



CSE3PPE / CSE5003

Professional Practices and Entrepreneurship in I.T.

Lecture 11

Semester 2 2023

Decision making and Conflict management





What is conflict?

You could say it is a clash of opinions, values, needs or goals.

This can arise when:

- Needs are not met
- Differences of opinion or expressions of different values occur
- A person or group interferes with another's attempts to satisfy their needs, wants or goals

Conflicts can be relatively small or large.

- I wanted takeaway for dinner, but my partner wanted to cook.
- I don't want to go to school today because I am tired, but my parents don't think I am unwell and want me to go.
- I want to take over the natural resources of this land but the current sovereign country refuses to let us do this.

Not all conflicts are equal

1. Discomfort is felt
2. An incident occurs
3. There is an escalation into a misunderstanding
4. Tension arises
5. Crisis can lead to damaged relationships

The crisis is considered to be the climax of a conflict. Behaviour and normal functioning can be seriously affected.

Conflict outcomes

A conflict can be ongoing or short lived. Typically, we aim to resolve conflict. The way we achieve conflict resolution can influence whether things will move on, or risk future conflicts.

The three possible outcomes in conflict resolution can be:

- a. A well-handled resolution

This reduces petty irritations, can improve awareness of self and others

- b. Poorly handled resolution

This can result in destructive outcomes

- c. Resolution is avoided or denied

This can result in things escalating to a more serious level

(Dwyer, Communication for the Professional 5th Edition)

Can conflict be positive?

Absolutely.

Differences in perspectives and opinions – and a process that enables those differences to be heard and valued – creates better outcomes.

This type of conflict is considered **functional**.

What are some examples of functional conflict?

However, most conflict tends to be associated with dysfunctional conflict.

Dysfunctional conflict

Dysfunctional conflict is less productive, and is characterised by any of the following elements:

1. Power imbalance between those holding different viewpoints
2. Apathy to the perspectives/considerations of others/other viewpoints
3. Fears around the impact of addressing the conflict, for example a fear of losing standing in an organisation for going against the commonly held view
4. Lack of safety / self-confidence
5. Lack of self awareness on the impacts of others with different perspectives

Reactivity to conflict

We can consider how we respond to conflict in three broad ways:

- Fight (addressing the conflict with a motivation for a positive outcome for yourself)
- Flight (avoiding the conflict altogether)
- Flow (working to understand other perspectives and collaborating for a compromise or outcome that is satisfactory)

How we react to conflict is influenced by our own personality styles, backgrounds, practice in conflict resolution, and communication skills.

How much do we personally value concern for ourselves and concern for others? Do you prioritise a good outcome for everyone, or perhaps are happy with a good outcome that benefits you more than anyone else?

Compromise?

Compromise is when a dispute is resolved where each side makes a concession.

Sometimes compromises are equal, but there are many examples where they are not.

Compromise can also result in an outcome that doesn't meet the needs of either party.

An example:

Your veggie garden is under attack each night from rats.

You think building a rat-proof fence that extends into the ground and around your garden will stop them.

Your partner thinks the best option is to lay rat poison.

Compromise?

How about a compromise: a cheaper version of the fence and less poison?

What do you think might happen?



The Flow Response

The flow response considers the needs of both parties and works towards an outcome that is respectful, even if the result isn't exactly what each party was initially seeking.

It comprises the following principles:

- Consideration of own and other party's wants
- Belief that both parties' needs can be met without one winning and the other losing
- Respect for relationships
- Movement towards a solution that meets as many needs as possible
- Consultation with others to explore needs and consider all possible options.

