



11

Decisions

Learning objectives in this unit

- Talking about decision-making
- Participating in a discussion
- Being persuasive
- Using the first and second conditionals to talk about future possibilities

Activity

- The decision game

Starting point

1 Read how four people make decisions. Who are you most like?

'I trust my instinct. If I think too much about something, I often get it wrong.'

'Sometimes I rush into decisions too quickly and I often regret what I have done.'

'I make a list of the advantages and disadvantages of each option before I decide.'

'I ask people I trust what they think before I make up my mind. I find it hard to make decisions on my own.'

2 Is there a difference between the way you make decisions at work and at home?

Working with words | Decision-making

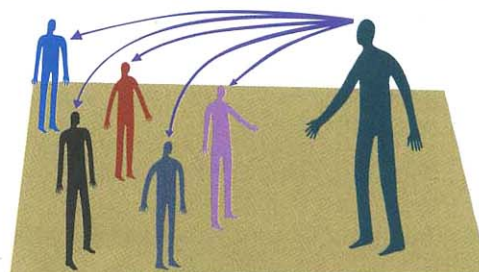
1 Read these texts and look at the diagrams of three decision-making processes. How are they different?

Suma is a large healthfood wholesaler. The company is a cooperative and practises a democratic decision-making process. All employees can take part in the decision-making.



Mitsubishi Motor Sales of America is changing the way it does business. 'We now have a completely collaborative process using a consensus decision-making model,' says Pierre Gagnon, Executive Vice President. This means that ideas are put forward by management, and are passed to other company employees to get their opinions.

At the Ford Motor Company, senior management members of the Strategy and Business Governance group decide on the direction of the company and make the necessary decisions.



2 45, 46, 47▶ Franz, Stella, and Aidan are talking about how decisions are made where they work. Listen and match them to the companies in 1.

3 Which decision-making process in 1 is closest to that in your place of work?

4 45▶ Listen to Franz again. Complete these words.

- 1 a discussion where different expert opinions are heard before a decision is made: *con*_____
- 2 an argument or open conflict: *con*_____
- 3 something you agree to accept or do in order to reach an agreement or end an argument: *con*_____
- 4 an agreement where you get part of what you want: *com*_____
- 5 general agreement between a group of people: *con*_____

5 46▶ Listen to Stella again. Match words from the list to definitions 1–9.

*go for brainstorm options in favour of majority
hierarchy backing put forward carry out*

- 1 the power and decision-making structure of an organization: _____
- 2 generate ideas imaginatively and energetically: _____
- 3 present / propose: _____
- 4 choices / alternatives: _____
- 5 support / approval: _____
- 6 most of the people: _____
- 7 for, not against: _____
- 8 choose: _____
- 9 perform / execute: _____

6 47▶ Match the verbs in A to the nouns in B to make phrases. There is sometimes more than one combination. Then listen again and compare your answers.

A	B
put forward	your mind
have	major decisions
express	a consensus
make	an idea
reach	confrontation
evaluate	a suggestion
carry out	a say
avoid	ideas
make up	an opinion

» For more exercises, go to Practice file 11 on page 122.

7 Work with a partner. Ask and answer questions using the phrases you made in 6.

Example: A When did you last put forward an idea that was accepted?

B I last put forward an idea that was accepted about a month ago.

8 Work in small groups. Have a discussion on these two topics.

- You have to decide on a dress code (what to wear at work) for all members of staff.
- Someone has suggested that everybody should have the same salary, whatever their position in the company or their responsibilities.

9 Tell the rest of the class how your discussion went.

- 1 What different stages did you follow?
- 2 How much confrontation, consensus, compromise, and consultation were involved?
- 3 Who put forward some good ideas and who expressed opinions?

Tip | How to introduce a question

To signal that you are going to ask a question, you can begin with *so*, *now*, or *and*.

So what happens if the workforce doesn't agree?

And does this lead to strikes?

Now how do you agree on something like that?

Meetings | Participating in a discussion



1 48▷ In 2002, Stefan, Ilse, and Patrick founded an independent computer games shop in the backstreets of a large historic town. It is popular with students and young people who live in the area. A new shopping centre is opening outside town and they are discussing whether they should move their business there. Listen to three extracts from their discussion. Who

- 1 thinks they should start to think about growing? ____
- 2 mentions how easy it will be to park at the shopping centre? ____
- 3 reminds everyone about who their customers are? ____
- 4 suggests keeping the shop in town as well as going to the shopping centre? ____
- 5 is worried that there won't be any well-located shops left in the shopping centre? ____
- 6 would like to wait and see what big retailers plan to do? ____
- 7 suggests asking for independent advice? ____

2 48▷ Listen again. Put phrases a–l below into categories 1–6.

