Participative Leadership, Delegation, and Empowerment

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter you should be able to:

- Understand what research methods have been used to study participative leadership.
- Understand the major findings in research on consequences of participative leadership.
- Understand the situations in which participative leadership is most likely to be effective.
- Understand the major findings in research on the normative theory of leader decision making.
- Understand procedures for the effective use of consultation.
- Understand the potential benefits and risks of delegation.
- Understand when and how to use delegation effectively.
- Understand why follower perceptions of empowerment are important.

Making decisions is one of the most important functions performed by leaders. Many of the activities of managers and administrators involve making and implementing decisions, including planning the work, solving technical problems, selecting subordinates, determining pay increases, making job assignments, and so forth. Participative leadership involves efforts by a leader to encourage and facilitate participation by others in making important decisions. Democratic societies uphold the right of people to influence decisions that will affect them in important ways. Involving others in making decisions is often a necessary part of the political process for getting decisions
approved and implemented in organizations. Delegation is a distinct type of power-sharing process that occurs when subordinates are given responsibility and authority for making some types of decisions formerly made by the manager. Empowerment involves the perception by members of an organization that they have the opportunity to determine their work roles, accomplish meaningful work, and influence important events.

Participative leadership, delegation, and empowerment are subjects that bridge the power and behavior approaches to leadership. The research on participative leadership and delegation emphasizes the leader’s perspective on power sharing. The research on empowerment is a more limited and recent addition to the leadership literature, and it emphasizes the follower’s perspective. Taken together, the two different perspectives provide a better understanding of the reasons why effective leadership is so important in organizations. This chapter describes the theory and research findings on this important aspect of leadership.

Nature of Participative Leadership

Participative leadership involves the use of various decision procedures that allow other people some influence over the leader’s decisions. Other terms commonly used to refer to aspects of participative leadership include consultation, joint decision making, power sharing, decentralization, empowerment, and democratic management. Participative leadership can be regarded as a distinct type of behavior, although it may be used in conjunction with specific task and relations behaviors (Likert, 1967; Yukl, 1971). For example, consulting with employees about the design of a flextime system may simultaneously involve planning better work schedules and showing concern for employee needs.

Varieties of Participation

Participative leadership can take many forms. A variety of different decision procedures may be used to involve other people in making decisions. A number of leadership theorists have proposed different taxonomies of decision procedures, but there is no agreement about the optimal number of decision procedures or the best way to define them (Heller & Yukl, 1969; Strauss, 1977; Tannenbaum & Schmidt, 1958; Vroom & Yetton, 1973). However, most theorists would acknowledge the following four decision procedures as distinct and meaningful:

1. **Autocratic Decision**: The manager makes a decision alone without asking for the opinions or suggestions of other people, and these people have no direct influence on the decision; there is no participation.
2. **Consultation**: The manager asks other people for their opinions and ideas, then makes the decision alone after seriously considering their suggestions and concerns.
3. **Joint Decision**: The manager meets with others to discuss the decision problem and make a decision together; the manager has no more influence over the final decision than any other participant.
4. **Delegation**: The manager gives an individual or group the authority and responsibility for making a decision; the manager usually specifies limits within which
the final choice must fall, and prior approval may or may not be required before the decision can be implemented.

The four decision procedures can be ordered along a continuum ranging from no influence by other people to high influence (see Figure 4-1). Some researchers differentiate between subvarieties of these basic four procedures. For example, Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958) distinguish two varieties of autocratic decision, one in which the leader merely announces an autocratic decision (“tell” style), and the other in which the leader uses influence tactics such as rational persuasion (“sell” style). The same writers also distinguished three varieties of consultation: (1) the leader presents a decision made without prior consultation, but is willing to modify it in the face of strong objections and concerns; (2) the leader presents a tentative proposal and actively encourages people to suggest ways to improve it; and (3) the leader presents a problem and asks others to participate in diagnosing it and developing solutions, but then makes the decision alone. Vroom and Yetton (1973) distinguish between consulting with individuals and consulting with a group.

The distinctions among decision procedures are useful, but Strauss (1977) reminds us that it is important to distinguish between overt procedures and actual influence. Sometimes what appears to be participation is only pretense. For example, a manager may solicit ideas and suggestions from others but ignore them when making the decision. Likewise, the manager may ask subordinates to make a decision, but do it in such a way that the subordinates are afraid to show initiative or deviate from the choices they know the boss prefers.

Decision procedures are abstract descriptions of pure or ideal types; the actual behavior of managers seldom occurs in ways that neatly fit these descriptions. The research discussed in Chapter 2 suggests that consultation often occurs informally during the course of repeated interactions with other people rather than at a single point of time in a formal meeting. Consultation may occur during brief contacts in the hall, after a meeting or social event, at lunch, or on the golf course. Actual behavior may involve a mix of elements from different decision procedures, such as consulting about problem diagnosis but not about final choice among solutions, or consulting about final choice among a limited set of predetermined solutions. Participative behavior has a dynamic quality and may change over time. For example, what was initially consultation may become a joint decision as it becomes evident that subordinates agree with the leader’s preferred choice. What was initially a group decision may become consultation when it becomes obvious that the group is deadlocked and the leader must make the final decision.

**FIGURE 4-1 Continuum of Decision Procedures**
Consequences of Participative Leadership

This section of the chapter examines the potential benefits of participation and explanatory processes for the effects of participation (see Figure 4-2). Situational variables that enhance or limit the effects of participation are discussed later in the chapter as part of the theories developed to explain why this form of leadership is not effective in all situations.

Potential Benefits of Participation

Participative leadership offers a variety of potential benefits, but whether the benefits occur depends on who the participants are, how much influence they have, and other aspects of the decision situation. Four potential benefits include higher decision quality, higher decision acceptance by participants, more satisfaction with the decision process, and more development of decision-making skills. Several explanations have been proposed for the positive effects of participation (Anthony, 1978; Cooper & Wood, 1974; Maiter, 1963; Mitchell, 1973; Strauss, 1963; Vroom & Yetton, 1973).

Decision Quality. Involving other people in making a decision is likely to increase the quality of a decision when participants have information and knowledge lacked by the leader and are willing to cooperate in finding a good solution to a decision problem. Cooperation and sharing of knowledge will depend on the extent to which participants trust the leader and view the process as legitimate and beneficial. If participants and the leader have incompatible goals, cooperation is unlikely to occur. In the absence of cooperation, participation may reduce rather than increase decision quality. Even high cooperation does not guarantee that participation will result in a better decision. The decision process used by the group will determine whether members are able to reach agreement, and it will determine the extent to which any decision incorporates the members’ expertise and knowledge (see Chapter 11).
have different perceptions of the problem or different priorities for the various outcomes, it is difficult to discover a high-quality decision. The group may fail to reach agreement or settle for a poor compromise. Finally, other aspects of the decision situation such as time pressures, the number of participants, and formal policies may make some forms of participation impractical.

**Decision Acceptance.** People who have considerable influence in making a decision tend to identify with it and perceive it to be their decision. This feeling of ownership increases their motivation to implement it successfully. Participation also provides a better understanding of the nature of the decision problem and the reasons why a particular alternative was accepted and others rejected. Participants gain a better understanding of how they will be affected by a decision, which is likely to reduce any unwarranted fears and anxieties about it. When adverse consequences are likely, participation allows people an opportunity to express their concerns and help to find a solution that deals with these concerns. Finally, when a decision is made by a participative process considered legitimate by most members, then the group is likely to apply social pressure on any reluctant members to do their part in implementing the decision.

**Satisfaction with the Decision Process.** Research on procedural justice (e.g., Earley & Lind, 1987; Lind & Tyler, 1988) found that the opportunity to express opinions and preferences before a decision is made (called “voice”) can have beneficial effects regardless of the amount of actual influence participants have over the final decision (called “choice”). People are more likely to perceive that they are being treated with dignity and respect when they have an opportunity to express opinions and preferences about a decision that will affect them. The likely result is more perception of procedural justice and stronger satisfaction with the decision process (Roberson, Moye, & Locke, 1999). However, in the absence of real influence over a decision, voice alone may not result in strong commitment to implement the decision. Furthermore, the process may reduce rather than increase satisfaction if participants perceive that the leader is attempting to manipulate them into supporting an undesirable decision.

**Development of Participant Skills.** The experience of helping to make a complex decision can result in the development of more skill and confidence by participants. Whether the potential benefits are realized depends on how much involvement participants actually have in the process of diagnosing the cause of the problem, generating feasible solutions, evaluating solutions to identify the best one, and planning how to implement it. Participants who are involved in all aspects of the decision process learn more than participants who merely contribute to one aspect. For participants with little experience in making complex decisions, learning also depends on the extent to which participants receive coaching and encouragement from the leader during difficult stages of the decision process (see Chapter 11).

**Objectives for Different Participants**

The potential benefits of participation are not identical for all types of participants. The leader’s objectives for using participation may differ depending on whether participants are subordinates, peers, superiors, or outsiders.
Downward consultation may be used to increase the quality of decisions by drawing on the knowledge and problem-solving expertise of subordinates. Another objective is to increase subordinate acceptance of decisions by providing a sense of ownership. A third objective may be to develop the decision-making skills of subordinates by giving them experience in helping to analyze decision problems and evaluate solutions. A fourth objective is to facilitate conflict resolution and team building.

