
Diagnosing the Task

OUTLINE

- THE VROOM, YETTON, AND JAGO MANAGERIAL DECISION-MAKING MODEL
- APPLICATION OF THE DECISION-MAKING MODEL
- DISCUSSION OF THE DECISION-MAKING MODEL
- SUMMARY
- REFERENCES

OBJECTIVE

- To gain knowledge of a decision-making theory that can be used to diagnose the task
 - To understand six major types of decision-making styles
 - To blend the diagnosis of followers and selection of appropriate beginning leader behavior with diagnosis of the task
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Part II of this book is devoted to identifying the appropriate leader behavior to use in beginning the process of motivating people in a system to accomplish an identified goal. This process involves diagnosing the environment—self, system, and task—and then applying leader behavior theory, as presented in Chapter 5.

Diagnosing self, presented in Chapter 3, is necessary in identifying the leader's personal point of view on the problem or goal and on the environment. Further, diagnosing one's personal leader behavior style is helpful in order to fit behavioral intent with what is automatic from one's own personality. Diagnosing self is a consciousness-raising experience with an intent of reducing leader bias and matching needed leader behavior with what is actually given to and perceived by followers.

Chapter 4 contains a discussion of theories that can be used to diagnose a system. Once a diagnosis is made, leader behavior theory is applied in order to determine the leader behavior style that has the highest probability for motivating people to accomplish a task. This leader behavior style is the umbrella or pivot upon which problem solutions are based.

Chapter 5 contains a discussion about matching a system's diagnosis to a leader behavior theory of choice in order to know the theoretically best leader behavior style that should be used in order to begin the process of goal accomplishment. The reader should be aware that leader behavior preferably should always be on target with what followers need. There is, however, another variable that adds to the overall diagnosis, as shown in the following equation, which was presented earlier and is worthy of reinforcement:

Manager Behavior =

- Diagnosing the Organizational Environment
 - Self
 - Human Resources 
 - Motivational Needs
 - Educational Needs
 - Task
 - Situational Variables
 - Material Resources
- Plus Applying Leader Behavior

Diagnosis of the task is the last segment of leader responsibilities that will be discussed in Part II of this book. It completed the equation that forms the basis for the core of how managers work. Remember, as stated previously in Chapter 4, situational variables and material resources are considered in the overall developing action plan and are thought of as an awareness of what a leader has in an environment. Situational variables and material resources do not require a diagnosis as does self, human resources, and the task.

The task is an addition to a leader's diagnosis. The nature of tasks may require different leader behavior styles in order to have the most effective outcomes. Ideally, the suggested best leader behavior style of a task should match the selected best beginning leader behavior style for the followers who will be doing the task. So, please place aside what Part II has presented so far and continue to hold it as your theoretically best suggestions for how managers work. Then study the contents in this chapter and blend everything when you understand what is presented. Diagnosing the task is another important piece of information that can be placed in the leader's picture of information—it purports to increase your batting average for success in leading others to accomplish goals.

THE VROOM, YETTON, AND JAGO MANAGERIAL DECISION-MAKING MODEL

The conceptual framework for diagnosing the task is the Vroom, Yetton, and Jago (VYJ) managerial decision-making model (Vroom, 1973; Vroom & Jago, 1978, 1988; Vroom & Yetton, 1973). This decision-making model is another theory destroying the myth that managers who use democratic styles are “good” and those who do not are “bad.” The decision process used by a manager in a situation should depend on the nature of the unique situation—the diagnosis of the environment (Donnelly, Gibson, & Ivancevich, 1997; Gatewood, Taylor, & Ferrell, 1995; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001). The VYJ model, therefore, provides a means to diagnose tasks in determining the most appropriate leader behavior style for the manager to use in getting something accomplished. While diagnosing the nature of the task should be only one of three determinants of leader behavior, the VYJ decision-making model is

a powerful one that reports validity for its purpose (Field, 1982; Jago & Vroom, 1987; Vroom & Jago, 1978) and has been widely evident in the literature (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2001; Lord, Hanges, & Godfrey, 2003; Marquis & Huston, 1996; Newstrom & Davis, 2002; Vroom, 2000, 2001, 2002).

