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Ver. 1.1, updated 6 October 2008

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These are **teaching notes**. They are written from the program leader's perspective, as if the program leader is speaking. They are detailed but not comprehensive. My goal is to give you all the concepts and tools of the program, along with a flavor of my teaching style. You should find here enough information to evaluate whether the program is useful for you, or enough detail to develop it for your own organization.

You'll also find teaching tips or clarifications shaded in gray.

These teaching notes make more sense if you've already read the **Program Overview and Setup** document. It's also best to read the session documents in order, because later sessions build on the work of earlier sessions.

Session 4 Topics

- Practice conversations
- The manager's daily juggling act
- Steering the ship
- What is your team accountable for?
- How to determine priorities
- How to manage ongoing priorities
- Making effective decisions
- Running effective meetings

- Brainstorming and group decision-making

Session 4 Key Concepts

- A manager's priorities should be driven by team accountabilities, what the team needs to function smoothly, and the demands of key relationships.
- You need clear decision-making processes that give people who are affected by decisions as much as input and ownership as possible.
- An effective definition of working consensus is a key part of managing. The goal is not 100% agreement with every decision – it's to arrive at a decision that everyone understands and agrees to support.
- It's essential to run meetings well. Much of the work of any organization has to be done in groups. If you can't manage group work, you can't be an effective manager.
- All of these skills rely on clear, transparent and authentic communication to deliver effective messages and maintain effective relationships.

These concepts are essential underpinnings of the Humans At WorkSM program. Do not substitute other concepts unless you are prepared to reconfigure the entire program accordingly. If you are not familiar with these concepts, don't lead this session. These skills should be introduced and demonstrated by expert practitioners who can model the behavior as well as describe it.

You'll find basic handouts for all sessions in the Tools and Materials document.

Homework assignments due for this session

1. Review handouts on Session 3 concepts.
2. Share learning with your team.

3. Read **Becoming a Manager** (pp. 47-85) and **Difficult Conversations** (pp. 44-57).
4. Communication scenarios.
5. Practice conversations.
6. Observe communication behavior and record observations.

Session 4 Agenda

9:00	4.1	Open session (see notes)
9:05		
9:10	4.2	Observations (see notes)
9:15		
9:20		
9:25		
9:30		
9:35		
9:40	4.3	The manager's daily juggling act (see notes)
9:45		
9:50		
9:55		
10:00		
10:05		
10:10		
10:15	4.4	Session manifesto: Steering the ship (see notes)
10:20		
10:25		
10:30		<i>BREAK (10 minutes)</i>
10:35		
10:40	4.5	Accountabilities and priorities (see notes)
10:45		
10:50		
10:55		
11:00		
11:05		
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11:15		
11:20		
11:25		
11:30		
11:35		
11:40		
11:45		
11:50		
11:55		
12:00		<i>LUNCH (1 hour)</i>
1:00	4.6	Making effective decisions (see notes)
1:05		
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2:40		
2:45		
2:50		BREAK (10 minutes)
2:55		
3:00	4.7	Running effective meetings (see notes)
3:05		
3:10		
3:15		
3:20		
3:25		
3:30		
3:35		
3:40		
3:45	4.8	Brainstorming and group decision-making (see notes)
3:50		
3:55		
4:00		
4:05		
4:10		
4:15		
4:20		
4:25		
4:30	4.9	Summary remarks, final questions and comments (see notes)
4:35		
4:40		
4:45		
4:50	4.10	Wrap up (see notes)
4:55		
5:00		Session ends

Session 4 teaching notes

4.1 Open Session

- A. Brief review of Session 3 outcomes
- B. Session 4 goals

4.1 A -- Review Session 3

In Session 3, we focused on the nuts and bolts of effective communication. Since the point is to communicate about business matters with other human beings, we talked about the Human/Business interaction model to keep us moving between the human and business levels in conversation. We looked at structuring messages, including knowing what you want to accomplish, identifying the right audience, and making your point up front. We talked about the importance of using plain language to be clear, transparent and authentic in your communication.

4.1 B -- Session 4 goals

Communication skills are vital to managing well. You'll use them in everything you do as a manager. Today we start becoming very specific about applying those skills to some of the activities that take large chunks of a manager's time: setting priorities, making decisions, and running meetings.

We'll talk about:

- Team accountabilities
- How to determine and manage overall priorities for your team
- Several models of decision-making, and when to use them
- How to communicate during and after making a decision
- How to run productive meetings

Please note that today is about **applying the learning from Sessions 1-3**. We'll focus more on concepts, models and tools than on free-ranging discussion. Don't get overwhelmed, and remember that all these skills and tools spring from the values and communication work you've already done.

4.2 Observations

Select a participant to facilitate the following group discussion. Coach them as they work. The goal is to make sure that responses are specific, and to record key concepts on the flip chart.

Group discussion of homework assignment: Talk about your observations of communication behavior. Be specific. What did you take from your observations that will help you as a manager?

4.3 The manager's daily juggling act

Group discussion of homework assignment: What did you get out of your reading of **Becoming A Manager**?

Allow discussion to range if necessary, but wind up by focusing on concepts of identifying and maintaining priorities in a constantly shifting environment ("putting out fires").

4.4 Session manifesto: Steering the ship

Please read the Manifesto section in the Program Overview and Setup for more guidance about the session manifestos.

Put the manifesto in your own words. Testify. And remember that your purpose is to show participants how today's concepts and ideas are related to each other, to the work of previous sessions, and to good management in general. This is where you bring it all together.

Start every manifesto with a personal story.

Today's story should be about what happens when a manager loses sight of priorities or fails to be clear about them with the team.