Lateral consultation with people in different subunits may be used to increase decision quality when peers have relevant knowledge about the cause of a problem and likely solutions. When cooperation from other managers is necessary to implement a decision, consultation is a way to increase their understanding and commitment. Lateral consultation facilitates coordination and cooperation among managers of different organizational subunits with interdependent tasks. However, consultation should be limited to decisions for which it is appropriate, so that time is not wasted in unnecessary meetings.

Upward consultation allows a manager to draw on the expertise of the boss, which may be greater than the expertise of the manager. In addition, upward consultation allows a manager to find out how the boss feels about a problem and is likely to react to various proposals. On the other hand, excessive consultation with a boss suggests a lack of self-confidence and initiative on the part of the subordinate. A manager with the authority to make the final choice in decisions is wise to avoid becoming too dependent on the boss when making these decisions.

Consulting with outsiders such as clients and suppliers helps ensure that decisions affecting them are understood and accepted. Consultation with outsiders is a way to learn more about their needs and preferences, strengthen external networks, improve coordination, and solve mutual problems related to the work.

**Research on Effects of Participative Leadership**

Since the pioneering studies by Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939) and Coch and French (1948), social scientists have been interested in studying the consequences of participative leadership. After supportive and task-oriented behavior, the largest amount of behavior research has been on participative leadership. The research has employed a variety of methods, including laboratory experiments, field experiments, correlational field studies, and qualitative case studies involving interviews with effective leaders and their subordinates. Most of the studies involved participation by subordinates, and the criteria of leader effectiveness were usually subordinate satisfaction and performance.

**Example of Research on Participation**

Bragg and Andrews (1973) conducted a quasi-experimental study on participation in a hospital laundry department. Following is a detailed description of the way participation was introduced into the department and the consequences for worker satisfaction and productivity.

The foreman of the laundry department typically made decisions in an autocratic manner, and he was persuaded by the chief administrator to try a participative approach. The 32 workers in the laundry department were told that the purpose of

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the group meetings was to make their jobs more interesting, not to increase productivity, which was already high. The workers and union were told that the participation program would be discontinued if they found it unsatisfactory. Over the next 18 months, meetings were held whenever the workers wanted to discuss specific proposals about hours of work, working procedures, working conditions, minor equipment modifications, and safety matters. In addition to these group meetings, the foreman consulted regularly with individuals and smaller groups of workers to discuss problems and new ideas.

Worker attitudes were measured at two-month intervals for 14 months with a questionnaire. The attitude data showed some initial doubts about the participation program, after which workers became increasingly more favorable toward it. Productivity during the first 18 months of the program increased 42 percent over that for the department during the prior year, whereas for similar departments in two other hospitals (the comparison groups), productivity declined slightly during the same period of time. Attendance in the department, which was high initially, became even better after the participation program was introduced, whereas for other non-medical departments in the same hospital (the comparison groups), it became worse. The results were statistically significant and showed that the participation program was highly successful.

After the program had been in effect for three years, neither the workers nor the supervisor had any desire to return to the old autocratic style of management. The success of the program encouraged the introduction of participation in the medical records section, where it resulted in elimination of grievances and a sharp reduction in turnover. However, an attempt to introduce a participation program in the nursing group was much less successful, due primarily to lack of support by the head nurse and resistance by administrative medical personnel.

**Effects of Participation**

The results of quantitative research (i.e., questionnaire studies, field experiments, laboratory experiments) on the effects of participation in decision making are summarized in several literature reviews and meta-analyses (Cotton et al., 1988; Leana, Locke, & Schweiger, 1990; Miller & Monge, 1986; Sagie & Koslowsky, 2000; Spector, 1986; Wagner & Gooding, 1987). The various reviewers did not agree in their conclusions, but they all noted the lack of consistent strong results in the research. One reason for the inconsistency seemed to be the type of methodology used in the research. Studies that used questionnaire data from the same respondents (the subordinates) usually found positive effects for participation, whereas studies with independent measures of outcome variables had results that were weaker and less consistent. Experiments and quasi-experimental studies in field settings showed positive results in most cases, whereas laboratory experiments did not support the effectiveness of participation in decision making. In experiments on goal setting, the effect of participation depended in part on other factors such as goal difficulty and supportive leadership. Assigned goals were as effective as participative goals when goal difficulty was held constant and the leaders who assigned goals were supportive and persuasive (Latham, Erez, & Locke, 1988). Overall, the evidence from the quantitative studies is not sufficiently strong and consistent to draw any firm conclusions, but the results suggest that participation can be effective in some situations.
The findings from qualitative research, including case studies of effective managers, have been more consistently supportive of the benefits of participative leadership (Bradford & Cohen, 1984; Kanter, 1983; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Peters & Austin, 1985; Peters & Waterman, 1982). This research found that effective managers used a substantial amount of consultation and delegation to empower subordinates and give them a sense of ownership for activities and decisions.

In summary, after more than 50 years of research on participation, we are left with the conclusion that participative leadership sometimes results in higher satisfaction, effort, and performance, and at other times it does not.

Limitations of Participation Research

The lack of strong, consistent results in the research on participative leadership may be a result of methodological problems in much of the research. Weak methods have been used in much of the research, and even the studies using stronger methods such as experiments have serious limitations.

The survey field studies are limited by measurement problems and difficulty of determining direction of causality (see Chapter 3). In most of these studies, subordinates were asked to rate how much involvement they had in decisions, or to rate the leader’s general use of participative decision procedures. No effort was made to identify the particular mix of decision procedures that were used or to determine whether these procedures were appropriate for the types of decisions being made. In effect, these studies tested only the general hypothesis that more is better when it comes to participation.

The field experiments and quasi-experimental studies also have limitations. Many of them involved a participation program introduced by the organization rather than participative behavior by an individual manager. In some studies, participation was combined with other types of interventions (e.g. more supportive behavior by the leader, better training of subordinates, or use of better procedures for planning and problem solving), making it difficult to determine what consequences were due to participation. The short-term nature of many field experiments raises the possibility that improved satisfaction and effort for people in the participation condition is the result of temporary elation from being singled out for special attention by the organization (the “Hawthorne effect”). In some studies the nonparticipation control group knew about the participation group, which could have led to resentment about not getting the “special” treatment, thereby lowering satisfaction and making the participation group appear better. Finally, most lab and field experiments compared only two decision procedures, and the definition of high and low participation varied from study to study, making it difficult to compare results across studies. For example, in some studies participation was a joint decision, whereas in others it was consultation.

The measure of participation consequences in most of the studies was overall satisfaction and performance of subordinates, not satisfaction with the way a particular decision was handled or commitment to implement that decision effectively. Thus, most studies failed to measure the most relevant and immediate outcomes, and instead used a relatively insensitive criterion that is influenced by many things besides participative leadership. Most studies also failed to measure the underlying influence
and motivational processes that could explain how participation affects decision acceptance.

Lack of consistent results about the effectiveness of participative leadership may also reflect the fact that various forms of participation are effective in some situations but not in others. In most studies of participation, researchers either ignored the situation entirely or identified limiting conditions only on a post hoc basis to explain discrepant results or lack of success. Few studies incorporated situational variables in a systematic manner or investigated whether different procedures are more effective for different types of decisions. This question is the subject of a contingency theory developed by Vroom and Yetton (1973).

**Normative Decision Model**

The importance of using decision procedures that are appropriate for the situation has been recognized for some time. Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958) noted that a leader’s choice of decision procedures reflects forces in the leader, forces in the subordinates, and forces in the situation. Maier (1963) pointed out the need for leaders to consider both the quality requirements of a decision and the likelihood of subordinate acceptance before choosing a decision procedure. Vroom and Yetton (1973) built upon these earlier approaches but went further in specifying which decision procedures will be most effective in each of several specific situations. Vroom and Jago (1988) subsequently revised the initial model to include some additional variables and decision rules.

**Vroom and Yetton Model**

The decision procedure used by a leader affects the quality of a decision and decision acceptance by the people who are expected to implement the decision. These two mediating variables jointly determine how effective the decision will be after it is implemented, which has obvious implications for the performance of the unit or team. However, the effect of the decision procedures on decision quality and acceptance depends on various aspects of the situation, and a procedure that is effective in some situations may be ineffective in other situations.

**Decision Procedures.** Vroom and Yetton identify five decision procedures for decisions involving multiple subordinates, including two varieties of autocratic decision (AI and AII), two varieties of consultation (CI and CII), and one variety of joint decision making by leader and subordinates as a group (GII). Each of these decision procedures is defined as follows (Vroom & Yetton, 1973, p. 13):

- **AI.** You solve the problem or make the decision yourself, using information available to you at the time.
- **AII.** You obtain the necessary information from your subordinates, then decide the solution to the problem yourself. You may or may not tell your subordinates what the problem is in getting the information from them. The role played by your subordinates in making the decision is clearly one of providing necessary information to you, rather than generating or evaluating alternative solutions.
CI. You share the problem with the relevant subordinates individually, getting their ideas and suggestions, without bringing them together as a group. Then you make the decision, which may or may not reflect your subordinates’ influence.

CII. You share the problem with your subordinates as a group, obtaining their collective ideas and suggestions. Then you make the decision, which may or may not reflect your subordinates’ influence.

