**Effective Communication in Leading Collaborative Work Teams:**

**Integrating The Functional Theory of Group Decision-Making with Ignatian Discernment**

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Reflection for 2025 Xavier’s Seminars on Ignatian Leadership

Making great decisions is a critical aspect of leadership. During Xavier’s Seminars on Ignatian Leadership, Provost Rachel Chrastil shared how her area practices discernment. I propose integrating the functional theory of group decision-making with the discernment process. This process will help us make the best decisions possible.

**Group Structure**

* When possible, *gather cross-functional work teams* to provide diversity of perspectives.

**Effective Communication**

* We must ask, “*How will our decision affect students?”*
* Approach communication with respect and trust in the value of our colleagues’ voice.

**Data Informed**

* Decisions must be *data-informed*, based in the best available information, and driven by our mission.
* Our decisions are only as effective as the quality of our data. We must start with accurate information.

**Decision Process:** [Ignatian communal discernment](https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/resources-by-theme/ignatian-communal-discernment). **(blue font);** Gouran and Hirokawa’s theory (**green font**).

1. Begin the process in a state of Ignatian indifference

Approach the deliberation with an impartial mindset.

2. Outline the pro’s and con’s of the decision

Weigh the issues, concerns, and values in light of the mission and vision.

* + Establish clear goals and objectives of the decision.
	+ Assess possible solutions. Even when there is initial consensus, the group must go through the exercise of listing and discussing multiple decisions/solutions.
	+ Always weigh positive and negative qualities associated with each alternative solution.

 \*Research found this is the most critical aspect of all functions of effective decision making.

3. Be a contributor and an active listener in brainstorming a solution

Share opinions and encourage the contributions of others.

4. Presume good intentions on the part of others

Pay close attention to people with different viewpoints by 'seeing through their eyes'

5. Notice God’s presence and will

Be mindful of *Ignatian desolation*, feelings of agitation or a disharmony of thoughts and feelings and *Ignatian consolation*, feelings of peace and satisfaction.

Recognize that moments of inspiration and gratitude are encounters with the Divine.

6. Deliberate until there is a shared contentment with a decision

When decision-makers have united around an outcome, communicate the decision to those impacted and help bring the resolution to fruition.

**Time is of the Essence**

* Recognize our limited time and energy, including the need to sometimes stop doing certain activities so that we create room for the new.

Gouran, D. S. , & Hirokawa, R. Y. (1996). Functional theory and communication in decision-making and problem-solving groups: An expanded view. In R. Y. Hirokawa , ed. & M. S. Poole (Eds.), Communication and group decision making (2nd ed., pp. 55–80). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.