

# Managing Expectations

How clear decision roles help staff adapt to change. By John Kuypers

## Introduction

When competition, financial pressures or new management cause organizations to implement operational changes, the first challenge is to get staff to accept them. Staff resistance to change can be deep and difficult if expectations are poorly managed. Productivity drops, timelines fall behind and morale suffers, along with the bottom-line.

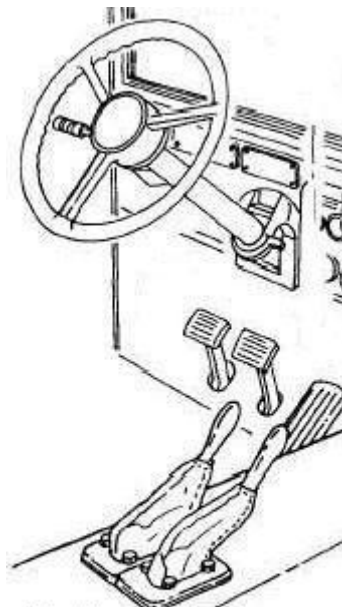
This article outlines one way that managing expectations about **Decision Roles** helps staff adapt to change and improve job performance. Decision roles is the one key area of job expectations that is nearly always left undefined and even unspoken. Yet staff frequently resist change because they perceive that their decision role was neither respected nor understood.

People are creatures of habit. Generally, we like the devil we know because at least we know what to expect! The result is that operationalizing performance improvement becomes a slippery beast, filled with debates about what should be done by whom and, who are you to tell me how I should do my job, anyway? Change becomes much easier when baseline job expectations are defined, including the trigger points that will cause a change in job performance expectations. When these are understood *upfront*, it is a much smoother process

to re-examine and implement changes in performance expectations down the road.

## Aligning Decision Roles

All work assignments require decisions to be made along the way. For example, the head of Engineering thinks he has the final say on a new machine on order, whereas the plant manager is convinced she has the final say. If a conflict arises, who gets to decide? Failure to clarify shared decision roles *upfront* creates an 86% chance of leaving important decisions stuck in a conflict along with its two best friends - stalled and bogged-down.



Role Driver synchronizes Decision Roles like two gear shifts that mesh in alignment.

At Performance Shift, we have designed a systematic solution to this problem. It is called Decision Role, which is part of our Role Driver™ *High Definition Roles & Responsibilities System*. Using the driving of a vehicle as a metaphor, jobs are divided into 'driver accountability roles.' Each accountability within a

job is divided into a Driver and a Passenger. The driver is the *Performer* who does the work. The passenger is the *Supporter* who has authority to influence how the driver performs. *Decision Role* assumes that if one person has sole authority, that adds up to 100%. If another person has some say in the matter, then clearly the driver does NOT have 100%. Harmony and balance occur when boss-subordinate or peer to peer are in-sync horizontally on the Decision Role Weight Scale:

**Decision Role™ Weight Scale**

Driver DA Weight	Supporter DA Weight	Supporter Role
100%	0%	Hands-off
90%	10%	Supply
70%	30%	Feedback
50%	50%	Advise
30%	70%	Approve
10%	90%	Direct
0%	100%	Total Takeover


The Decision Role Weight Scale measures the decision-making weight of each person. Conflict occurs when the authority adds up to greater than 100% and apathy occurs when the weight is under 100%. Notice that a *Driver* who only wants to be *supplied* with help does not welcome a *Supporter* who insists on any of the other six authority levels. Consequently, six out of seven DR pairings are NOT a horizontal match. **This adds up to an 86% risk of a conflict!** No wonder shared decision-making often leads to conflict and resentment.

For example, 90:10 is like that of a race car driver and the pit crew. The driver is the *Performer*. The pit crew *supplies* help by changing tires and refueling. The driver has 90% of the decision authority and the pit crew has just 10%. This performer doesn't want advice or direction. As long as both agree, their expectations will be in

alignment and they will work together effectively and cooperatively to win the race!

The opposite end of the Weight Scale is like a truck driver and a dispatcher. The truck driver is still the *Performer*. However, he *complies* with orders from the dispatcher who *directs* him where to go for each load delivery throughout the day. The truck driver's decision weight is *low* at 10%, while the dispatcher is high at 90%. This level of decision weight is recognizable from employees who say, "Tell me what to do, and I'll just do it!" They want very little decision weight or its burden.

What happens when a dispatcher tries to tell a race car driver how to perform? You get decision role OVERLAP which leads to conflict. And what happens when someone with pit crew authority supports a truck driver? You get a decision role UNDERGAP, which leads to apathy and stalling as both wait for instructions. Systematically synchronizing decision roles *upfront* is a powerful way to improve the speed with which staff and colleagues work together cooperatively and productively.

Setting decision roles *explicitly* gives managers a powerful communication tool with which to delegate responsibilities intentionally and at a level that fits each employee's competency. Decision Role is available as part of the ROLE DRIVER High Definition Roles & Responsibilities System. To learn more, go to [www.performanceshift.com](http://www.performanceshift.com) 

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