



Keyword: Criteria

## Applying Criteria to Decision Making

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by Kevin Eikenberry

Often we face decisions that are complex and situations where the “best” decision isn’t obvious. Along with complex problems, often the “best” solution looks completely different to different people or groups based on their perspective and interests.

In these cases it is often helpful to step back from the problem or decision and identify the criteria by which the decision should be made.

This Bonus Byte outlines a basic process that you as a leader can use to facilitate the creation of these criteria.

When properly applied, these criteria can lead to better and more strongly supported decisions.

### Developing Criteria

1. **Make a list.** As a team, brainstorm a list of the items you think are important to consider when selecting a solution or otherwise making a decision.
2. **Clarify the brainstormed list.** Make sure that everyone understands each of the items.
3. **Narrow the list as appropriate.** Delete duplicates and remove any brainstormed items that people don’t feel are important criteria for this process.
4. **Firm up the list.** Aim for not more than four criteria. When the list gets too long the ease of use and the value of the criteria are diminished.
5. **Establish the relative importance of the criteria.** Are some more important than others? If so, set weighting factors. (You can use a voting technique as a starting point in understanding how everyone feels about the weighting individually).
6. **Is anything on your list a must meet (yes/no)?** If so, make it a pre-screen criteria.
7. **Step back and look at your criteria lists (and their weightings if any).** Does the group agree with the outcome? Discuss the outcome and make sure you have consensus and a common understanding. If possible, set them aside and review at a later time to make sure you are truly happy with the outcome.



## Applying Criteria to Decision Making (continued)

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Once you have developed your decision making criteria, apply the criteria to each of your possible solutions to help you compare them. To use a more rigorous process of applying the criteria or for more information, I highly recommend [The Thinker's Toolkit: Fourteen Powerful Tools for Problem Solving](#), by Morgan D. Jones.



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