

Critical decision analysis

2
HOURS

4-6
PEOPLE



A critical decision analysis workshop is designed to help us make a critical decision by selecting one option. This is extremely valuable when involving others in the decision making process and it also prevents powerful personalities driving a particular agenda.

The outcome is a well-documented and bankable decision that will withstand significant scrutiny.

Benefits

Often projects suffer from analysis paralysis as they continue to put off the important decisions that frustrate people and prevent progress. Equally critical decisions can be made quickly with little involvement of key stakeholders and in some cases can appear to have little evidence of logical thinking. These less informed decisions often lead to rework as we are forced to make another decision and go back over old ground.

The critical decision analysis process helps us involve people in the decision, introduce clear objectives and systematically document the reasons why we made this important decision.


The process demonstrates due diligence, transparency, a documented trail and rigour that can withstand significant scrutiny when challenged by new

stakeholders or our sponsor. This rigour is vital when seeking sanction (approval of capital or resources) to progress to the next stage of our project.

Activities

Pre-work

1. Work with the project sponsor to design and plan the workshop using the planning tools.
2. Create a workshop communications deck and ask the sponsor to send it to the participants; this raises the importance of the activity.
3. Review the project background and:
 - Create a high level project overview (what, why and who is involved).
 - Create a short statement describing what needs to be decided or recommended.
 - Create a presentation describing what options are to be investigated.
 - Create the decision objectives that will influence our choice.
4. Create workshop posters, the decision analysis spread sheet and arrange a scribe to be ready for the workshop.



Decision Objectives	Weighting	Option 1		Option 2		Option 3	
		Score	Total	Score	Total	Score	Total
	10	8	80	3	30	8	80
	8	4	32	10	80	6	48
	6	10	60	5	30	10	60
		Option Total	172	Option Total	140	Option Total	188

The process of defining objectives and scoring them ensures we make the right decision; one that is bankable and will withstand significant scrutiny from key stakeholders.

Steps

1. Bring everyone onto the same page using the SPACER tool.
2. Agree on the decision to be made, the decision objectives and the options to be analysed.
3. Classify the decision objectives as either a 'must' or a 'want'.
4. Weight the 'wants' to show how much they will influence the decision; a most important 'want' is 10 and assign relative numbers appropriately.
5. Review and become familiar with the options to be analysed.
6. Screen the options against the 'musts'; any option that does not meet the 'must' requirement is rejected.
7. Compare the options against the 'wants' and score the best performer as a 10 and compare the other options relatively and assign a number.
8. Multiply the objective weighted number by the score and total the results to identify the best options.
9. Identify possible risks with the highest scoring options and complete a reality check.
10. Select the best option based on the results and risk profile.
11. Document the next steps to be completed outside the workshop including communicating the outcomes.
12. Wrap up the workshop and capture feedback using the plus/deltas tool.

Post session

1. Nominated scribe to populate the decision analysis work sheet during the workshop.
2. Facilitator to finalise the decision analysis worksheet.
3. The sponsor is to validate the decision analysis worksheet and issue to the project team.
4. Project team to complete the next steps.

Tips

- Be organised and have the decision statement, objectives and options signed off by the sponsor to streamline the workshop.
- Increased pre-work will ensure the participants are able to make the decision and not continue analysis paralysis by having an ongoing debate on what we are trying to decide.
- Work down the decision analysis worksheet by evaluating each option against the criteria before moving onto the next option.
- Score each option before totalling the results, this ensures participants are not changing their scores to push their option to the top of the list.

Duration

- The length of the workshop will depend on the number of options to be considered. Good workshop planning and pre-work will reduce the workshop duration as the team are more focused.
- We will require 2 hours to evaluate the options and make a bankable decision.

Tools

- Mandatory facilitation tools
- Detailed context
- Project objectives
- Communication plan
- Absolute criteria screening