- 1 Giving an opinion: _____
 - 2 Agreeing: _____
 - 3 Asking if there is a general agreement: _____
 - 4 Acknowledging what someone else says: _____
 - 5 Summarizing what someone has said: _____
 - 6 Asking for suggestions for future action: _____
- a Personally, I think we should ...
 - b I agree with you, ...
 - c I hear what you're saying, (but) ...
 - d That's a nice idea, (but) ...
 - e As far as I'm concerned, it's ...
 - f I take your point, (but) ...
 - g According to ...,
 - h So if I've understood you correctly, ...
 - i So, where do we go from here?
 - j So are we all agreed, then?
 - k Yes, that's fine with me.
 - l Me too.

» For more exercises, go to Practice file 11 on page 122.

3 Work with a partner. Take turns to choose a statement about using email from the list of pros and cons and exchange opinions. Use expressions from 2. You can add your own ideas if you want.

Example: A As far as I'm concerned, email is the best form of communication in business because it's so fast and inexpensive.

B I hear what you're saying but you don't always get an answer straight away.

A Yes, good point.

Pros: Email is the best form of communication in business because

- it's so fast and inexpensive
- you can send documents as attachments – no need to wait for the post
- you can pick up messages wherever you are in the world
- it gives you more time to think than a phone call does
- it means you have an accurate record of communications with a customer.

Cons: Email is not that great because

- you don't always get an answer straight away
- it's not as private as a letter
- you don't always have access to a computer
- it's not as personal as a handwritten letter
- it's easy to delete messages by mistake and therefore lose important information.

4 Work in small groups. A number of people where you work want your organization to become more ethical and democratic. Have a discussion on these proposals and decide whether to accept them or not.

- 1 All decisions will be made democratically using a 'works parliament'. Each member of staff will have one vote for every year they have worked at the firm (with a maximum of five votes).
- 2 For the health of employees, from now on the staff restaurant will only serve sugar-free soft drinks, decaffeinated coffee, and vegetarian meals.
- 3 As parking at the company is limited, only cars which carry at least two employees will be permitted to park.
- 4 At the moment, the highest paid worker earns ten times more than the lowest paid. This will be reduced to a four-to-one ratio.

 » Interactive Workbook » Email

Key expressions

Giving your opinion

Personally, I think / feel ...
 I think we should ...
 In my opinion, ...
 From my point of view, ...
 As I see it, ...
 As far as I'm concerned, ...

Giving someone else's opinion

X says that we should ...
 According to X ...
 X maintains that ...

Agreeing / disagreeing

I agree.
 Exactly.
 Absolutely.
 I couldn't agree more.
 I don't agree.
 Yes, but ...
 I'm not (quite) sure about that ...
 That's fine with me.

Acknowledging what someone else says


Yes, good point.
 I take your point.
 I hear what you're saying, ...
 I can understand what you're saying.
 Yes, fair enough.

Checking understanding

So what you're saying is ...
 So if I've followed what you've said, ...
 So if I understand you correctly, ...

Reaching a decision

Does everyone agree?
 Are we all agreed?
 Is everyone happy with that?

 » Interactive Workbook
 » Phrasebank

Practically speaking | How to be persuasive

1 49▶ Listen to these extracts and note down the four phrases the speakers use to sound more persuasive.

- | | |
|---------|---------|
| 1 _____ | 3 _____ |
| 2 _____ | 4 _____ |

2 Match the phrases in 1 to meanings a–d.

- a I am about to mention something important we shouldn't forget. ____
- b Be reasonable. ____
- c I am going to tell the truth as I see it. ____
- d We need to be realistic. ____

3 Work with a partner or in small groups. Discuss the following statements. Give yourself a point for each time you use one of the phrases from 1.

- First impressions are nearly always the most reliable.
- Private health insurance creates inequality among people who are ill.
- All workers should receive a share of the company's profits.
- Two heads are always better than one.

Language at work | First and second conditionals

1 Read this email. What advice do you think Jeff will give?

Dear Jeff

I am writing to you to ask for your expert advice. We've got the opportunity to relocate our computer games shop to a new out-of-town shopping centre. If we ¹*had / have* more money, we would keep the shop in town and open up at the shopping centre too. However, that's not an option for us. If we ²*don't keep / won't keep* this shop, we'll lose most of our current customers who are local students without cars. However, if we move, we ³*would / will* have a larger base of potential (and wealthy) customers.

We'd greatly appreciate it if you could advise us on this matter. Please could you let us know if you are able to do so asap.

Many thanks and best wishes

Ilse

2 Choose the correct answer from the words in *italics* in the email in 1.

3 Match sentences a–c below to meanings 1–3.

1 Something that might or might not happen and the result: ____

2 Something that is impossible or very unlikely to happen: ____

3 Something that is likely to happen: ____

a If we *had* more money, we *would keep* the shop.

b If we *don't keep* this shop, we'll lose most of our current customers.

c If we *move*, we *will have* a larger base of potential customers.








4 Which word / phrase in *italics* in 1–2 means 'just imagine'? Which means 'if not'?

1 They won't be able to get to the shopping centre *unless* they have a car.

2 *What if* we kept the shop here and opened up in the shopping centre?

