Decision making process for IT Projects

Giusi La Rocca

GL Beratung

Benefits of a standardized decision process
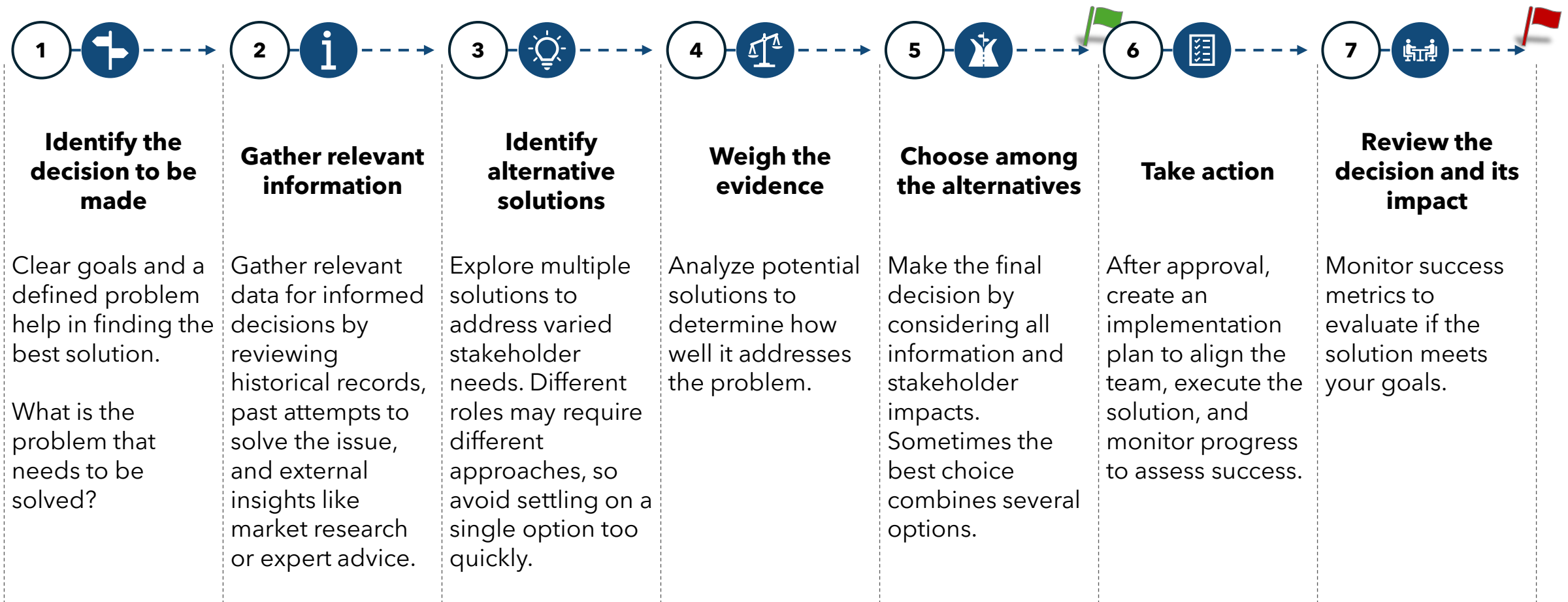
Structured Approach

Improved deliberation

Optimal Outcomes

Transparency

Decision making is the process of making choices by identifying a decision, gathering information, and assessing alternative resolutions.
Using a step-by-step decision-making process can help to make more deliberate, thoughtful decisions by organizing relevant information and defining alternatives. This approach increases the chances that the most satisfying alternative possible is chosen.

Process overview

1 **Identify the decision to be made**

Clear goals and a defined problem help in finding the best solution.

What is the problem that needs to be solved?

2 **Gather relevant information**

Gather relevant data for informed decisions by reviewing historical records, past attempts to solve the issue, and external insights like market research or expert advice.

3 **Identify alternative solutions**

Explore multiple solutions to address varied stakeholder needs. Different roles may require different approaches, so avoid settling on a single option too quickly.

4 **Weigh the evidence**

Analyze potential solutions to determine how well it addresses the problem.

5 **Choose among the alternatives**

Make the final decision by considering all information and stakeholder impacts. Sometimes the best choice combines several options.

