

Decision Matrix



Make The Perfect Decision Every Time





About This Ebook

Would you like to learn how to improve your decision making? Would you like to stop second guessing your choices? This ebook explains the process for making logical decisions each time you face tough choices, and provides a tool to help you organize your decision-making process.

©2009 Crow Communications, LLC

The copyright holder licenses this ebook under the Creative Commons Attribution-No Derivative Works 3.0 Unported License.

Learn more at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/3.0/>

Feel free to share this ebook with your friends and co-workers, post it on your blog, email it, print it, and copy it. If you like it, subscribe to my blog updates or RSS feed. You'll be notified each time I publish something new.

Subscribe on my blog: <http://blog.CrowInfoDesign.com/>

Download your own copy: <http://www.CrowInfoDesign.com/ebooks/decisionmatrix.pdf>

Does your company have an idea for a ebook, or do you have a library of white papers you would like to publish as ebooks? I can help you!

Contact me: ebooks@CrowInfoDesign.com

Why You Need This

Do you ever find yourself in a quandary when trying to choose between several options? Do you ever make a list of pros and cons to help you decide which path to take in life? Do you ever wish you could be sure you were making objective decisions and not just being driven by emotional preferences?

I used to struggle over making the big decisions in my life. Then I discovered a technique called the decision matrix that revolutionized my decision-making process. Now, I use it to make important decisions like:

- Which vacation location to visit
- Which candidate to hire for a job
- Which job offer to accept
- Which apartment to rent
- Which software to purchase
- Whether to lease or purchase a car

You can use the decision matrix to make any decision you face in your personal or business life. You can use it alone, with your partner, or with a business team. The only limit to how you can harness the power of the decision matrix is your own imagination.

If you have an important decision to make and you want to reduce or eliminate the chances of second guessing yourself later, you should try the decision matrix.



The Benefits

Here are some benefits you can expect from using the decision matrix:

- You understand how and why you choose one option over another.
- Your decision fits with your priorities.
- You evaluate each option on its own merit without directly comparing it to other options.
- You use logic rather than emotion to make the decision.
- You get a chance to think about what you really want.

Why Not Use Pros and Cons?

Many people do a list of pros and cons when making decisions. I think that is always a bad idea. Here's why. When you take the time to make list of the cons for each option, you make a list of the things you don't want for the option you end up choosing.

I don't know about you, but I'd rather not fill my head with all of the things I don't want about the choice I'm about to make. Staying focused on the benefits of each option seems like a smarter and happier way to live.



Decision Matrix Process

The decision matrix process is simple.

1. **Define your ideal solution.** Spend a few minutes thinking about the ideal solution. How does it look and feel? Try it on for size. Make a list of the key characteristics for your ideal solution.
2. **Set Your Priorities.** Which of these characteristics of your ideal solution are the most important? Assign a weight (percent) to each key characteristic. The weight establishes your priorities.
3. **Assign The Points.** Evaluate each option and give it a raw score for each key characteristic. You look at each option by itself and rate it according to how it meets your key characteristics.
4. **Calculate the weighted scores.** Use the raw score and the key characteristic weight (percent) to calculate a weighted score. This combines the facts from your option with your priorities for the decision to give you an objective measurement.
5. **Add up the total scores.** Add up the weighted scores to get the total score for each option. The option with the highest score is closest to your ideal solution.

I'm going to walk you through using the decision matrix to decide on a family vacation destination so you can see how to perform each step.

Decision Matrix Forms

The decision matrix can be done on a scrap piece of paper. But because I use this so often, I've developed and refined a form that I use to collect the information.

To help you out, I've included both a blank form, and one that I've filled in for the vacation example for you to follow along. They are located near the back of this ebook.

Step 1:

Your Ideal Solution



Before you can start evaluating options, you have to know what you want. Sometimes, figuring out what you want is the hardest part of making any decision. Give yourself plenty of time for this step. Get a cuppa and a tablet and brainstorm. Jot down your ideas. You can pretty up the list later.

For our vacation example, here are some things you might consider to be the key characteristics of your ideal vacation.

- Warm climate
- A beach or other swimming and sunbathing option
- Somewhere where they speak English (since you only know English)
- A great cultural experience, not just museums, but different foods and a different lifestyle
- Recommendations from friends or high ratings on review websites rather than going in cold
- Something that fits into your vacation budget
- Kid friendly
- Somewhere where the travel isn't a hassle (because of the kids)

If this isn't your idea of the perfect vacation, just play along. From this example, you will learn how to use the decision matrix for your own choices.



Step 1: Define Your Ideal Solution

The Key Characteristics

After you make your list, review it with your partner and incorporate her expectations of the ideal vacation. This is the time to compromise and negotiate a solution in very general terms.

