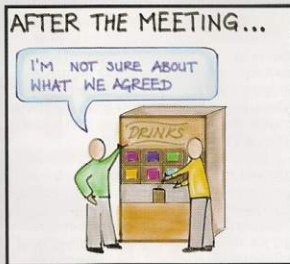


Many decisions are made in meetings, but too often by the time people get back to their desks or to the coffee machine they are starting to unpick them. **Katherine Woods** explores what goes on when people have to reach a decision and shares her top three strategies on how to make choices that stick



SHARING CONTEXT

Good decisions are informed decisions. Time invested at the beginning of a meeting to share information and data usually saves time later.

Answer these five questions first:

1. What is the purpose of this work?
2. How does this fit into the broader picture?
3. Who are we working with?
4. What is my role?
5. How are we going to do it?

Be clear from the outset about any 'givens'.

This will help the group to understand what needs to be decided. Try to see different perspectives as an opportunity to reach better

quality decisions. Take time to explore people's actual experiences of similar situations and to understand the values that are guiding them to reach their decisions.

Be clear about how decisions will be made.

There are a number of different options – the key being to choose the right one(s) for your meeting. Here are three approaches:

- **Hierarchical** – the most senior person or the person with the most expertise decides
- **Consensus** – decisions can be reached through discussion or negotiation
- **Rule based** – weighted 'dot' voting, criteria based decisions evaluating several options on set criteria, and a simple show of hands.

An alternative approach is iterative decision making. This means a group can start to form a view and then revisit the decision. For example you may work in small groups and then feed back to the main group or you may be given time to reflect overnight.

Don't gloss over disagreements. Many decisions get unpicked because there are issues that did not get discussed in the meeting. There can be a tendency to use time and process to push decisions through in meetings, rather than explore different views. Don't ignore conflicts and differences of opinion in your meeting, but make sure they get explored. This way they don't come back to bite you.