encourages participation and creativity |
| f._________    | _____    | f. Follows decision-making process |
| g._________    | _____    | g. Finds basis for compromise if deadlock occurs |
| h._________    | _____    | h. Maintains time schedule |

---

School Food Authority ________________________________

_________________________  __________________________
Student’s Name               Preceptor’s Signature

Date __________________________
UNIT NAME: DECISION MAKING

Test 1

Student's Name ____________________________

Date ________________

Directions: Choose the best answer. When you have chosen your answer, circle the letter in front of it. There is only one correct answer for each question.

1. The final step in the problem-solving process is
   a. choose the best solution.
   b. put the solution into effect.
   c. check the solution.
   d. define the problem.

2. “Exceptional” decisions
   a. can usually be made quickly.
   b. often require judgment and creativity.
   c. usually involve minor problems.
   d. All of the above.

3. A high quality decision
   a. usually does not need the concurrence of the manager.
   b. helps the organization meet its goals.
   c. is one that has the support of the employees.
   d. None of the above.

4. Decisions requiring high acceptance but not high quality
   a. may be made by employees even if the manager does not concur.
   b. should be made by the manager.
   c. should be made by the supervisor.
   d. Either b or c.

5. In a group problem-solving session
   a. the topic should not be announced until the session starts.
   b. participation should be limited only to those who are trained in the problem area.
   c. the area of freedom for the group should be defined.
   d. All of the above.
UNIT NAME: DECISION MAKING  Test 2

Student’s Name ________________________________________________

Date ______________________

Directions: Choose the best answer. When you have chosen your answer, circle the letter in front of it. There is only one correct answer for each question.

1. The first step in the problem-solving process is
   a. think of solutions.
   b. check the solutions.
   c. define the problem.
   d. get the facts.

2. Routine decisions
   a. may be made according to “standard operating procedures”.
   b. require considerable time evaluation alternatives.
   c. usually deal with critical questions of quality.
   d. All of the above.

3. Acceptance of a decision refers to
   a. the support of the administration.
   b. the support of the employees.
   c. the agreement of the decision with the organization’s goals.
   d. None of the above.

4. Decisions requiring high quality but not high acceptance
   a. require employee input.
   b. should be made by the manager.
   c. may be made by employees even if the manager does not concur.
   d. Both a and b.

5. The leader of a group problem-solving session
   a. maintains the time schedule.
   b. encourages participation of all group members.
   c. keeps the group goal-directed.
   d. All of the above.
DECISION MAKING

Examination Form

Key for Tests

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