Guidelines for management and leadership decision

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Abstract
This paper presents an eight-questions model for leadership and management decisions. The eight questions provide a comprehensive and integrated system that can help managers become more competent as managers, and as leaders, by bringing more thoroughly considered decisions. They are based on managerial responsibilities and on existing motivation and leadership theories, as reported in the literature. Managers who develop the habit to ask these eight questions with all decisions that affect stakeholders, will find them easy to apply as guidelines to better decisions. The model also applies to individuals who are not in managerial positions but find themselves in leadership roles in teams or projects at work, in their professions, or at home. For thinking about leadership and managerial functions, and for higher education and human resource development, the eight-questions model provides a more practical and actionable guide than the Fayol cycle of planning, organizing, leading (or influencing or directing), and controlling. Drawing a set of practical and actionable guidelines for managerial decisions from these complex functions is difficult, however. This is especially true when “leading” is one of them, because leadership is such a complex matter.

Introduction
The ability to manage, and to lead, can be significantly improved with high quality decisions in all managerial responsibilities because decisions are the foundation for action. Looking at that from the opposite side, effective actions are based on sound decisions, and sound decisions pay attention to all controllable matters which impact on their outcomes.

In many ways, Henry Fayol’s view of managerial work (Fayol, 1916), as a cycle of activities has served as a major guide for the thinking of managers and thereby as a foundation for decisions. More than 80 years after its original publication in French, the cycle still continues to serve as one of the pillars of most basic management courses. Fayol divided a manager’s duties into five primary functions: planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating and controlling. Though the word “commanding” strikes us as somewhat odd, today, in the early 1900s it was a fairly accurate description of the relationship between manager and “subordinate”.

Current textbooks use more relevant words for the cycle, primarily planning, organizing, leading (or influencing or directing), and controlling. Interestingly, these guidelines can be useful to managers at all levels but also to all others who find themselves in leadership roles at work, in their professions, and also at home.

The eight-question model
The model consists of eight major questions which are not meant to be the only set of questions that could be used for the purpose of improving decision quality. Though at the moment there does not seem to be another equally comprehensive, integrated and actionable set available, such a set could serve the same purpose. Below the major questions are several levels of more specific ones which lead to increasingly clearer views of the situation. Unfortunately the model does not seem to lend itself to graphic presentation. It will however be shown in a matrix to demonstrate how it provides an even more comprehensive picture of managerial responsibilities and functions than the Fayol cycle.

Managers and others who may be in leadership roles, should consider the suggested questions whenever they develop a plan, solve a problem, meet a challenge, or seek to exploit an opportunity. The eight questions (the initial words in italics are key words that will be used in the matrix for comparing the model with the Fayol cycle which follows the questions) are:

1. Goals (outcome). What do we want to accomplish by solving this problem (meet this challenge, or gain full advantage of this opportunity)? That question sets the stage for consideration of approaches to the situation, including what goals might be useful to set formally, how, and with whom.
2. Communications. What do we need to do so that information which internal and...
external stakeholders, including us, need to have, and maybe also would like to have, is effectively communicated to them? That question prepares the way for other people to become involved, and for effective responses to the other questions that follow.

3 Participation. How do we ensure appropriate participation by those who can and/or should contribute to the decision (or plan)?

4 Competence. What, if anything do we have to do so we will have the highest possible competence levels for all activities?

5 Satisfaction. How do we ensure that all stakeholders, staff members as well as others, will be as satisfied as possible with what we decide?

6 Co-operation. How do we achieve the highest possible levels of coordination and cooperation?

7 Norms. How will organizational and individual norms, including those on ethics and diversity, be affected? And finally:

8 Reviews. Where do we need progress or performance reviews, and how will performance evaluations be affected?

### Comparison of the Fayol cycle with the eight-question model

As pointed out above, these are broad questions. They lead to more specific questions which provide more precise guidelines for a decision. However, even these broad questions, if asked with every relevant decision, are likely to ensure that all aspects will be considered that can contribute to achieving the plan, meeting the challenge, or taking advantage of the opportunity (see Table I).

