
Learning Activity 15-1. Introductions

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this learning activity are to

- become comfortable in the learning environment by meeting others in the class
- determine the biggest challenges in decision making and problem solving for the learners.


MATERIALS

- PowerPoint slide 15-5

TIME

- 15 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Explain that this is an opportunity to meet everyone.
2. Invite attendees to introduce themselves. They should say their name, department, title, and one thing that prevents them from being able to make effective and timely decisions, such as not having all the facts, not having time, or lack of authority to make decisions.
3. List these challenges on a flipchart page.
4.  Show **slide 15-5** and note that they are not alone in their concerns. Many people share these same obstacles in their decision making and problem solving processes.
5. Post the page and note that you will be looking at methods to address these challenges in today's session.
6. Ask the group to be your research squad and to note whenever one of the techniques discussed would be a good solution to one of the challenges on the flipchart.
 - You can use this as an incentive and offer a prize or points toward a prize every time someone comes up with a way to answer a decision-making challenge.

Learning Activity 15-2. Self-Assessment

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this learning activity is to

- help participants assess their areas of strength and potential in the development of their decision-making and problem-solving skills.

MATERIALS


For this activity, you will need

- Assessment 15-1: Self-Assessment
- pencils.

TIME

- 20 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS

1.  Distribute **assessment 15-1**. Explain that this is an opportunity for participants to assess their decision-making and problem-solving skills and the areas they can focus on developing in this session.
2. Remind the participants that they don't have to share their responses, so they should be completely honest in the assessment.
3. Give the participants time to complete the assessments.
4. Conduct a debriefing discussion, using the questions provided.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR DEBRIEFING

- Which areas would you like to focus on developing?

Learning Activity 15-3. The 5 D's of Decision Making

OBJECTIVES

- The objective of this learning activity is to
- demonstrate the steps of various methods of decision making.

MATERIALS





For this activity, you will need

- PowerPoint slides 15-8 through 15-15
- Training Instrument 15-1: Decision-Making Instruments (one copy for each learner).

TIME

- 25 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Explain that decision making is a process that can be made more effective by following steps, getting as much information as possible, and keeping an open mind.
2.  Go through each of the 5 D's of Decision Making, using the information on **slides 15-8 through 5-11** to lead the discussion of the first three D's.
3.   Show **slide 15-12**, which introduces methods to determine the best solution. Distribute copies of **training instrument 15-1** and, using the instructions on the pages and **slides 15-13 through 15-14**, walk learners through the process of using these alternatives to evaluate options. The sample on the decision grid is a good way to practice the system with the group.
4.  Show **slide 15-15** and discuss each of the steps for turning a decision into an action plan.
5. Conduct a debriefing discussion, using the following questions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR DEBRIEFING

- What are some ways you could use each of these methods?
- How could you adapt these methods to use for individual decision making?
- What other methods of assessment do you use to help make decisions when you have a number of viable alternatives?

Learning Activity 15-4. Decision-Making Practice

OBJECTIVES

- The objective of this learning activity is to
- practice the various methods of decision making.

MATERIALS


For this activity, you will need

- Training Instrument 15-1: Decision-Making Instruments
- flipchart page and markers for each group
- masking tape for each group to post pages.

TIME

- 45 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Divide the class into four groups.
2.  For this activity, learners will refer to their notes and **training instrument 15-1**.
3. Assign each group a different method of decision making.
4. You can let the class decide on the decision to be made or you can assign situations for them to work on such as deciding on the best employee appreciation method, choosing an event to improve morale, or the best method to conduct a customer service survey.
5. Their assignment is to demonstrate each step of this process to the rest of the class. Invite them to be creative in their presentation, using interactive methods, such as a role play or a panel discussion. The only rule is that every member of the group must be involved.
6. Pass out flipchart pages and markers for them to use to create visual aids. Allow them 15 minutes to create their presentation.
7. When time is called, each group will present their demonstration.
8. Conduct a debriefing discussion, using the following questions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR DEBRIEFING

- What are some ways you could use each of these methods?
- How could you adapt these methods to use for individual decision making?
- What other methods of assessment do you use to help make decisions when you have a number of viable alternatives?

