

TEACHING SOUND METHODS FOR MAKING DECISIONS

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WORKSHOP

We assert that there is a profound need at all levels of society for instruction in the use of sound decisionmaking methods. Human performance is largely a cause-effect chain in which (1) our decisionmaking methods produce our decisions; (2) our decisions guide our actions; and (3) our actions produce outcomes. Therefore, it follows that our decisionmaking methods produce outcomes. However, unsound methods, far more often than sound methods, produce undesirable outcomes, frequently with serious negative consequences to individuals, families, organizations, and society.

Participants in this workshop will learn four essential principles for sound decisionmaking and the reasons they must be followed. Examples in the use of these principles will be provided. These principles include:

1. In order to teach or apply sound decisionmaking methods, a rigorous vocabulary is essential. For example, in the same way that the words *salt*, *sugar*, and *vinegar* have precise meanings, the words *factor*, *alternative*, *attribute*, *advantage*, and *criterion* have precise meanings. The sound decisionmaking concepts that are represented by these five words will be illustrated in this workshop.
2. To consistently make sound decisions, people must avoid using unsound methods, including many that are now widely used. For example, basing a decision on the pros and cons of the alternatives is one of the methods that must be avoided. (Different unsound methods produce different unsound decisions.)
3. To consistently make sound decisions, people must use sound methods.
4. By basing decisions on the importance of the advantages of the alternatives (not advantages and disadvantages), sound methods anchor decisions to the relevant facts. Therefore, sound methods are also called facts-based methods.

The sound methods are the result of centuries of development. They are now being applied in a number of organizations — in governments, as well as in the private sector. Unfortunately, most people have not yet had an opportunity to learn them. Two of the sound methods (The Two-List Method and The Simplified Two-List Method) will be presented in this workshop.