GII. You share the problem with your subordinates as a group. Together you generate and evaluate alternatives and attempt to reach agreement (consensus) on a solution. Your role is much like that of chairman. You do not try to influence the group to adopt your preferred solution, and you are willing to accept and implement any solution that has the support of the entire group.

Situational Variables. The effectiveness of a decision procedure depends on several aspects of the decision situation: (1) the amount of relevant information possessed by leader and subordinates, (2) the likelihood that subordinates will accept an autocratic decision, (3) the likelihood that subordinates will cooperate if allowed to participate, (4) the amount of disagreement among subordinates with respect to their preferred alternatives, and (5) the extent to which the decision problem is unstructured and requires creative problem solving. The model also takes into account (1) whether the decision is important or trivial, and (2) whether the decision will be accepted by subordinates even if they are not involved in making it. The causal relationships among the variables are shown in Figure 4-3.

Decision Acceptance. Decision acceptance is the degree of commitment to implement a decision effectively. Acceptance is important whenever a decision must be implemented by subordinates or has implications for their work motivation. In some cases, subordinates are highly motivated to implement a decision made by the leader because it is clearly beneficial to them or because the leader uses influence tactics to gain their commitment to the decision. However, subordinates may not accept an autocratic decision for other reasons. For example, subordinates may resent not being consulted, they may not understand the reasons for the decision, and they may see it as detrimental to their interests. A basic assumption of the model is that participation increases decision acceptance if it is not already high, and the

![Causal Relationship in the Normative Decision Model](image-url)
more influence subordinates have in making a decision, the more they will be motivated to implement it successfully. Thus, decision acceptance is likely to be greater for joint decision making than for consultation, and for consultation than for an autocratic decision.

**Decision Quality.** Decision quality refers to the objective aspects of the decision that affect group performance aside from any effects mediated by decision acceptance. The quality of a decision is high when the best alternative is selected. For example, an efficient work procedure is selected instead of less efficient alternatives, or a challenging performance goal is set instead of an easy goal. Decision quality is important when there is a great deal of variability among alternatives and the decision has important consequences for group performance. If the available alternatives are approximately equal in consequences, or if the decision has no important consequences for group performance, then decision quality is not important. Examples of task decisions that are usually important include determination of goals and priorities, assignment of tasks to subordinates who differ in skills, determination of work procedures for complex tasks, and determination of ways to solve technical problems.

The effect of participation on decision quality depends on the distribution of relevant information and problem-solving expertise between leader and subordinates. The model assumes that participation will result in better decisions if subordinates possess relevant information and are willing to cooperate with the leader in making a good decision. Cooperation, however, depends in turn on the extent to which subordinates share the leader’s task objectives and have a relationship of mutual trust with the leader. The model assumes that consultation and joint decision making are equally likely to facilitate decision quality when subordinates share the leader’s objectives. However, when subordinates have incompatible objectives, consultation usually results in higher-quality decisions than joint decision making, because the leader retains control over the final choice.

**Decision Rules.** The model provides a set of rules for identifying any decision procedure that is inappropriate in a given situation because decision quality and/or acceptance would be jeopardized by using that procedure. The rules are based on the assumptions discussed earlier about the consequences of different decision procedures under different conditions. The decision rules are summarized briefly in Table 4-1.

For some decision situations, the model prescribes more than one feasible decision procedure. In this case, the choice among decision procedures in the “feasible set” should be based on other criteria, such as time pressure, desire to develop subordinates, or a leader’s personal preferences among the procedures. Vroom and Yetton developed decision process flowcharts to simplify the application of the rules and assist managers in identifying the feasible set of decision procedures for each situation.

**The Revised Model**

Vroom and Jago (1988) reviewed the research findings on the model and offered a revised version of it. The revised model was designed to correct some of the weaknesses in the earlier version. The Vroom-Yetton model eliminates some of the procedures from the feasible set, but it does not indicate which of the remaining procedures is best.
The Vroom-Jago model incorporates features that allow a manager to determine the relative priority of different criteria and reduce the feasible set to a single procedure by applying the criteria. The Vroom-Yetton model fails to include some important aspects of the situation, such as severe time constraints, amount of subordinate information, and geographical dispersion of subordinates are incorporated in the Vroom-Jago model. The Vroom-Yetton model uses only two outcome criteria—decision acceptance and decision quality—in the decision rules. The new model adds concern for subordinate development and concern for decision time as explicit criteria for determining optimal decision procedures. Managers are given more choice in setting priorities for the criteria in the new model, and there are different versions of the model for different priorities.

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The Vroom-Yetton model fails to capture some differences among situations by requiring a definite yes-no answer to the situational questions. The new model corrects this deficiency by requiring managers to differentiate among five choices in describing each aspect of the situation. For example, to the question “Do subordinates share the organizational goals to be attained in solving this problem?” managers select one of the following choices: no, probably no, maybe, probably yes, yes. Decision rules are replaced by mathematical functions. The result of the various changes is to make an already complex model even more complex, and a computer software program is recommended to apply the model in its complete form.

### TABLE 4-1 Decision Rules in Vroom-Yetton Decision Model

1. When the decision is important and subordinates possess relevant information lacked by the leader, an autocratic decision (AI, AII) is not appropriate because an important decision would be made without all of the relevant, available information.
2. When decision quality is important and subordinates do not share the leader’s concern for task goals, a group decision (GII) is not appropriate because these procedures would give too much influence over an important decision to uncooperative or even hostile people.
3. When decision quality is important, the decision problem is unstructured, and the leader does not possess the necessary information and expertise to make a good decision, then the decision should be made by interaction among the people who have the relevant information (CII, GII).
4. When decision acceptance is important and subordinates are unlikely to accept an autocratic decision, then an autocratic decision (AI, AII) is not appropriate because the decision may not be implemented effectively.
5. When decision acceptance is important and subordinates are likely to disagree among themselves about the best solution to an important problem, autocratic procedures (AI, AII) and individual consultation (CI) are not appropriate because they do not provide the opportunity to resolve differences through discussion and negotiation among subordinates and between the subordinates and the leader.
6. When decision quality is not important but acceptance is important and unlikely to result from an autocratic decision, then the only appropriate procedure is a group decision (GII), because acceptance is maximized without risking quality.
7. When decision acceptance is important and not likely to result from an autocratic decision, and subordinates share the leader’s task objectives, subordinates should be given equal partnership in the decision process (GII), because acceptance is maximized without risking quality.

Based on Vroom & Yetton, 1973
Over the years various theorists have attempted to simplify the normative decision model to make it easier for managers to use (e.g., Yukl, 1990). One example is shown in Table 4-2. This simplified model involves three decision procedures (autocratic, consultation, joint decision), and it shows the optimal procedure when the priorities are (1) protect decision quality, (2) gain decision acceptance, and (3) save time.

### Research on the Models

Several field studies have been conducted to test the Vroom-Yetton model since it first appeared (e.g., Ettling & Jago, 1988; Jago & Vroom, 1980; Margerison & Glube, 1979; Paul & Ebadi, 1989; Tjosvold, Wedley, & Field, 1986; Vroom & Jago, 1978). The most common research method was to collect incidents in which managers described a successful or unsuccessful decision. The researchers classified the situation and decision procedure for each incident, then determined how often successful decisions involved the use of a decision procedure consistent with the model. Vroom and Jago (1988) computed the mean rate of success across five studies and found that for decisions made in accordance with the model, the mean success rate was 62 percent, versus 37 percent for decisions made using a decision procedure outside of the feasible set. Four studies that tested the decision rules separately found some decision rules were supported much better than others (Vroom & Jago, 1988). In a field survey study (Field & House, 1990), the data from subordinates provided much less support for the model than data from managers. Support for the theory was also found in a study that used scenarios to determine what level of participation was viewed as most effective for the leaders of trauma center teams in a hospital (Yun, Samer, & Sims, 2005). The respondents (team members) favored more directive leadership when team member experience was low and patient injuries were severe (high time pressure). The normative decision model was also tested in laboratory experiments in which researchers manipulated the situation and the decision

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Based on Yukl (1990)
procedure used by the leader and measured the consequences for the group (e.g., Crouch & Yetton, 1987; Field, 1982; Heilman, Hornstein, Cage, & Herschlag, 1984; Liddel et al., 1986, cited in Vroom & Jago, 1988). The results were weaker and less consistent in the experiments than in the field studies.

In summary, the empirical research on the initial version of the normative decision model provides some support for it, but more research is needed to adequately test the model and each of the decision rules. The extended version of the model has not been extensively tested. Vroom and Jago (1988) reported some positive findings in their research on managers, and positive results were also found in a laboratory experiment with scenarios (Field, Read, & Louviere, 1990). The initial results are promising, but more research is needed to test the extended version of the model.

**Conceptual Weaknesses**

Critics of the model have identified several conceptual weaknesses. Decision processes are treated as a single, discrete episode that occurs at one point in time, but most important decisions are not made in this way. As we saw in Chapter 2, important decisions typically involve multiple meetings with a variety of different people at different times, and repeated cycles occur as decisions are returned for revisions necessary for approval by powerful people not directly involved in the initial process. Thus, the leader may have to use a sequence of different decision procedures with different people at different times before the matter is resolved.

