be true. This flowchart should be used as a process, not necessarily as a specific model for producing a consensus decision, except in circumstances where consensus is an absolute requirement.

Therefore a model is needed to clarify what level of involvement each person has in the decision making process (Bridges & Mitchell's "what's my *Part*"), in relation to any issue. The Decision Making Grid is a model that can be used to clarify each person's role in any decision making process.

It has already been stated that when people know what *Part* they play in a *Plan* that adequately addresses their concerns, they will contribute more to the good of the whole, and not spend so much time fighting with co-workers and management to protect their own needs.

The common-sense logic behind using the Decision Making Grid

- People will use their power to support their needs. According to Sandra Ramey, 'Some facets of power identified are "personal power", which is earned by experience and respect as a faculty member; and "position power", which is implied' by the authority given to that person's title. (Ramey, S.).
- If I don't have control (*position power*), I must at least know that my needs and concerns are understood (*personal power*) (CBAM).
- If I am uncertain whether my needs and concerns will be addressed, I may use my "*personal power*" to reach beyond my position's sphere of influence. This leads to gossip, cliques, and political power struggles, and inhibits open communication.
- If I have confidence that leaders will take my concerns into consideration, I can openly give recommendations that reach beyond my "*position power*," and focus myself on the work that is within my sphere of influence.

The Decision Making Grid identifies six kinds of influences that a person might have on a decision. These include: [(Blank) -- May recommend or suggest, (I) Must be informed, (C) Must be consulted, (P) Must participate, (V) Veto power. (A) Authority to make decision]. (Schmuck, et al., 1972) The Grid provides a procedure to clarify what influence each person would have in the various types of decisions that are made by the group, so that everyone knows what role he or she plays *(position power).*

This Decision Making Grid would not replace an organizational chart. It would not replace work-flow processes. The Grid enhances these to clarify for each individual the "*position power"* he or she has in the decision process. Such models are useful to guide leaders in building an atmosphere of inclusion in decision making, while still creating a clear chain of command that produces timely results.

Case Study
An educational organization put together a diverse team of specialists to develop training programs. This team included a Psychologist (Psych), a school administrator (Admin), a script writer (Writer), and the team leader (Lead) who was also the company's Educational Department Director with authority over the team (*position power*).

The Writer wrote a first draft, others added their input, and then they would meet to discuss and edit. The process was confusing at first because different people had different objectives, and different areas of specialty that they wanted emphasized. Therefore it took a long time to produce a product.

The team agreed to create a Decision-Making Grid to clarify each person's involvement at each stage in the development of the product. A work process chart showed each stage in the process of creating the educational material, from outlining objectives to writing first drafts, to editing for various factors as age and school appropriateness, and finally for grammar.

Educational Team's Decision-Making Grid

	Lead	Admin	Pscyh	Writer
Objectives	A	A	V	V
1st Draft	C	C	C	A
Techniques	P	P	V	A
Age	A	A	V	I
School	V	A	C	C
Confidential	C	C	A	C
Grammar	A	__	__	__

[(Blank) -- May recommend or suggest, (I) Must be informed, (C) Must be consulted, (P) Must participate, (V) Veto power, (A) Authority to make decision]

The team agreed to seek consensus on development of the program content, while still recognizing the degrees of influence outlined in the Grid. For example, the Writer wrote the first draft (A) with suggestions from others (C), and had the final say (A) with the models or techniques being used. When discussion focused around issues of school appropriateness, the Writer and Psychologist could give suggestions (C), but Admin had the final decision (A) in a disagreement – however, the Lead could require further discussion (V). Each person had authority in his or her area of specialty, and they agreed on an approach that sought

consensus. This structure greatly facilitated the team's ability to communicate, resulting in faster product development.

But any model can be sabotaged by an authority figure who ultimately defines what role anyone plays in decisions. Arguments eventually arose in the editing meetings. Often, when the Team Lead disagreed, the conversation would go back and forth until the Lead said, "I guess we will have to agree to disagree." The other team members eventually learned that when this was said, the Department Director's *position power* would override whatever influence they had written in the Grid. They learned that, in practice, no one truly had an (A) or even a (V) except the Lead. Eventually the team members did not offer opposing opinions freely, knowing that their input would not be included. The products were still produced, but creative input was withheld by team members.

This demonstrates the risk that an authority figure takes in the consensus process by imposing an authority decision, even if he or she thinks that decision is right. Employees learn to withhold their input, because their effort will not produce results. Even the legendary Matsushita Konosuke once told a section chief, "Only about 40 percent of the decisions I approve are ones I really agree with; the other 60 percent I have reservations about but I okay them anyway. . . I think a person in charge of others has to okay some things he doesn't really like. It is still possible to see that necessary adjustments are made over the long run." (Matsushita)

The team had each person's "influence" clearly defined at every step of the product development. The team agreed in principle to seek consensus, to make sure that each person felt completely understood and free to express, and that each person's expertise received the proper level of influence in decisions. But the leader was uncomfortable in situations where people with strong convictions entered spirited discussions. She ended them quickly by "agreeing to disagree," and then used her *position power* to avoid the discomfort.

