

Many of the basic ideas and the terminology for Values in Action presented in these workshop materials were originally developed in creative partnership by Mark D. Bennett and Joan McIver Gibson and published in *A Field Guide to Good Decision: Values in Action* by Mark D. Bennett and Joan McIver Gibson © 2006 Praeger.

Since the publishing of this joint work, I have modified significant amounts of the original content, added new content, and changed the format and graphics. While this revised version is copyrighted by Decision Resources, Inc., I acknowledge the valuable contribution of Joan McIver Gibson to earlier versions of this work.

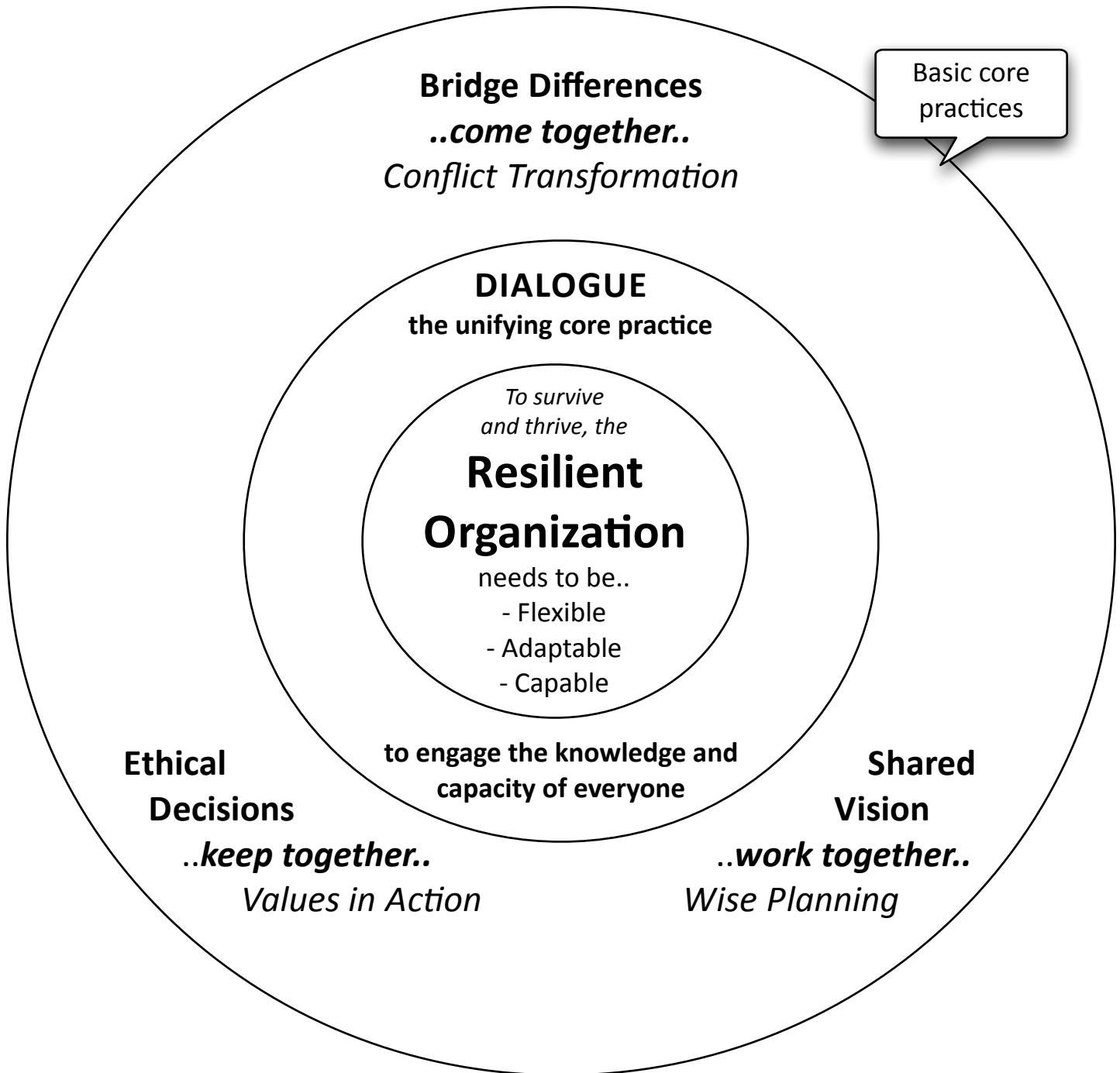
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At Decision Resources, Inc. we are committed to sharing these decision-making tools in order to encourage ethical decision making and organizational integrity.