The theory is not parsimonious (Field, 1979). The distinction between autocratic, consultative, and joint decision procedures is more important than the distinction made among subvarieties of each procedure (AI vs. AII, and CI vs. CII). The theory would be much easier to understand and apply if the primary model focused on the choice among these three decision styles. Supplementary models could be developed to guide a manager in selecting among the major variations of each decision procedure. The distinction made between AI and AII is unnecessary; the descriptive research shows that managers are continually gathering factual information from a variety of sources. The distinction between CI and CII is important, but other variations are possible. For example, sometimes different people are consulted individually followed by consultation with the entire group.

Leaders are assumed to have the skills necessary to use each of the decision procedures, and leader skill is not a factor in determining which procedure is most appropriate (Crouch & Yetton, 1987; Field, 1979). Crouch and Yetton showed that some assumptions of the model are not valid for unskilled leaders. Their study found that in situations with conflict among subordinates, group procedures (CII or GII) were effective for leaders who had conflict management skills, but not for leaders lacking these skills. Leaders without these skills are better off using individual consultation (CI), which does not require direct confrontation between subordinates who disagree with each other.

**Summary**

The normative decision model is probably the best supported of the contingency theories of effective leadership (see Chapter 8). It focuses on specific aspects of behavior, it includes meaningful intervening variables, and it identifies important aspects
of the situation moderating the relationship between behavior and outcomes. However, the model deals with only a small part of leadership, and several conceptual weaknesses need to be corrected.

**Applications: Guidelines for Participative Leadership**

Building on the participation research and the Vroom-Yetton model, some tentative guidelines are proposed for using participative leadership. Guidelines for diagnosing the situation are presented first, followed by some guidelines for encouraging participation (see Table 4-3).

**Diagnosing Decision Situations**

The following sequence is a relatively easy way to determine whether a participative procedure is feasible and appropriate for a particular decision situation.

- **Evaluate how important the decision is.**

  Decision quality is likely to be important if the decision has important consequences for the manager’s work unit or the overall organization, and some of the alternatives are much better than others. Decision quality is also more important when the manager’s position is one with high exposure (i.e., mistakes are very visible and will reflect poorly on the manager).

- **Identify people with relevant knowledge or expertise.**

  Participative decision procedures are appropriate when a manager lacks relevant information possessed by others such as subordinates, peers, or outsiders. This situation is likely when the decision problem is complex and the best way to resolve the problem is not evident from the data or from the manager’s prior experience with similar problems.

**TABLE 4-3 Guidelines for Participative Leadership**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How to Diagnose Decision Situations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluate how important the decision is.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Identify people with relevant knowledge or expertise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluate likely cooperation by participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluate likely acceptance without participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluate whether it is feasible to hold a meeting.</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How to Encourage Participation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Encourage people to express their concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Describe a proposal as tentative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Record ideas and suggestions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Look for ways to build on ideas and suggestions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be tactful in expressing concerns about a suggestion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Listen to dissenting views without getting defensive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Try to utilize suggestions and deal with concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Show appreciation for suggestions.</td>
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</table>
A decision is more complex when it involves many possible alternatives, the outcomes of each alternative are difficult to predict, and the alternatives involve trade-offs among several important criteria. For complex decisions, it is essential to identify people who have relevant knowledge and expertise, and a good network of contacts is invaluable for identifying such people.

- **Evaluate likely cooperation by participants.**

  Participation is unlikely to be successful unless the prospective participants are willing to cooperate in finding a good solution to the decision problem. Cooperation is more likely when the decision is important to followers and they perceive that they will actually have some influence over the final decision. If people perceive that a leader is trying to manipulate them, then consultation is unlikely to increase either decision quality or decision acceptance.

  Cooperation is also unlikely if potential participants have task objectives that are incompatible with those of the manager. When there is doubt about the motives of potential participants, it is advisable to consult with a few of them individually to determine whether a group meeting would be productive. It is unwise to hold a meeting with a hostile group of people who will use it as an opportunity to make decisions that are contrary to the interests of the manager. When people with relevant information have different objectives, then some consultation may be useful to diagnose the cause of a problem and identify promising alternatives, but the final choice of an alternative must remain with the manager.

  Another reason for lack of cooperation is that the potential participants simply do not want to become involved in making decisions they view as the manager’s responsibility. Opportunities to participate may be rejected by followers who are already overloaded with work, especially when the decisions do not affect them in any important way. Just as many people decline to vote in local elections, not everyone will be enthusiastic about the opportunity for participation in organizational decisions.

- **Evaluate likely acceptance without participation.**

  A time-consuming participative procedure is not necessary if the manager has the knowledge to make a good decision and it is likely to be accepted by subordinates or others who must implement it or who will be affected by it. An autocratic decision is more likely to be accepted if the manager has considerable position and personal power over group members or has the persuasive skills to “sell” the decision successfully. Acceptance of an autocratic decision is also likely if the decision is to do something people already want to do, or the decision appears to be a reasonable response to a crisis situation. Finally, acceptance of autocratic decisions is more likely when people have cultural values that emphasize obedience to authority figures (see Chapter 14).

- **Evaluate whether it is feasible to hold a meeting.**

  Consulting with people separately or holding a group meeting usually requires more time than making an autocratic decision and telling people to implement it. It is especially difficult to hold a meeting if the number of people who need to be involved is large and they are widely dispersed. In many crisis situations time is not available either for extensive consultation with individuals or for a lengthy group meeting to decide how to react to the crisis. In this situation, a leader who knows what to do and takes
charge in a decisive way is likely to be more effective than one who is very participative (e.g., Yun, Samer, & Sims, 2005). Nevertheless, even in a crisis situation a leader should remain responsive to suggestions made by knowledgeable subordinates. Under the stress of a crisis, a leader is unlikely to notice all of the problems that require attention or to think of all the actions that need to be taken.

**Encouraging Participation**

Consulting will not be effective unless people are actively involved in generating ideas, making suggestions, stating their preferences, and expressing their concerns. Some guidelines for encouraging more participation include the following.

- **Encourage people to express their concerns.**

  Before making changes that will affect people in significant ways, it is useful and considerate to consult with them. This guideline applies to peers and outsiders as well as subordinates. One form of consultation that is often appropriate is to hold special meetings with people who will be affected by a change to identify their concerns and deal with them.

- **Describe a proposal as tentative.**

  More participation is likely if you present a proposal as tentative and encourage people to improve it, rather than asking people to react to an elaborate plan that appears complete. In the latter case, people will be more inhibited about expressing concerns that appear to be criticism of the plan.

- **Record ideas and suggestions.**

  When someone makes a suggestion, it is helpful to acknowledge the idea and show that it is not being ignored. One approach is to list ideas on a flipchart or blackboard when they are expressed. In an informal meeting, if no flipchart or blackboard is available, make some written notes to avoid forgetting a person’s ideas and suggestions.

- **Look for ways to build on ideas and suggestions.**

  Most people quickly focus on the weaknesses of an idea or suggestion made by someone else without giving enough consideration to its strengths. It is helpful to make a conscious effort to find positive aspects of a suggestion and mention them before mentioning negative aspects. Many times an initial idea is incomplete, but it can be turned into a much better idea with a little conscious effort. Thus, rather than automatically rejecting a suggestion with obvious weaknesses, it is useful to discuss how the weaknesses could be overcome and to consider other, better ideas that build on the initial one.

- **Be tactful in expressing concerns about a suggestion.**

  If you have concerns about a suggestion, express them tactfully to avoid threatening the self-esteem of the person who made the suggestion and discouraging future suggestions. Some negative examples include the following:

  You aren’t serious about that?
  That has been tried before and it doesn’t work.
Concerns should be expressed in a way that indicates qualified interest rather than outright rejection. It is usually possible to express concerns in the form of a question using the terms *we* and *us* to emphasize a shared effort, as shown in the following example:

Your suggestion is promising, but I am concerned about the cost. Is there any way we could do it without exceeding our budget?

- **Listen to dissenting views without getting defensive.**

  In order to encourage people to express concerns and criticisms of your plans and proposals, it is essential to listen carefully without getting defensive or angry. Use restatement of a person’s concerns in your own words to verify that you understand them and to show you are paying attention. Avoid making excuses, and instead try to consider objectively whether revisions are needed.

- **Try to utilize suggestions and deal with concerns.**

  People will stop making suggestions if you dismiss them without serious consideration or simply ignore them in making a final decision. It is important to make a serious effort to utilize suggestions and deal with concerns expressed by people with whom you have consulted. The potential benefits from participation will not occur if people perceive that a request for suggestions was done just to manipulate them.

- **Show appreciation for suggestions.**

  People will be more likely to cooperate in making decisions and solving problems if they receive appropriate credit for their helpful suggestions and ideas. Compliment someone for good ideas and insights. It is important to thank people and show appreciation for helpful suggestions. Explain how an idea or suggestion was used in the final decision or plan. Explain how the proposal or plan was modified to incorporate a person’s suggestion or respond to his or her concerns. If a suggestion is not used, thank the contributor and explain why it was not feasible to use the suggestion.

