Individual members act on their own idiosyncratic perspectives. Soon, the left hand doesn’t know what the right hand is doing.

Some people hold onto rigid, fixed positions and stalemate the discussion.

Just as time runs out, someone makes a new suggestion. This becomes “the decision.”

Someone’s name gets vaguely attached to a poorly defined task (as in, “Bill, why don’t you check into that?”). Later, that person gets blamed for poor follow-through.

When a quick decision has to be made or an opportunity will be lost, conservative members exercise a pocket veto by stalling the discussion. Thus, “no decision” becomes a decision not to act.

The person who has the most at stake makes an independent decision; later, people resent him/her for taking actions that did not meet other people’s needs.

The person-in-charge says, “Is everyone okay with this idea?” After a few seconds of silence, the person-in-charge moves to the next topic, believing that every member’s silence meant “yes,” rather than “no” or “I’m still thinking.”

After the meeting ends without agreement, a few people meet behind closed doors and make the real decisions.

Certain people always get their way.

The meeting goes overtime; the discussion drags on and on . . .

Those who whine or raise their voice get what they want.

Someone says, “Let’s put this on next month’s agenda and pick up where we left off.” But at the next meeting, the item is superseded by urgent new business.

‘DECISION-MAKING’ WITHOUT A DECISION RULE
**Decision Rules**

A decision rule is a mechanism that answers the question, “How do we know when we’ve made a decision?” Each of the six rules shown below performs this basic function. Which decision rule you choose depends on the needs of the decision for complete agreement and of the level of agreement among the participants.

*Kaner, 1996*
### Implications of Using Each Decision Rule in Different Situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule</th>
<th>High-Stakes Decisions</th>
<th>Low-Stakes Decisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unanimous agreement</strong></td>
<td>Very important, but time-consuming. It may mean allowing reformulation of options.</td>
<td>Good result but may not be necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Majority vote</strong></td>
<td>Creates a choice between elements. May be necessary or desirable in order to move forward. Consider effective ways to ensure all opinions are heard. May not have full support for the decision.</td>
<td>Good result. May facilitate the process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Person in charge decides after discussion</strong></td>
<td>Can be justified depending on the structure of authority and responsibility. It may be useful to include “devil’s advocate thinking.”</td>
<td>Good result - depends on structure of authority and responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Person in charge decides without discussion or delegation</strong></td>
<td>Not advisable; but may be necessary in a crisis.</td>
<td>May be ok if very low stakes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flip a coin</strong></td>
<td>Not advisable.</td>
<td>May be ok if very low stakes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gradients of Agreement Scale

The Gradients of Agreement scale helps give a picture of how much support there is on a particular issue. The scale also makes it easier for participants to be honest. Using it, members can register less-than-whole-hearted support without fearing that their statement will be interpreted as a veto.

Kaner, 1996