Key activities in which you must always be clear, transparent and authentic are managing priorities, making decisions, and leading meetings.

You become a manager and suddenly everyone wants a piece of you. They want a report about this and a budget for that. They want paperwork. They want to talk to you about a raise or the fact that the guy in the next cubicle whistles through his teeth for eight hours a day. They want you to come to a million meetings. They want you to come up with a five-year plan. And it's all now, now, now.

It's easy to get caught up in reactive patterns. It can be hard to let go of the need to do, do, do. Putting out fires, leaping into action, solving the problems feels like a lot like "doing," and it's comfortable. But it's not always the best use of your time.

Everything you do is ultimately driven by what your team is accountable for in the organization. You, your team, your manager and the company need to be clear on what your team is accountable for. Only then can you determine your priorities, whether you are looking at long-term goals or trying to figure what to do first on your daily task list.

Your priorities drive who you have relationships with, what you communicate about, and what decisions you need to make. You have to learn to balance long-term priorities with today's emergencies. If you don't have clear priorities, you may turn around one day and find you've been doing things that have hung your team out to dry in the longer term, because you didn't see a change or a problem or an opportunity coming.

The process of making and communicating decisions is one of the biggest sources of the misunderstanding, friction, resentment and rage that people experience at work. If you use an effective process, you have a better chance that the people who are supposed to carry out your decisions will generally understand and support them even if they don't always like them.

Good managers make decisions using clear, transparent and authentic process – they don't disappear secretly into a conference room and emerge with unexpected and disruptive pronouncements.

One important way that you keep short-term and long-term work on track is through meetings. Meetings bring people together to share information or do work. Bad meetings waste people's time, create unnecessary work, and widen the gaps between people. If you run effective meetings, the people in them will get more done – and you'll stay on track with your priorities.

Managing priorities, giving information and direction, making decisions, running meetings are some of the most frequent and most important activities you do as a manager. They are areas where your communication skills are particularly critical. If you communicate badly in these areas, people don't know what their priorities are. They don't understand what you want them to do. They fail to support your decisions. They walk out of meetings feeling ineffective and grumpy. People suffer and work suffers.

These things are important. Learn to do them well.

4.5 Accountabilities and priorities

- A. Team accountabilities
- B. Determining priorities
- C. Managing priorities

4.5 A -- Team accountabilities

In order to set priorities and decide where to focus your attention, you must have a clear idea of what your team is accountable for.

Accountabilities are not goals. Goals are short-term or long-term actions, results or benchmarks you wish to achieve. You set goals, reach them, and set new ones. Accountabilities are fundamental. They are not moving targets. They are the basic work that your team must do well over and over in order to help the company be successful.

Your team has a particular job to do in the company. You should have a simple, clear statement about what that job is, and how success is measured.

If you are the payroll team, you might express your accountabilities as making sure employees and taxes are paid correctly and on time. The project management team I ran was accountable for delivering product on time, to specification and within budget (and that order was not accidental).

You should never express your team accountability in a detailed list of specific tasks, or in a vague "mission statement." Your accountability is simple: what does your team do for the company, and how, ultimately, does everyone in the company know that your team is doing its job successfully?

If your team is meeting its accountabilities, then you are doing your job. Your manager should measure your performance in two ways: is your team meeting its accountabilities, and what does your team have to say about you as a manager?

So it's important that you and your manager agree on what your team is accountable for. One of your homework assignments for next session will be to work out your team's accountabilities with your manager.

Individual exercise: Begin making notes about your team accountabilities in preparation for this conversation with your manager. Make sure to stay simple, high-level and clear.

Keep this brief, since it will be a homework assignment. The point is to get people started. Focus your walk-around comments and assistance on keeping the statements high-level.

4.5 B -- Determining priorities

Effective managers are good at knowing where to focus their attention – at deciding whether something is truly a **priority**.

Here's a model to start thinking about:

Is this issue, project, problem or request a priority for me?

- Does it directly impact something my team is accountable for?
- Is it a team administration or team culture issue?
- Does it personally impact a member of my team?
- Does it directly impact a Group 1 individual's or team's ability to work with me?
- Does it directly support my manager?

Please note that "impact" can be positive or negative – either something (an activity, project, report, meeting etc.) will help your team meet its direct commitments in some way, or the lack of it could prevent your team from fulfilling its commitments.

Your overall priorities are driven by what your team is accountable for and what is needed to keep your team functioning . You should be able to decide whether or not an idea, activity or issue is important based on these two basic principles: is this what we do as a team (accountabilities) and does this help us function better as a team (administration and culture)?

Everything else is not a priority.

Now let's look at the criteria in more detail.

Please note that anyone can use this model to evaluate their own job priorities. You may find it useful to share with your team during your team-building process (which we'll cover in Session 5).

Solicit examples from participants of each criterion as you move through the list.

1. Does this directly impact something my team is accountable for?

Making sure your team can do its job is always your first priority.

When someone makes a request of you, consider whether fulfilling the request

will help your team meet its accountability, or whether it will head off a problem that could derail your team from meeting its accountability. If either answer is yes, put it on your priority list.

Can someone give me an example of this kind of priority for your team?

2. Is it a team administration or team culture issue?

Team administration is everything needed to keep the team functioning smoothly: hiring and firing, training, performance coaching, performance reviews, rewards and recognition, regular team meetings, etc. We'll cover team meetings in Session 5 and the rest of these activities in Session 6.

Team culture is everything that contributes to the basic experience of "being on the team" – the assumptions your team members make about how they will interact with each other and with you, and their expectations of how it will feel on a daily basis to do their jobs. We'll look closely at how you address and manage this in Session 5.

The message today is don't neglect these activities: they are vital to the ongoing effectiveness of your team.