**Delegation**

As noted earlier, delegation involves the assignment of new responsibilities to subordinates and additional authority to carry them out. Although delegation is sometimes regarded as a variety of participative leadership, there is ample justification for treating delegation as a separate category of managerial behavior. Delegation is qualitatively different in some ways from the other forms of participative leadership such as consulting and joint decision making. A manager may consult with subordinates, peers, or superiors, but in most cases delegation is appropriate only with subordinates. Delegation has somewhat different situational determinants than consultation (Leana, 1987). For example, a manager who is overloaded with work is likely to use more delegating but less consulting. Thus, it is not surprising that factor analysis of leadership questionnaires typically yields distinct factors for consulting and delegating (Yukl & Fu, 1999).
Varieties of Delegation

The term delegation is commonly used to describe a variety of different forms and degrees of power sharing with individual subordinates. Major aspects of delegation include the variety and magnitude of responsibilities, the amount of discretion or range of choice allowed in deciding how to carry out responsibilities, the authority to take action and implement decisions without prior approval, the frequency and nature of reporting requirements, and the flow of performance information (Sherman, 1966; Webber, 1981).

In its most common form, delegation involves assignment of new and different tasks or responsibilities to a subordinate. For example, a person who is responsible for manufacturing something is also given responsibility for inspecting the product and correcting any defects that are found. When new tasks are assigned, the additional authority necessary to accomplish the tasks is usually delegated also. For example, a production worker who is given new responsibility for ordering materials is given the authority (within specified constraints) to sign contracts with suppliers.

Sometimes delegation involves only the specification of additional authority and discretion for the same tasks and assignments already performed by the subordinate. For example, a sales representative is allowed to negotiate sales within a specified range of prices, quantities, and delivery dates, but cannot exceed these limits without prior approval from the sales manager. Delegation is increased by giving the sales representative more latitude in setting prices and delivery dates.

The extent to which a subordinate must check with the boss before taking action is another aspect of delegation. There is little or no delegation for someone who must ask the boss what to do whenever there is a problem or something unusual occurs. There is moderate delegation when the subordinate is allowed to determine what to do but must get approval before implementing decisions. There is substantial delegation when the subordinate is allowed to make important decisions and implement them without getting prior approval. For example, a sales representative who was not allowed to make adjustments for damaged goods and late deliveries without checking first is given permission to resolve these matters in the future without getting prior approval.

Reporting requirements are another aspect of delegation that is subject to considerable variation. The amount of subordinate autonomy is greater when reports are required only infrequently. For example, a department manager must report department performance on a weekly basis rather than on a daily basis. Autonomy is also greater when reports describe only results rather than describing both the results and the procedures used to accomplish them. For example, a training director must report to the vice president for human resources the number of employees who were trained in each subject area and the overall training expenses for the month, but not the types of training methods used, the number of trainers, or the breakdown of training expenses in different categories.

The flow of performance information involved in monitoring a subordinate’s activities is also subject to variation. Subordinate autonomy is greater when detailed information about subordinate performance goes directly to the subordinate, who is then allowed to correct any problems. A subordinate is likely to have less autonomy when detailed performance information goes first to the boss and is subsequently
passed on to the subordinate. There is an intermediate amount of subordinate autonomy when detailed performance information goes to both parties simultaneously.

### Potential Advantages of Delegation

There are many different reasons for delegating (Leana, 1986; Newman & Warren, 1977; Preston & Zimmerer, 1978; Yukl & Fu, 1999). Table 4-4 shows the results found in a study that asked managers in several organizations about the importance of various reasons for delegation to a subordinate.

Delegation offers a number of potential advantages if carried out in an appropriate manner by a manager. One potential advantage of delegation, like other forms of participation and power sharing, is the improvement of decision quality. Delegation is likely to improve decision quality if a subordinate has more expertise in how to do the task than the manager. Decision quality is likely to improve also if the subordinate’s job requires quick responses to a changing situation and the lines of communication do not permit the manager to monitor the situation closely and make rapid adjustments. A subordinate who is closer to the problem than the manager and has more relevant information can make quicker and better decisions about how to resolve the problem. The result may be better customer service and reduced administrative costs. However, delegation is not likely to improve decision quality if the subordinate lacks the skills to make good decisions, fails to understand what is expected, or has goals incompatible with those of the manager.

Another potential advantage of delegation is greater subordinate commitment to implement decisions effectively. The commitment results from identification with the decision and a desire to make it successful. However, commitment is unlikely to improve if a subordinate views delegation as a manipulative tactic by the manager, considers the task impossible to do, or believes the newly delegated responsibilities are an unfair increase in workload.

Delegation of additional responsibilities and authority can make a subordinate’s job more interesting, challenging, and meaningful. Enriched jobs are sometimes necessary to attract and retain competent employees, especially when the organization has limited opportunities for advancement to higher-level positions. Giving junior managers more responsibility and authority, with a commensurate increase in salary, reduces the likelihood that they will be lured away to other companies in times of stiff competition for managerial talent. However, delegation will only increase the satisfaction

### TABLE 4-4 Percentage of Managers Who Rated a Reason for Delegating as Moderately or Very Important

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for Delegating</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop subordinate skills and confidence.</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enable subordinates to deal with problems quickly.</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve decisions by moving them close to the action.</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase subordinate commitment to a task.</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make the job more interesting for subordinates.</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce your workload to manage time better.</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfy superiors who want you to delegate more.</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get rid of tedious tasks you don’t want to do.</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Yukl & Fu (1999)
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of a subordinate who desires more responsibility, has the skills necessary to handle new responsibilities, and is able to experience some success in accomplishing a challenging task. Delegation will decrease job satisfaction if the subordinate is constantly frustrated due to a lack of sufficient authority and resources to carry out new responsibilities, or to a lack of ability to do the work.

Delegation is an important form of time management for a manager who is overloaded with responsibilities. By delegating less important duties and functions to subordinates, a manager frees additional time for more important responsibilities. Even when a manager could do the delegated tasks better than subordinates, it is a more efficient use of the manager’s time to concentrate on those functions that will have the greatest influence on the performance of the manager’s organizational unit. Without delegation, a manager is unlikely to have sufficient discretionary time to do some important tasks that require larger blocks of time and are not immediately urgent.

Delegation can be an effective method of management development. Organizations need to develop managerial talent to fill vacant positions at higher levels of authority. Delegation is a way to facilitate development of the skills necessary to perform key responsibilities in a higher position. When delegation is used for developmental purposes, however, it is usually necessary for the manager to do more monitoring and coaching. Thus, when used for this purpose, delegation is unlikely to reduce a manager’s workload much.

Reasons for Lack of Delegation

With all of these potential advantages from delegation, it would seem as if it should occur whenever appropriate. However, for a number of reasons some managers fail to delegate as much as they should (Leana, 1986; Newman & Warren, 1977; Preston & Zimmerer, 1978; Yukl & Fu, 1999). Results from a study that asked managers in several companies about the importance of different reasons for not delegating are shown in Table 4-5.

Several aspects of personality are associated with failure to delegate, including a strong need for power, insecurity, a high need for achievement, and difficulty in forming relationships. Some managers enjoy the exercise of power over subordinates and the feeling of being in charge. Delegation would require sharing power with subordinates and reducing their dependence.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>TABLE 4-5 Percentage of Managers Who Rated a Reason for Not Delegating as Moderately or Very Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keep decisions involving confidential information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep tasks and decisions that are very important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep tasks and decisions central to your role.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep tasks for which mistakes are highly visible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep tasks you can do better than subordinates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep tasks that are difficult to explain to subordinates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep tasks that are difficult to monitor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep tasks that are interesting and enjoyable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Yukl & Fu (1999)
Delegation is never absolute, because a manager continues to be responsible for the work activities of subordinates. To avoid the risk of mistakes, a manager who is insecure may delegate sensitive tasks only to a few trusted subordinates, or not at all. Furthermore, allowing a subordinate to demonstrate competence in performing managerial responsibilities may create a competitor for the manager’s job.

Managers with a high need for achievement often prefer to retain important, challenging tasks rather than delegating them to subordinates (Miller & Toulouse, 1986). Managers who take pride in solving important problems may be reluctant to relinquish that activity or admit others could do it as effectively. Reluctance to delegate may be supported by biases in perception of one’s own performance. One experiment found that managers rated quality of performance higher when they were directly involved in supervising a task, even though actual quality was the same as for a delegated task (Pfeffer, Cialdini, Hanna, & Knopoff, 1998).

Failure to delegate is also related to characteristics of the subordinates, such as task expertise and shared objectives. Managers are reluctant to delegate significant responsibilities to subordinates who lack the necessary expertise (Ashour & England, 1972; Leana, 1986; Yukl & Fu, 1999). Even if a subordinate has the expertise, delegation of significant responsibility is unlikely if the person seems indifferent about task objectives (McGregor, 1960). This perception may be inaccurate initially, but distrust by the manager may eventually make it a self-fulfilling prophecy (Argyris, 1964). Sometimes distrust of subordinates is determined more by personality problems in the manager than by the actual characteristics of the subordinates (Johnston, 2000).

The reader should not assume that only insecure, power hungry managers are reluctant to delegate. Even managers who become successful at empowering people often say it was personally difficult. Consider Ben Cohen, the cofounder of Ben and Jerry’s (Ice Cream), who believes strongly in empowerment. When describing how difficult it was, he explained how it was not natural to ask questions of employees when he already knew the answer, to listen patiently when they said something that wasn’t right, or to ask them for ideas when he was eager to express ideas of his own (O’Toole, 1995).