In Table I, the X’s are, of course, somewhat subjective. Nevertheless they are based on the many levels of meaning that the eight questions can reveal, once they are thoroughly understood. There is also considerable overlap among the eight questions as well as between the four elements of the cycle. Interestingly, this overlap can be beneficial since it reduces the chance that something is overlooked during application.

The beauty of the eight-questions model lies with its practicality and comprehensiveness, and with the ease and speed with which it can be applied. That is especially true if the habit is developed to give it a mental glance whenever a significant management or leadership decision has to be made. A word of caution: it should be noted that the questions lead only to matters that should be considered – they can not specify what should be done. This is so because the questions apply to all problems, challenges and opportunities, in every environment, as does what should be considered. What should be done is unique to the specific situation.

The Fayol cycle, in contrast to the eight-questions model, is not actionable and does not lend itself to use with every decision because it refers to the managerial functions in a general way. The eight questions can be used with every decision and they lead to (but do not identify) specific alternatives to consider. An example expansion of one of the questions can help to illustrate how that occurs.

### Expansion of the participation question

Participation is likely to be an important element of a decision on a plan, a problem, or an opportunity. An expansion of question 3, the participation question (Participation. How do we ensure appropriate participation by those who can and/or should contribute to the decision or plan?), with second level questions shows how it can bring specific guidance for decision alternatives and provide foundation for selection of the most desirable one. Then,

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third level questions lead to still more precise
guidance for the participation issues.
All levels apply to participation of
individuals at work or at home, groups of
managerial or non-managerial staff
members, and individuals outside the
respective team or department. Four sets of
second level questions need answers:
1 Who, specifically – one or more than one
person – should be involved in this
decision or plan?
2 How – with what role – with little input as
would happen if only notified of the
decision, with a request to cooperate, after
it has been made, or with more impact on
the decision, up to full authority (power)
to make the decision?
3 When – at the start of the deliberation, or
at some later time?
4 Where – in meetings, in individual
face-to-face contacts, or in some other
medium?

Please note that the authority referred to
here could be seen as the extent to which
making of the decision was delegated to the
staff member or to a group of staff members
Whom to involve in the decision, when,
and with how much of a voice, leads to
tought to the following third level
questions:
• What specific relevant expertise is
needed?
• What is the respective work-maturity of
the individuals being considered? (Work
maturity of an individual or of a team is
not a function of age but of the ability and
willingness to assume responsibility for
the outcome of the decision and for the
implementation steps.)
• How strongly do they feel that they should
be involved?
• How accurately are they likely to predict
the reaction of one or more groups of
stakeholders?
• How urgent and important is the decision?
• What is the time and cost of participation
(to the organization and to the
participants)?
• What is the likelihood of conflict?
• What information is available or can be
made available?
• To what extent is the decision
predetermined by procedures and
policies?
• What is the impact of the decision on the
participants?

It should be clear that rapid consideration of
the issues mentioned above points to specific
selection of an individual or individuals, and
to the how and when they should be asked to
participate in a decision. In a way they add to
the intuitive selections that managers make
and that often exclude individuals who could
or would contribute significant thoughts.

Hopefully this brief example has
broadened awareness of the ways in which
attention to successively more detailed,
relevant issues can help to bring thoroughly
considered decisions. At the same time,
thinking of the more specific issues brings
reminders of concepts, theories, and research
findings that can be used to lend confidence
to specific answers.

Practical use of the eight-question
model

Does a manager, as manager or as leader,
need all this depth of understanding? Of
course not. Just developing the habit to ask
the questions will undoubtedly bring better
plans and approaches to problems,
challenges, and opportunities. However,
every manager who finds the eight questions
useful, and will develop the habit to use
them, will undoubtedly, over time, come to
acquire at least that much depth and apply it
with lightening speed.

That such rapid consideration is possible
seems questionable at first, until one
considers chess masters who meet the many
challenges they face almost simultaneously,
in tournaments against many competent
opponents. They can assess the situation on
each board, and make decisions about their
next moves much faster, as a rule, than the
accomplished chess players who oppose them
and who are thoroughly familiar with their
respective single boards.