If you want to present or share these tools with others, copies of this workbook are available and affordable. In addition there is a Facilitator's Guide and Trainer's Guide. For more information go to www.decisionres.com

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Mark D. Bennett, April, 2011



*The occasion is piled high with
difficulty and we must rise with
the occasion.*

Abraham Lincoln, US President

Resilient.... able to *..recover quickly
from setbacks ..spring back quickly into
shape after being bent or stretched.*

The Importance of Values in Action (VIA)



When a difficult choice presents itself, people need traction. Traction on the road to a good decision comes from deliberate, honest, and respectful talk about what matters. Leaders need to bring the language of values and ethics alive in every decision making conversation. Tough choices and good decisions demand nothing less.

VIA is a straightforward process for making and communicating decisions based on the most important values. A leader's integrity and credibility in the eyes of others come from a values driven process, and from transparency and honesty in communication.

It involves five steps, each focused on a key question designed to generate open, focused dialogue emphasizing the dimension of values and importance.

VIA is a well-tested approach to making important decisions in a way that clearly reflects the organization's mission and values, leading to greater support, acceptance, and durability.

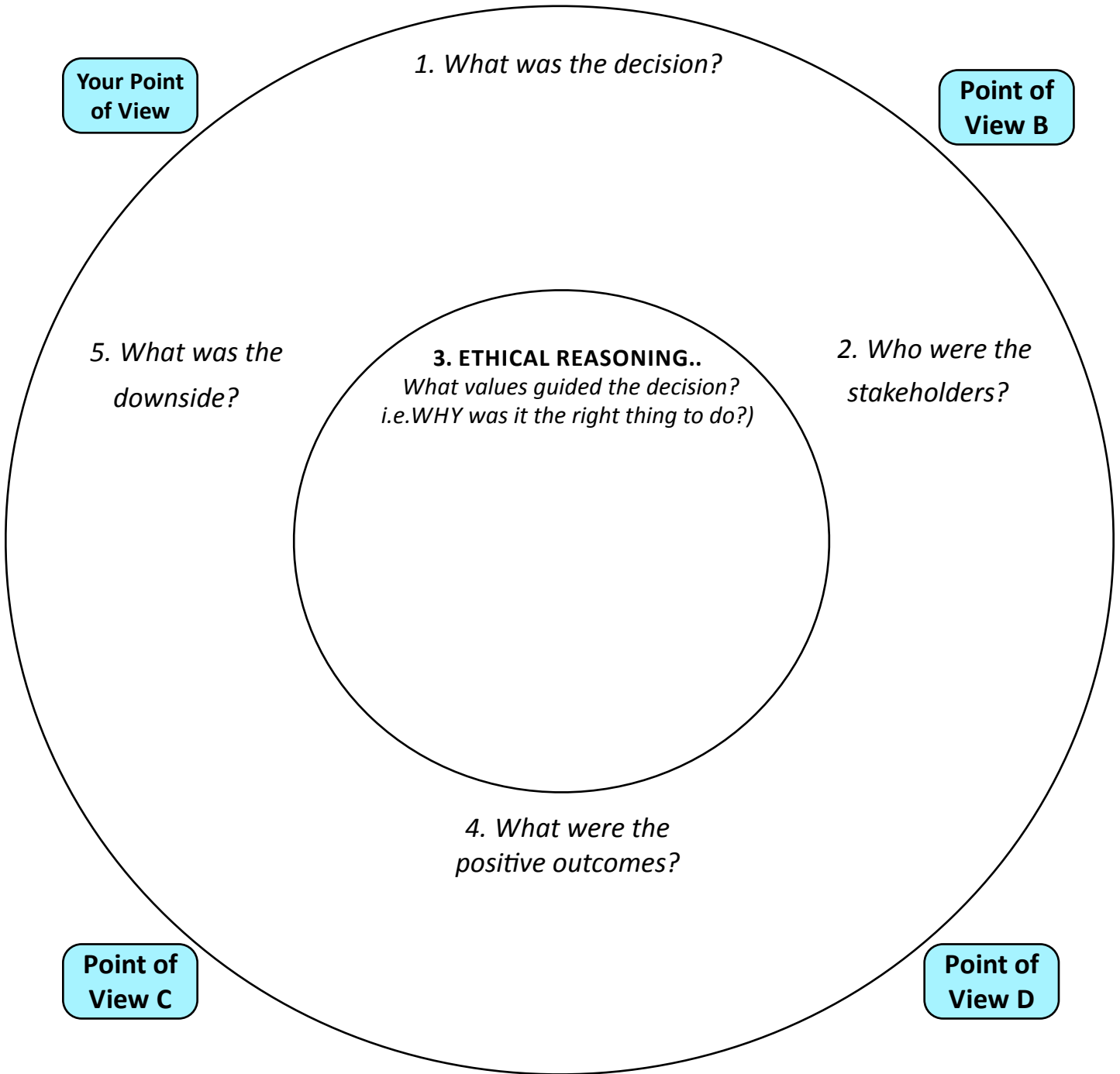
VIA's practical structure develops better decisions because it:

- Leads to meaningful dialogue about what is most important
- Adapts to limited time periods from fifteen minutes to two hours
- Engages the best thinking of participants to fit key values with available options
- Builds genuine understanding of the downside of a difficult decision
- Insures ethical clarity and conviction about the best course of action
- Prepares the decision-maker to credibly communicate to stakeholders.

*The house of delusions is cheap to build
but drafty to live in.*

A.E. Houseman, Scholar and Poet

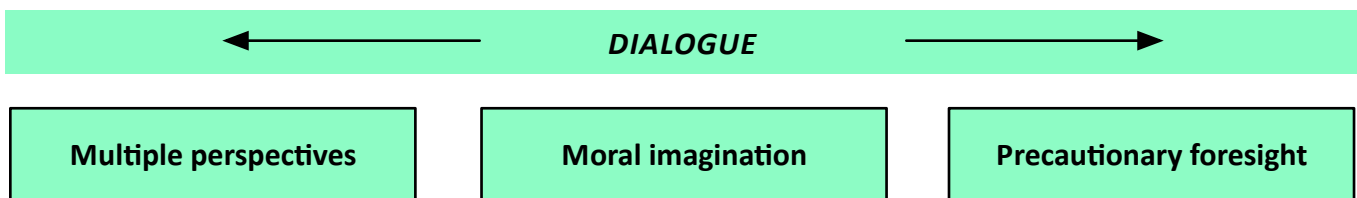
Assessing the Ethical Structure of a Decision