The potential for delegation also depends on the nature of the work and the amount of authority possessed by the leader. A lack of leader authority to make decisions or change how the work is done limits the potential for delegation. Another constraint is when subordinates have highly interdependent jobs. Even if people have shared objectives, they may disagree about priorities and the best way to accomplish the objectives. In this situation empowering individuals to act on their own increases the danger they will be working at cross-purposes. To achieve coordination and avoid destructive conflicts, it will be necessary to devote more time to meetings to plan joint activities and solve operational problems. In this type of situation it is more feasible to use consultation or to delegate authority for a task to a team rather than to individual subordinates. Self-managed teams are discussed in Chapter 11.

Research on Consequences of Delegation

Much less empirical research is available on leader delegation than on leader consultation with individuals or a group. Studies on the amount of delegation used by supervisors find that it is correlated with subordinate performance (e.g., Bauer & Green, 1996; Leana, 1986; Schriesheim, Neider, & Scandura, 1998). Miller and Toulouse (1986) found...
that the amount of delegation by top executives in 97 small businesses was related to their profitability and sales growth. Descriptive research on effective management also tends to support the effectiveness of delegation (Bradford & Cohen, 1984; Kanter, 1983; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Peters & Austin, 1985; Peters & Waterman, 1982). However, the direction of causality is difficult to determine in the existing research. It is not clear whether delegation improves performance, improved performance results in more delegation, or both effects are occurring simultaneously. More longitudinal, experimental research is needed to investigate direction of causality and the facilitating conditions (e.g., mutual trust, shared objectives, leader self-confidence, subordinate desire for more responsibility).

Applications: Guidelines for Delegating

This section of the chapter provides some tentative guidelines for effective use of delegation by managers. Although research on delegation is still very limited, there is considerable agreement in the practitioner literature about when and how to use delegation effectively. Guidelines for what to delegate are presented here first, followed by guidelines on how to delegate (see Table 4-6 for summary).

What to Delegate

The selection of tasks to delegate depends in part on the purpose of the delegation. Some guidelines on what to delegate are the following.

- **Delegate tasks that can be done better by a subordinate.**

  Some responsibilities can be done better by a subordinate than by a manager. Better performance by a subordinate is likely when the person has more expertise, when

<table>
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<th>TABLE 4-6 Guidelines for Delegation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What to Delegate</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tasks that can be done better by a subordinate</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Tasks that are urgent but not high priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tasks relevant to a subordinate’s career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tasks of appropriate difficulty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Both pleasant and unpleasant tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tasks not central to the manager’s role</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **How to Delegate**                   |
| • Specify responsibilities clearly.   |
| • Provide adequate authority and specify limits of discretion. |
| • Specify reporting requirements.     |
| • Ensure subordinate acceptance of responsibilities. |
| • Inform others who need to know.     |
| • Monitor progress in appropriate ways. |
| • Arrange for the subordinate to receive necessary information. |
| • Provide support and assistance, but avoid reverse delegation. |
| • Make mistakes a learning experience. |
the person is closer to the problem and can obtain more timely information about it, or because the manager simply does not have the time necessary to do the task properly. Such responsibilities are usually good candidates for delegation, regardless of the purpose.

- **Delegate tasks that are urgent but not high priority.**

  When the purpose is to reduce excessive workload, the best tasks for delegation are ones that are urgent but not high priority. These tasks must get done quickly, but the manager does not have time to do all of them. Some of the tasks may be things that a subordinate cannot do as well as the manager, but it is better for them to be done by a subordinate than not at all. Delegation of these tasks frees more time for a manager to do higher priority tasks.

- **Delegate tasks relevant to a subordinate’s career.**

  If the purpose of delegation is to develop subordinate skills, the responsibilities must be ones relevant to the subordinate’s career objectives. Developmental delegation is likely to include special projects that allow a subordinate the opportunity to struggle with a challenging task and exercise initiative and problem solving. Preparation of a subordinate to take over the manager’s job or to advance to a similar job in another unit requires delegating some important managerial responsibilities, including ones the subordinate initially may not do as well as the manager. Some of these delegated tasks may be irrelevant to the subordinate’s current job and, in fact, may take time away from the subordinate’s regular work.

- **Delegate tasks of appropriate difficulty.**

  Delegated tasks should be challenging for a subordinate, but not so difficult as to offer little hope of doing them successfully. The tasks should be difficult enough so that some mistakes are likely to occur, because mistakes are an integral part of the learning experience. However, the task should not be so difficult and important that mistakes will undermine the subordinate’s self-confidence and ruin his or her reputation. Delegation for developmental purposes should be carried out gradually. As the subordinate learns how to handle the initial responsibilities, additional responsibilities can be delegated.

- **Delegate both pleasant and unpleasant tasks.**

  Some managers keep all of the pleasant tasks for themselves and delegate only tedious, boring tasks to subordinates. Such tasks will not enrich subordinate jobs and are likely to reduce rather than increase subordinate job satisfaction. On the other hand, some managers with a martyr complex delegate only pleasant tasks and retain for themselves all of the disagreeable ones. This approach leaves a gap in the development of subordinates and is likely to make the manager’s job more stressful than it should be. Delegation should include both pleasant and unpleasant tasks. The unpleasant tasks should be shared by subordinates or rotated among them to avoid perceptions of favoritism and inequity in work assignments.

- **Delegate tasks not central to the manager’s role.**

  Tasks that are symbolically important and central to a manager’s role should not be delegated. These responsibilities include such things as setting objectives and priorities...
for the work unit, allocating resources among subordinates, evaluating the performance of subordinates, making personnel decisions about pay increases and promotions for subordinates, directing the group’s response to a crisis, and various figurehead activities for which an appearance by the manager is expected (Mintzberg, 1973). When it is necessary to develop subordinate skills related to these responsibilities, another form of participation such as consultation and group decisions can be used rather than delegation. For example, strategic planning may be carried out in planning meetings in which subordinates provide ideas and suggestions, but the responsibility for strategic decisions is not delegated to individual subordinates.

How to Delegate

The success of delegation depends as much on how it is carried out as on what is delegated. The following guidelines are designed to minimize problems and avoid common pitfalls related to assignment of tasks and delegation of authority. The first four guidelines are for the initial meeting held to delegate responsibilities to a subordinate.

- **Specify responsibilities clearly.**

  When delegating, it is essential to make sure the subordinate understands the new responsibilities. Explain the results expected for a delegated task or assignment, clarify objectives and priorities, and inform the person about any deadlines that must be met. Check for comprehension by asking the subordinate to restate your expectations, or by questioning the subordinate about important aspects of the task. In the case of an inexperienced subordinate, you may want to ask the person to prepare action plans for you to review before they are implemented.

- **Provide adequate authority and specify limits of discretion.**

  Unless adequate resources are provided, the subordinate is unlikely to be successful in carrying out a delegated task. When assigning new responsibilities, determine the appropriate amount of authority needed by the subordinate to carry them out. Specify clearly the subordinate’s scope of authority and limits of discretion. Authority includes funds that can be committed, resources that can be used, decisions that can be made without prior approval, and agreements that can be negotiated directly with outsiders or other units in the organization.

- **Specify reporting requirements.**

  It is important for a subordinate to understand the types of information that must be reported, how often reports are expected, and the manner in which progress will be monitored (e.g., written reports, progress review meetings, presentations in department meetings, formal performance evaluations). The frequency and timing of progress reviews will depend on the nature of the task and the competence of the subordinate. More frequent checking is appropriate for critical tasks with high exposure and high cost of mistakes, and for subordinates who lack experience and confidence. As a subordinate demonstrates competence in doing delegated tasks, the frequency of reporting can be reduced. Progress reports should emphasize results, but the means for accomplishing delegated tasks should not be ignored entirely. It is important to ensure use of procedures that are legal, ethical, and consistent with organizational policy.
• **Ensure subordinate acceptance of responsibilities.**

If delegation is to be successful, the subordinate must accept the new assignments and be committed to carrying them out. In some cases acceptance is not a problem, because the assignments are interesting and important for the subordinate’s career advancement. However, a subordinate may be reluctant to admit doubts and concerns about new assignments. It is useful to allow the subordinate to participate in determining what tasks will be assigned and how much authority will be delegated. With developmental delegation, it is useful to discuss how the delegated tasks are relevant to the person’s career advancement. If the subordinate lacks self-confidence, it is helpful to express confidence in the person’s ability to do a good job.

**How to Manage Delegation**

The next five guidelines describe steps the manager should take after delegating responsibilities to a subordinate. These steps help to ensure that delegation will be successful.

• **Inform others who need to know.**

People who are affected by the delegation and people whose cooperation and assistance are necessary for the subordinate to do the delegated tasks should be informed about the subordinate’s new responsibilities and authority. Unless informed about the delegation by you, these people may doubt the subordinate’s authority and ignore his or her requests and directions. The people who need to be informed may include other subordinates, subordinates of your subordinate, peers in other units, outsiders such as clients and suppliers, and your boss.

• **Monitor progress in appropriate ways.**

With delegated tasks, as with all tasks, it is important to monitor progress and provide feedback to the subordinate. It is difficult to achieve an optimal balance between control and delegation, and progress review meetings enable a manager to monitor subordinate progress without having to supervise too closely on a day-to-day basis. The subordinate is given considerable latitude to deal with problems without interference, yet is free to ask for advice and assistance whenever it is needed. When authority is delegated, a manager and subordinate should decide on the type of performance measures and progress indicators to collect.

