Blackblot® PMTK Decision Making

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1. Introduction
   1.1.   Document Objective
           This document describes guidelines and a methodology that drives an effective decision-making process within a project to bring closure to all outstanding issues.

2. Overview
   2.1.   Section Objective
           This section describes the need for an effective decision-making process.

   2.2.   The Need for Closure
           All project issues must achieve closure, and the only way to do so is by making decisions, which means reaching a binding conclusion or passing judgment. Rarely does one find an optimal, efficient, and acceptable solution to all parties, and almost always, the decision-making process is based on maximizing an objective subject to several constraints. Once one accepts these notions, it is much easier to make a decision; otherwise, the lack of decisions and the existence of procrastination can result in project delay or stagnation.

3. Basic Workplace Psychology
   3.1.   Section Objective
           This section describes the human aspects and perspectives of decision-making.

   3.2.   Workplace Psychology
           This sub-section describes factors that relate to workplace psychology.

           3.2.1.   "*Mediocre decisions are BETTER than a perpetual state of indecisiveness*". Accept and remember this. There are apparent costs to adopting such an approach, but it is possibly the only realistic means to achieving finality and a chance at product success.

           3.2.2.   Getting results is the first step to success, so always focus on securing decisions and not just collecting views and opinions.

           3.2.3.   Try to educate yourself and others to be:
                     o   Decisive in the face of indecision.
                     o   Clear in the face of ambiguity.
                     o   Concise in the face of the verbose.

           3.2.4.   The key to driving any process or project to completion is to be decisive, clear, and concise. Promote the same in others by constantly reiterating the aforementioned. Act and apply it consistently until it comes naturally and is acceptable to others.

3.2.5.   Once a significant decision has been made, regardless of who made it, document the decision, launch a sign-off (if applicable), and propagate the agreed upon and approved decision to all relevant parties, internal and external to the company.

3.3.   The Key Axioms
- Decisions mobilize a project.
- Decisions are the building blocks to making a product materialize.
- Decisions must be made and promptly.

4.   Decision-Making Guidelines

4.1.   Section Objective
This section describes the four primary guidelines that drive decision-making.

4.2.   Guideline Number One
"*Decisions are made by ONE person only with others supporting the decision-making process*".
This guideline means that if you raise an issue that needs resolution, ensure to specify the one (only one!) individual you feel should make that decision. Whether done in the context of a meeting or an email message, make sure that everyone is aware of who is being singled out as the one and only decision-maker. It does not always need to be the same person or the highest ranking, but there should be only one person in this assigned role for each decision.

4.3.   Guideline Number Two
"Discussions are a tool that supports the decision-making process".
This guideline means that if you raise an issue that needs resolution, ensure you specify the individuals requested to comment or provide information for the decision-maker in support of the process. Whether done in the context of a meeting or an email message, ensure all participants are aware of their role as contributors and their obligation to contribute. Consensus is important and nice to have, but not critical. You should always focus on attaining a sound decision, not mutual agreement.

4.4.   Guideline Number Three
"Decisions must be made, and promptly".
Make this obvious and request that a decision be made within a reasonable time frame. Do not impose or dictate deadlines, but be firm.

4.5.   Guideline Number Four
"Decisions must become public knowledge once made".
Propagate and inform all parties concerned that a decision has been reached. Do not assume people will hear or learn about the decision somehow or understand how it was made and why. Initiate a sign-off process to secure a commitment from everybody regarding the decision.

5.   Implementing the Guidelines

  5.1.   Section Objective
          This section describes the application of the practical decision-making
          guidelines via an email message.

  5.2.   Using Email Messages for Effective Decision Making
          • The email message is addressed to (To:) only one person (the
            decision-maker).
          • The email message is copied to (CC:) all those who should comment
            and provide input supporting the decision-making.
          • A time limit has been placed for reaching a decision with the
            consequences of indecisiveness described.

          Here is a sample email message applying the methodology:

          <-----Original Message-----
          From: Gabriel Steinhardt
          Sent: Tuesday, March 16, 20xx 1:35 PM
          To: Software Architect
          Cc: Development Team; Lead Developer
          Subject: Programming language choice

          Hi,
          What programming language do you recommend we use to develop future
          versions of our products?

          Notes:
          * Decision maker: software architect
          * Decision support: development team; lead developer
          * Decision due date: Friday, April 16, 20xx
          * If no decision: continue using ANSI C
          * All on Cc: line: please provide your comments and opinion.

          Thanks,
          --Gabriel

          -----End Message----->