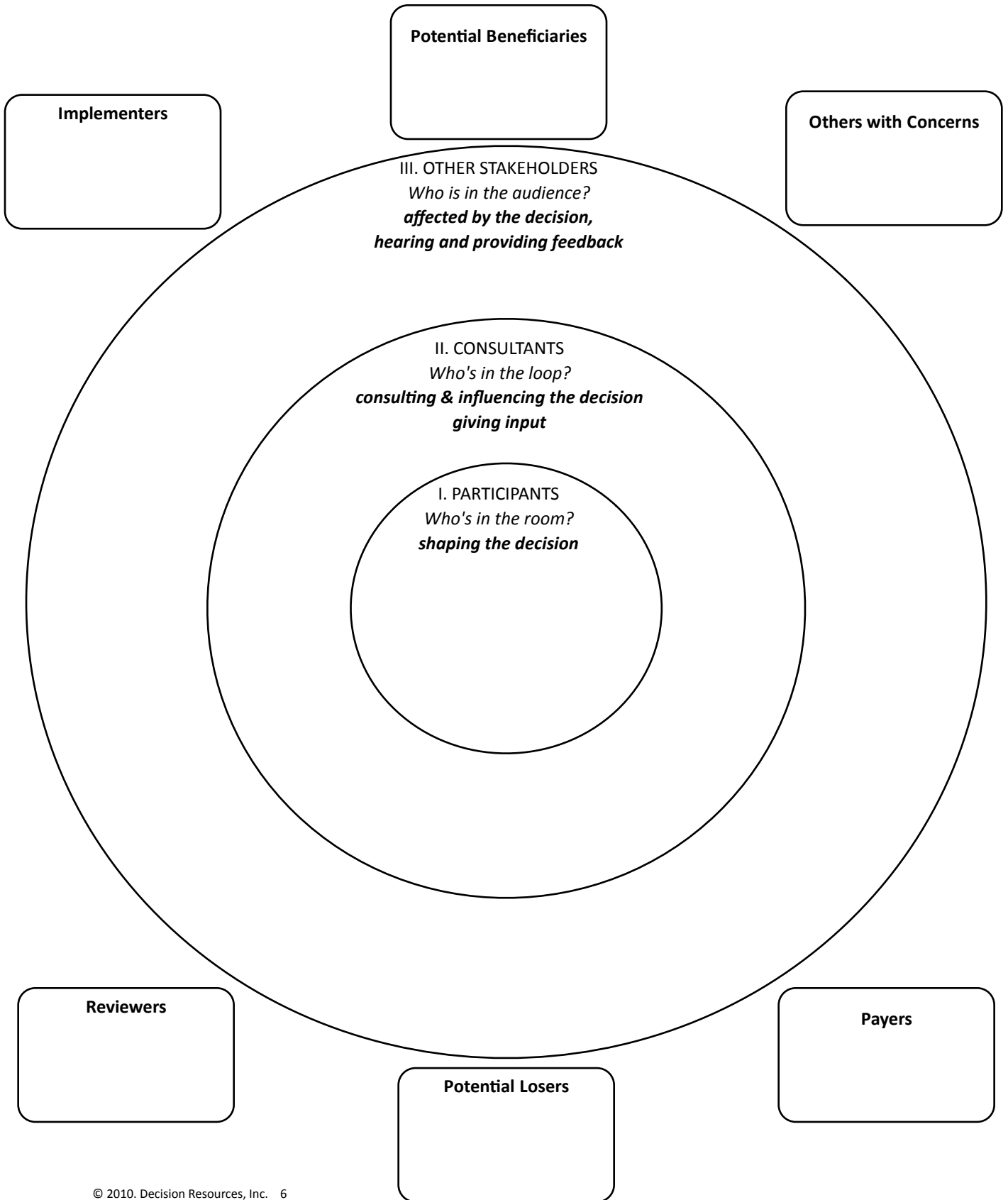
Values in Action: Five Steps to Decision Integrity



Step	Question(s)	Activities	Result
1. Clarify Perspective	<i>What point of view do I bring to this decision?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stepping back Framing 	More capacity to see clearly and listen well
2. Comprehend What Matters	<i>What is important to me, the organization, and others?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying stakeholders Listing values 	Improved understanding of the range of values
3. Commit to Priorities	<i>What is MOST important that should guide this decision?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy Weighing 	Set of guiding values to point the way
4. Choose to Align Priority & Action	<i>Which option is the best fit with guiding values? What is the downside?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examining options Assessing risks 	Strong connection between guiding values and decision
5. Communicate the Decision Clearly	<i>How can I/we credibly convey the the decision to those who need to know?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transparent speech Telling the story 	Decision that merits the support and confidence of stakeholders



Stakeholder Decision Map



Values in Action: Decision-making Worksheet



Step/Question(s)

Notes

1. Clarify Perspective

What point of view do I bring to this decision?

- your first reaction
 - roles you play
 - related experiences
-

2. Comprehend What Matters

What is important to me, the organization, and others?

- Stakeholders? (use map)
 - Their values?
-

3. Commit to Priorities

What is MOST important that should guide this decision?

- WHY?
-

4. Choose to Align Priority and Action

Which option is the best fit with guiding values?

What is the downside?

5. Communicate the Decision Clearly

How can I/we credibly convey the decision to those who need to know?

- Audience(s)?
- Message?
- Channel?

Values in Action: Decision Summary Worksheet



Step/Question(s)

Notes

Decision: What is the decision?

Make a clear, direct statement

Responsibility: Who made the decision and is accountable?

If a group, provide names and titles.

Guiding Values and Benefits:

Why is this a good decision?

A strong summary of the ethical reasoning

Essential Background: Why this decision now? How did we get to this decision? Alternatives considered?

Set context to aid audience understanding. If appropriate to audience, begin the communication by setting context with this background. ('Telling the Story')

Downside: What difficulties and burdens will/could be experienced?

Level with stakeholders about potential negative consequences.

Be concrete and accountable about any plans to mitigate the downside.

