

Making better decisions in groups

“By pooling diverse information and different areas of expertise, groups can make better decisions than individuals.”

Dr Dan Bang and Professor Chris Frith FBA FMedSci FRS,
Making better decisions in groups, Royal Society Open Science, 2017.

Unfortunately, social dynamics can undermine this.

Committees can prevent this by:

Being diverse in terms of their background and expertise

A wide range of views allows a group to explore a problem space fully.

Avoiding the impact of social influence

Group decisions can be more valuable if members have independence from one another. If hierarchies exist, opinions may be more useful if collected anonymously.

Recognising expertise

Judgement by an individual with relevant specialist knowledge should carry more weight than judgement by an individual without such knowledge.

Finding hidden information

The sharing of information held by the minority, not just the majority, should be encouraged. This can prevent essential details from being overlooked.

Looking beyond confidence

High confidence does not always imply greater knowledge. Less confident group members may be more knowledgeable. Consider fixed speaking times and no-interruption rules.

Challenge the status quo

Standard practises often work well, but may not always deliver the best decisions. Be prepared to tackle problems in new ways.

Establishing checks and balances

Committee chairs should ensure members agree on the nature of the problems they are addressing. Everyone should be encouraged to monitor for unconscious bias.



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