6 **Take action**

After approval, create an implementation plan to align the team, execute the solution, and monitor progress to assess success.

7 **Review the decision and its impact**

Monitor success metrics to evaluate if the solution meets your goals.

Step 1 – Identify the decision to be made

1

Activity

Start by recognizing that a decision is necessary. Clearly define what the decision is about and the problem you're trying to address. Misunderstanding or choosing a problem that's too broad can derail your efforts before you even begin.

If your decision is intended to accomplish a specific objective, ensure that your goal is both measurable and time-bound. This clarity will guide you toward a more focused and effective solution..

Methodology

The SMART framework can help to identify, the decision objectives:

◆ Specific: Clearly define the goal.

◆ Measurable: Identify key metrics to track progress.

◆ Achievable: Set realistic expectations.

◆ Relevant: Align the decision with your overall objectives.

◆ Time-bound: Set a deadline for the outcome.

Outcome

◆ Clearly defined decision to be made: The specific goal has been identified.

◆ Key metrics identified: Clear, measurable success criteria have been set.

◆ Realistic expectations established: Feasibility has been assessed to ensure the decision is achievable within available resources and capabilities.

◆ Alignment ensured: The decision has been evaluated to confirm its relevance to broader business objectives.

◆ Deadline defined: A clear timeline for decision-making and implementation has been set.

Step 2 – Gather relevant information

2

Activity

Gather relevant information through internal assessments and external research. Internal efforts involve reviewing historical data, past outcomes, and team insights to learn from previous successes and failures. External research, such as industry reports and expert opinions, provides valuable perspectives beyond the organization. Combining these sources ensures a well-informed and balanced decision.

Keep in mind, you can become bogged down by too much information and that might only complicate the process.

Methodology

◆ Surveys: Collects data from a large group, both quantitative and qualitative, through online, in-person, or email distribution. They are useful for gathering feedback on customer opinions, employee experiences, and market trends.

◆ Interviews: Provides deep, qualitative insights via one-on-one conversations, allowing exploration of complex issues and detailed feedback, often used to gather expert opinions or personal experiences.

◆ Focus Groups: Small groups discuss specific topics, encouraging diverse perspectives and group dynamics. This method is effective for understanding attitudes, opinions, and behaviors.

◆ Observations: Involves watching and recording behaviors or processes in real-time, offering insights without relying on self-reported data. It can be structured or unstructured, depending on the focus.

◆ Secondary Data (Desk Research): Involves gathering existing data from sources like reports or databases. It's cost-effective and efficient, providing background, trends, and benchmarks relevant to the decision.

Outcome

◆ Data Summary Report: Consolidates all gathered information, both internal and external.

◆ Analysis of Key Insights: Identifies patterns, trends, strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities.

◆ Compiled Sources: Documents all sources used, such as surveys, interviews, and secondary data.

◆ Insights and Recommendations: Provides guidance and preliminary recommendations for the next steps.

◆ Identified Knowledge Gaps: Highlights areas where further information or research is needed.

Step 3 – Identify alternative solutions

3

Activity

This step involves identifying multiple alternatives to achieve an accurate decision. Different stakeholders, such as developers, IT managers, and business analysts, may have varying needs, so it's important to consider a range of possible options.

By gathering relevant information, you can explore several approaches that could potentially meet the objectives. This step focuses on generating and listing all feasible and desirable alternatives before making a final decision.

Methodology

These techniques can help to ensure a comprehensive and collaborative approach to exploring alternatives in IT projects:

◆ Brainstorming: Encourages team members to generate a wide range of alternatives without judgment, fostering diverse solutions.

◆ Nominal Group Technique (NGT): A structured brainstorming method where alternatives are independently generated, followed by group discussion and ranking.

◆ Scenario Planning: Considers how alternatives might play out under different future scenarios to anticipate risks and opportunities.

Outcome

◆ List of potential alternatives: A comprehensive list of viable options that address the decision at hand.

◆ Diverse options identified: Alternatives reflecting different perspectives and needs of stakeholders.

◆ Feasibility assessment: Preliminary evaluation of the practicality of each alternative.

◆ Alignment with objectives: Ensuring the identified alternatives align with overall project goals and objectives.