Consider communication approach: sequence; style; audience(s); channel. (see Communication Guide)

Values in Action: Variations in Time and Scope



Decision Resources

	Scope	Elements	Examples
TIME NEEDED ↑ 3-5+ hrs	Complex 5 steps <i>5 questions from one page VIA summary</i>	.. 10+ people to represent large # of stakeholders' perspectives .. Facilitator is essential .. Significant preparation needed .. 6-10 page briefing memo needed to provide key information, identify stakeholders, and present options .. Options require preliminary preparation with assessment of benefits and risks	.. High stakes policy issue .. Critical 'fork-in-the-road' e.g. starting/ending a major activity, closing a facility or line of business, change in mission focus, etc. .. Major resource allocation .. High profile controversy
1-2 hrs	Full 5 steps Formal	.. 6-8 people can represent stakeholder perspectives .. Facilitator is useful, but not essential .. Moderate preparation .. 2-4 page briefing memo adequate .. Options are clear and do not require preliminary preparation and risk assessment	.. Important policy issue .. Significant operational action with substantial stakeholder impacts .. Large resource allocation .. Challenging issue with key values in tension likely to be the subject of public discussion and speculation .. Decision that needs stakeholder buy-in and support to be successful
30-60 min	Informal Limited 3 steps <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is most important here that should guide the decision? 2. Which option best follows from what is most important? 3. How can I credibly tell others about this decision? 	.. Alone or with a few others .. No facilitator .. Little or no preparation... work with existing knowledge of the situation .. Invent options on the spot	.. Right vs. right decision requiring clear, credible communication .. Key personnel issue .. Moderate, but important discretionary resource allocation .. Crisis issue requiring prompt leadership response
5-15 min	On-the-Fly 2 steps <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is most important here that should guide the decision? 2. Which option best follows from what is most important? 	.. Alone or with a couple of others .. No facilitator .. Work with existing knowledge of the situation .. No time for more than a quick response after brief reflection about importance	.. Day-to-day RIGHT vs. RIGHT issues .. Emergency decisions that must be made 'on-the-spot' .. Small discretionary resource allocations that have symbolic importance

BOTTOM LINE... Credible, durable decisions that clearly communicate values in action

Implementing Values in Action in the Organization: Key Decisions



Situation Indicators of need for VIA dialogue

- Major '*fork in the road*,' e.g. closing a service/facility, establishing a policy for handling future issues or taking action that will set a precedent
- Significant *stakeholder impact* (real or perceived)
- *Likelihood of controversy*, debate, rumor, or misunderstanding
- Likely to *affect morale* in the organization
- Likely to generate *media coverage* affecting organization or leader reputation

Organization level

1. Decision type:
e.g. annual budget
allocation for capital

2. People: e.g. formal mtg.
of 5-10 people, small grp.
of 3-5, or individual

3. Time: how
long to consider
& make

4. Communication:
e.g. face-face, email,
formal announcement

Senior Leadership..

Board, Superintendent,
Associate
Superintendents

Operational Leadership..

Heads of major
departments and large
operational entities

Sector Leadership..

heads of divisions
within departments,
project and work
teams, first line
supervisors

Values in Action: The Path of Integration



Each organization has a particular history, current strategic challenges and cultural norms that shape behavior in decision making and communication. Review the map of the 'Ethical Organization: Values in Action' and consider these general ideas as you map out your organization's journey.

Leaders Must Model the Way

Firmly commit to a vision of success regarding the organization's integrity and ethics. Communicate the vision clearly.

Use each key decision as an opportunity to visibly demonstrate 'how we do things' in the organization.... listening to multiple perspectives.... effective communication to stakeholders....candid acknowledgment of impacts/burdens

Encourage and reward initiative in others who show commitment to the vision of an ethical organization

Discuss values and ethics during the hiring process for executive and operational leaders

Remove Organization Obstacles

Develop and implement a practical, values-based decision making process with the training and resources necessary to support its successful use.

Encourage upward use of important values (Agenda Item Summary) so subordinates feel safe in advocating for important values when recommendations are presented to leaders.

Demonstrate a commitment to respectful, participatory engagement when relating with stakeholders (dialogue, collaborative negotiation, partnering, facilitated meetings)

Provide an Accountability Structure

Include at least one evaluation measure regarding values-based decision making in the performance review of key subordinates

Include survey questions about the ethical behavior of leaders and managers in organizational performance surveys

Ask for feedback at all levels of the organization about the effectiveness and inclusiveness of key decision making

Encouraging Values-Based Recommendations (Agenda Item Summary)



Meeting Date:

Agenda Item #:

Topic:

Action Requested:

Action / Recommendation

What is the action requested/recommendation? (Use direct, unambiguous language.)