A general guide for diagnosing the task can be depicted by the following equation (La Monica & Finch, 1977):

Effective decisions = a function of (quality + acceptance + time)

Quality refers to whether there are a number of possible solutions to the problem and some alternatives could result in better outcomes than others—a qualitative judgment on the best solution must be made. *Acceptance* is concerned with whether staff members must accept the problem's solution in order for the problem to be eliminated or the goal to be achieved—must the staff do anything? *Time* relates to how much time is available to work on the problem or accomplish the goal. The VYJ managerial decision-making model integrates answers to these three variables and suggests a decision-making style that has the highest probability for effectiveness. These results will be combined with other diagnoses from previous chapters in determining leader behavior.

Table 6.1 contains six different managerial decision styles. Read each one and then study the case in Box 6.1. Select the decision-making style that you would use if you were the manager in the case. Write your response in the space provided after the case.

As you have probably noted, the six managerial decision styles can be considered as a continuum. AI and AII are autocratic styles, CI and CII are consultative styles, and GII is a group decision-making style. Delegation (DI) has been discussed by Vroom and Yetton (1973) and Vroom and Jago (1988) as a style for use in a two-person superior or follower relationship; delegation is at the opposite end of the continuum from AI. These decision styles are paralleled with the Ohio State Model of Leadership, as shown in Figure 6.1. Of course, they similarly would apply in the other leader behavior models that are presented in Chapter 5. It must be noted that as a manager moves from AI to GII, the amount of time involved in solving the problem or in achieving the goal increases. Group interactions take more time than does autocratic behavior.

TABLE 6.1 Management Decision Styles

Type	Description
AI	You solve the problem or make the decision yourself, using information available to you at that time.
AIL	You obtain the necessary information from your subordinate(s), then decide on the solution to the problem yourself. You may or may not tell your subordinates what the problem is in getting the information from them. The role played by your subordinates in making the decision is clearly one of providing the necessary information to you, rather than generating or evaluating the alternative solutions.
CI	You share the problem with relevant subordinates individually, getting their ideas and suggestions without bringing them together as a group. Then you make the decision that may or may not reflect your subordinates' influence.
CIL	You share the problem with your subordinates as a group, collectively obtaining their ideas and suggestions. Then you make the decision that may or may not reflect your subordinates' influence.
GIL	You share a problem with your subordinates as a group. Together you generate and evaluate alternatives and attempt to reach agreement (consensus) on a solution. Your role is much like that of chair. . . . You do not try to influence the group to adopt "your" solution, and you are willing to accept and implement any solution that has the support of the entire group.
DI	You delegate the problem to your subordinate(s) providing . . . [he, she, or them] with any relevant information that you possess, but giving . . . [him, her, or them] responsibility for solving the problem. . . . You may or may not request . . . [him, her, or them] to tell you what solution . . . [has been] reached.

Note. The source of AI through GIL is: Reprinted from "A New Look at Managerial Decision Making," by Victor H. Vroom, *Organizational Dynamics*, Spring, 1973, ©1973. Reproduced with permission from Elsevier. All rights reserved.

The source of DI is: Vroom, V., & Yetton, P. (1973). *Leadership and decision-making*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, p. 13. Reprinted from *Leadership and decision-making* by Victor H. Vroom & Philip W. Yetton, by permission of the University of Pittsburgh Press. ©1973 by University of Pittsburgh Press.

Box 6.1**Case Example**

You are an assistant director of nursing in a large city hospital. The management has recently put into effect, at your request and consultation, the [newly organized and computerized] unit manager system on two floors. This was expected to relieve the nurses of administrative responsibility, increase their abilities to provide quality care to clients, ensure that health assessments and care plans could be accomplished for every client, and lower the nursing budget. Quality health care and nursing care plans reflected the suggestions made by the hospital accreditors. To the surprise of everyone, yourself included, little of the above has been realized. In fact, nurses are sitting in the conference room more, quality has maintained a status quo, and employees and patients are complaining more than ever.