For leadership and management decisions,
the key lies in the consistent application of
the eight questions.

The hypothetical but realistic scenario that
is analyzed below, demonstrates how
extensive detail, similar to that described
above for participation, exists behind the
question pertaining to goals, and somewhat
less behind each one of the remaining six
questions.

The scenario

XYZ Company, the manufacturer of small
appliances, has recently introduced a new
product. Soon after shipments to customers
began, there were quality complaints and a
number of units had been returned for
replacement.

The president called a management
meeting to consider what to do. Like at the
regular weekly meeting, it was attended by
the vice presidents of administration,
manufacturing, engineering, sales, marketing, and finance.

After reviewing the extent of the returns, the president instructed both engineering and manufacturing to investigate the cause of the complaints and report back to him as quickly as possible. No further shipments of the new appliance were to be made, and no further units were to be produced, pending corrective measures based on the results of the problem analysis. Marketing and finance were to prepare estimates of the impact on sales, market position, and anticipated profit. Sales assumed the responsibility to follow up with customers who had complained, to ensure that they were satisfied with the replacements that had been shipped. There were no comments from the other members of the team.

Two days later, manufacturing and engineering presented different conclusions to the president. Engineering blamed the problem solely on manufacturing errors. Manufacturing conceded that there were production errors but claimed that design problems were behind most of those errors. It also became apparent during the investigation that a quality control inspector had reported the possibility of product failures in the field to his manager who did not take them seriously enough to report them up the line to the VP of administration. Instead he mentioned them to both the production supervisor on duty at the time and to one of the engineers.

To briefly describe management practices:
• The president is somewhat autocratic as was evident from the brief description of the management meeting. He is, however, a considerate and reasonable person.
• Most managers (staff members in charge of teams and departments) tend to display similar characteristics.
• All managers are expected to set semi-annual goals for themselves and for the members of their teams. These are recorded and reviewed quarterly. For some goal achievements, those with direct impact on profits, managers and staff members often receive small bonuses. Mainly because failure to achieve goals has negative impact on performance evaluations, staff members feel that the procedures are too rigid and that there is inadequate support by the respective next higher level of management.
• Competence development for managerial staff and for professionals such as engineers is primarily in public seminars that are offered or sometimes are required. New employees are given extensive on-the-job training and there is group and individual training on matters that pertain to new products.

| Scenario analysis |
A sound approach to decision making and problems solving starts with thought about desirable outcome conditions for the decision, and proceeds from there to:
1. identification of alternatives;
2. reviewing these in light of available information and additional information that can reasonably be obtained; and
3. evaluating the alternatives to select the best one.

The eight questions apply to each of these steps.

| Identifying desirable outcome conditions |
The obvious primary condition is resolution of the quality problem. It is useful to note that this is a technical issue that even managers who are not competent as leaders would easily identify.

Most managers would also recognize that satisfaction of customers is a related desired outcome.

For a thorough solution of this quality problem, however, the outcome conditions should also consider leadership issues (as are highlighted by the eight questions):
• high level competence of engineering and manufacturing staffs especially in early identification of potential and actual quality problems;
• satisfaction of stakeholders other than customers, specifically those staff members who have had unpleasant experiences as a result of customer complaints and possibly as a result of conflicts between engineering and manufacturing; and
• high level coordination and cooperation, particularly between engineering and manufacturing.

Once the outcome conditions have been identified, the eight questions can be used to point to matters that should be considered:

Q1. Should goals be set, how, and on what?

The issues behind this question would indicate that it might be desirable to establish, with appropriate participation of course, criteria that would bring greater achievements and satisfaction from the use of goals. These criteria would be on:
• matters on which goals would be appropriate;
• quality of goals;
• the process for reviewing progress toward goals; and
• the respective responsibilities of individuals and the person to whom they report.