Responsibility

Who made the decision/recommendation?

Alternatives considered

What other options did you assess? (Identify for those who need to review your recommendation what else you considered and determined to be less desirable.)

Background

Why this decision now? (Give the audience sufficient context to understand the need for the decision.)

Guiding values, benefits, and metrics

Why is this a good decision? (Explain the organizational core values and other stakeholder values supporting the request/recommendation in concrete language; describe the intended positive outcome, and how we will know we have accomplished this.)

Downside

What is the “downside” of the action/ recommendation? (Be honest about the burdens on stakeholders and important values not receiving priority.)

Planning to Address Negative Consequences



When a decision-maker stops ignoring likely negative consequences of a decision, it is important to speak honestly and firmly about the approach to deal with the consequences. When the effort is half-hearted or insincere, the decision-maker's credibility is at risk.

→ Identify and commit to credible, concrete action to address the burden of the decision on others.

Steps to Take

- ✓ Be specific. Don't commit to more than you can do. Under-promise and over-deliver!
- ✓ What will be done? Who will do it? When will it happen?
- ✓ How will you communicate with others about the follow-up?
- ✓ What is your commitment about this action?

Make sure you DO NOT ..

- x Make vague, or general statements of what you intend to do
- x Use plans to postpone accountability
- x Communicate empathy without real commitment and action
- x Trivialize or 'low ball' the burden that others may experience

Chance favors the prepared mind..
Louis Pasteur, Scientist

I believe that we are solely responsible for our choices, and we have to accept the consequences of every deed, word, and thought throughout our lifetime.
Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, Psychiatrist

Importance

Credible communication of key decisions must reflect your core values. Many good decisions fail to gain acceptance because leaders do not communicate the guiding values and other information needed to understand the integrity of the decision.

Keep Your Audience In Mind

Consider their knowledge, expertise and background. Keep your communication simple and easy to understand.

- Think about their roles and their stake or interest. What will they want to know? What do they care about? How might they react?
- Remember non-verbal communication (voice tone, body language, facial expressions and gestures) when communicating face-to-face.

Think About the Medium and the Messenger

Determine the most effective way to reach your audience. A diverse audience will likely need multiple communication methods.

- Plan it out and be intentional about your choice and mix of communication methods.
- Communicate face-to-face as often as possible.
- Create opportunities for dialogue and engagement to insure true understanding, particularly when issues are complex or the impacts are significant.
- Pick the most appropriate person to deliver the communication, considering the scope and impact of the action along with trust and credibility issues.

Crafting Your Communication

Content

Answer the five questions on the Decision Summary Worksheet to provide the essential content you need for credible, effective communication.

Format

Think in "bite sizes." Pages and pages of continuous text can be ineffective. Break up your communication with subheads or sections to help your audience digest the information and more easily refer back to key points when needed.

Provide tools and resources

- If your audience includes people expected to carry the message to others, provide necessary background and instructions to help them do so effectively.
- If you plan to communicate more about the decision or recommendation in the future, let your audience know of your intention and timeframe.
- Always provide information on where individuals can go to get more details or background on the decision or recommendation.

