

Business Decision Mapping

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Business Decision Mapping (BDM) is a technique for making decisions, particularly for the kind of decisions that often need to be made in business. It involves using diagrams to help articulate and work through the decision problem, from initial recognition of the need through to communication of the decision and the thinking behind it.

BDM is designed for use in making deliberative decisions - those made based on canvassing and weighing up the arguments. It is also qualitative - although numbers may be involved, the main considerations are qualitatively specified and there is no calculation-based route to the right decision. In these two key elements, BDM is similar to the natural or typical way of making decisions.

However, it differs from typical, informal decision making by providing a structured, semi-formal framework, and using visual language, taking advantage of our ability to grasp and make sense of information faster and more easily when it is graphically presented.

BDM is centered on the creation of a decision map - a single diagram that brings together in one organized structure all the fundamental elements of a decision, and that functions as a focus of collaboration.

BDM aims to support the decision process, making it easier, more reliable and more accountable. It addresses some major problems that can afflict business decision making the way it is generally done, including stress, anxiety, time pressure, lost thinking and inefficiency. By mapping the decision problem, the options, the arguments and all relevant evidence visually using BDM, the decision maker can avoid holding a large amount of information in his or her head, is able to make a more complete and transparent analysis and can generate a record of the thinking behind the final decision.

Related methodologies

Business Decision Mapping is related to:

Argument mapping, the graphical representation of the structure of an argument, often used in the teaching of reasoning and critical thinking.

Dialogue mapping, a method for building shared understanding through a structured representation of group communication, developed by Jeff Conklin of the CogNexus Institute. Dialogue mapping and Business Decision Mapping use the 'grammar' of IBIS, a well-established methodology developed by Horst Rittel for tackling wicked problems.

Mind mapping, in which a diagram is used to structure and classify ideas by linking them radially around a central key word or idea. There are no formal restrictions on the type of links used.

Minto Pyramid Principle, a process for organizing ideas in order to write compelling business documents, developed by Barbara Minto.