You do not believe that there is anything wrong with the new system. You have had reports from other hospitals using it and they confirm this opinion. You . . . [also have] had representatives from institutions using the system talk with your nursing personnel, and the representatives report that your nurses have full knowledge of the system and their altered responsibilities.

You suspect that a few people may be responsible for the situation, but this view is not widely shared among your two supervisors and four head nurses. The failure has been variously attributed to poor training of the unit managers, lack of financial incentives, and poor morale. Clearly, this is an issue about which there is considerable depth of feeling within individuals and potential disagreement among your subordinates.

This morning you received a phone call from the nursing director. She had just talked with the hospital administrator and was calling to express her deep concern. She indicated that the problem was yours to solve in any way you think best, but she would like to know within a week what steps you plan to take.

You share your director's concern and know that the personnel involved are equally concerned. The problem is to decide what steps to take to rectify the situation.

Decision style you would use: _____.

Note. The source of the case is: La Monica, E., & Finch, F. (1977). Managerial decision-making. *Journal of Nursing Administration*, 7(5), 21. Reproduced with permission. This case was originally adapted into nursing from a business example. The original material was presented by Vroom, V. (1973). A new look at managerial decision-making. *Organizational Dynamics*, 1(4), 66–80.

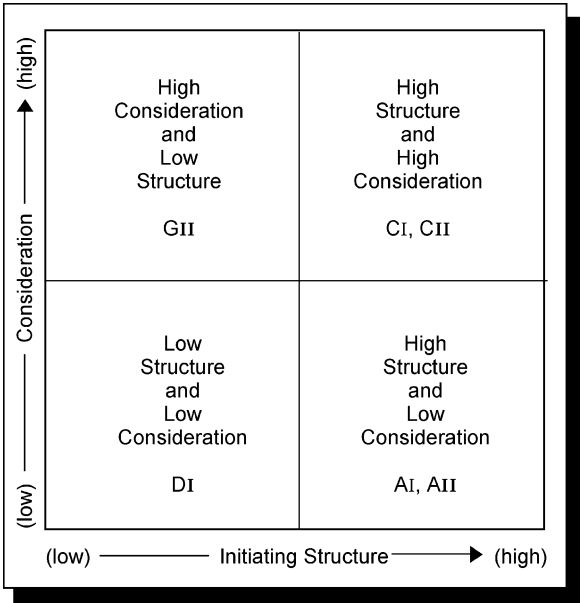


FIGURE 6.1 Vroom, Yetton, and Jago’s decision styles and the Ohio State Model of Leadership.

Note. The sources for the Ohio State Model of Leadership are as follows:
Bass, B., & Stogdill, R. (1990). *Bass and Stogdill’s handbook of leadership: Theory, research, and managerial applications* (3rd ed.). New York: Free Press.
Fleishman, E. (1973). Twenty years of consideration and structure. In E. Fleishman & J. G. Hunt (Eds.), *Current developments in the study of leadership: A centennial event symposium held at Southern Illinois University of Carbondale*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
The sources for the Vroom, Yetton, and Jago Decision Styles are as follows:
Vroom, V. (1973). A new look at managerial decision-making. *Organizational Dynamics*, 1(4), 66–80.
Vroom, V., & Jago, A. (1978). On the validity of the Vroom-Yetton model. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 63(2), 151–162.
Vroom, V., & Jago, A. (1988). *The new leadership: Managing participation in organizations*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
Vroom, V., & Yetton, P. (1973). *Leadership and decision-making*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
The source for the figure of the Ohio State Model of Leadership is adapted from:
Hersey, P., Blanchard, K. H., & Johnson, D. (2001). *Management of organizational behavior: Leading human resources* (8th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, p. 94. Reprinted by permission of Prentice-Hall, Inc.

