

DEFINE. DISCERN. DECIDE

A Practical Guide to Leading Your Team Through the Decision-Making Process

Yolanda G. Stewart, Executive Pastor, Mosaic Church (TN)

◆ Note to Leaders:

Collaboration must be a core value—especially when making decisions. Refuse to do it alone. When you collaborate with key players who will be responsible for communication or implementation, you gain:

1. Access to their insight, experience, and gifts
 2. Their buy-in, because they were included in the decision-making process
 3. Better outcomes and decisions
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Step 1: Clearly Define the Problem or Objective

This is by far the most important step in the decision-making process because it serves as your anchor point. If you skip this step or treat it casually, your target will be unclear—and you may waste time and resources, risk solving the wrong issue, or pursue an objective misaligned with ministry priorities.

◆ Defining the Problem

The main problem should be stated in one to two sentences. It should be specific, measurable (if possible), and clearly connected to improving ministry effectiveness. Focus on what needs to be solved, not just what is being experienced.

✓ Key Considerations:

- Invite only essential decision-makers and those responsible for implementation (too many voices can hinder progress).
- Focus on one problem at a time.
- Use observable facts.
- Keep the problem separate from people and personalities—avoid blame or finger-pointing.

● Guiding Questions for Discussion:

- When did this become a problem?

This content was inspired by the 7 steps of the Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP), as outlined in Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 5-0.1, *Army Design Methodology*, published by the U.S. Army.

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- What is the adverse impact if left unresolved?
- What have we already tried?
- Who or what resource can we learn from that is doing this better?

📋 Problem Statement Template:

The specific problem we need to resolve is [describe the main issue], because it is causing [state the impact or consequences], and if left unaddressed, it will [explain the risks to people, ministry, or leadership objectives].

★ Example:

The specific problem we must resolve is the 30% decline in online viewers over the last six months, as shown in analytics. This may indicate a loss of relevance with our target audience, specifically military personnel who are transitioning duty stations. If left unaddressed, it could impact our objective of being a visible, viable spiritual resource to the military community.

◆ Defining the Objective

The objective should also be stated in one to two sentences. It must be clear, actionable, specific, and (if possible) measurable—and directly tied to improving ministry effectiveness.

✓ Key Considerations:

- Invite essential decision-makers and implementation leaders (limit to what's necessary).
- Focus on one objective at a time.
- Use observable facts.

💬 Guiding Questions for Discussion:

- Is this objective or opportunity aligned with our mission and core values?
- Do we have the finances, facilities, experience, or personnel to support it?
- Is it sustainable?
- What would success look like spiritually, practically, and relationally?
- What are the measurable indicators of success or evidence that we made a good decision?
- Is now the right time to pursue this?
- What are the benefits or drawbacks of delaying this decision?

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- What competing priorities (internal or external) should be considered?

📌 Objective Statement Template:

Our objective is to [accomplish what] by [when], in order to [achieve what outcome], while addressing [limitations or challenges].

✦ Example:

Our objective is to build 30 serve teams to support the National Serve Day initiative on July 12th using platform appeal, social media promotion, and impact videos during service openers—while ensuring there are serving opportunities for families with young children.

Step 2: Clearly Identify the Non-Negotiables

These are the boundaries and values that must not be compromised. They ensure decisions remain aligned with the ministry’s mission, maintain integrity, and are sustainable.

✓ Key Considerations:

- **Mission Alignment** – Stay true to who you are.
 - **Biblical & Ethical Integrity** – Honor scriptural principles and ethical standards.
 - **People** – People matter to God, so they must matter in your decisions.
 - **Financial & Personnel Stewardship** – Are you willing to say “no” if an objective overextends resources?
 - **Time & Capacity** – Do you have the bandwidth to pursue this with excellence?
 - **Boundaries** – Are there cultural, theological, or strategic lines that must not be crossed?
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Step 3: Develop at Least Three Courses of Action (COAs)

Use “3” as a guide, not a rigid rule—what matters most is that you develop **more than one** viable option.

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🔍 Why Multiple COAs Matter:

- Rushing to one “obvious” solution can cause you to miss more strategic alternatives.
 - Exploring multiple options promotes innovation and flexibility.
 - Comparing different COAs allows you to choose the most effective one based on purpose, mission, resources, risks, and non-negotiables and all things considered.
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◆ Keys to Identifying the Best COA

- Reference Key Considerations and Guiding Questions from earlier steps to evaluate the COAs.
- List the strengths and weaknesses (pros and cons) of each COA.
- Collaborate with your team and decide on the most effective COA.
- Present the best COA to the final decision-maker.
- Adjust based on their feedback.
- Develop a clear, executable plan: communicate it, assign tasks, and implement.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the COA after execution.