Specifically, in the scenario, use of the model would lead to questions whether goals could or should be considered for:
• development of a plan to rectify the quality problem;
• preparation of procedures that would ensure better coordination between engineering and manufacturing on design of new products;
• review of quality control procedures, and possible modifications; and
• review of training procedures of production and quality control staff on new products, and possible modifications, etc.

Q2. Could communications be improved?
The questions that the model might prompt with every decision, goal and action is: who should communicate what, to whom, and how?

In other words, in the scenario, as anywhere, the extent to which there is 360 degree two-way communications on all matters on which information is needed, or possibly just expected or desired, deserves constant review. Clarification may be necessary for each organizational segment, on what types of information should be passed directly between staff members in different departments, and what information should go through the respective managers.

In the scenario, the communications question might have raised issues pertaining to:
• What steps could be considered to improve communications between engineering and manufacturing?
• How could communications on quality matters be improved so that problems are acted on before a product leaves the factory?
• How could awareness of staff member roles in communications be improved? etc.

Q3. Who should be involved, in what role (with how much influence), in the various decisions that had and have to be made?

As previously described, the selection of individuals for participation, and the extent of authority and responsibility for the actual decision to grant, has to be made by the manager in charge of the respective decision or project, based on the technical expertise needed for the decision, the information needed to ensure highest possible acceptance of the decision, and the work maturity of the individual(s) involved.

The participation selection applies, and could have applied, to all significant decisions such as, in the scenario, to the best choices for people to involve in identifying the cause of the quality problem. Might consideration of this issue have led to assigning primary responsibility of the investigation to someone less committed to a departmental point of view? Any team which that person would have assembled would likely have involved staff members of the two departments. It might, however, have brought a more useful report than the two that now have to be reconciled with as little conflict and repercussions, as possible.

Serious consideration of participation issues, if done by a President with knowledge of the eight-questions model might bring thought about a more active role for Vice Presidents in decisions at the management meetings, beyond comments on the President’s decisions. That, in turn might lead to similar review of manager roles in meetings.

Q4. What can be done so the organization has the necessary competence in every position?

This question involves the competence development efforts that might be indicated. It also concerns the quality of new hires for open positions, and the effectiveness with which internal talents are used through transfers, and selection to teams and projects.

For the scenario the model would suggest the following:
• If the president were aware of the eight-questions model, he might consider self-development in leadership skills and decision-making for himself, and stimulation of similar self-development by the vice presidents and managers further down the line.
• Questioning of the usefulness of public seminars for manager development; alternatives might be reviewed such as the use of brief internal seminars, coaching and mentoring.
• Identification of learning needs of staff members in all departments and appropriate forms of learning programs where indicated.
• Consideration of learning programs on conflict management and team development involving both engineers and manufacturing professionals, to bring clearer understanding of factors that
make easier and faster high quality manufacturing of new product designs.

- Review of the extent to which coaching and/or more on-the-job training may be needed.
- Review of procedures being used to assign staff members to teams and projects, such as the teams to investigate the quality problem, etc.

Q5. Ensuring that all stakeholders, staff members as well as others, will be as satisfied as possible with decisions.

For this question, more detailed issues suggested by the model involve thought of the needs of staff and non-staff stakeholders. For staff members they suggest consideration of psychological and tangible ways in which evidence of appreciation could best be provided to staff members. That would help offset the incessant barrage of negative feelings that stem from deadlines, quality problems, cooperation failures, inadequate communications and misunderstandings. In addition the model suggests that work-related stress levels be monitored by the respective managers, and that steps are taken to hold them within reasonable bounds.

Here, possibly more so than elsewhere in the model does it become evident how extensive the interdependence of the questions is. High level of satisfaction by staff members requires consideration of all questions including appropriate participation, communications, developmental support, cooperation and good coordination, an environment of positive discipline, appropriate rewards, regular supportive reviews, and fair performance evaluations.

For the scenario, the model suggests questions about managerial competence in providing signs of appreciation, and that steps might be considered to reduce excessive work-related stress where it may exist. Little information is available from the scenario description about stress levels except that it would seem reasonable that the goals process and the quality problem do generate stress that might possibly be reduced.

Q6. How could better coordination be achieved, with greater cooperation?

