

# TeamBuilders International

## Text from Michigan State University Web Site Overview of Decision Making

Effective decision making is a name for a systematic process of coping with matters of concern to you. Following the process offers the greatest chance of resolving many problems.

The process is straight-forward, and it can be applied to many of the problems you encounter.

Your understanding of each of the following steps in decision making will assist you in utilizing the process in your problem solving -- now -- and in the future.

The steps are...

1. Problem definition
2. Information gathering
3. Information assessment
4. Choice of decision making
5. Behavioral action
6. Review

### 1. Problem definition...

You must know what the problem is before you attempt to resolve it. You must begin the process by clearly defining the nature of the problem.

Frequently, persons get bogged down in the problem solving process by solving peripheral "problems" that are not the "real problem." Considerable effort may be necessary to achieve clarity in problem definition.

#### \*\*\*\*\* A Common Error \*\*\*\*\*

An error that occurs with great frequency is to identify symptoms as being the actual problem. Often symptoms are only a sign of a problem!

Example:

Inability to study may be a problem -- or -- it may be a symptom of a more core problem such as distraction resulting from not having a clear educational goal or from an inability to relate to other people.

To solve a problem, you must attack the problem -- not an alternative problem or a symptom.

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## 2. Information gathering...

The first stage of information gathering is to decide what kinds of information are relevant to your problem solving. A clear definition of the problem (step #1) is of great help.

After determining the nature of the relevant information, you must determine the facts available about you -- in relationship to the relevant information.

Example:

Relevant information about a career decision might include:

- A. Study
- B. Academic ability
- C. Achievement
- D. Experience
- E. Interests
- F. Job facts

Example of information gathering:

Relevant Related facts information about you:

- a. Study?
- b. Academic Ability?
- c. Achievement?
- d. Experience?
- e. Interest ?
- f. Job facts?

## 3. Information assessment...

In this stage you weigh the information you have gathered:

- To see if some information "outweighs" other information
- To identify personal priorities
- To identify the choices or alternatives available to you

## 4. Choice of decision making...

Here is the point where you combine your evaluations of relevant information.

Keep in mind that some of your information is more valuable than other information.

Which plans best fit the gathered information?

Do your plans and alternative plans fit your problem definition?

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## 5. Behavioral action...

Behavioral action means DOING IT -- taking action that could be observable by others that's consistent with your choice or decision.

- What can you do now to further your plans?
- What can you do subsequently to further them?

(Note: Many problems are not solved because no action is taken by the person.)

## 6. Review...

Your choice or decision (step 4) should be viewed as the best possible at this time. As you gather more information about yourself and your environment, a new decision might become a better choice.

You may discover that you need to change your decision or move to an alternative plan. Usually if you've completed steps 1 through 4 thoroughly, these shifts will be minor.

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The review of your plan is to accomplish two goals:

- To identify the strong and weak points of your decision making process.
- To identify more appropriate methods for problem solving in the future.