Afterwards

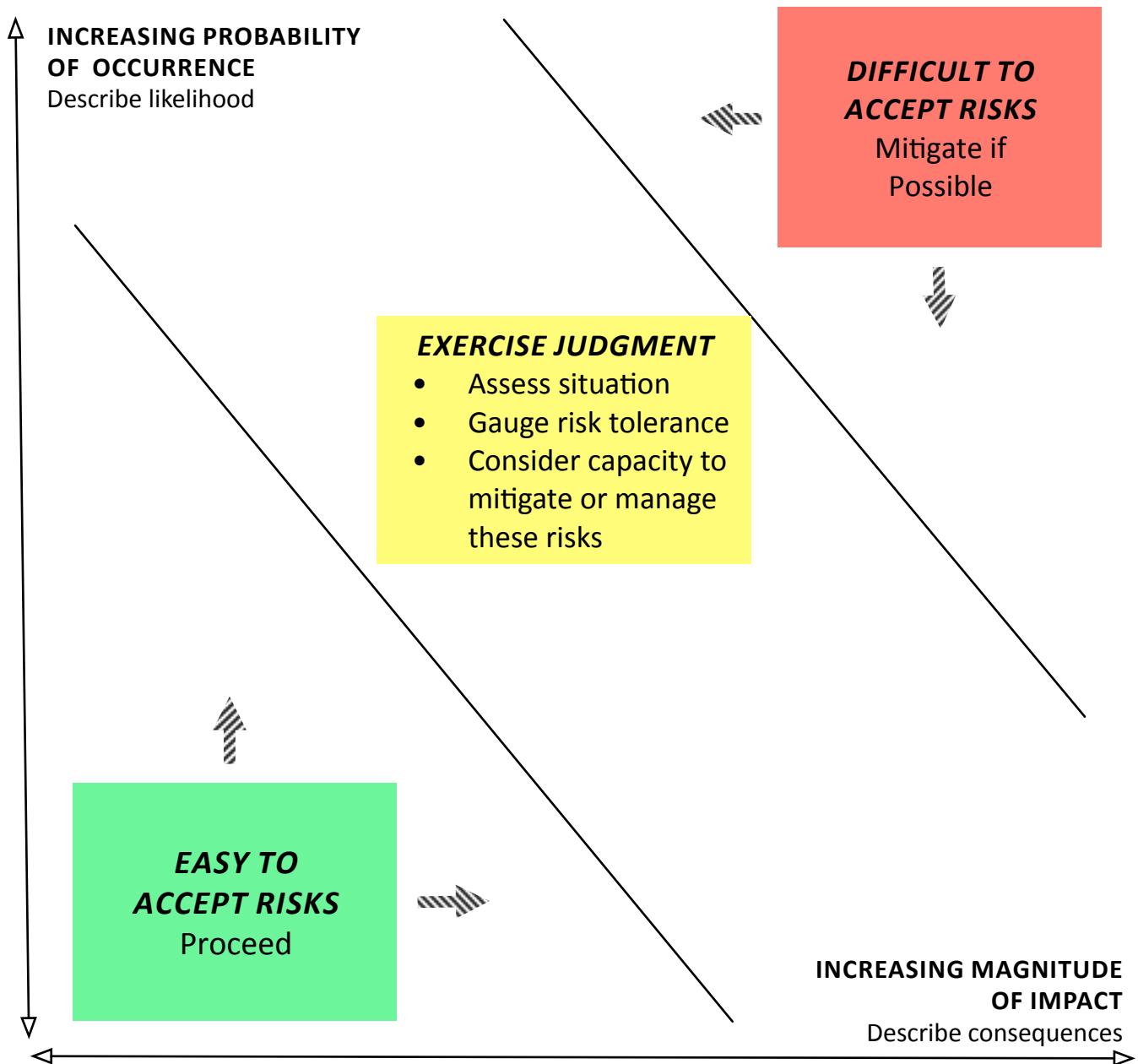
Listen Be responsive to reaction to the news. If you detect confusion or concern among your audience, create opportunities for ongoing dialogue or consider additional communications regarding the issue.

Learn Take time to gauge the effectiveness of your communications approach. Reflect on what worked and what didn't work in order to gain lessons for future VIA communication.

Risk Assessment Matrix



Honoring values requires understanding the significance of risks. The significance of a risk involves a determination of probability and impact. This matrix can be drawn on a whiteboard or flip chart to encourage specific characterization of possible risks. After characterizing risk, then consider risk tolerance and the capacity to do something about it.



Raising the Bar for Ethical Decision Making: Beyond Compliance



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Good decisions build trust

Concern for Stakeholders....

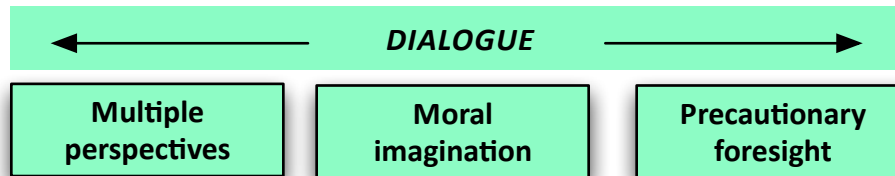
Insure open, honest consideration of the possible effect(s) of the decision upon the lives of individuals, groups, and organizations

Focus on Guiding Values....