• **Arrange for the subordinate to receive necessary information.**

It is usually best to have all detailed information about the subordinate’s performance flow directly to the subordinate, with less detailed summary information coming to the manager at less frequent intervals. However, in the case of developmental delegation with an inexperienced subordinate, detailed information may be collected more frequently to check closely on the progress of the subordinate. In addition to performance information, the subordinate will need various types of technical and general information to carry out the delegated tasks effectively. Keep the subordinate informed about changes that affect his or her plans and schedules. If possible, arrange for relevant technical information to flow directly to the subordinate and help the subordinate establish his or her own sources of essential information.
• **Provide support and assistance, but avoid reverse delegation.**

A manager should provide psychological support to a subordinate who is discouraged or frustrated, and encourage the person to keep going. For newly delegated tasks, it may be necessary to provide more advice and coaching about procedures for doing some aspect of the work. However, it is important to avoid reverse delegation, in which control is reasserted over a task that was previously delegated. When a subordinate asks for help with problems, he or she should be asked to recommend a solution. The manager can help the person evaluate whether the solution is feasible and appropriate.

• **Make mistakes a learning experience.**

It is important to recognize that mistakes are inevitable for delegated tasks. Mistakes and failures should be treated seriously, but the response should not be one of criticism and blame. Instead, the episode should become a learning experience for both parties as they discuss the reason for the mistake and identify ways to avoid similar mistakes in the future. If it becomes obvious that the subordinate does not know how to do some essential aspect of the work, the manager should provide additional instruction and coaching.

**Perceived Empowerment**

The theory and research reviewed earlier in this chapter examines power sharing and participation from the perspective of leader behavior, decision procedures, and the formal structure of the organization. The emphasis has been on what is done to allow more influence over work-related decisions and to create conditions that foster initiative and self-determination. Leader actions and decision processes are an important determinant of empowerment, but by themselves they do not explain when and why people will actually feel empowered. Additional insights can be gained by examining follower perceptions, needs, and values.

**Nature of Psychological Empowerment**

The term *psychological empowerment* describes how the intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy of people are influenced by leadership behavior, job characteristics, organization structure, and their own needs and values. One reason it is important to consider psychological processes is that participative practices and employee involvement programs do not necessarily reduce feelings of powerlessness or leave people feeling that their work is meaningful and worthwhile (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). For example, allowing people to determine how to do a trivial and demeaning task is unlikely to increase their feelings of self-worth and self-fulfillment. Delegating responsibility for a more significant task will not be empowering if people lack the skills and knowledge required to perform the task successfully and are worried about failure. The opportunity to elect a leader may do little to reduce feelings of powerlessness if the choice is between candidates who are equally unsatisfactory. Theories of psychological empowerment attempt to explain when and why efforts to empower people are likely to be successful.
Theories about the defining elements of psychological empowerment have been proposed by various scholars (e.g., Bowen & Lawler, 1992; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Kanter, 1983; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990), but as yet there has been only limited research on this question. A study by Spreitzer (1995) found support for the proposition that psychological empowerment includes four defining elements: (1) meaning, (2) self-determination, (3) self-efficacy, and (4) impact. A person will feel more empowered if the content and consequences of the work are consistent with a person’s values and ideals, the person has the capability to determine how and when the work is done, the person has high confidence about being able to do it effectively, and the person believes it is possible to have a significant impact on the job and work environment. The emphasis on these four elements links psychological empowerment to earlier theory and research on work motivation (e.g., Bandura, 1986; Shamir, 1991), job design (e.g., Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Fried & Ferris, 1987), participative leadership (e.g., Vroom & Jago, 1978; Sagie & Koslowsky, 2000), and organizational programs for employee involvement (e.g., Cotton, 1993; Lawler, 1986).

Empowerment Programs

Efforts to increase employee empowerment often involve organizational programs rather than just an individual leader’s actions with direct subordinates. A variety of different empowerment programs have been used, including self-managed teams (see Chapter 11), democratic structures and processes, and employee ownership of the company (Heller, 2000; Lawler, Mohrman, & Benson, 2001; Yukl & Becker, 2007; Yukl & Lepsinger, 2004). Some of these empowerment programs for organizations are described briefly.

Leader Selection and Assessment. More empowerment is likely when members elect their leaders for limited terms, which is a common practice in voluntary organizations, professional associations, and democratic political units (e.g., city councils, school boards, state legislatures). Most private business organizations have leaders who are appointed rather than elected, but some companies use a hybrid form of selection. The leaders are selected by a council of representatives who were elected by the members (c.f., de Jong & van Witteloostuijn, 2004). Regardless of how a leader is selected, the influence of members is greater when they participate actively in assessing leader performance, especially if they are able to remove a leader with unsatisfactory performance.

Democratic Decision Procedures. Empowerment is also increased when the formal procedures for making important decisions give members significant influence over these decisions. In some organizations the charter specifies that a meeting or referendum must be held to allow members to decide important matters by a majority vote. In large organizations where direct participation is not feasible, an alternate form of empowerment that is sometimes used is to have elected representatives from each major subunit on the governing council, or to allow lower-level members to elect one or more representatives to serve on the board of directors.
Shared Leadership Responsibilities. Empowerment is also increased when leadership responsibilities are shared by members of a small organization or team rather than invested in a single leader. One example is the growing use of self-managed teams in business organizations (see Chapter 11). The most extreme form of shared leadership occurs when all important decisions are made collectively, and leadership responsibilities for daily operations are distributed among the members and rotated frequently. This form of empowerment is most likely to be found in small employee-owned businesses, cooperatives, and voluntary organizations. An example of a “bossless organization” is provided by Vanderslice (1988) in her case study of the Moosewood Restaurant.

Moosewood is a small, collectively owned organization that has been financially sound for the 15 years it has existed. The restaurant has 18 members, and all of them are involved in making important decisions such as policy changes, selection and dismissal of members, financial issues, wages and benefits, and selection of suppliers. In addition, there are usually 4 to 6 temporary workers who are not involved in decision making but who may be accepted as regular members after a year of apprenticeship. Areas of responsibility are rotated among the members. The time an individual remains responsible for a particular job depends on the logical cycle of the task and the individual’s interest in doing it. All jobs are open to any member who wants to learn to do them, and members are encouraged to take a turn at every job. Job rotation spreads expertise and responsibility among collective members rather than lodging it in one or two managers. All jobs pay the same hourly rate, and income from the 15% service charge is shared by all members. Some power differences exist, but they are based on demonstrated expertise and commitment to the organization. Accountability is regulated through internalized values and group pressure. However, confronting a member about inappropriate behavior is still an unresolved problem.

Consequences of Empowerment

Potential benefits from empowerment have been identified by scholars (e.g., Block, 1987; Howard, 1998; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). The benefits include (1) stronger task commitment, (2) greater initiative in carrying out role responsibilities, (3) greater persistence in the face of obstacles and temporary setbacks, (4) more innovation and learning, and stronger optimism about the eventual success of the work, (5) higher job satisfaction, (6) stronger organizational commitment, and (7) less turnover. Some potential costs and risks have also been identified (e.g., Baloff & Doherty, 1989; Bowen & Lawler, 1992; Eccles, 1993). Examples include (1) higher costs for selection and training, (2) higher labor costs for skilled employees,
(3) inconsistent service quality, (4) expensive giveaways and bad decisions by some employees, (5) customer feelings of inequity about unequal treatment, (6) opposition by middle managers who feel threatened, and (7) conflicts from raising employee expectations beyond what top management is willing to concede.

As yet only a few studies have examined the consequences of psychological empowerment (e.g., Howard & Wellins, 1994; Koberg, Boss, Senjem, & Goodman, 1999; Konczak, Stelly, & Trusty, 2000; Spreitzer, 1995; Spreitzer, Kizilos, & Nason, 1997). One example of this research is a survey of 406 manufacturing companies in the UK (Waterson, Clegg, Bolden, Pepper, Warr & Wall, 1999): 22 percent of the companies reported little or no improvement in overall performance, 32 percent claimed moderate gains, and 46 percent reported substantial performance gains. In general, the results in research on effects of empowerment programs have been mixed and inconclusive.