This questions concerns issues pertaining to the adequacy of procedures, the attention given to prevent lack of cooperation with people and procedures, and steps for identifying and resolving potentially damaging conflicts.

In the scenario, the question would raise subsidiary questions pertaining to:

- appropriateness and adequacy of procedures being used to bring new products from the design stage to pilot and full manufacturing;
- what steps could be considered to defuse any lingering resentment between manufacturing and engineering;
- whether the competence is adequate for identifying potentially damaging conflict situations and to effectively resolve emerging conflicts; and
- how dissatisfactions could be identified as early as possible and what appropriate steps might be to reduce or eliminate them, etc.

Q7. How will organizational and individual norms, including those on ethics and diversity, be affected?

For this question the model suggests that it is important for all leaders to recognize that there are three types of norms: those held by management; those held by staff members that correspond to the management norms; and norms that are held by staff members which differ from the management norms. Leaders should also be aware that positive discipline exists when, like in a sports team, every member of the organization puts great value on the organization achieving its goals. Positive discipline is based on:

- an open communications climate;
- a common understanding of the rules of the “game” – with fair and uniform application of standards of quality, performance, morality, work ethic, cooperation, behavior limits, and attitude toward diversity;
- staff members who deserve commendation and privileges will receive them;
- those who violate accepted norms receive help at first and then are subject to a fair disciplinary procedure; and
- counseling is used competently to reduce, to a minimum, the use of the disciplinary procedure.

In the scenario, this question could raise issues pertaining to:

- the norms of shop people with respect to quality issues;
- the views of engineers about manufacturing staff attitudes toward new designs, and vice versa;
- the quality and application of the disciplinary procedure; and
- appropriateness of efforts to maintain (or establish) positive discipline in all organizational units, etc.
Q8. Where are progress or performance reviews needed, and how will performance evaluations be affected?

The model considers progress reviews (for projects and toward goals) and performance reviews (for all work) to have two purposes – to identify support needs (including competence development) from the respective leader/manager and, to ensure that performance evaluations will have a factual and fair basis.

Since there is little information in the scenario description on which to base comments, it can be assumed that this question would be dealt with by raising issues such as:

• What, if any, changes in the existing progress and performance review procedures might be useful and should be communicated?
• What, if any, changes in the existing performance evaluation system might be useful and should be communicated? etc.

Conclusions

As should be evident and has been hinted at previously, the questions in the model overlap extensively and thus reinforce each other. Furthermore, any one could provide reminders for something that may have been overlooked when another one was considered.

While at first the use of the model may seem as a formidable and time-taking task to perform with every decision, that is not even true after the second or third time. Once the habit to think of questions for decisions begins to take hold, the process speeds up greatly and soon equals any alternative decision-making approach.

Anyone who doubts that reviewing the set of eight questions can be done with lightning speed might first realize that not all are relevant to each decision and some can be pruned immediately on inspection, especially if they have been dealt with in a previous decision. It might also be useful to consider the incredible feats of chess masters, referred to previously, who can play, and win, many simultaneous games. They can do that because they have developed the habit to consult a list of strategies for most situations they have encountered – essentially a model of issues not fundamentally different from those to which the eight questions lead.

Developing the habit to use several questions, the same ones, possibly with changes that experience shows to be more in line with personal views, is most important in improving decision-making competence.

The eight-question model presented in this paper is one good set of questions to use, and in any case, can be a good model with which to start.

Applicability of the eight-question model to other cultures

Every one of the eight questions adapts readily to any culture. For the US culture they would best be interpreted on the basis of the existing literature. In a more autocratic environment, all questions from those pertaining to goal setting to progress reviews may have significantly different meaning. Still, to consider them in decisions is no less important.

Part of the reason for the automatic adaptation, not only to different cultures but also to new research findings, is that the model does not lead directly to specific conclusions. It merely points to the issues that should enter the decision makers’ minds. Obviously, the conclusions from the specific questions offered here, or from any other one, will bring different guides to action in different cultures, and in light of any new research findings or otherwise valid theories.