Source Dwyer, Communication for the Professional 5e

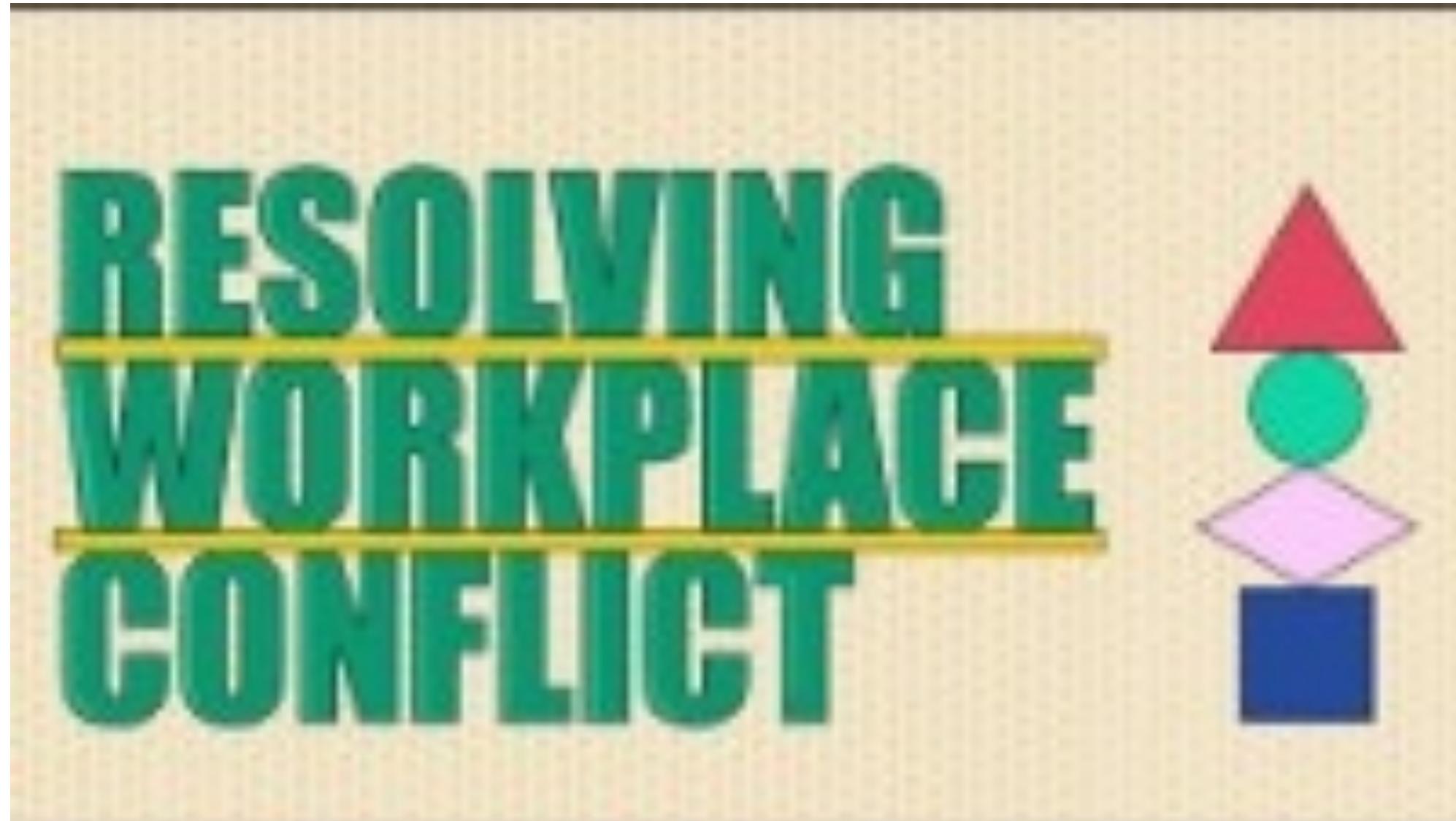
Workplace conflict



Resolving workplace conflict

For conflicts resulting in levels of discomfort or that have involved minor incidents, sitting down and listening to the other person to clarify misunderstandings is a great place to start the resolution process.

The next video provides a short overview of the process and the importance of embracing empathy with the other person's perspective, and to engage in active listening to better understand why the person's position is different to your own.



This video runs for 1 min 54.

<https://youtu.be/rXiMGT-le0M>

Source GCFLearnFree.org

Face to face

It can be difficult to engage with a person who you may have a minor (or major) conflict.

There are clear benefits from resolving conflict face to face rather than via text such as email or text messages.

This is because when there are differences between two people we can sometimes misinterpret the intent behind written messages.