Can someone give me an example of this kind of priority for your team?

3. Is this an activity in support of one or more team members?

If something impacts a team member's ability to do his or her individual job, or if a team member needs special support (preparing for maternity leave, a stress management course, additional training, wants to discuss a raise, has a concern to raise about, etc.), then put it on your priority list.

Can someone give me an example of this kind of priority for your team?

4. Does this activity help a Group 1 individual or team work better with you or your team?

If a team that supplies you with work, or a team to whom you deliver work, needs your help to improve a process or resolve an issue that affects handoffs, then put it on your priority list.

Can someone give me an example of this kind of priority for your team?

5. Does this activity support your manager?

If your manager makes a direct request, of course it ends up somewhere on your list – that's how hierarchy works. If he's a good manager, he'll only request things that should be priorities for you, because they affect his ability to support you and your team.

Not all requests from your manager are urgent. Make sure your manager is clear with you about why a request is urgent.

If he's not a good manager, then find ways to deal with non-priority requests that don't make you crazy, but do not let them derail your real priorities. One strategy is to sit down with him, explain your current priorities and the specific consequences you foresee if each is delayed, and then ask which he would like you to remove from your list in order to accommodate him.

And make sure that you do not ask your team to take on requests without being very clear about their priorities. It's human nature to please people in authority – it's how we survive – and it is your responsibility to let your team know that what pleases you is that they attend to their priorities. Do not ask them to do things unless there is a good reason.

You should regularly make a list of the issue, projects, problems and requests that are currently on your plate, and evaluate whether they meet any of the priority criteria. If they don't, figure out how to get them off the list.

If time permits, have participants begin making their list as described in the exercise below. Do not give too much time – 5 or 10 minutes will do. The goal is simply to make the list, not to begin evaluating it. There's little point in evaluating the list until the participants have clearly defined their team's accountabilities (#1 priority).

Individual exercise: Begin making notes on issues, projects or problems that are currently on your plate. Do they meet any of these five criteria?

4.5 C -- Managing ongoing priorities

Everyone has too much to do. How do we manage competing priorities?

Management consultant and writer Stephen Covey, in his book First Things First, presents a model of time and priority management that is considered a standard today. I've adapted the wording of the quadrant titles slightly.

See the model on the following page.

Refer participants to the handout in their notebooks.

Managing Priorities

(model developed by Stephen Covey)

<p style="text-align: center;">Quadrant 1 Important and Urgent</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Crises, problems, deadlines, daily "fires."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-----</p> <p>These things have to be handled – but if they are all you do, they are all you will ever do.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Learn to spend time in Quadrant 2.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Quadrant 2 Important and Not Urgent</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Preparation, prevention, relationship building, team-building, process negotiation, etc.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-----</p> <p>The more of this you do – the more effective you become at the human side of management – the less time you will spend in "crisis" mode.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Learn to live here.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Quadrant 3 Not Important but Urgent</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Many phone calls, reports, emails, meetings and requests.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-----</p> <p>People will try to persuade you that these are Quadrant 1 activities.</p> <p>Use <u>your</u> criteria to determine your priorities, not theirs.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Learn to negotiate, delegate, streamline the request or say no.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Quadrant 4 Not Important and Not Urgent</p> <p style="text-align: center;">If it feels like busywork, it probably is.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-----</p> <p style="text-align: center;">So don't do it.</p> <p>And if it's busywork for someone else, don't make them do it either.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Learn to say no.</p>

Most managers spend their time in Quadrant 1 and Quadrant 3 – letting firefighting and other people's demands determine their priorities. But if you

define your priorities according to the list we just discussed, you'll find that much of it belongs in Quadrant 2.

The more time you spend in Quadrant 2, the less time you will need in Quadrant 1. You means you need to develop a sense of long-term versus short-term thinking.

Treat Quadrant 2 items as a snapshot of a beautiful future – a time when your team will have fewer crises, or at least the crises will be more easily resolved, because you'll have better systems, processes, relationships, etc. They may be mid- to long-term projects, but they are critical to your future success. Don't forget them.

Most of the concepts, skills and tools of the Humans At Worksm Program are designed to help you operate efficiently and effectively in Quadrant 2, so that you can avoid or expedite the crises in Quadrant 1.

For example: maintaining effective key working relationships means that you'll have a better chance of solving problems when they come up, or even working together to see them coming and head them off.

Having good decision-making and meeting skills makes it easier to solve problems when many people are involved.

And good communication skills help you explain to people why you don't consider their Quadrant 3 requests true priorities in a way that minimizes negative assumptions and helps narrow the interpersonal gap.

Don't let your Quadrant 2 items to turn into Quadrant 1 crises for lack of attention. Treat them like projects. Plan out the action steps necessary to accomplish them, and set deadlines for those action steps so that the small steps become Quadrant 1 "deadline-driven" items over time. That way, you can get them done without the stress associated with "crisis."

Quadrant 1 and 3 is where many managers spend their time. But being good in Quadrant 2 is what makes managers effective over the long term.

Finally, whenever you have to decide how to tackle your priorities, remember the Pie Model. How do you eat a pie? One piece at a time. None of us can put a

whole pie in our mouth and eat it at once.

You have to eat your pie one slice at a time. So make sure you're eating the right slice first. When you start feeling overwhelmed by all that must be done, think of everything you have to do as a pie, and break it down into manageable slices.

If time permits, and if you had participants do the previous exercise, also have them do the one below. You can also combine the two. Do not give too much time – 5 or 10 minutes will do. The goal is simply for participants to begin understanding in which quadrant(s) they are spending their time.

If there is not time to do this in class, add it to homework. Stress that participants don't need to make an exhaustive list – the goal is to practice the concepts.