Learning Activity 15-5. Problem Solving

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this learning activity are to

- describe the steps of problem solving
- give participants an opportunity to practice problem solving.

MATERIALS

For this activity, you will need

- PowerPoint slides 15-18 through 15-23
- Training Instrument 15-2: The Steps of Problem Solving.





TIME

- 25 minutes



INSTRUCTIONS

1.  Show **slides 15-18 through 15-23** on problem solving, and walk the learners through the steps of problem solving using the notes on the slides. Emphasize the importance of follow up and the fact that the number-one expectation of others is that you will do what you say you are going to do.
2.  Distribute **training instrument 15-2**.
3. Break learners into pairs.
4. Instruct them to work with their partner to resolve a problem using the problem-solving steps. Assign a simple customer service issue such as receiving the wrong meal at a restaurant, returning a piece of defective merchandise, or an incorrect bill. Instruct them to walk through each step of the process and make notes on the training instrument.
5. Invite volunteers to present their process as a role-playing exercise or skit for the rest of the class.
6. Conduct a debriefing discussion, using the questions provided.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR DEBRIEFING

- Were you able to come up with a solution to your problem? What was it?
- Did the steps of problem solving make it easier to analyze the problem? How?
- What follow-up practices did you build into your solution?

Learning Activity 15-6. STEM—System, Training, Environment, and Motivation

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this activity is to

- help participants separate the symptoms of a customer problem from its cause.

MATERIALS


For this activity, you will need

- PowerPoint slides 15-24 and 15-25.

TIME

- 10 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS

1.  Ask your group how the following symptom could indicate a problem in the areas of System (software or hardware), Training (skills or knowledge gap), Environment (anything in place that can cause inefficiencies, such as process, work culture, or illness), or Motivation (attitude). **Slide 15-24** is an example, and **slide 15-25** shows the four categories.
2. Ask the participants what causes might contribute to the following symptom: The customer calls and complains that none of the reports you sent were accurate.
Examples of possible answers the learners might give are
 - **System:** The program that prints the reports has a problem.
 - **Training:** The customer does not know how to read the reports.
 - **Environment:** The customer spent only five seconds looking at the reports.
 - **Motivation:** The customer is angry about previous dealings with your department and is trying hard to make you look bad.

This model and practice will help people implement a careful thought process to look past the obvious cause and consider multiple possibilities. This is essential before deciding on what information needs to be used to determine the next action.

Learning Activity 15-7. Problem-Solving Activity

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this learning activity is to

- practice the steps of solving a workplace challenge.

MATERIALS


For this activity, you will need

- Training Instrument 15-3: Problem-Solving Practice (one copy for each learner).

TIME

- 45 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Divide the group into four think-tank groups.
2.  Distribute **training instrument 15-3** and note that this is an opportunity to practice all of the things that have been discussed during the course of this workshop and to solve a real problem for one of their fellow attendees.
3. Ask each group to poll its members to find which ones have a problem they would like to use as an example for this activity. Remind them that it should be a general problem that doesn't require expertise in their area of specialization and that no names or identifying factors should be used. They should select one issue to deal with in their discussion.
4. Give them 20 minutes to study the challenge, discuss ideas with others in their group, and brainstorm possible solutions.
5. Each group will have an opportunity to read its challenge and share its ideas for handling this situation.
6. After each one, ask others in the class for their thoughts. In addition, ask the learners if they have had similar challenges and how they have handled them.
7. After the exercise, conduct a debriefing discussion, using the following questions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR DEBRIEFING

- Did you hear some ideas that might work for challenges that you have?
- What are some ways you could adapt some of these solutions to address other challenges?

Learning Activity 15-8. Putting It All Together

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this learning activity is to

- create a plan to continue developing your learners' decision-making skills.

MATERIALS



For this activity, you will need

- PowerPoint slides 15-28 through 15-29.