This can conflate the conflict.

A face to face discussion enables you to clarify the intent behind what is being said, and gives an opportunity to clarify perspectives.



Please note language warning. This video runs for 2 minutes 42. <https://youtu.be/snqRrkQayDA>
Source: Key & Peele

Mediation

Mediation occurs when a third party is engaged to help the parties in conflict work through the issues and move towards an agreement.

The role of the mediator is not to judge but to facilitate discussion, fair listening, and consideration of relevant matters.

It is essential that the mediator provides a safe environment for these sometimes difficult conversations to take place.

This might require a number of sessions as each party works through the issue and balances needs.

Mapping

Mapping is a tool to support conflict resolution, particularly when there are no clear outcomes or causes for the conflict.

A mapping process lays out the conflict in a way that all parties can see where perceptions of the conflict lie from each perspective.

Decision making



Decision making

We make decisions every day, from the ordinary and mundane (what to have for breakfast?) to the extremely critical or time critical decisions.

This section provides guidance on the process for making sound decisions in a professional environment.

Decision making

Why?

No matter how diligently we make decisions or create a plan, things change and we need to make adjustments or new decisions.

Being prepared on the process for this will help us make better decisions.

When we factor in time, we need to make sure our decisions made in haste are sound.

Decision making is both science and an art. In the workforce, many of our decisions can be guided by business protocol or based on the training you may have had. There are always exceptions to these frameworks, and we must factor in the critical elements in order to make a reasonably justified decision.

General principles

There is a lot of guidance available on decision making processes. These generally consist of the following elements:

- Recognising the problem/requirement for change
- Relevant information around desired outcome is identified, gathered and analysed
- Alternative options (possible causes of action that could result in the desired outcome) are generated. Consideration is undertaken on which of these options might result in a suitable end state (the change and outcome sought)
- All options are carefully evaluated. Consideration is given on the resource requirements for each option as well as the overall outcome.
- Implementation of the best course of action commences, noting a plan based on the assessment of options, and ongoing monitoring of the progression of the plan.

General principles

Why follow such a model?

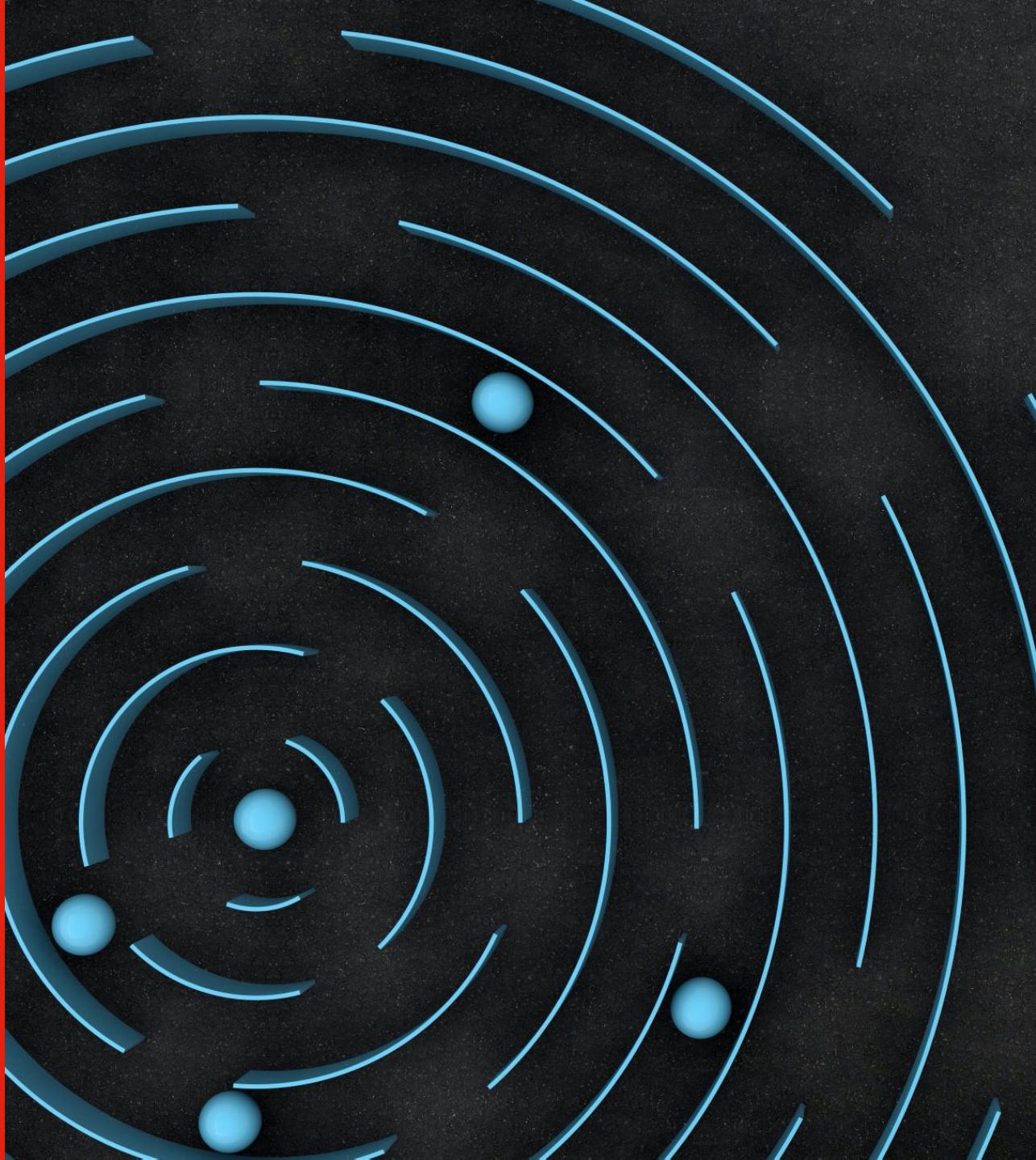
Using a step-by-step decision making processes helps decision makers make more deliberate and thoughtful decisions by organizing relevant information and defining possible alternatives that will achieve the desired end-state.