Individual exercise: Use the list you made for the previous exercise. Sort your priorities into quadrants. Where are you spending your time?

4.6 Making effective decisions

- A. What is an effective decision?
- B. Directive, consultative and collaborative decisions
- C. Consensus and the 70% consensus rule
- D. Making the decision
- E. Communicating the decision

4.6 A -- What is an effective decision?

Group discussion: Share a story about a decision-making situation that affected you. What made it a good or bad experience for you?

Be ready to lead with an example of your own.

An effective decision-making process recognizes that that decisions affect people at both the business level and the human level.

The time that many decisions go off the rails is when the people who are affected by a decision are not involved in the decision. We all like to feel that we have some control over our own destiny – that we've been heard and understood, even if we don't get what we want. When executives or managers are too busy or too frightened to seek input and to acknowledge different perspectives, their decisions often leave people feeling powerless and resentful. "If only they'd checked, they would know this was a stupid thing to do."

If you shut people out of the process, you run the risk of a) making a bad decision because you don't have important information from people involved in the work, and b) alienating the very people you rely on to execute the decision.

Your manager, your co-workers, and your own experience will teach you how to make good *business* decisions. Today we're going to focus on the skill every manager needs – a solid grasp of effective decision-making process at the human level.

4.6 B -- Directive, consultative and collaborative decisions

We're going to look at 3 types of decisions: directive, consultative and collaborative. They are named according to how much input you solicit from other people to make the decision.

You make directive decisions by yourself with no additional information apart from what you know, think and feel. Many new managers think that making directive decisions shows that they are competent, in charge, decisive, etc. And sometimes it does: some decisions are strictly a manager's responsibility, and if you don't step up to them, you lose credibility and trust. But being directive about every decision will make the people around you resentful and uncooperative.

You make consultative decisions by yourself after seeking input from other people. You consider their input, but you decide.

You make collaborative decisions with other people after seeking input. There are a variety of ways that a group makes a decision, but the bottom line is that it's not just yours – the group owns the decision.

Group discussion:

- What are the benefits and drawbacks of directive decisions? When are directive decisions appropriate?
- What are the benefits and drawbacks of consultative decisions? When are consultative decisions appropriate?
- What are the benefits and drawbacks of collaborative decisions? When are collaborative decisions appropriate?

Make sure that the following elements emerge during the discussion:

- People affected by a decision must have some level of involvement, or it's inevitable they will feel disenfranchised. Sometimes you can't avoid this, but you must recognize it and deal with it.
- Input takes time.
- The more you push decision-making out to people, the less control you have. What if they make a decision you don't like?

4.6 C -- Consensus and the 70% consensus rule

Group discussion: What does the term **consensus** mean to you?

Keep this brief – the point is to open the door for the definition below, in order to lead participants to a different perspective on consensus.

Often, so-called "consensus" decisions get hung up in the details – someone says, "Well, I don't agree the logo should be red, so we don't have consensus," or, "I don't think Shelly should be in charge of that part of the work, so we don't have consensus." They withhold their "consensus" and the decision process is stalled or completely derailed.

Consensus is not "majority rules" or "everyone agrees 100%." There's a better, more effective definition of consensus: **everyone affected by the decision has had input into it; understands the reasons for the decision; and agrees to support it.**

This definition allows people to agree in principle while differing on details. If the details don't violate the overall principle, then why should they hold up the overall decision?

I find the **70% consensus rule** works well in most business situations: if you can agree with the decision at least 70%, then you agree to support the decision 100%. You give your consent.

People often use the term "consensus decision" interchangeably with "collaborative decision," but this isn't always accurate. It's possible to have consensus with other kinds of decisions as well, and there are collaborative decision systems that don't always achieve consensus (representative democracy is one).

Group discussion: How do you gain consensus from people who have not been involved in a decision?

The best route to building consensus for a decision is to explain the decision process clearly. What was the context of the decision? What was the urgency or business need? What input did you seek, and why (or why not)? What will the impact of the decision be? Then you need to ask for their support even if they don't agree. And then you need to be prepared to listen to some people being unhappy for a while: but if they genuinely understand the reasons for the decision, if their consent has been solicited, and if you acknowledge their unhappiness with the process, this period will often be shorter.

Consensus is always the goal of an effective manager, regardless of the decision-making model you use. You can't always achieve consensus – the consent of others to support the decision – but if you never achieve it, you're not effective in your role.

4.6 D -- Making the decision

Here's a process for making effective decisions.

1. Define the decision
2. Define the stakeholders
3. Define who should make the decision and what approach you will use
4. Communicate with stakeholders and get input
5. Make the decision
6. Communicate the decision.

1. Start by defining the decision
 - Be clear and specific. The more specific you can be, the better the decision.
 - Sometimes this process will be quick and informal – a 5-minute conversation – and sometimes it will be extensive. The process is scalable: the important thing is to be clear, transparent, and authentic, and to communicate.
2. Define the stakeholders – who is affected by the decision?
3. Define who should make the decision and how. Is this a directive, consultative or collaborative decision? Who is making the decision? Both elements need to be crystal clear to everyone. It upsets people to believe that they will (or should) have input into certain decisions, and then find that has been "taken away" from them. You want to set everyone's expectations for this clearly.
4. Communicate with stakeholders that a decision is on the table, including:
 - The decision to be made
 - Any background, context or criteria that people need to understand the issue
 - Who will be affected by the decision
 - Who is making the decision
 - What process you will use.
 - A deadline (firm or approximate) for the decision
 - When and how you will communicate the decision
 - What kind of input you need.