» For more information and exercises, go to Practice file 11 on page 123.

5 Work with a partner. Complete 1–7 using the meter on the left which tells you how likely the event is (*I* = impossible / unlikely, *C* = certain / likely).

- 1  1 If I _____ (win) salesperson of the month competition, I _____ (go) to Prague to celebrate.
- 2  2 If our bosses _____ (listen to) us more it _____ (avoid) so much confrontation.
- 3  3 We _____ (understand) her arguments better if she _____ (explain) herself more clearly.
- 4  4 If people _____ (cooperate) more willingly, we _____ (make) faster progress.
- 5  5 What _____ (you / do) when you _____ (retire)?
- 6  6 What _____ (you / do) if they _____ (offer) you the job in New York?
- 7  7 How _____ (you / react) if your company _____ (relocate) to the other side of the country?

6 Work with a partner. Discuss what you will / would do if your

- company is / was relocated to another part of the country or abroad?
- firm is / was taken over by its main competitor?
- partner gets / got a new job a long way from home / abroad?
- boss's job becomes / became vacant?

The decision game

Work in small groups. You work at the Central Bank, a British bank with branches in most towns and cities. All of your call centres are based in the UK, in areas of high unemployment. You must make a series of decisions which will affect the future of these call centres. Work together and make your first decision by choosing option **a** or **b**. Start at **1**. Follow the instructions.

Senior management want you to cut costs and improve profitability. In India, call centre workers are paid five times less than in the UK. You decide to

- a** keep the call centres in the UK and accept higher costs. **Go to 6.**
- b** investigate more fully the cost and benefits of moving the call centres. **Go to 2.**

Shareholders complain that you are less profitable than rival banks. They are still putting pressure on you to cut costs. You decide to

- a** please shareholders by closing some less profitable branches. **Go to 9.**
- b** organize a newspaper campaign explaining to the public why you want to keep the call centre jobs in the UK. **Go to 4.**

Your negotiations with the union have reached a crossroads. The union wants to reduce UK job losses to a minimum. You decide to

- a** keep just 150 UK call centre jobs and risk a strike. **Go to 14.**
- b** keep 400 UK jobs which will satisfy the union. **Go to 5.**

If you close the UK call centres, 1,000 jobs will be lost. You do not want to cause unnecessary panic because you are still at the investigation stage. You decide to

- a** be open about your plans. **Go to 8.**
- b** keep your plans confidential for the moment. **Go to 15.**

Customers are even angrier when they receive your letter. They don't care what your motives are. You decide to

- a** ignore the complaints. **Go to 13.**
- b** invest more money in staff training. **Go to 3.**

Union negotiations have been successful. Both sides have compromised. You have agreed to keep 250 UK jobs. The bank offers you a tough new mission which involves closing other unprofitable branches. You decide to

- a** accept their tough new mission. **Go to 10.**
- b** stay where you are, happy that you have survived a difficult moment. **Return to 1 or end here.**

The India call centre is now a success and complaints have dropped. However, an Indian worker now costs a third as much as a UK worker and soon will cost half as much. You will now have to look for a cheaper alternative or think of other places where costs might be cheaper. **Return to 1 or end here.**

UK call centre employees have heard about your possible plans to go to India. They want full consultation with the union. You decide to

- a** involve the union and discuss the plans with them. **Go to 11.**
- b** ignore the union and go ahead with your plans. **Go to 14.**

Angry customers contact Head Office and name you as personally responsible for the problems. Senior managers are happy to use you as a scapegoat. You are moved to manage a small branch in the countryside. It is the end of your ambitions. **Return to 1 or end here.**

A newspaper has run a campaign praising you as the patriotic bank. This is good for your image, but means that your hands could be tied in the future. **Return to 1 or end here.**

Your plan to close smaller branches will cost 500 jobs. This causes protest from the union and from customers who live near the small branches. You decide to

- a** carry on with the closures. **Go to 10.**
- b** reconsider other ways of cutting costs, including the call centre option. **Go to 2.**

There have been three one-day strikes in selected branches. You decide to

- a** face up to the union and refuse to change your position. **Go to 13.**
- b** re-open negotiations with the union. **Go to 12.**

Now you have solved the union problems, the call centre is going ahead. However, UK customers say there are often communication problems with the Indian-based call handlers. You decide to

- a** ask senior management to invest more money in staff training. **Go to 3.**
- b** send a letter to customers explaining the need to set up in India. **Go to 7.**

Going ahead with the branch closures loses the bank several thousand customers and gets a lot of negative publicity. You lose your job! **Return to 1 or end here.**

Someone has leaked the story about the India plans to the union. You are attacked in the press as an exporter of British jobs. You decide to

- a** deny everything and go ahead with the plans in secret. **Go to 14.**
- b** open up negotiations with the union. **Go to 11.**