APPLICATION OF THE DECISION-MAKING MODEL

Now that your decision-making style has been selected for the case example from Box 6.1, the VRJ (Vroom, 1973; Vroom & Jago, 1978, 1988; Vroom & Yetton, 1973) model should be applied in diagnosing the task. Vroom (1973) and Vroom and Yetton (1973) developed the decision model using a tree format; it is commonly referred to as the decision-making tree, shown in Figure 6.2. This tree can be described as a series of questions that move through the situational parameters of the model (Chemers, 2000).

Notice that there are seven questions across the top of Figure 6.2. Questions A, B, and C refer to the variable of quality, and questions D through G refer to the variable of acceptance. Referring to the case in Box 6.1, it is necessary to start at the left of the model, Question A, and answer the question in a yes or no format. If the answer to Question A is “no,” then follow the “no” line to the next node and answer the question on top of that node. Follow this format until the tree ends with a decision-making style. It should be noted that each successive question in the quality and acceptance sets of variables asks more specific information concerning the variable. This process is similar to programmed history taking when an answer of yes to “history of familial diabetes,” for example, results in more specific questions concerning this matter being asked.

The decision model conceptually is communicating the following:

1. If acceptance of decision by followers is crucial, then get the group involved in solving the problem.
2. If quality is important, with expertise being a requirement, then find people who have the expertise and solve the problem with their input.
3. When both quality and acceptance are required, then bring the experts and the group together for problem solving.

The purpose of the decision-making tree, however, is to integrate the variables of quality and acceptance and to suggest a decision-making style that will take the shortest amount of time, considering the requirements of the task. Time increases as one moves down is styles from AI to GII. Hence, if style CII is suggested at the end of the decision-making tree, quality and acceptance are important so one should not use styles

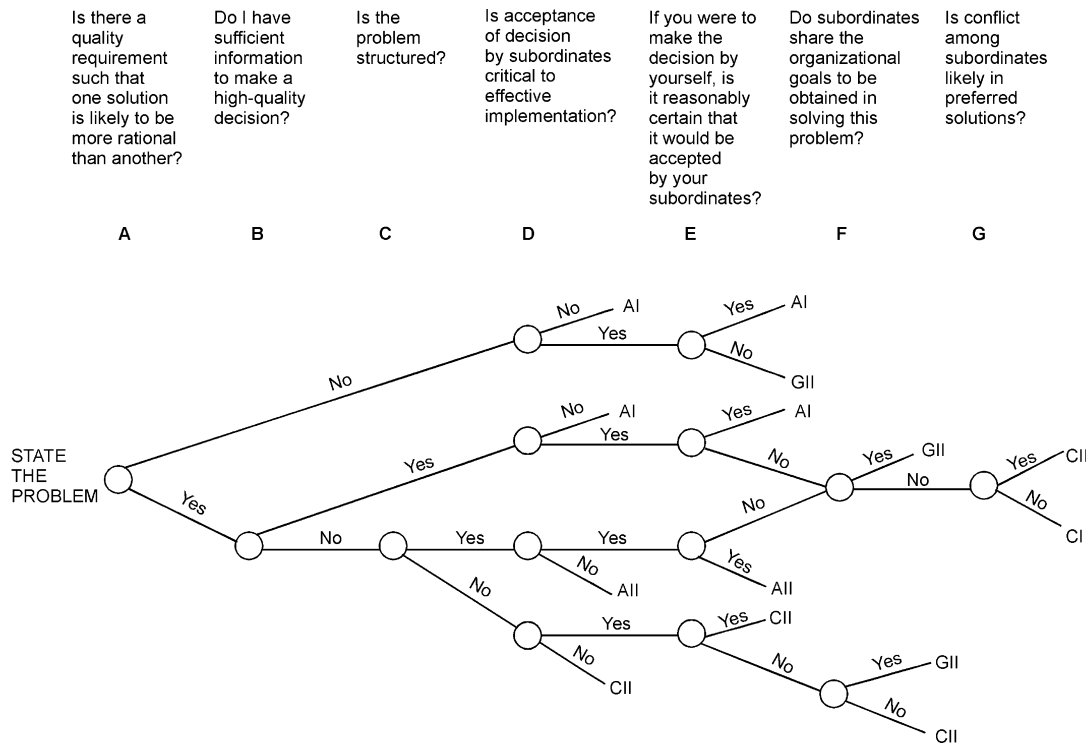


FIGURE 6.2 Vroom's Decision Model (tree).