In the end, your list looks like this:

- **A swimming option.** An indoor pool is okay, but being at the beach is ideal.
- **English is spoken.** Or, English-speaking tourists are welcome.
- **Rich cultural experience.** You want some place that is not like home and not a tourist trap.
- **You want recommendations.** Information from friends is ideal, but good online ratings are okay.
- **Within budget.** You have some flexibility, but would prefer to come in under budget this year.
- **Kid friendly.** Either visit a kid-friendly location or have great kid activities available most days.
- **Minimal travel hassle.** Less than a day of travel each direction is ideal. You don't want to be exhausted during the trip or after you get home.



To make the decision process as simple as possible, you should keep your list short. Somewhere between five and eight key characteristics is ideal.

Write in these key characteristics in the **Key Characteristics Ranking** table. That's the first table on Decision Matrix form. I've filled it in for you in the example form.

Step 2:

Set Your Priorities

As you develop your recipe for the perfect vacation, you know that some characteristics are more important than others. To reflect your priorities, you rank your characteristics in order of importance and assign a weight to each one.

To weight your characteristics, you assign a percentage to each one. The weights for all characteristics add up to 100%.

Working The Vacation Example

In this vacation example, you have seven characteristics. With seven characteristics, the average weight for each one is about 15% (100% divided by 7 characteristics equals about 15%).

This number (15%) gives you a starting point for your weighting process for your seven vacation key characteristics. Some get a higher weight, and some get a lower weight.

Of course, you don't want to weight each option at 15%. Why not? First, because it adds up to more than 100%. And second, because everything doesn't have the same priority in your ideal vacation recipe.



Step 2: Set Your Priorities

Pick Your Top Priorities

You and your partner sit down and discuss how important these are for each of you. Here's a hint: start with the most important characteristics first.

- You both agree that staying within your budget is the most important thing, so budget gets the largest percentage (weight). If the average weight (in this example) is 15%, you decide that the budget is worth 25%.
- Your second priority characteristics is kid friendly, and that is almost as important as the budget, so you weight it at 20%.
- After some discussion, you decide that a great cultural experience is the next most important, and you weight that at 15% based on the weighting of the other characteristics.



Here's what you have so far:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----|
| 1. Budget | 25% |
| 2. Kid Friendly | 20% |
| 3. Cultural | 15% |

These characteristics use 60% of your weight, leaving you only 40% to distribute between the remaining four key characteristics. You can adjust the weights at this point if that doesn't seem like the correct balance.

Step 2: Set Your Priorities

Complete The Priorities

After some further discussion, you decide on the weighting for the remaining items. Your key characteristics have the following weights:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----|
| 1. Budget | 25% |
| 2. Kid Friendly | 20% |
| 3. Cultural | 15% |
| 4. Travel | 15% |
| 5. English | 10% |
| 6. Ratings | 10% |
| 7. Swimming | 5% |

The next time you use the decision matrix to choose your vacation destination, you may assign different weights for the same key characteristics. Or, you may use different key characteristics.

After you complete the weighting, you should review your list and do any fine tuning. These weights drive the process for evaluating your options, so you should be very happy with them before moving on.

Add the weight for each key characteristic in the **Key Characteristics Ranking** table. Next, fill them in at the top of the **Decision Matrix** table in weight order (highest percentage first). I've done this for you in the example forms.



Step 3:

Evaluate Your Options



Roll up your sleeves and get ready to work. In this step, you research each option so you can rate it according to each of your key characteristics. You give each option a rating from 1 to 10 based on how well it meets the characteristic, with 10 being the perfect fit.

In our vacation example, you have some ideas of where you might want to go on your vacation. Some of them may be new places, and others may be places you have already visited. Here's the short list of possible destinations you have to evaluate:

- Disneyland
- Mexico (Rocky Point)
- Santa Fe, New Mexico
- Camping in the Redwoods (California)

You must research each option thoroughly, including costs, travel options, and the other key characteristics you identified.

You know intuitively that Disneyland rates high on kid friendly and low on cultural experience. The decision matrix calculates a score so you can see how Disneyland really measures up to your ideal vacation in objective terms.



Step 3: Evaluate Your Options

Assign The Points

Think of the ratings as points on a sliding scale. Start with 5 as the average. Decide in advance what the average rating for each characteristic means. This way, you make sure that you evaluate the options fairly and objectively. Don't be afraid to use the full range of numbers available for rating each characteristic.

For example: Average for the budget means that this option costs the amount you budgeted for the vacation.

- Assign 5 points for options that meet your budget.
- Assign 1-4 points for vacations that are over your budget but still doable.
- Assign 6-10 points for vacations that come in under your budget.

