

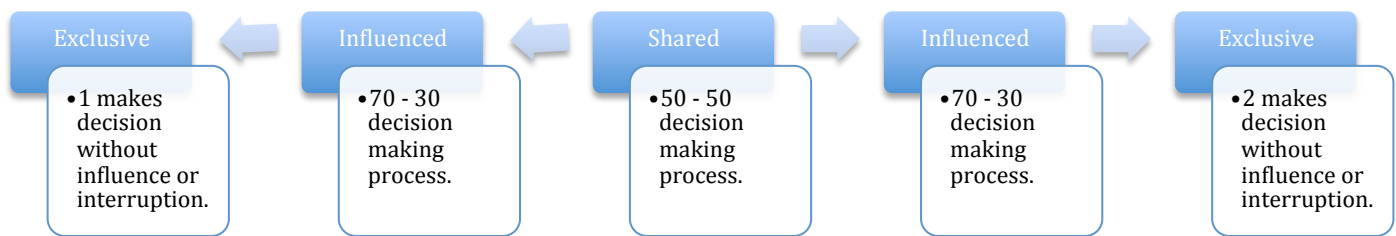
The 'Powergram'

Sorting Out Who Decides What

No one can make every decision for someone else — and if they try, the relationship usually suffers. Parents try to and wonder why their kids resist them, and so do husbands and wives to their detriment. And so do business leaders who can't figure out why their employees under-perform.

Dividing up authority between family or community members can help families break out of “decision traps” by clarifying who's in charge of what. The Powergram creates five spaces representing areas of decision.

The first space represents the area in which one party can make the total decision (with rare veto power); the fifth space represents the same for the other person. Spaces 2 and 4 are the where each person “usually” makes the decision with consultation from another, and the center is where joint decisions are made.



To use the Powergram in the church or other cooperative setting, have each party (e.g. elders, pastors, primary leaders) mark in each space who they think makes what decisions, working from a series of common questions: who leads the worship service?, who is responsible for the finances?, who takes over when there is a crisis?, who organizes the missions program, etc.?

Next, mark it the way you would like the decisions to be made. This will probably be different than the way that decisions are currently made.

Then try trading areas of authority. “How about you making these, and I those?” Divvy-up the decisions — make the center (joint decision) section as small as possible to avoid argument and make it clear who is responsible.

I am thinking about marriage and family now, so here are some areas for conversation about decision-making:

- Who decides on major purchases like a flat-panel TV with surround sound?
- Who has responsibility for the kids' bedtime story?
- Who initiates lovemaking?
- Who decides what is important for the kids to learn?
- Who has the responsibility for interrupting conflict with something appreciative?
- Who decides on the where and when of the family vacation?
- Who has the responsibility for choosing colors in the home?

- Who sets the music when guests come to visit?
- Who decides about a new job that requires a move to a new city?
- Who decides how fast we drive when we are in a hurry?
- Who cleans up?
- Who buys the Christmas and birthday presents?
- Who disciplines the kids? And how is it done?
- Who sets the tone for the family especially at dinner time?
- Who has the responsibility to connect with neighbors?
- Who decides what is valuable to the marriage?
- Who decides what is appropriate to wear to a social occasion?
- Who is responsible to pick up after the dog?
- Who decides what is most important to do in an evening where there is nothing demanding?
- Who has the responsibility for paying the bills?
- Who initiates and carries out the spiritual life in the family?

Now there are many more questions that you might like to ask. These are just a few that came to me quickly. It might be interesting to ask members of your family who has responsibility and decision-making power in these and other areas. It would make for great family conversation.