

Decisions! Decisions!

A team activity about consensus decision making, teamwork and influencing others. At *Extreme Adventures Ltd*, company image, customer satisfaction and profit are all at stake on the problematic Borneo trip!

Training Benefits

- Energetic group decision making in action
- Allows a decision making framework to be set up
- Demonstrates that decisions have unforeseen consequences
- Looks at the balance of profit versus customer satisfaction
- Requires good teamwork skills including managing conflict
- Shows the value of everyone's contribution
- Reaching consensus within a given time.

Timing

1 to 1.5 hours

Participants

up to four teams of four to six people

Price

£395 (plus delivery and, for the UK, VAT)

One computer and printer are required

Scenario

Teams represent a group of senior managers at head office for *Extreme Adventures Ltd*, a travel company. They currently have a group on a trekking holiday in Borneo and the survival expert in charge, Dirk Hanson, sends back a series of problems he encounters. Teams have to decide what to do.

For each problem teams are given all the information needed - plus a number of options. But how will they choose? Teams need to be well organised and to set up a decisions framework to make the best decisions according to company objectives. This is even more important later in the exercise when one member of the team must take decisions on his or her own and later still they must take decisions as two, separate 'half' teams. Will they have a coherent policy in place to adopt in these situations?

Reaching team consensus isn't always easy but for each situation teams must complete a *Decisions Slip* within a given time frame - to note the *team* decision. Each member also notes down what he or she would choose to do had they had to make the decision *alone*. Can the team talk issues through and come to common consent or will there be conflict?

Team decisions are linked to the commercial success of the trek. At the start the profit stands at over \$12 000 but if teams make unnecessary, costly decisions then this decreases. Customer satisfaction will probably go up, but it is not guaranteed - pleasing one half may alienate the other! Not spending money may limit the options and could cause morale to fall – and could have long term effects in terms of people not returning to holiday again with the company. With a big contract at stake what will teams decide? How much will they try to hang on to profit – how much will they speculate to accumulate?

The Problems on the Borneo Tour

In total there are nine problems and teams spend on average about eight minutes per issue. Each has five possible solutions - involving a cost or an effect on the trek members' morale. What the teams must decide is how much they can trust Dirk's interpretation of events? He is after all the one on the spot but how much authority should he have?

Problems vary widely. Some of the group have not turned up - should Dirk keep them *all* waiting or leave the latecomers to their own devices? One of the forest lodges has not been booked - should those affected be accommodated in a more expensive lodge? And when a member on the tour breaks the local law what is the moral position? Care must be taken with each decision as the consequences are often not what teams anticipate!

Once decisions are made they cannot be changed. Each is fed into the computer that prints the next problem, gives the current bank balance and the state of morale. Failing to solve a problem properly means it re-emerges further down the line. Teams must weigh up alternatives and make rational decisions if they are to come out on top – but above all they must be decisive! At the end the computer provides a final report for each team.

Decisions! Decisions! Cheque Book

Trainers are provided with an *Extreme Adventures* cheque book. At the half-way point they issue a cheque to each team – to represent the profit that teams have left – and competition between teams heats up as more problems filter back from Dirk!

But how well will they balance the opposing interests of profit and customer needs? Can they retain profit *and* maintain customer satisfaction?

At the end of the trek the cheque could be worth much less than at the start - but satisfied customers are the best endorsement and will sow the seeds for future business!

Decisions! Decisions! Reviewing Performance

A Questionnaire allows teams to review performance and to focus on how well they organised themselves. Did they elect a leader? What decision-making procedure did they adopt? Did they have a policy for managing conflict resolution?

Decisions! Decisions! gets across the fact that a **Decisions Loop** is the ideal frame for making decisions. The stages are:

- **problem definition**
- **seeking alternatives**
- **evaluation**
- **implementation**
- **review**

with information being central to each phase. Armed with this structure people find making decisions back at work much easier and more effective.

WHAT TO DO

- 1 Use the **PowerPoint Presentation Slides** to introduce the session.
- 2 Divide the group into teams of 4-6. Issue each team with copies of the **Team Brief**.
- 3 Allow teams about five minutes to study the briefs, then issue teams with **Problem No1**.
- 4 Teams study the problem and five possible options and decide on an option.
- 5 Their decision is entered into the computer using their unique access code.

6 The computer prints the consequences of the decision - and the next problem. Teams can see the effect of their decision on the trek members' morale and on profit level.

7 Teams work through nine problems before getting a final report and final score.

8 Start the Debrief. Give out the **Questionnaire** for teams to complete and lead a discussion on teams' performance. The **Trainer's Notes** and **PowerPoint Presentation** provide guidance.

"Decisions Decisions was the highlight of our course! It allowed us to listen to so many opinions and values from delegates towards customer values and expectation. It was extremely useful to assess the team process - many learning points were extracted about how to make the most successful decisions".

K. Brasier, Bristol Business School.

"Decisions Decisions is an excellent learning tool for management teams to review how they work together and how they balance profit and customer satisfaction. S. Lamont, Lamont Associates.