

Group Exercise

Topic

Democratic Decision-making

Aim

To engage students in various methods of democratic decision making and ensure they understand the process, issues and outcomes of each method.

Description

This is a group-based problem solving exercise that places the learners in control of the situation and allows them to construct their own meaning of democracy.

Learning Outcomes

- Understand different approaches to democratic decision making and participate effectively in each approach.
- Demonstrate an ability to co-operate effectively in groups and act in the best interests of the group.
- Analyse and debate an issue and be able to articulate their opinions coherently and logically.

Time & Materials

Time:

Approximately 35-45 minutes depending on how in depth the facilitator wishes the discussion to be.

Materials:

- Powerpoint presentation
- Note on worker co-operatives
- Note on consensus decision making

Scenario

The participants are given a work-based problem to solve in groups. They must debate the problem in depth and make a decision based on the two options they are given. The purpose of this exercise is to expose participants to different democratic decision making processes and to challenge them to overcome the problem by working together as a group.



Rules

- One vote per participant.
- Flat hierarchy (everyone is of equal standing in the business).
- Debate for 3/4 minute minimum, at which point they can continue to debate or make their decision.
- A decision has to be made, either:
 1. Keep current pay structure
 2. Pay based on length of service
- One group will reach a decision through a majority vote.
- One group will make a decision by consensus (everyone needs to agree).

Conducting the Exercise

1. Divide the students into groups based on the decision making process they will use i.e. **majority** and **consensus**. The number of participants in each group is entirely up to the facilitator; we recommend that the majority group is uneven in number and the consensus group even.
2. Assign the students in each group their role. The two roles are **senior** and **junior**. For the majority group, assign more students the role of senior employee than junior employee. With the consensus group, assign an even number of roles.

Senior Employee	With the company >2 years
Junior Employee	With the company <2 years

3. Record the time it takes each group to reach their decision and what their decision is.
4. When the groups have finished making their decision, conduct the discussion segment of the exercise.



Additional ideas

- Play around with the variables – change the ratio of senior employees to junior employees; the amount of participants in each group (even or uneven).
- Let them make their own decision, outside of the two offered.
- Change the scenario – the pay structure could be based on how many hours you work or linked to your job title.
- Introduce a third group whereby the decision making process is based on the amount of shares a person holds (an investor-owned business) or other forms of decision-making such as supermajority, unanimity or autocracy.

