

## **FAIR PROCESS – Better Decisions Through Higher Engagement**

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We work with leaders who make decisions every day. Often, they must decide on complicated issues which involve many stakeholders and consequently they struggle to make effective decisions. On the one hand, they want to engage their stakeholders/team members to build upon various inputs. On the other hand, they want timely decisions which avoid endless conversations of differing opinions. In addition, they fear losing control of the process. So how do we reconcile this dilemma and come to high quality decisions that are supported by those involved?

Ludo van der Heyden (INSEAD) researched the topic and concluded that fairness is a key element to engagement in a decision. This means that if the decision process is perceived as fair, then individuals are more likely to support the decision even if they personally did not favour this option. *Fairness* is instrumental to supported decisions.

So what does that mean a team or department's decision making process? What constitutes fairness and how can we facilitate a process that is regarded as fair? Fair process leadership is summarized by the following key phases:

- **Engage** employees from the start onwards in the decision-making process. Give stakeholders and employees a voice and make sure your involvement is authentic. Take time to involve the wider group of people
- **Explore** various options and do not close off to new and wild ideas. Generate many new ideas and keep an open mind to a variety of opinions -even those that may not appeal to you in the beginning. Use your inquiry skills to understand options in depth.
- **Explain** the framework that you use for making the decision and why you as a leader made that choice. Set expectations up front about your role in the process. It is perfectly justifiable to seek wide inputs, but still maintain responsibility for making the final decision – you are the leader.
- **Execute** the decision taken and focus on discipline. This requires a different leadership approach, instead of the open approach in the phases above it may be required to be more directional and focus on effective execution – not going back to re-open the discussion at this stage.
- **Evaluate** the outcome is and identify learnings. What could we have done differently and what changes could we make. How could we approach this better next time?

The model above is circular rather than linear. Once you make the evaluation you probably want to re-engage your stakeholders and together find options for the next step etc., making it a continuous process rather than a one – off.

There is much more to be said about the leadership styles that support this fair process, but we have seen that applying this framework can already make a big difference for teams. So... next time you are confronted with a difficult decision ... try it and see what happens!