Note. Reprinted from "A New Look at Managerial Decision Making," by Victor H. Vroom. *Organizational Dynamics*, Spring, 1973, © 1973. Reproduced with permission from Elsevier. All rights reserved.

AI, AII, or CI because the group would not be involved to the degree required in these styles. But one could use GII if the leader thought that the group was mature enough to solve the problem using that style *and* had the time available. The problem would be solved more quickly in style CII than in style GII.

Concluding simply, any decision-making style at or below the one indicated by the decision model in Table 6.1 is fine to use; more time, however, would be needed to solve the problem as the styles move downward. Decision-making styles above the one indicated by the decision model should not be used because the nature of the task requires more group interaction.

Let us walk through the case example from Box 6.1 using the decision-making tree from Figure 6.2 to see if Vroom (1973) and Vroom and Yetton (1973) agree with your choice for the best style to use given the nature of the task. Begin by starting at the left and answering Question A.

Question A: Quality—Yes

There is quality requirement in this case. A number of possible solutions to the problem exist, and one could be better than another; there are several ways to solve this problem, and one way could result in more effective outcomes than another.

Follow the “yes” line on the tree to the next node; look above it. Question B must be answered.

Question B: Manager’s Information—No

The assistant director obviously has neither the information nor the expertise to make a high-quality decision and solve the problem.

Follow the “no” line to the next node and answer the above further question on quality.

Question C: Structure—No

This question requires explanation. A structured problem is one in which the decision is based on quantitative (objective) data, and the location of those data is known. An unstructured problem has a subjective element; the decision is a qualitative assessment—a value judgment—and/or the location of the information is unknown. In the case example, information that is required for solving the problem

is qualitative and its specific location is unknown.

Follow the “no” line to the next node, look above the node, and answer Question D.

Question D: Acceptance—Yes

Another way of asking Question D is: Do followers have to do anything in order for the problem to be solved? In this case, acceptance is critical. The followers must implement the new unit management system in order for the goal to be reached. One possible reason for why the system is failing may be that personnel were not involved in the initial planning.

Follow the “yes” line to the next node and answer Question E.

Question E: Prior Probability of Acceptance—No

An autocratic decision in this case probably would not be tolerated.

Follow the “no” line to the next node and answer Question F located above the node.

Question F: Goal Congruence—Yes

Another way of asking this question is: If the problem is solved, will it benefit the people working in the environment? Obviously, the people will benefit in this case if the unit manager system works. The resulting style that is suggested by the model is GII. Bring the two supervisors together with the four head nurses and proceed in solving the problem as a group.

Did the style you chose match the style that you ended with on the decision-making tree? If so, your intuition was on target. Intuition, however, is as fluid as air—it comes and goes. Theory should be used first, and then intuition. Even if you were correct, diagnose every task and check on what your intuition tells you. You can raise your batting average continuously by using the theory. If your intuition does not match the decision-making tree (Vroom, 1973; Vroom & Yetton, 1973), it would be advisable to follow the suggestion from the decision-making tree over your own. Vroom and Jago (1978) reported on an experimental study suggesting that managers who apply the decision model have

significantly more effective outcomes—more technical quality and more follower acceptance—than do managers who do not apply the model. Experiential Exercise 7 at the conclusion of Part II of this book contains additional cases that can be used for practice.

DISCUSSION OF THE DECISION-MAKING MODEL

The decision model just discussed is used to diagnose the task; this is just one part of the environmental diagnosis. As noted earlier in this chapter, diagnosis of the system and self-diagnosis must be considered in determining leader behavior.