Communicate face-to-face for important or emotionally-weighted decisions that affect only a few people, or for major decisions that affect a large group. For example, if you are a CEO considering layoffs, say so at an all-hands meeting rather than through a memo.

Communicate through email for decisions that carry less emotional weight (e.g., a decision to go with a new paycheck vendor or whether to reschedule a team meeting).

You'll use all your communication skills in this part of the decision-making

process. Make sure you identify assumptions, filters (such as fear, personal agendas, misinformation, etc. that may affect someone's input). Listen carefully. Follow up as necessary to make sure you've identified all the issues, concerns, suggestions and objections you can.

Don't avoid contrary opinions or input from dissatisfied people. Don't avoid bad news. Remember – it's better to deal with what's real at the beginning of the process, rather than hoping that ignoring it will make it disappear. That hardly ever works.

Take as much time as you can. This part of the process can be long and laborious, but when you are making an important consultative or collaborative decision, taking this time can make all the difference in how the quality of the final decision and how well people support it.

5. Make the decision.

Sometimes decisions are urgent, or very simple – make them quickly and move on. But complex decisions and decisions that greatly impact people deserve as much time as you can give them. Just make sure you are using that time actively – to gather input, weigh options, etc, -- rather than stalling. When people perceive that you are dragging out decisions, you lose credibility.

Make sure your decision is consistent with your stated values as a manager. If it's not, be prepared to explain why. This is what your values are for – to help you make decisions.

Make sure your decision is consistent with your team's priorities. If it's not, be prepared to explain why. This is what your priorities are for – to help you make decisions.

And finally – remember that even with the best intention and the best process, you will make mistakes. You won't have all the information. You'll upset someone. You'll make a bad call and have to apologize for it and fix it.

Don't avoid decisions because you're afraid of mistakes. When you make mistakes, learn from them. It's only through practice that you learn how to consistently use good process and make good decisions. Trust your sense of

what's important (your values and priorities), and trust your team and your key relationships to give you input and help you find solutions.

6. Communicate the results.

- Communicate when and how (face-to-face, email, memo, phone) you promised in step 4.
- State the decision immediately, then explain it.
- Make your criteria and reasoning transparent.
- Thank everyone for their input. Be able to explain how you considered it, even if the decision turned out another way.
- Ask everyone to support the decision.
- Be clear about the next steps and your expectations for how the decision will be carried out.
- Solicit feedback, questions or clarifications.

Much of a manager's day is spent making informal decisions. And you won't always stop and go through your 6-step process. But do get into the habit of asking yourself these basic questions. And don't be afraid to ask them out loud – that's part of making your thinking transparent.

- Have we described the decision correctly?
- When do we have to make this decision?
- Do we have all the information we need?
- Who needs to be involved in the decision?

One of the added benefits of this process is that it does make your decision-making transparent, and people learn from that. Your team will make their own decisions better because they'll learn your approach, your values, how to solicit input, etc. You'll be able to delegate more, and your team will work more efficiently.

Group exercise: What went wrong with this decision?

Have decision scenarios prepared to hand out to the group. You can invent scenarios or use famous business cases.

The scenarios should clearly describe a decision that arose, the sequence of events in making and communicating the decision, and the unfortunate results. Don't get too complicated – the point is for participants to zero in on some of the basic steps that people so often neglect.

Ask the group to discuss what went wrong in the process, and how it might have been avoided.

Try to review 2 – 3 scenarios if possible, but make sure you leave time for the table exercise as well. And don't steal too much time from the next section on effective meetings, that's important too.

Table exercise: Map out a decision approach

Instructions: Work in your table groups to plan an approach to these decisions. Please describe how you would go about making and communicating the decision.

Have scenarios prepared to hand out to the table groups.

The scenarios should present a simple, typical situation in which a manager must make a decision. These can vary from a casual conversation about a non-emotional topic to a more emotionally-freighted situation (such as a department restructuring or a lower-than-expected raise).

Please do not include a layoff/firing scenario or a large-scale change/grief scenario such as a plant closing. Those require conflict management and change management skills, which we'll cover in later sessions.

Provide a clear description of the decision to be made and reassure participants that they do not need to spend time defining the decision. It's more important right now for them to practice the overall decision process.

Try to allow time for at least 2 scenarios.

4.7 Running effective meetings

- A. Characteristics of effective meetings
- B. When to have a meeting
- C. How to prepare for a meeting
- D. Communicate about the meeting
- E. The Four Keys to effective meetings: preparation, opening, closing, follow-up
- F. General notes about meetings

4.7 A -- Characteristics of effective meetings

Group discussion: What would be the perfect meeting? How would it be run? How would people behave?

Select a participant to facilitate this discussion. Coach them as they work. The goal is to make sure that responses are specific, and to record key concepts on the flip chart.

Keep it brief – you're looking for an overview, not an exhaustive list.

A meeting is a group of people communicating to accomplish a desired result. Running an effective meeting is all about structuring the communication in ways that help the group to be clear, transparent, authentic and consistently focused on the goal of the meeting.

4.7 B -- When to have a meeting

Have a meeting to:

- Share information that is critical to business; complex; likely to elicit emotional response; or open to interpretation
- Solve a problem (brainstorming, etc.)
- Plan a project
- Solicit input and/or make a decision that affects the group
- Share concerns
- As a part of ongoing team-building and team administration

Do not have a meeting if:

- The information you have is non-critical and can be communicated through email.
- You are not prepared or do not have all the data. Do your homework.
- There are private issues to deal with that have not yet been worked on. Group meetings are not a substitute for one-to-one communication.
- There is conflict in your group that leads to ongoing bad meeting behavior. You have to address the behavior outside of a meeting first. Don't let it derail your meeting.