TIME

- 15 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Explain that it's time to ensure that today's session fulfilled the objectives you discussed at the beginning of the workshop.
2.  Display **slide 15-28**, note the objectives for the day, and briefly summarize the ways the class addressed those objectives.
3. Ask the learners what happens if they don't immediately use information they get in workshops. (Most of the time they will respond that they'll lose it.)
4.  Present the one-day, one-week, and one-month action plan on **slide 15-29**.
5. Explain that this is why you'd like them to practice these principles right away so they will retain the valuable insights they've made today.
6. Go through each item on **slide 15-29**. You can use the items as listed or adjust them to suit your organization or any special areas of decision making or problem solving.
7. Ask for their commitment to do the three activities in the action plan.
8. Conduct a debriefing discussion, using the questions provided.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR DEBRIEFING

- What questions do you have about the techniques we've discussed here today?
- Which of these techniques do you feel will be a useful addition to the methods you use right now?
- What other questions or concerns about decision-making or problem-solving situations would you like to discuss?

Training Instrument 15-1. Decision-Making Instruments

GROUP DECISION-MAKING FORMATS

Brainstorming

Have a recorder list all the possible ideas from the group as quickly as possible. No judging of ideas is allowed. Quantity, not quality, is the goal. Once you have come up with as many ideas as you can, you can then shorten the list and finally determine which idea(s) to pursue.

Best of Two

Read the first two ideas, decide between the two which idea is least preferred and should be eliminated. Now compare the idea to the next one on the list and continue to do this until you have reached the last item on your list and the group is satisfied.

Dot System

Provide each person with three colored dot stickers. Put the list of all potential ideas or solutions on a flipchart page and invite everyone to come forward and put their stickers by their three favorite ideas. The idea with the greatest number of dots is the preferred idea.

Brainwriting

Each person records an idea or solution to the problem on a piece of paper and adds it to a pile. Everyone then takes a different paper from the pile and adds to the idea on that page. Rounds can continue until time is called. These ideas can then be reviewed and discussed to develop a final solution.

THE DECISION GRID

Can be used to determine the optimal order for addressing challenges or projects for a team or department.

Part One

1. Determine your overall goals for your department.
2. Brainstorm on the challenges that need to be solved to meet goals.
3. List those challenges in the center column of the Challenges Chart below.
4. For each challenge, rate in left column the level of importance or how much impact solving this challenge will have on the organization.
5. For each challenge, rate in the right column the ease or difficulty of solving this challenge.
6. Using these ratings, list your challenges in the Prioritization Chart below.

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Training Instrument 15-1. Decision-Making Instruments, *continued*

CHALLENGES CHART		
How important is this to the organization?	Challenges	How hard will this be to solve?
Rating Scale: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medium <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low		Rating Scale: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Easy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medium <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hard
	A.	
	B.	
	C.	
	D.	
	E.	
	F.	
	G.	
	H.	

Next, you'll move on to the Prioritization Chart and determine priority level.

DECISION GRID

Part Two

- Place each task into the corresponding box on the Prioritization Chart by using the level of importance and the difficulty level.
- The number of the box that the task falls into is the order that it should be addressed; this will ensure that your first activities are those that are most important and easiest to complete.
- Break major challenges into smaller action items and assign tasks to employees, using a Project Management Chart.
- Follow up by monitoring and reporting accomplishments until task is completed.

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Training Instrument 15-1. Decision-Making Instruments, *continued*

PRIORITIZATION CHART			
LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE TO ORGANIZATION	DIFFICULTY LEVEL OF SOLVING		
	Easy	Medium	Hard
High	1	2	5
Medium	3	4	7
Low	6	8	9

THE ASSESSMENT CHART

Useful for determining candidates by competencies.

1. Determine the attributes that are most important to the position that is being considered. These could include any skills or competencies such as decision making, communication skills, technical knowledge, customer focus, creativity, and so forth.
2. Place the top candidates' names across the top row.
3. Place each skill in the first column.
4. Rank each person on each skill. Each row should have the candidates ranked starting with the top candidate as number 1. The other candidates would be 2, 3, and downward in ranking.
5. Total the numbers for each candidate at the bottom.
6. The lowest number is the top candidate.