It is too early to reach any firm conclusions about the consequences of empowerment programs, but the combined evidence from these studies and related lines of research suggest that the potential benefits are unlikely to occur unless conditions are favorable. The conditions that can strengthen or weaken feelings of empowerment have been suggested by a number of writers (e.g., Argyris, 1998; Forrester, 2000; Gratton, 2004; Randolph, 1995; Spreitzer, 1996), and they include characteristics of the organization, the members, and the national culture. These conditions are listed in Table 4-7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Unfavorable</th>
<th>Favorable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization structure</td>
<td>High centralization and formalization</td>
<td>Very decentralized, low formalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive strategy</td>
<td>Low cost, standard product or service</td>
<td>Customized, highly differentiated product/service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task design and technology</td>
<td>Simple, repetitive task and reliable technology</td>
<td>Complex, nonroutine task, unreliable technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of relation with customers/clients</td>
<td>Brief transactions during a short time interval</td>
<td>Repeated interaction in a continuing relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant cultural values in the organization</td>
<td>Reliable, efficient operations without any mistakes</td>
<td>Flexibility, learning, and participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee traits</td>
<td>Low achievement motivation, external locus of control, and emotional stability</td>
<td>High need for achievement, internal locus of control, and emotional stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee ability</td>
<td>Unskilled, inexperienced</td>
<td>Highly skilled professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee tenure</td>
<td>Temporary employee</td>
<td>Regular, continuing employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee ownership and rewards for success</td>
<td>None or very little</td>
<td>Employees are shareholders or co-owners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee involvement programs</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Extensive programs strongly supported by top management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual trust</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 4 • Participative Leadership, Delegation, and Empowerment

TABLE 4-8 Guidelines for Empowering

- Clarify objectives and explain how the work supports them.
- Involve people in making decisions that affect them.
- Delegate responsibility and authority for important activities.
- Take into account individual differences in motivation and skills.
- Provide access to relevant information.
- Provide resources needed to carry out new responsibilities.
- Change management systems to be consistent with empowerment.
- Remove bureaucratic constraints and unnecessary controls.
- Express confidence and trust in people.
- Provide coaching and advice when requested.
- Encourage and support initiative and problem solving.
- Recognize important contributions and achievements.
- Ensure that rewards are commensurate with new responsibilities.
- Ensure accountability for the ethical use of power.

How Leaders Can Increase Empowerment

The theory and research on psychological empowerment makes it evident that participative leadership and delegation are not the only types of leadership behavior that can make people feel empowered. Other types of leadership behavior can directly affect psychological empowerment, and these behaviors may also enhance the effects of participative leadership and delegation (Forrester, 2000; Howard, 1998; Konczak et al., 2000). Table 4-8 provides guidelines on how to empower subordinates. The behaviors are explained in more detail in other parts of this book.

Summary

Participative leadership involves efforts by a manager to encourage and facilitate participation by others in making decisions that would otherwise be made by the manager alone. Participation can take many forms, ranging from revising a tentative decision after receiving protests, to asking for suggestions before making a decision, to asking an individual or group to jointly make a decision, to allowing others to make a decision subject to the manager’s final authorization. Involving others in making decisions is often necessary for getting decisions approved and implemented in organizations. Even when it is not necessary to consult with others before making a decision, a manager may still prefer to do so in order to obtain the potential benefits, which include better decisions and greater acceptance of decisions.

Many studies have been conducted on the outcomes of using participation, but the research evidence is not sufficiently strong and consistent to draw any firm conclusions. Lack of consistent results about the effectiveness of participative leadership probably means that various forms of participation are effective in some situations but not in others. Participation is unlikely to be effective if potential participants do not share the leader’s objectives, if they do not want to take responsibility for helping to make decisions, if they distrust the leader, or if time pressures and the dispersion of
participants make it impractical to consult with individuals or hold group meetings. Group forms of participation are unlikely to be effective unless the manager has sufficient skill in managing conflict, facilitating constructive problem solving, and dealing with common process problems that occur in groups (see Chapter 11).

Vroom and Yetton developed a model of participative leadership to help managers identify the appropriate decision procedures in different situations. The situational variables are characteristics of the decision situation that determine whether a particular decision procedure will increase or decrease decision quality and acceptance. The model was extended by Vroom and Jago to include other criteria and aspects of the situation. Research on these models is limited, but it provides moderate support for them. The findings suggest that managers are likely to be more effective if they use decision procedures that are appropriate for the situation.

Delegation involves the assignment of new responsibilities and additional authority to individual subordinates or to a team. The potential benefits of delegation include better decisions, increased subordinate motivation, more satisfying jobs for subordinates, development of subordinate skills, and reduction of work overload for a manager. Lack of confidence in subordinates and desire to consolidate power prevent some managers from delegating as much as they should. Research on the consequences of using delegation is still limited, but the findings suggest it can be effective when used for appropriate decisions and carried out in a competent manner.

Psychological empowerment involves a combination of meaningful work, high self-efficacy, self-determination, and ability to influence relevant events. Leaders can affect the psychological empowerment of followers in many ways, and participative leadership and delegation are only two of the relevant behaviors. Whether an employee feels powerful or powerless also depends on aspects of the job, the organization, and the employees. Several types of programs have been used by organizations to increase member empowerment, but the results from research on these programs are mixed.

### Review and Discussion Questions

1. What are the potential benefits and risks of using participative leadership?
2. What have we learned from the research on participative leadership?
3. What determines the success of a participative decision?
4. Briefly explain the Vroom-Yetton normative model of leadership and the Vroom-Jago extension of the model.
5. How useful are these prescriptive models if a leader does not know the answers to some of the situational questions?
6. What are some guidelines on how to encourage participation?
7. What are the potential benefits and risks of delegation?
8. Under what conditions is delegation most likely to be successful?
9. What are some guidelines on what to delegate?
10. Why do some managers find it so difficult to delegate or share power?
11. What are essential elements of psychological empowerment?
12. What are some facilitating conditions for employee empowerment?
13. What types of leadership behavior contribute to high empowerment?
CASE

Echo Electronics

Paul Sanchez is the production manager for Echo Electronics, a small company that makes and distributes communications equipment. Paul’s direct subordinates are the supervisors of the four production departments in the company’s manufacturing plant. Six months ago, the engineering manager at Echo Electronics proposed a plan to install new computerized workstations to increase productivity in the plant. It seemed to be a good idea to Paul, and he welcomed the change. The CEO also approved the plan, and the new equipment was installed immediately.

Three months later, Paul was surprised and disappointed to find that the expected increase in productivity did not occur. In fact, productivity and quality actually decreased. The marketing manager told Paul that several of their best customers complained about receiving Echo equipment that was defective. Paul does not believe that the problem lies with the new workstations. Technicians from the firm that built the workstations recently checked them and found that they were operating properly. Paul talked to someone at another company that uses the workstations, and his contact reported that they were having great success with them.

When Paul discussed the problem with his four production supervisors, he found that they shared his concern but did not agree among themselves about the cause of the problem. Reasons given for the decline in performance included poor design of the workstations, inadequate training of the production workers who operate them, and lack of financial incentives for increasing productivity. The supervisors also told Paul that the production workers have strong feelings about the workstations. Morale declined, and two employees quit because they were upset about the changes made in the way the work is done.

This morning Paul received a phone call from the CEO who just received the production figures for last month and was calling to express concern about them. The CEO indicated that the problem was Paul’s to solve, but he must take immediate steps to deal with it. The CEO wants to know by next week what steps Paul will take to reverse the decline in productivity and product quality.

SOURCE: Adapted from a case by Timothy R. Hinkin and used with his permission.
Kathy McCarthy was the manager of a production department in Alvis Corporation, a firm that manufactures office equipment. The workers are not unionized. After reading an article that stressed the benefits of participative management, Kathy believed that these benefits could be realized in her department if the workers were allowed to participate in making some decisions that affect them. Kathy selected two decisions for an experiment in participative management.

The first decision involved vacation schedules. Each summer the workers are given two weeks vacation, but no more than two workers can go on vacation at the same time. In prior years, Kathy made this decision herself. She would first ask the workers to indicate their preferred dates, then she considered how the work would be affected if different people were out at the same time. It was important to plan a vacation schedule that would ensure adequate staffing for all of the essential operations performed by the department. When more than two workers wanted the same time period, and they had similar skills, she usually gave preference to the workers with the highest productivity.

The second decision involved production standards. Sales had been increasing steadily over the past few years, and the company recently installed some new equipment to increase productivity. The new equipment would make it possible to produce more with the same number of workers. The company had a pay incentive system in which workers received a piece rate for each unit produced above a standard amount. Separate standards existed for each type of product, based on an industrial engineering study conducted a few years earlier. Top management wanted to readjust the production standards to reflect that fact that the new equipment made it possible for the workers to earn more without working any harder. The savings from higher productivity were needed to help pay for the new equipment.

Kathy called a meeting of her 15 workers an hour before the end of the work day and explained that she wanted them to discuss the two issues and make recommendations. Kathy figured that the workers might be inhibited about participating in the discussion if she were present, so she left them alone to discuss the issues. Besides, Kathy had an appointment to meet with the quality control manager. Quality problems had increased after the new equipment was installed, and the industrial engineers were studying the problem in an attempt to determine why quality had gotten worse rather than better.

When Kathy returned to her department just at quitting time, she was surprised to learn that the workers recommended keeping the standards the same. She had assumed they knew the pay incentives were no longer fair and would set a higher standard. The worker speaking for the group explained that their base pay had not kept up with inflation and the higher incentive pay restored their real income to its prior level.

QUESTIONS

1. What actions could Paul have taken to prevent the problem?
2. What steps should Paul take now to deal with the problem?
On the vacation issue, the group was deadlocked. Several of the workers wanted to take their vacations during the same two week period and could not agree on who should go. Some workers argued that they should have priority because they had more seniority, while others argued that priority should be based on productivity, as in the past. Because it was quitting time, the group concluded that Kathy would have to resolve the dispute herself. After all, wasn’t that what she was being paid for?

SOURCE: Copyright © 1987 by Gary Yukl

QUESTIONS

1. Were the two decisions appropriate for a group decision procedure according to the Vroom-Yetton model?

2. What mistakes were made in using participation, and what could have been done to avoid the difficulties the manager encountered?

3. Were these two decisions appropriate ones for introducing participation into the department?