4.7 C -- How to prepare for a meeting

1. Define your goals for the meeting
2. Draft a clear and specific agenda
3. Define who should participate

Define your goals for the meeting. What results do you want? Be specific: "The objective of this meeting is to identify the top 3 marketing messages for this product" (as opposed to "talk about marketing the product"). Or a goal can be as simple as, "I have some news about new product directions that I want to share with you."

Define the work that has to happen in the meeting –brainstorming, making decisions, interpreting results, sharing information, etc. This is your agenda.

Determine the participants. Based on this agenda – the goals and work of the meeting – who needs to be in the room? What are their roles? Does anyone need to prepare something specifically for the meeting?

When in doubt, call or email someone, explain the meeting, and ask if they need to be there or let them know they need to prepare in some specific way.

If key people cannot be there, or do not have time to prepare critical information, **do not have the meeting.**

4.7 D -- Communicate about the meeting

The first rule of a successful meeting is to send out the agenda in advance so that people have time to prepare.

Your agenda is more than a list of meeting activities. Never, never hide the real purposes of a meeting. Never surprise people who are attending with unexpected agendas. If you believe someone at the meeting will have particular concerns about an issue, talk with them privately ahead of time. If you can, work it out before the meeting. If not, make clear in the general communication that there is disagreement over some issues, and that this disagreement will be part of the discussion.

This is what it means to be clear, transparent and authentic. It means to describe reality (as Susan Scott says in **Fierce Conversations**), not step around it or cover it up.

Use email for general communication about meetings – it allows everyone to see who else is attending, and gives them time to absorb all the information they need. Be sure to include:

- Details: time, place, duration
- Any context or background that will help people understand why the meeting is being called, including constraints
- The goals of the meeting
- The agenda. Be specific and as detailed as necessary
- Any prep work that needs to be done, who is accountable, and the deadline for this work (if, for example, someone has to prepare numbers to distribute before the meeting takes place).

4.7 E -- The four keys to effective meetings

The four things you must do properly for every meeting are prepare, open, close and follow up.

If you do these things well, people will stick with it even if the actual work process in the meeting gets messy. They will know what's expected, have a sense of

how things are going wrong, and want to work with you to get things back on track.

Most people do not sabotage meetings because they are assholes trying to ruin your day. They do it because they misunderstand the goals of the meeting, or their role in it; because they disagree with some aspect of the work but have been given no chance to say so; or because they have fallen into the interpersonal gap (assumptions, etc.).

You have the communication skill to deal with the interpersonal gap. The proper structure of the meeting – the four keys – will address the rest.

Preparation includes the work already described to define the meeting's goals, attendees, scope and prep work.

You also need to prepare your communication.

- Treat this as any other business interaction – know your headlines, key points, etc.
- If you believe there will be disagreement or conflict, organize your thoughts about the issues.
- A short time before the meeting, review your agenda, prep work, talking points, etc.
- Have any handouts prepared.
- Prepare an agenda on a flip chart.

Open the meeting on time.

- Thank everyone for attending (enter the interaction at the human level).
- Briefly summarize the issue, context, etc.
- State the goals of the meeting.
- Review the agenda so everyone is clear on what will happen in the meeting. Ask for any changes or additions.
- Tell people what their role is (to listen and ask questions, to provide input or feedback, to make the decision, etc.)
- If a key player isn't there, start without them if possible. If not, wait five minutes and then let everyone go.

Close the meeting on time.

- Summarize the results of the meeting.

- State what you will do with the results
- State specific action items/deadlines, who is responsible, and make sure everyone agrees.
- Ask if there is any feedback on the meeting process (optional)
- Thank everyone for their time and work (leave the interaction of the human level). It's **very important** to thank people for working with you.

Follow up on time.

- Document important elements of the meeting and email/post them.
- Continue to communicate about action item status.
- Meet the expectations that were set in the meeting.

4.7 F -- Meeting tips

For an important or lengthy meeting, or meetings held regularly (team meetings, etc.), facilitate a set of meeting ground rules. These rules govern the behavior of everyone during that particular meeting.

Bring a list of suggested ground rules, and then ask participants to add or change any, and agree to abide by the rules.

Suggested ground rules could include:

- Meeting starts and ends on time
- Everyone participates. No checking out if you get grumpy
- Speak openly, honestly and with respect
- No interruptions
- No side conversations
- No phone calls or email in the room

Always record meeting notes on a flip chart so everyone can see (and clarify or re-phrase, if necessary). Transcribe the important information – ideas, concerns, decisions, next steps – as part of your documentation.

Use your effective communication skills when you facilitate. Ask for clarification. Question assumptions. Ask people to make their thinking transparent (a useful phrase is "Can you help us understand why you think that way?").

Check **The New Compleat Facilitator** for many helpful tips on facilitating meetings.

4.8 Brainstorming and group decision-making

Group discussion: What is brainstorming? How do you do it effectively?

Brainstorming is used to generate ideas for discussion, exploration, and prioritization – all with the goal of some kind of future action. The usual process is to generate ideas and then narrow them down to a "short list" for further study, or to make a decision from the available ideas.

Key rules of brainstorming:

- Do not criticize, judge, or debate ideas during the brainstorming process. **This is the most important rule.** Criticizing ideas during brainstorming widens the interpersonal gap, makes people disengage, shuts down the creative process and limits the flow of ideas.
- Go as far as you can. In brainstorming, no idea is too wacky.
- The goal is quantity. The more ideas on the board, the more chance you have of finding a good one.
- It's fine to modify or expand other people's ideas.