◆ Prioritization criteria established: Basis for further evaluation and comparison of alternatives.

Step 4 – Weigh the evidence

4

Activity

In this step, each alternative is analyzed to determine how well it aligns with the goals established in Step 1. The pros and cons of each option are weighed, and some alternatives may be eliminated based on their limitations or shortcomings. Past experiences, both within the organization and externally, are reviewed to understand the potential risks and rewards associated with each alternative. The team considers how each option would perform in practice, reflecting on the likely outcomes and challenges. Ultimately, the alternatives are ranked in order of priority, based on their potential to achieve the desired objectives.

Methodology

Following techniques can help to ensure a comprehensive and collaborative approach to assessing the identified alternatives:

◆ Pros and cons list

◆ SWOT Analysis: While commonly used to evaluate solutions, it can also be applied in this step to assess potential alternatives by considering their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

◆ Decision matrix

Outcome

◆ Weighted Alternatives: Each alternative is assessed and assigned a weight based on its potential to meet the objectives, taking into account factors such as feasibility, risk, and reward.

◆ Considerations and Conclusion: A comprehensive evaluation of all the relevant factors, including past experiences, risks, and potential outcomes, results in a clear understanding of the pros and cons of each alternative.

◆ Recommendation: Based on the weighted analysis, a recommendation is made for the most viable alternative, prioritized according to its alignment with the overall goals and its likelihood of success.

Step 5 – Choose among the alternatives

GL Beratung

5

Activity

The decision is made by reviewing and considering the management summary, the outcome of the previous evaluation, and the recommendation. This process involves assessing how the alternatives align with the project's objectives and the interests of key stakeholders. The goal is to select the option that offers the most value while minimizing potential risks or drawbacks. If necessary, a combination of alternatives may be chosen to achieve the best overall result. At this point, the decision is finalized, drawing from the thorough analysis and insights gathered throughout the process.

Methodology

alternatives:

◆ Evaluating the Conclusion and Recommendations: Assessing the final recommendations based on the provided information and analysis, ensuring they align with project goals and stakeholder needs.

◆ Considering Stakeholder Alignment with the Recommendation: Confirming that stakeholders are aligned with the recommendation and incorporating their perspectives into the final decision.

◆ Critical Evaluation: Reflecting on the overall impact and feasibility of the recommendation, factoring in risks, benefits, and alignment with strategic objectives.

◆ Final Decision: Making the final decision based on the conclusions, recommendations, and stakeholder considerations, selecting the most suitable option that best achieves the project's goals.

Outcome

◆ Final Decision: A clear and justified decision selecting the most suitable alternative.

◆ Consensus and Support: Alignment and support from stakeholders, including management.

◆ Action Plan: Defined next steps and resources required for implementation.

◆ Rationale: A documented explanation of how the decision meets project goals and stakeholder expectations.

Step 6 – Take action

6

Activity

Once the decision is made, it's time to take action and begin execution. The team starts implementing the chosen alternative, ensuring everyone is aligned on their roles and responsibilities.

Progress is closely monitored to determine if the decision is leading to the expected outcomes. Adjustments are made as necessary based on real-time feedback and results. The key focus is on driving the decision forward and making it a reality through consistent execution.

Methodology

Depending on your project:

◆ Classic waterfall

◆ Agile

Outcome

◆ Implemented solution or

◆ scope changed or

◆ any other deliverable pertaining your decision

Step 7 – Review the decision and its impact

7

Activity

In this final step, consider the results of your decision and evaluate whether or not it has resolved the need you identified in Step 1. The result is analyzed to see if the identified need has been resolved.

This final step involves reflecting on the decision's effectiveness and determining if further action is required. Based on this evaluation, adjustments may be made or alternative solutions may be considered.

Methodology

Here are a few questions to consider when reviewing your decision:

◆ Did it solve the problem your team identified in step 1?

◆ Did this decision impact your team in a positive or negative way?

◆ Which stakeholders benefited from this decision?

◆ Which stakeholders were impacted negatively?

Outcome

◆ Lessons learned

◆ Experience, information helping for the next decision

Thank you

GL Beratung

find us on
www.gl-beratung.ch