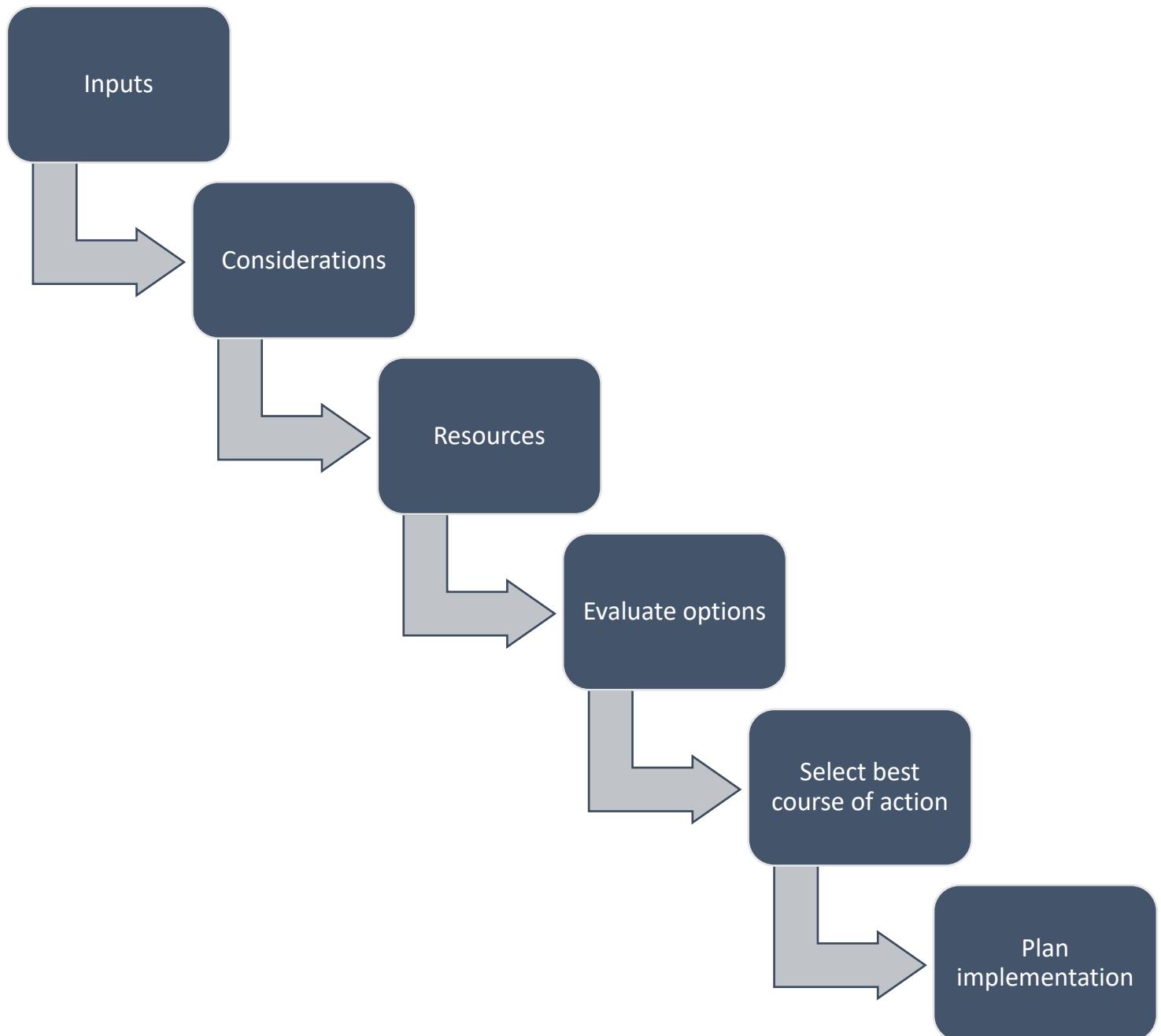
These steps can be broadly grouped into:

- input,
- consideration, and
- output.

As you begin to build your experience in the professional environment, it is important to build good habits on decision making processes. This enables you to come to decisions that are well considered and justified.

Decision making process for the professional environment





Professional decision making process

1. Inputs:

Determine the aim or goal in the decision making dilemma. As you do this, consider

- a. Any relevant limitations (such as time) or boundary conditions (company policy)
- b. What might be the minimum, median (or average), and ideal/best outcome?
- c. What is right? This relates to ethical considerations that need to be factored into the decision making process. For this component you can draw on the modules from the ethics section of this subject.

2. Considerations:

List as many possible ways of achieving your aim or outcome as you can. While being realistic on the possibilities, also consider novel or imaginative options as these may inspire creative solutions

Professional decision making process

3. Resources:

Determine the resources available to support the options. This might include staff, their skill levels, information, time availability or limitations, budget considerations, and any other resources or constraints that should be factored in.

1. You will most likely need to acquire information at this stage to better inform the decision making process.
2. Be sure to check your assumptions in this stage: relying on inaccurate information or false assumptions can impact good decision making. Worst, you might rule out an option that might still be a possibility had you accessed the right information.

Professional decision making process

4. Evaluate options

Consider:

- a. Resources you might have available
- b. Time availability
- c. Which options meet (or do not meet) company policy, safety considerations, and ethical considerations
- d. Relevant risks for each option

The evaluation should include an assessment on:

- a. Is it feasible (can it be done?)
- b. Is it effective (how well does it resolve the problem)?
- c. What are the consequences of the option (costs both financial non financial, for example, staff moral, ethical or policy violations)

Professional decision making process

5. Select the best/preferred Course of Action (CoA)

Consider and outline the reasons for the decision based on the information and assessment above

6. Prepare your plan to implement your decision

This means you should transition the decision making process into implementation and the planning required to support this.

7 STEPS TO IMPROVE YOUR DECISION-MAKING PROCESS



There are many different processes available to guide decision making. In this video produced by Southern New Hampshire University, a 7-step process for decision making is presented. You might recognise some of these themes from the entrepreneurial aspect of this subject (covered in modules 1-6). This video runs for 4 minutes 21. <https://youtu.be/5a0Fe3AchAI> Source: SNHU

Thank you.