How to brainstorm:

- Define the scope of brainstorming clearly and specifically. It may be a narrow subject or a wide one – just make sure everyone is starting from the same place.
- Write the topic on a flip chart or white board so everyone can see it.
- Record all ideas on a flip chart.
- Set a time limit (generally 10 -20 minutes for narrow topics, up to 30 minutes for a wider scope).
- Encourage everyone to participate. Don't let a few people dominate the process.
- When time is up, consolidate any ideas that are similar, and clarify ideas if necessary until everyone has a shared understanding.

There are many tools and techniques a group can use to make a decision.

Today we're covering two basic techniques: multi-voting and the grid tool. They are good for groups of any size.

Multi-voting is a group decision-making tool useful for:

- Reducing long lists of ideas to a workable size
- Quick prioritization of shorter lists.

There are a couple of different ways of multi-voting: with experience, you'll find what works best for you in different situations.

Have sample brainstorming lists prepared, and demonstrate each system while you explain it.

Multi-voting to reduce a list

This style of multi-voting allows people to weed down the ideas without having to focus too narrowly – you can still come out with a wide range of ideas.

However, with a long list, multi-voting may not result in a final decision – it's too easy to get stuck in a tie. You may need to repeat the process with a shorter list, use a different form of multi-voting, or use a grid tool instead.

- Each member of the group gets a number of colored sticky dots equal to approximately one-third of the total list (e.g. 6 votes for a list of 20, 10 votes for a list of 30) up to a limit of 15 votes. They are allowed to paste a single dot by an item.
- If you don't want to use sticky dots, then have each member write down the items they are voting for. Collect each person's votes verbally or on paper, and tally.
- Eliminate items with few or no votes.
- If the list is very long, you may have to do another round of voting to get it down to 7 or fewer items.

- Once the list is a workable size, discuss and use other techniques for your final decision-making.

Multi-voting to make a final decision

Use this on a shorter list. It allows people to focus more narrowly and put more voting weight behind certain ideas.

- Have the group decide if you wish to use specific criteria to evaluate the ideas, or simply "go with your gut." If you are using criteria, make sure they are simple, specific, and that everyone understands them.
- Each member of the group identifies their top 3 choices on the list (based on the criteria, or on personal preference). Their top choice gets 3 votes, their second choice gets 2 votes, and their third choice gets 1 vote.
- Collect each person's choices and tally the results.
- Make sure not to get confused! Their first choice gets 3 votes, not 1.
- If a clear winner does not emerge, eliminate ideas with low vote counts and repeat the process.

Grid tool to make a final decision

Use this on a shorter list. This tool uses forced comparison to evaluate every item against every other item, and is often more reassuring to a group of analytical-minded folks than the more freewheeling multi-vote tool.

- Have a prepared grid to hand out, or ask the group to draw their own (see example below).
- Put the final items into a numbered list.
- Each person looks at each pair of items and chooses one, drawing a circle around it.

- When all comparisons are complete, each member adds up the total number of votes they have given to each item.
- Go around the room and collect each person's total for each item. Add those totals to get a combined final total for each item on the list.

Be careful when tallying individual votes – make sure each person counts across the grid as well as down (see example).

The grid is more complex to use than multi-voting, but also forces the group to take each idea into account against all other ideas, and thus minimizes someone using multi-votes to drive their own agenda.

Here's what a sample grid might look like after someone fills it in:

Individual Grid Tool: Possible uses for team entertainment budget

1. go bowling – 3 votes
2. picnic – 2 votes
3. paintball – 1 votes
4. fancy dinner – 4 votes
5. sports event tickets – 0 votes

1 2			
1 3	2 3		
1 4	2 4	3 4	
1 5	2 5	3 5	4 5

It's clear this person would push for a fancy dinner – but the final vote count will depend on how many times every person votes for dinner, not just this person.

Now you combine the individual totals into a group result. Let's say there are four people voting. Their final lists look like this:

Person A (above):

1. go bowling – 3 votes

2. picnic – 2 votes
3. paintball – 1 votes
4. fancy dinner – 4 votes
5. sports event tickets – 0 votes

Person B

1. go bowling – 2 votes
2. picnic – 0 votes
3. paintball – 3 votes
4. fancy dinner – 1 votes
5. sports event tickets – 4 votes

Person C

1. go bowling – 0 votes
2. picnic – 4 votes
3. paintball – 1 votes
4. fancy dinner – 3 votes
5. sports event tickets – 1 votes

Person D

1. go bowling – 2 votes
2. picnic – 2 votes
3. paintball – 2 votes
4. fancy dinner – 3 votes
5. sports event tickets – 1 votes

Add up their votes to find the group tally:

1. go bowling – 7 votes (3+2+0+2)
2. picnic – 8 votes (2+0+4+2)
3. paintball – 7 votes (1+3+1+2)
4. fancy dinner – 11 votes (4+1+3+3)
5. sports event tickets – 6 votes (0+4+1+1)

So the final result is that the team will go out for a fancy dinner. This is the choice that most people really liked, and no one hated (there were no "zero" votes). This represents a snapshot of the "group mind" built on taking individual preferences into account.

The result of a group decision is not carved in stone. Any group decision-making tool is just a tool! The point is to get a group focused on a choice – but the tool isn't sacred.

When you've reached a final decision, ask the group to do a gut check. If the group is not comfortable with the final result, keep discussing the issues and, if necessary, find another way to make the decision.

Group exercise: practice leading brainstorming and group decision-making.

Have simple, specific brainstorming topics prepared in advance (e.g. screening criteria for hiring a marketing consultant, how executives in your industry should be measured for bonuses, ideas for a team-building activity, top three things the airline industry can do to improve customer satisfaction, etc.)

Select a participant to facilitate a brief (5-7 minute) brainstorming session.
Select a different participant to facilitate the group decision-making process.

