

# Chapter 6

## Passing From Discrete Experiences to Journeys That Connect the Dots: 21st Century Collaborative Decision Making

### ABSTRACT

*There have been a number of factors that include the gradual disintegration of hierarchies, the creation of flatter learning organizations, the presence of heterogeneity and conflict among the principal agents, and the centrality of knowledge in the organizations of the twenty-first century. Despite the fact that flatter organizations are classless, in which no single individual has all the answers, and in which a lateral approach to managing knowledge at all levels appears to be the key to competitiveness, the focus on decision making has been primarily as a strategic outcome. This is the case despite the fact that all of these factors have been taken into consideration. It is implied in this approach that the premise that decision making is still a level-derived phenomenon. Despite the fact that the nature of the job is becoming more technical and the requirement for engagement is growing and becoming more important than further compliance to instructions from above, the truth remains that the demand for participation is increasing.*

### INTRODUCTION

The gradual dismantling of hierarchies (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967, Heckscher, 1995), the emergence of flatter learning organizations (DeGeus, 1997, Senge, 1990), existence of heterogeneity and conflict among the principle agents (Eisenhardt,

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Kahwajy & Bourgeois, 1997; Jehn, 1997; Lovelace, Shapiro & Weingart, 2001) and the centrality of knowledge in the organizations of the twenty first century (Jackson, Hitt & DeNisi, 2003).

Despite this recognition of flatter organizations that are classless, in which no single individual has all the answers and in which a lateral approach to managing knowledge at all levels appears to be the key to competitiveness; the focus on decision making has been mostly as a strategic outcome or the outcome of management interaction. Implicit in this approach is the assumption that decision making is still a level derived phenomenon in which specific individuals at specific levels in 21st century knowledge centric organizations have the ability to make decisions and also that important decisions are made at this level only. While the fact is that as the nature of the job becomes more technical, the need for participation increases and becomes more important (Weitzman & Kruse, 1990) rather than further compliance to directives from above. Therefore decision making as a process becomes more visible in technical jobs, essentially implying that it is a tool used more commonly than selectively in today's knowledge workplace.

The decision-making process takes into account both the environment in which it is carried out and the outcomes that will result from the action. Information, rational normative research, and behavioral research are the three major categories that can be used to categorize a significant portion of the diverse work that is being done in the field of decision making. The procedure, antecedents, and content of the decision making process, as well as the decision-specific elements and their impact on the decision making process, have been the primary areas of concentration throughout all of this study because of their importance. The process of decision making as a strategic activity at the managerial or senior management level is a topic that is frequently discussed throughout the entire document.

Therefore, since companies are fundamentally a confluence of information, then this research work would not appear to be all that exhaustive because it deals with the essence of organization action. However, research on decision making is quite obviously exhaustive. Despite the fact that this research has yielded a great deal of fruit, there are several elements in which it has been lacking. One, although the fields in which the research has been conducted acknowledge the significance of a knowledge economy, in which information is more widely dispersed and, as a result, decision making is decentralized, there is a dearth of research on decision making that takes into account a more diverse range of employee perspectives and knowledge. In essence, decision making is a tool that encourages participation and is also impacted by the knowledge component of work. Second, although there have been a number of process and contextual factors that have been taken into consideration in the course of this research, there does not appear to be a clearly marked justification of why one contextual factor is more relevant than the other,

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