

## **Democraship**

by Will Phillips

### **A Cooperative Decision Process**

Democraship, one approach to decision making, combines the speed of strong leadership and the commitment of a democratic consensus. To combine leadership and democracy into Democraship, we distinguish three aspects in reaching a decision: making, taking and accepting.

"Making" the decision goes on as individuals on the team collect data, discuss, exchange information, and generally work the issue or challenge. We use the word making because, in fact, the team is fashioning, creating, and assembling a solution.

This decision making process is most successful if the relationship among team members is mutually influential, rather than authority or power based. The Decider is an equal while making the decision. The Decider shares relevant information and even expresses his or her ignorance, like every one else on the team.

"Taking" a decision occurs when the Decider says, "This is the decision that I will take and approve." This fixes the authority and responsibility for the decision. The Decider uses the team as a medium for mutual education, to gain ideas and perspectives to help him take a more informed decision. He encourages a decision to be made which takes the concerns of others into account. This process builds respect, trust and commitment to the Decider's decision.

When taking of the decision, the Decider is first among equals. The Decider and only the Decider can take the decision. This means the Decider is taking full responsibility for the decision and its implementation. The Decider can and will be held accountable.

The acceptance of the decision by the team needs testing. "Acceptance" will be extraordinarily high if the decision was taken as a result of a well integrated decision making process. If some significant number of the team members do not accept the decision that was taken by the Decider, the process of making the decision was insufficiently facilitated and little mutual learning occurred.

The purpose of this process is to combine the best benefits of a Democratic consensus, which seeks input from everyone, with the best benefits of strong leadership.

### **Suppose We Still Don't Agree?**

Even with good facilitation and leadership, you may end up without one hundred percent agreement. For many decisions, operational consensus will be sufficient.

Operational Consensus sounds like this: I understand what you want to do. If it were left to me I would not do it that way. However, I feel that you understand my view, and I feel that you have given me a fair chance to influence you, but I have not been able to do so. Therefore, as a member of this organization and supporter of its purpose, I will enthusiastically support your decision, and not undermine it or bitch about it.