As is pointed out at various places in this paper, the list of questions that are described here, are not meant to be universal. Individuals and possibly organizations are encouraged to modify them or even develop entirely different lists that might better fit their respective needs. What is important is the cumulative effect of using the same set of specific questions that cover all responsibilities, with every decision.

References

Overall author response to the comments

While disagreeing with some points in the review, I would like to first express my appreciation for Dr. Rossi’s thoughtful comments to the previous and the current version of the paper. I have made many specific corrections he suggested. However, I have not acted on the statements below though I feel that they deserve attention. Specifically, I am responding to three issues and my responses follow each one.

Issue 1 – reviewer statements

As stated in an earlier review, the author mentions the literature but fails to cite the paper very well. I think it would be much stronger if the origin of the decision questions were identified and any support (either empirical or proposed) were indicated. The big issue here is that a reader does not know where these questions come from and if and how they were ever applied or tested. The example is fictitious or appears so and the link between theory or some applied research is missing. By indicating sources or actual field tests the author would greatly enhance the model . . .

. . . Using the model for research would definitely require a much better grounding in empirical study or the literature to support the concepts . . .

. . . grounds the paper in the literature, in other words, describe where these questions came from and possibly provide an example of its use in an actual decision making situation or a research study of decision making . . .

. . . I believe this paper could contribute to the knowledge of leadership decision making if it provided the support I indicated above. We need to know where it came from so we know where our starting point is to use it and to improve it as a tool.

Issue 1 – author response

The reviewer certainly has a good point about the need for specific citations in the paper. Maybe some of the response here should be part of the paper. While I had considered doing so, and did have them in a previous version, some informal reviews by associates discouraged me because it introduced thoughts that some readers (especially practitioners) might consider distracting.

I agree with the desirability of providing strong evidence of successful application of the concept, or better yet, empirical validation. Unfortunately there is no "smoking gun" support, only "circumstantial evidence".

That evidence is of two kinds – literature foundations and undocumented use.
1 Literature foundations

Literature foundation for the Participation question can be found in the insights offered by Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1956), Maier (1957), Fiedler (1967), Hersey and Blanchard (1969; 1982), and others. Outstanding work on this issue has been and continues to be done by Victor Vroom and his associates (Vroom and Yetton, 1973; Vroom and Jago, 1988). The collaborators have worked on this challenge for years and have made considerable progress. There is a paper by Vroom in this issue of Management Decision.

In a similar vein, House, Hughes, Latham, Locke, Odiorne, Rausch, Yukl, (House and Terence, 1974; Hughes, 1965; Latham and Yukl, 1975; Locke and Latham, 1990; Odiorne, 1968; Rausch, 1978; 1980; 2002; Yukl, 1988), and others, have independently developed some more or less specific criteria that can help to bring sound decisions pertaining to the effective use of Goals (objectives) in an organization.

With respect to Satisfaction there is the rich literature on motivations stemming from and expanding on Mayo's Hawthorne experiments, from Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1954), and Herzberg's motivation/hygiene theory (Herzberg, 1959; 1968). (There are readers who may feel that the citations in these paragraphs are too dated to be of full value and that newer writing should have been cited. The answer to this concern is that what has been quoted are the foundation writing on these topics. There does not appear to be anything in later literature that adds significant value to the concepts. However, should something emerge, it is highly unlikely that it will affect the eight-questions model, since it would automatically become part of the subsidiary information for the respective question.)

On other fronts, there are vast literature resources that bring foundation for decisions pertaining competence development, specifically in books and papers on processes, techniques, and conditions for learning, and learning styles. The same is true for communications, for norms related to work, ethics, and biases, for coordination and cooperation, and for appropriate performance evaluation based on regular performance/progress reviews.

