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## GUIDE TO INVOLVING STAKEHOLDERS IN DECISION MAKING

derived from work of P.J. Bloom & E.M. Bridges

### Test of relevance (personal interest or stake in the issue)

Do individuals have a high personal stake in the decision?

If they have a personal stake, their interest in participation will be higher.

If they have no personal stake, employees will be more receptive to their supervisor's directive.

### Test of expertise (degree of competence regarding the issue)

To what extent are individuals qualified to make a useful contribution to the identification or solution of the problem?

### HIGH INTEREST

#### Situation I

w/**HIGH EXPERTISE** High interest, high expertise: If different individuals have a personal stake (high relevance) in the decision and have the knowledge to make a useful contribution (high expertise), the decision clearly falls outside their zone of indifference. They should be involved in the decision making process as early as possible and given as much freedom as possible in defining the problem and specifying objectives.

#### Situation II

w/**LOW EXPERTISE** High interest, low expertise: This situation needs careful consideration and skilled leadership. Involvement of various stakeholders should be limited. The rationale for involvement is to lower resistance to the decision. A consultative model of participation may be useful in this situation so that the interested parties have input, but the director/head makes the final decision.

**Situation I** is straightforward and highly desirable and will normally result in effective sound consensus decision making.

**Situation II** is delicate- basically, it addresses involving interested parties without giving them decision making power when they have no expertise to draw upon. For example, letting parents make curriculum decisions, or letting teachers make administrative decisions, or letting children make schedule decisions (amount of free time, recess)!!

**Situation III** arises when trying to tap into resources (expertise) and can be problematic because without personal investment, the "expertise" tends to be perfunctory; it is often better to have enthusiastic ignorance (which can be guided) as opposed to indifferent expertise (which tends to lose applicability when the "expert" does not care to examine the situation thoroughly).

**Situation IV** arises when trying to **make** people participants when they are not interested. Although a democratic ideal, involving everyone when all are not invested can cause problems perhaps worse than leaving them out.

### LOW INTEREST

#### Situation III

w/**HIGH EXPERTISE** Low interest, high expertise: In this situation, it is usually best not to involve other stakeholders unless necessary, and even then, involvement should be limited. To involve others may increase the likelihood of alienating other stakeholders. Although involving others under these circumstances increases the director/head's chances of reaching a higher quality decision, the disinterested parties are likely to wonder "what the director/head gets paid for."

#### Situation IV

w/**LOW EXPERTISE** Low interest, low expertise: If the topic or issue is irrelevant and falls outside the stakeholder's sphere of competence, then involvement should be avoided. Indeed, involvement in this case is likely to produce resentment because subordinates typically will not want to be involved and will probably not follow through if they are delegated tasks.