After doing your research, you give each option the following ratings:

Option:	Budget	Kids	Travel	Culture	Recom.	English	Beach
Mexico	8	5	10	9	6	5	10
Disneyland	5	10	5	3	10	10	5
Santa Fe	4	5	4	9	8	10	5
Redwoods	6	4	3	7	5	10	10

Compare the numbers for each option in the same category and make any appropriate adjustments.

Use these numbers to fill in the raw rating row for each option in the **Decision Matrix** table. I've filled in the example form so you can see how this works.

Step 4:

Calculate Weighted Score

After you have given each option a score for each key characteristic, you are almost done. The last step is to calculate a weighted score for each raw score.

To calculate the weighted score:

- Multiply the raw score (Raw) by the weight (percent) for the key characteristic. This gives you the weighted score.
- Write the weighted score in the weighted (Wt.) score row for the option under the appropriate key characteristic column.

For example: To find the weighted rating for Mexico for budget, you multiple the raw score (8) by the key characteristic weight (25%) and get 225 for the weighted (Wt.) score.

Complete this procedure for all of the raw rating scores in the matrix.



Step 5:

And The Winner Is...

To find the winner, add up the weighted scores for each option and write it in the **Total** column. The option with the highest score is closest to your ideal solution.

As many times as I have used this tool, I am always surprised at the results. Applying a bit of logic to the decision-making process always gives a different result than my gut-level emotional choices.

At this time, you can go back and tweak the numbers a bit if they seem unbalanced when you look at the results as a group. You can go back and change the weighting for a key characteristics, or adjust the ratings for individual option characteristics.

The point of this review and tweaking is to perfect your weighting and ratings. It's not a license to cook the books or force the option you want from the numbers.

If logic selects a different option than your heart, you have a choice to make.

- Are you willing to be open to a different experience that has the potential of being the nearly ideal solution?
- Are you willing to take the risk to do what you want even though you can see that it isn't the most logical choice.

Only you can decide that. And no decision matrix will be necessary for that choice.



Decision Matrix Forms

I've included a copy of the decision matrix forms for your use. The blank forms consist of two tables:

- **Key Characteristic Ranking.** This table gives you room to brainstorm and finalize your list of key characteristics. After you identify your characteristics, use the **Weight** column to assign a percentage for each characteristics.
- **Decision Matrix.** This table records your key characteristics (across the top) and your decision options (along the left). As you work through the process, record your raw (**Raw**) and weighted (**Wt.**) scores for each option (one for each key characteristic) in the option row. When you finish your calculations, add the weighted scores for an option and put the total score in the **Total** column.

Under the Creative Commons license, you may duplicate and distribute these forms without changes. If you have any questions about what you can legally do with the forms, refer to <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/3.0/>.

Vacation Example

I've also included a copy of the decision matrix forms completed for the vacation options example used throughout these ebook. Refer to these pages as you work through the example. They show you how to use the forms.

About The Author

About Charlene Kingston

Charlene Kingston is an information design professional with more than 25 years experience solving business challenges with practical information solutions. She started Crow Information Design in 1995 in the Phoenix metropolitan area.



I wrote this ebook to help people like you make better decisions and feel more confident about your decisions.

When she is not writing or engaged in social media, Charlene makes a lot of decisions.

Find Charlene online:

- Follow Charlene on Twitter: [Kinchie](#) and [CrowInfoDesign](#)
- Visit her website: [Crow Information Design](#)
- Read her blog: [From The Crow's Nest](#)

I'd love to hear how you put the decision matrix to work in your life.

About Crow Information Design

Crow Information Design provides services that help companies and freelance professionals present themselves in writing for online and print.

Regards,



My team can help you with:

- | | | | |
|----------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| ■ Social Media | ■ Screencasts | ■ User Manuals | ■ Online Help |
| ■ Ebooks | ■ Websites | ■ Software Demos | ■ Training Programs |
| ■ Blogs | ■ Press releases | ■ Job/Task Analysis | ■ Knowledgebase Articles |
| ■ Editing | ■ Indexing | ■ Business Analysis | ■ RFP/RFQ Responses |

Finding the shortest distance between your message and your audience.

Decision Matrix

Use this tool to make an objective decision based on your selection of the key characteristics of the ideal solution, and your priority for each characteristic.

1. Define the key characteristics of your ideal solution.
2. Assign a weight (percent) to each key characteristic. Fill in the column headings on the Decision Matrix (next page) with the key characteristics information.
3. Evaluate each option and give it a raw score (Raw) for each key characteristic.
4. Calculate the weighted score (Wt.) by multiplying the raw score by the key characteristic weight (percent).
5. Add up the total score (Total) for each option. The best option has the highest score.