2. Undocumented use

The eight-questions concept has developed from my many years of designing and testing simulation games on practically all management functions. At first, Didactic Systems' staff provided the responses to attendee/participant decisions in human resource development programs. These were based on our staff views and were then revised as necessary during pilot use. I was dissatisfied with such haphazard, mainly subjective responses and searched for an integrated, comprehensive foundation. The foundation concept, based on manager and leader responsibilities, has been presented in different but similar models, without any substantive challenges, contradictions, and change, in 25 years of use. That use has been in human resource programs for the entire Federal Prison System, the training arms of the US Office of Personnel and the Alberta Government, continuing use in fire departments in many states, JCPenney, the Girl Scouts, several hospitals, seminars of the American Management Associations, and many other lesser programs. It has been depicted in the West Point Academy book on leadership, in Heyel's Encyclopedia of Management and in General Electric's summary handout to management learners at all levels.

Still, there are undoubtedly sets of questions, other than those in the model described here, that could serve the same purpose, provided they are equally integrated, comprehensive, specific and actionable, and supported by more detailed questions based on the literature, that lead the user closer to the most desirable aspects of the decision alternative under consideration. However, in light of the literature support it seems undeniable that definition of desired outcome (in effect the thinking about goals), appropriate participation and communications, thought about necessary competencies, and satisfaction of stakeholders, would have to be components of any set of questions to ask when making decisions.

There is no specific empirical evidence of the eight-question model's effectiveness in bringing "better management or leadership" except as extension of the research reported on in the literature. Validating the enormously complex concept would take generations and huge financial resources, in light of the many uncontrollable factors. That is demonstrated by the many years that Victor Vroom and his associates have worked on a still incomplete set of guidelines for selection of participation level. However, the fact that its application to real situations and hypothetical scenarios in many different environments, almost inevitably brings some improvement to the decisions, could also be considered at least partial validation of the concept.

One more thought. If a substantive objection were to arise, in light of the flexibility of the model, that point could
undoubtedly be incorporated, either as part of a related question, or possibly even as a ninth question.

**Issue 2 – reviewer statement**

There appears to be very little support for much of what is written. There is no description of the process used to develop the model. It is difficult to determine if this came about from just a review of the literature, a series of interview, case studies, etc. of from an empirical study. Rigor is suspect without a description of the foundation or background.

**Issue 2 – author response**

As outlined above, the concept evolved simultaneously from literature review and from the extensive use of segments in simulation game trials, with subjective validation based on the views of literally thousands of managers. Throughout the many years, since before 1978 when the first book was published, not one substantive objection or contradiction has been raised.

There was one thought that was not in the original model, but has since been added. It concerned the role of values in norms. This addition, incidentally, attests to the flexibility of the model and the ease with which it can adapt to new inputs.

**Issue 3 – reviewer statement**

The author(s) state that the model, in its described form, is applicable to other cultures. In the same section the paper points out that it might need modification and that the components of the model are not universal. None of the statements are supported by research, theory or literature. This makes its global use or applicability suspect.

**Issue 3 – author response**

a. The model does adapt to other cultures. Seminar attendees and graduate students from many regions of the world, including European, Indian, Pacific Rim, and South American countries, have confirmed that.

However, logic can also confirm this universal applicability. If one actually applies any of the eight questions, and their subsidiary ones, to an issue, it becomes apparent that it is the orientation of the decision-maker that shapes the answers. A US manager/leader’s answer to the participation questions is likely to be more democratic than the answer of a South American. Still, the answer would be equally valid because it would be appropriate to the environment and relationships.

Moreover, the model automatically adjusts to new research findings because such new findings would become part of the background information behind the respective question – or possibly add another question to the list of questions that the decision-maker uses. The addition of the thoughts on values to the question on norms confirms this ease of adjustment.

Finally, the seeming contradiction between universal application and desirable modifications is understandable. However, (1) the model is not a final, ultimate, version of a decision-assisting one, and (2) minor and possibly even major modifications could possibly make the model more useful to an individual user. That would be true even if the specially adapted model might not be quite as solidly based on the literature, or be equally comprehensive and consistent. It is meant to be a major point of the paper, that the habit to consistently apply a series of appropriate questions to every problem, challenge, and opportunity, will bring significantly better decisions than a less disciplined approach. Obviously, the more comprehensive, integrated, actionable, and otherwise valid the questions, the more effective they are likely to be.