



(KBDM) Knowledge-Based Decision-Making

Model Communication

PA Al-Anon Service Tool - Panel 61

Knowledge-Based Decision-Making (KBDM) to Reach an Informed Group Conscience

In a Knowledge-Based Decision-Making culture, background information is introduced to frame a topic and then full discussion of the idea takes place before a motion is presented. Sometimes these discussions continue over several meetings before any decision for a motion, action or recommendation is made. KBDM requires considerable research and information gathering before and possibly even during the discussion. At the end of a discussion, further information and knowledge may be necessary to reach an informed group conscience. A motion or decision need not be made after every discussion. Premature action (e.g., making or amending motions early in the discussion or hastily calling the question) can divert attention from the subject at hand, thus confusing or delaying business. With KBDM, the decision reached is usually one that most members can support. Groups, Committees, Work Groups, Thought Forces and Task Forces are encouraged to do KBDM on topics they are charged to discuss.

Five key elements comprise the Knowledge-Based Decision-Making process for reaching an informed group conscience:

1. Open communication between leadership and membership
2. Dialogue before deliberation
3. Common access to full information for all decision-makers
4. Existence in a culture of trust
5. Confidence in the competency of our partners

How does this relate to the Twelve Concepts of Service?

It is based on the following:

- Mutual trust
- Designated authority- traditional and legal
- Participation
- Leadership
- Right of Decision
- Our spiritual foundation

Why is this a good model?

- Allows thorough examination of issues without an end in mind
- Who makes the decision becomes far less important than the fact that a good decision is made
- It is a process for ongoing strategic thinking and strategy development
- Allows us to develop a reputation for value and nimbleness in carrying the message

What does this mean for Al-Anon as a whole?

- Recognition as a credible organization
- A reputation for value
- A culture built on trust and communication

The Four KBDM Questions

The background information used to frame a topic is usually gathered after the KBDM questions below have been answered. The answers to the questions below can provide a basis for discussion. They provide common information so everyone can be on the same page.

The additional question, *“What do we wish we knew, but don’t?”* is asked as part of each main question to help determine - *Might our decision have unintended consequences? We might need to do some additional work or research to help us make a sound decision.* Gather information to these questions. Everyone can add to them.

Question 1 (Members): What do we know about our current or prospective members' wants, needs, or preferences that is relevant to this discussion? What do we wish we knew, but don't?

(How important is it? Is it what our current members want? How will it affect newcomers? What purpose would this serve? Is it necessary? Is it helpful?)

Question 2 (Organization): What do we know about our resources and our vision for the organization and our meetings that are relative to this issue?

What do we wish we knew, but don't?

(What are our resources? Can we afford it? Do we have enough volunteers to make it happen? Do we have any background information in our archives that can help us answer this question?)

Question 3 (World): What do we know about the current realities and evolving dynamics that are relevant to this discussion?

What do we wish we knew, but don't?

(What do we know about the changes happening within our world around us, within our community and that are relevant to this discussion ? (This could mean the economy , conflicts, culture , etc.))

Question 4 (Principles/Policies/Legacies): What are the ethical implications of our choices? Would we be practicing our "principles in all our affairs"? In other words--Will our decision be consistent with our principles, policies, and legacies: the Twelve Steps, Traditions, and Concepts? What are the implications of our choices? What are the pros and cons?

What do we wish we knew, but don't?

(Is our decision legal? Will our decision help us fulfill our primary purpose? If we decide to take an action, will it be the "right" thing to do? How would this affect our meeting? How would this affect our fellowship? Newcomers? Al-Anon (and A.A.) as a whole? Does our Service Manual provide any guidance about this issue? Pros/Cons: The advantages of this change might be? The disadvantages might be?)

What is your part in the process?

- Participate in the dialogue
- Practice our principles
- Let it begin with me
- Allow as much time as it takes

After our best efforts to answer these questions, and through listening with open minds and hearts, we trust in each other and our Higher Power, and can move forward with a decision, action or recommendation. Once a direction is determined, the entire group supports the decision (Tradition Two).

How does a KBDM fit into the work of a Committee, Thought Force, Task Force, or Work Group? *Thought Forces are the 'thinkers'. Task Forces are the 'doers'. Committees have ongoing work and Work Groups meet a need.*

- Thought Forces are appointed to investigate, brainstorm, propose strategies as they may relate to a specific topic, need or concern of our membership or service arms. The suggestion may come from the Officers of a Service Arm, the Assembly, AWSC, or a committee.
- Careful thought is given to the Thought Forces creation and purpose. We don't commit to a Thought Force on the spot at a meeting. The suggestion to have a Thought Force is taken back to the Officers which will select perspective and mission. The Chair of the originating body establishes the Thought Force, sets their charge (direction) and appoints its members.
- The Thought Force works by brainstorming, fact-finding, evaluating the topic with the use of the **KBDM questions** and suggests strategies for implementation.
- The Thought Force reports to the originating group periodically during the process to report progress, be sure they are on the right track to answer the charge.
- Once the process is complete, a report with the frame of the issue is presented to the originating body (AWSC, Assembly, Work Group, etc). Discussion before deliberation follow and it may be that the body does not want to do anything, however, if there is agreement that one of the strategies should be pursued, a Task Force may be appointed.
- A Task Force puts together a plan on how to implement the action decided upon and presents it back to the originating group to approve the plan. A Work Group, committee, or individual member is appointed to carry out the task necessary for the implementation of that strategy.



We hope you find this tool helpful. We are here to help. If you have any questions please contact your District Representative or the PA Delegate Panel 61, Lori F., at delegate61@pa-al-anon.org.

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