This example shows that all the organizational structure in the world will not overcome the negative personal power of a leader who is not able to build an atmosphere in which it is safe to disagree.

Building an atmosphere in which it is safe to disagree

Even if the decision-making structure is clear, resistance could emerge from ineffective uses of *personal power*. This may include unresolved disagreements or misunderstandings, personality clashes between individuals, favoritism, or from the fear of dealing directly with conflict. Most of these misuses of personal power are perceived as disrespectful behaviors.

While leaders do need to give attention to the organizational structures that establish *position power,* they must also give attention to the organizational cultures that influence *personal power.* In her study of academic leadership, Adriana Kezar observes that most studies "focused almost exclusively on structural theories and to a lesser extent on political theories," and that the "human dynamics have remained under-investigated." According to Kezar, "Human relations, cultural, and social cognition theories remain underutilized theoretical frameworks in the study of governance, especially for exploring human conditions that affect governance" (Kezar, 2002).

According to John Bennett, relational power "involves the authority that others bestow upon the leader when he or she genuinely consults and freely communicates with them" (Bennett, J., 2001). When used appropriately, this relational power, akin to Ramey and Lucas's *personal power*, is less likely than *position power* to meet resistance, because the latter is imposed while the former is earned and freely given. But when misused, the result is that people feel misunderstood and disrespected.

In order to encourage everyone to productively use their *personal power* in the decision making process, (and to avoid the various destructive uses of *personal power*) leaders must build an atmosphere of respect that leads to trust. To do this, leaders must also practice these principles in one-on-one communication and problem solving with everyone, and must establish common methods by which people can resolve their misunderstandings and disagreements respectfully.

Rosabeth Moss-Kantor points out the importance of building trust at all levels of the organization:

> "Many alliances unravel because, while there is support at the top of the organization, departments at lower levels are left to resolve tensions, answer questions, or fill gaps on their own. The conflicts and wasted efforts that can end up destroying value instead of creating it. You have to make sure that the goals of people at many levels of the organizations are aligned, and that people get to know each other, before you can expect them to build trust." (Moss-Kantor, 1999)

But how can people feel free to express their concerns if a leader acts defensively when faced with conflicts, and discourages disagreement and dissent? One of the barriers to effective leadership identified by Frances Hesselbein, president and CEO of the Drucker Foundation, is the practice of killing the messenger (Hesselbein 2002). In many organizations, people who disagree with the leadership are not considered "team players." If one agrees with the leaders one is considered to have a positive team attitude, and will more

likely grow into positions of leadership. While this may appear to be a problem of rigid organizational structure that does not allow input from lower levels, it is actually an organizational culture issue caused by inappropriate use of *personal power*. The organizational structure may provide for channels of communication, but the people in those positions inhibit the free flow of information.

In his excellent article on The Trouble with Teamwork, Patrick Lencioni explains why trust is so essential, and how it can only develop in an atmosphere in which it is safe to disagree.

- "The first and most important step in building a cohesive and functional team is the establishment of trust. But not just any kind of trust. Teamwork must be built upon a solid foundation of vulnerability-based trust. This means that members of a cohesive, functional team must learn to comfortably and quickly acknowledge, without provocation, their mistakes, weaknesses, failures, and needs for help. They must also readily recognize the strengths of others, even when those strengths exceed their own. . . . Showing vulnerability is unnatural for many leaders, who were raised to project strength and confidence in the face of difficulty.
- "There is a very practical reason why vulnerability-based trust is indispensable. Without it, a team will not, and probably should not, engage in unfiltered productive conflict.
- "What CEOs and their teams must do is learn to identify artificial harmony when they see it, and incite productive conflict in its place. This is a messy process, one that takes time to master. But there is no avoiding it, because to do so makes it next to impossible for a team to make real commitment.
- "Teams that fail to disagree and exchange unfiltered opinions are the ones that find themselves revisiting the same issues again and again. All this is ironic, because the teams that appear to an outside observer to be the most dysfunctional (the arguers) are usually the ones that can arrive at and stick with a difficult decision." (Lencioni 2003)

As Lencioni proposes, it can be messy and time consuming to facilitate productive conflict. And it is easier said than done. Leaders need communication tools to develop this art, and to establish norms within the organization so that others feel safe that these norms will be followed to support them when they have a concern to express.