

Roles

A major challenge of almost all organizations today is finding a way to integrate the knowledge and expertise of their personnel in decision making and forecasting. In *The Wisdom of Crowds*,¹ James Surowiecki shows that under certain conditions – diversity, independence, and a particular kind of decentralization, the aggregation of judgments of a group will produce better decisions and forecasts than even the most skilled decision maker.

By assigning roles for providing data and judgments, and by aggregating judgments based on data, knowledge, and experience from people throughout an organization or population, the conditions for creating the wisdom of crowds rather than delusions of crowds (*Extra Ordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*²) can be achieved. Assigning roles to decision makers is also important in terms of higher level management maintaining control where they feel it is necessary (usually by limiting roles for prioritizing the high level objectives). Also, assigning roles helps distribute some of the workload in gathering judgments.³

Consensus is a worthy goal, but as a decision-making standard, it can be an obstacle to action or a recipe for lowest-common-denominator compromise.⁴ A more practical objective is to get the stakeholders for a decision involved in some way, and assigning roles is an excellent way to do this. Often it is the stakeholders who will make a decision succeed or fail, and getting them involved in the decision is a proven way to increase buy-in.

Next: [Synthesis](#)

¹ Surowiecki, James. *The Wisdom of Crowds: Why the Many Are Smarter Than the Few and How Collective Wisdom Shapes Business, Economies, Societies and Nations*. New York: Anchor Books, 2005.

² MacKay, Charles. *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*. United Kingdom: Richard Bentley (publisher), 1841.

³ Expert Choice Comparison online help

⁴ Rogers, Paul and Marcia W. Blenko. "Who has the D?: How Clear Decision Roles Enhance Organizational Performance." [Harvard Business Review](#), January 2006.