Clarify the actual motivation for the decision and the guiding values that justify choosing the preferred option over alternatives

Straight Talk about the Decision....

Communicate transparently with people who need to know, including the ethical reasoning (values) supporting the decision, its intended benefits, and the downside (costs and risks).



Questionable decisions jeopardize trust

... Inattention to stakeholders concerns

... Failure to develop the ethical reasoning for the decision

... Failure to effectively communicate to others

Poor decisions perpetuate mistrust

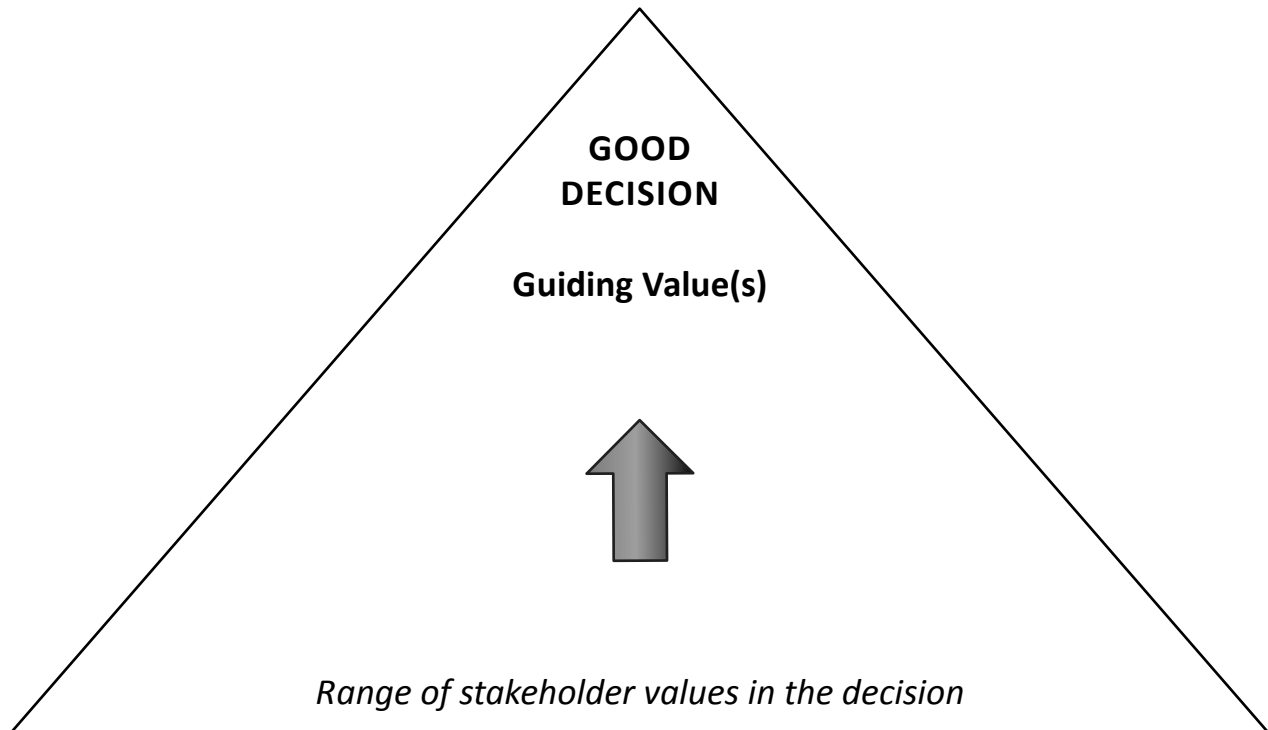
... Conflict of interest/appearance of impropriety

... Inadequate assessment of downside risks

... Intention to 'walk the line'

Bad Decisions create mistrust

Violate Law, Policy, or Regulation



Listen with the Heart....

consider the moral 'force' of others' perspectives that resonates within you as others advocate for their guiding values

Assess values relationships....

- determine which values are 'in tension'
- look for an overarching value that, in this situation, holds other values within it

Make it visual....

- use a flip chart or white board to list the possible guiding values
- use a 'balance sheet' or 'paired comparison analysis' to 'see' the value together

DEEPEN THE DIALOGUE...

Maintain the sense of openness (safety) and the time necessary to avoid groupthink (false consensus), explore relative importance from multiple perspectives and search for the best available option.