Suppose that you went back to the case example in Box 6.1 and applied the maturity or readiness theories from Chapter 4 and the leader behavior theories from Chapter 5. You decided that the followers in the case example were at the M1 level of readiness, thereby requiring high structure and low consideration leader behavior. The diagnosis of the task in the case suggested that group decision making is indicated—that is, high consideration and low structure leader behavior style (see Figure 6.1). What should the manager do?

The best course for the leader to follow in the above scenario is to bid for more time by presenting evidence to your superior, the nursing director. Advise your director that the nature of the task demands that the group become involved in solving this problem in order to have the best probability for an effective outcome. Further, the group is not mature or ready enough to handle a group problem-solving activity. More time is needed to help the group mature to the level required for solving the problem. The manager's best bet, therefore, is to try to get the task tabled until the group is mature enough to handle it—get more time. Then use other tasks that do not require group problem-solving experiences and have your followers practice and experience the group processes so that they learn to communicate effectively while working together. Coach them in the learning process when the stakes are not too high.

The manager should try, to the degree possible, to match the decision-making style required by the task with the leader behavior suggested by the group maturity or readiness level—this is ideal. It is also a way to determine the problems or goals that should be the focus of group work at any given point. Tasks should be given to groups according to

the group's ability to accomplish them effectively. Decision styles (AI through DI) can be used by the manager to help followers progressively mature in group problem solving. Decision styles are a ladder to how a leader brings followers to maturity in organizational group activities.

Going back to the case example, if the director of nursing says "the task must be done even though the group is not ready to handle it," even though a case against this has been made repeatedly and with assertiveness, then the manager must act accordingly. Given that the situation is far from ideal, every effort must be taken to ensure the highest probability for success. The group must be involved even though the experts must maintain control of the group's process because quality and acceptance are both critical. The manager's best bet in this instance is to move into a leader behavior style that falls between what the system requires and what the task requires—high structure and high consideration—CI or CII.

It must be noted that group decision making in the case example, indicated as best by the decision tree, means that the manager presents the problem for the group members to solve. The problem or goal is to determine how to make the unit manager system work effectively, producing the anticipated outcomes. The problem or goal must be presented with clarity. Group members should not be given the opportunity to say that they do not want the new unit management system. The system exists, and now it must be made effective. This principle applies in all group decision-making processes. Group decision making should begin with the manager's statement of the problem or goal and the factors that have to be considered in the situation—those that must continue and those that may be changed.

Foresight in management is always better than hindsight. The manager should always try to prevent the situation just discussed by a complete and accurate diagnosis of essential elements in the environment. However, when prevention has not worked (and prevention does not always work), then the manager must do what is best in the given situation, after considering the best leader behavior style based on diagnosis of followers and diagnosis of the task.

Self-diagnosis must also be studied because a manager who has a personality that matches the requirements of the system and task probably will have the smoothest journey through solving the problem. Should the leader's personal style not match, however, two alternatives are possible, given that the task must be accomplished by the system: (a)

delegate leadership for solving the problem to an assistant whose personal leadership style matches the requirements or (b) provide the leader behavior style that is required by the system and task by being conscious that one's behavior must follow the style needed. If possible and comfortable, validate with someone if your intended behavior matches their perceptions. In the second alternative, the manager must be diligent in thinking about the leader behavior that must be provided for the system because one's personal inclination may be different from the desired behavior.

SUMMARY

The task is the third aspect of the environment that must be diagnosed in order to determine leader behavior. VRJ's (Vroom, 1973; Vroom & Jago, 1978, 1988; Vroom & Yetton, 1973) managerial decision-making model was discussed for this purpose. The variables of quality, acceptance, and time are considered important in specifying the task's requirements. A decision tree or model can be used to integrate elements of quality and acceptance for a given situation and to suggest a decision style that requires the least amount of time and has the highest probability for effective outcome. One case was followed and discussed applying the decision model. An experiential exercise in this part of the book contains three additional cases for practice using the model. The manager should try to match the decision-making style required by the task with the leader behavior suggested by the system's maturity or readiness level. The manager can use the model to decide on task priorities for a given group.

Chapter 7 contains a case application of the management process and problem-solving method.

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