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Training Instrument 15-1. Decision-Making Instruments, *continued*

	Name	Name	Name	Name	Name	Name
Skill A						
Skill B						
Skill C						
Skill D						
Skill E						
TOTAL						

Training Instrument 15-2. The Steps of Problem Solving

PROBLEM SOLVING	
STEPS OF PROBLEM SOLVING	NOTES
Define the problem. <i>Separate it from its emotional content</i>	
State the problem as clearly as possible. <i>If more than one issue exists, define each issue separately</i>	
Describe what you can do and what your limitations are. <i>Use positive language and information explanations to describe:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What you will do</i>• <i>When you will do it</i>• <i>How you will do it</i>• <i>Who will be involved</i>• <i>Where it needs to be done</i>• <i>What your limitations are</i>	
Agree on a solution. <i>Provide alternatives, if appropriate</i>	
Verify the solution. <i>Ask if the solution is acceptable and summarize agreements</i>	
Follow up. <i>Follow up on what was promised</i>	

Training Instrument 15-3. Problem-Solving Practice

PROBLEM SOLVING	
STEPS OF PROBLEM SOLVING	NOTES
Define the problem. <i>Separate it from its emotional content.</i>	
State the problem as clearly as possible. <i>If more than one issue exists, define each issue separately.</i>	
Describe what you can do and what your limitations are. <i>Use positive language and information explanations to describe:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What you will do• When you will do it• How you will do it• Who will be involved• Where it needs to be done• What your limitations are	
Agree on a solution. <i>Provide alternatives, if appropriate.</i>	
Verify the solution. <i>Ask if the solution is acceptable and summarize agreements.</i>	
Follow up. <i>Follow up on what was promised.</i>	

Assessment 15-1. Self-Assessment

1 = Never	2 = Seldom	3 = Sometimes	4 = Often	5 = Most of the Time
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Next to each behavior listed below, circle the number that indicates how frequently you act or respond in these ways.

DECISION MAKING

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I make decisions in a timely manner. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I get input from all those involved before I make a final decision. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I try not to make rushed decisions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I use a standard and consistent system for decision making. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I achieve positive outcomes from my decisions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Total score for this section_____

PROBLEM SOLVING

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6. I try to look beyond the obvious symptoms and uncover the root problem before I work toward solutions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. I solicit ideas from others before I consider possible solutions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I keep an open mind toward options I had not considered. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. I use a systematic and effective method for solving problems. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. I remain calm in difficult situations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Total score for this section_____

ATTITUDES

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11. I view problems as an opportunity to improve and grow. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I welcome ideas and suggestions for improvement from others at all levels of the organization. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. I appreciate the different ideas and viewpoints that are represented on my team. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. I understand my personal biases and put them aside to think objectively about the situation at hand. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. I work to ensure that others are not hesitant to approach me for help with challenges and issues. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Total score for this section_____

OPPORTUNITIES

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16. I view every challenge as an opportunity for improvement. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. I consider organizational values, ethics, and long-term goals when I address decisions and problems. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. I recognize the benefits of diverse thinking for my team. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. I solicit input on processes and improvements, even when no problems exist. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. I take the time to review and document lessons learned from challenges and apply them to future situations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Total score for this section_____

Survey TOTAL_____

continued on next page

Assessment 15-1. Self-Assessment, *continued*

Review each section to determine the areas in which you would like to make improvements. As you go through today's session, think about the ideas you hear that will allow you to be more effective in those areas. List those ideas in the spaces provided.

DECISION MAKING

PROBLEM SOLVING

ATTITUDES

OPPORTUNITIES

Assessment 15-2. Program Evaluation

Name (optional):

Course:

Date:

Company:

Instructor:

Time:

Instructions: Answer the questions below. For questions 1 through 10, circle the appropriate number, using the following scale:

1 = Definitely No; 2 = No; 3 = Not Sure/Not Applicable; 4 = Yes; 5 = Definitely Yes

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Did you enjoy this workshop? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Did you obtain the information that you needed? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Will the handouts be valuable as job aids? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Do you feel that the information from this workshop will help improve your decision-making and problem-solving skills? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Would you like to attend an advanced course on this topic? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Did the instructor know the subject matter? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Was the pacing of the class comfortable for you? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Were questions answered completely and clearly? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Did the instructor's presentation style keep your attention and interest in the subject matter? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Would you recommend this program to others? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. What would you have liked to see more of in this program? | | | | | |
| 12. What would you have liked to see less of in this program? | | | | | |
| 13. What is one thing you learned in this program that you will be able to put into practice in the workplace? | | | | | |