Key Characteristics Ranking

Use this table to identify the key characteristics of your ideal solution and assign a weight to each characteristic. All weights added together must equal 100%. Copy this information to the Decision Matrix form (next page).

Key Characteristics	Weight (%)
1. Warm Climate	%
2. beach or pool - swimming	5 %
3. English - tourist friendly	10 %
4. great cultural experience	15 %
5. recommendations - ratings	10 %
6. budget	25 %
7. kid friendly	20 %
8. no travel hassle	15 %
9.	%
10.	%
Total (Must equal 100%)	100 %



Crow Information Design

©2009 Crow Communications, LLC ■ info@crowinfodesign.com ■ blog.crowinfodesign.com/2009/02/09/decision-matrix/
The copyright holder licenses this form under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License. For more information, see: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/us/>

Decision Matrix

Use the weighted key characteristics to evaluate each option. Determine a raw score (Raw) for each option, and then calculate a weighted score (Wt.) by multiplying the raw score by the key characteristics weight (%). Add the weighted scores for each option for the option total (Total). The option with the highest score is closest to your ideal solution.

Key Characteristics:		Budget	Rid	travel	outtime	recom.	English	Beach				Total
		Options:	Weight:	25%	20%	15%	15%	10%	10%	5%	%	%
1. Mexico Rocky Point	Raw	8	5	10	9	6	5	10				
	Wt.	200	100	150	135	60	50	50				745
2. Disneyland	Raw	5	10	5	3	10	10	10				
	Wt.	125	200	75	45	100	100	50				695
3. Santa Fe	Raw	4	5	4	9	8	10	5				
	Wt.	100	100	60	135	80	100	25				600
4. Redwoods California	Raw	6	4	3	7	5	10	10				
	Wt.	150	80	45	105	50	100	50				580
5.	Raw											
	Wt.											
6.	Raw											
	Wt.											

If you have more than 6 options, use an additional form.



Crow Information Design

©2009 Crow Communications, LLC ■ info@crowinfodesign.com ■ blog.crowinfodesign.com/2009/02/09/decision-matrix/

The copyright holder licenses this form under the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License. For more information, see:

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/us/>

Decision Matrix

Use this tool to make an objective decision based on your selection of the key characteristics of the ideal solution, and your priority for each characteristic.

1. **Define your ideal solution.** Spend a few minutes thinking about the ideal solution. How does it look and feel? Try it on for size. Make a list of the key characteristics for your ideal solution.
2. **Set Your Priorities.** Which of these characteristics of your ideal solution are the most important? Assign a weight (percent) to each key characteristic. The weight establishes your priorities.
3. **Assign The Points.** Evaluate each option and give it a raw score for each key characteristic. You look at each option by itself and rate it according to how it meets your key characteristic.
4. **Calculate the weighted scores.** Use the raw score and the key characteristic weight (percent) to calculate a weighted score. This combines the facts from your option research with your priorities for the decision to give you an objective measurement.
5. **Add up the total scores.** Add up the weighted scores to get the total score for each option. The option with the highest score is closest to your ideal solution.

Key Characteristics Ranking

Use this table to identify the key characteristics of your ideal solution and assign a weight to each characteristic. All weights added together must equal 100%. Copy this information to the Decision Matrix form (next page).

Key Characteristics	Weight (%)
1.	%
2.	%
3.	%
4.	%
5.	%
6.	%
7.	%
8.	%
9.	%
10.	%
Total (Must equal 100%)	%



Crow Information Design

©2009 Crow Communications, LLC ■ info@crowinfo design.com ■ <http://blog.crowinfo design.com/2009/02/09/decision-matrix/>
The copyright holder licenses this form under the Creative Commons Attribution-No Derivative Works 3.0 Unported License. For more information, see: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/3.0/>

Decision Matrix

Use the weighted key characteristics to evaluate each option. Determine a raw score (Raw) for each option, and then calculate a weighted score (Wt.) by multiplying the raw score by the key characteristic weight (%). Add the weighted scores for each option for the option total (Total). The option with the highest score is closest to your ideal solution.

Key Characteristics:															Total	
		Options:	Weight:	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	100%	
1.	Raw															
	Wt.															
2.	Raw															
	Wt.															
3.	Raw															
	Wt.															
4.	Raw															
	Wt.															
5.	Raw															
	Wt.															
6.	Raw															
	Wt.															

If you have more than six options, use an additional form.



Crow Information Design

©2009 Crow Communications, LLC ■ info@crowinfodesign.com ■ <http://blog.crowinfodesign.com/2009/02/09/decision-matrix/>

The copyright holder licenses this form under the Creative Commons Attribution-No Derivative Works 3.0 Unported License. For more information, see:

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/3.0/>