Instruct both participants to open and close their portion of the meeting properly.
Coach participants as necessary. Debrief afterwards.

Do as many rounds as time permits, giving as many participants as possible a chance to practice.

4.9 Summary remarks, final questions and comments

Today we've looked at critical activities that managers do every day: setting priorities, giving information or direction, making decisions, and working in meetings. Key points include:

- Your overall priorities are driven by what your team is accountable for and what is needed to keep your team functioning . You should be able to decide whether or not an idea, activity or issue is important based on these two basic principles: is this what we do as a team (accountabilities) and does this help us function better as a team (administration and culture)?

- Often your priorities list will be long, and will include today's emergencies as well as things that are important six months out. One way to balance those priorities is to use Covey's quadrant tool, and make sure you are spending as much time as possible in Quadrant 2.
- Remember that assessing priorities is a great opportunity for you to make your thinking transparent to your team – everyone can operate from the same base of knowledge about the priorities.
- It's also important that your decision-making process is clear and transparent. Whether you are making a directive, consultative or collaborative decision, you need to make sure that you communicate fully with all stakeholders at each step.
- Consensus is not a dirty word. It simply means that everyone believes their input has been heard; they understand the reasons for a decision; and they agree to support the decision (even if they don't agree with every aspect of the decision itself).
- Make decisions quickly if you must, but take as much time as you can, especially if you need more input and information.
- Don't be a gunslinger! As much as possible, involve the people who will be affected by the decision. You can't do this with everything – some things are strictly a manager's responsibility. But if you try to make every decision in a directive manner, it will not make you a hero – it will backfire on you.
- There's no easier way to make people happy than to run good meetings – with clear goals and agenda, the right people in the room, and good communication before and after.
- Always follow up on meetings by communicating the results, monitoring action steps, and delivering on your commitments.
- Brainstorming is an important part of many meetings. Lead it well by establishing clear topics and goals, ensuring that no judgment or debate obstructs the free flow of ideas, and making sure that everyone participates.

- You can use a variety of techniques for group decision-making. Two basic approaches are multi-voting and the grid tool. Remember, the goal of group decision-making tools is to level the playing field, so that everyone's perspective and concerns are reflected in the process and the most verbal or aggressive people don't necessarily drive the decision.
- Decisions made using these tools are not written in stone! If the group seems uncomfortable with the final decision, don't ignore those signals – remember, you get nowhere by ignoring reality. It's better to engage the group in working through the issues rather than disconnect people from the process by railroading a decision.
- Remember to be clear, transparent and authentic in your communication – in setting priorities, in making decisions, and in doing work in meetings. Continue to move between the human and business levels, monitor the interpersonal gap and do your best to head off miscommunication when you see it happening. Remember to listen.

Questions or comments about what we've covered today?

4.10 Wrap up

- A. Preview Session 5
- B. Review homework assignments for Session 5

4.10 A -- Preview Session 5

In our next session, we will examine what it takes to build a great team – the fundamentals of team organization and team culture that bring a diverse group of people together into a highly effective team. These include roles and responsibilities, expectations for all team members, team ground rules, information flow, team meetings, and handling concerns and mistakes.

4.10 B -- Homework for Session 5

Refer participants to homework sheet in their notebook. See Tools and Materials section for homework sheet and handouts.

1. Spend time thinking about your values as a manager. Make a list of these values. Please include clarity, transparency and authenticity on the initial list.

Your management values, along with your accountabilities, will drive your priorities. You need to be transparent and clear about your primary values – that's why the list needs to be short. Of course you may have more values that sometimes come into play: we all do. But you must be clear on the values that drive you most as a manager before you can start making consistent and transparent decisions.

Clarity, transparency and authenticity are core values of the Humans At Worksm program, and I believe they should be driving values of all effective managers. But this is your values list, and your management experience. If you determine that none of the program values match your values as a manager, please be honest about that.

If there are more than 5 or 6 values on your list, please use the grid tool to identify the top 5 (preferable) or 6 values.

Once you have determined 5 or 6 driving values, please write a description of what each value means to you, with examples of personal experience. Why are these values important to you as a manager?

Please email your document to the program list before the next session. Please read everyone else's list and respond as the spirit moves you, so that we create an ongoing discussion about values. The point of this is to practice being transparent about your values, and also to help each other be clear.

You are free to re-work your values based on the email discussion.

You'll be sharing your values with your team at some point after Session 5. Please hold off on sharing them until then, because there are still some steps for us to go through.

2. Develop a draft of your team accountabilities. If you wish, work with other program participants to help each other brainstorm about what your accountabilities are, and how to state them simply, clearly and measurably.

Meet with your manager to review, discuss and agree on a draft of your team accountabilities. Do this with care and attention: these are the things your manager should be measuring you on.

You'll be sharing these accountabilities with your team at some point after Session 5. Please hold off on sharing them with your team until then.

3. Begin implementing effective meeting techniques in meetings you lead, including an agenda published prior to the meeting and timely follow-up. Let your team know what you are doing, and that you will be using these techniques in your meetings from now on.

If you are not currently leading any meetings, ask someone who leads meetings that you attend if you can work with them to implement this process for their meetings (recording notes on flip chart, facilitating ground rules for longer or regular meetings, etc.)

4. Readings:
 - **The New Compleat Facilitator**, pp 34-65 (Chapters 4 and 5). Please note the great definition of consensus on p. 58.
 - **Becoming a Manager**, pp. 87-145 and pp. 283-302
 - **Difficult Conversations**, pp.58-82.
5. Observe how people at all levels of your company make decisions. Notice their process and their communication behavior. Record in your journal more examples of effective and non-effective decision-making, and what you can learn from these examples that will make you a more effective manager.