

Are We Ready to Decide?

Find out with this influence indicator.

1 Corinthians 10:31–11:1; Numbers 14:1–9

Is your congregation ready to make a decision on a new building program, add staff, or change its worship focus? Here's a way to help determine that.

- ♦ **For every 100 people in your church, list five influential people.** Then mark each name with these influence-level indicators.

1 = low influence

2 = medium influence

3 = high influence

- ♦ **Estimate how each person will respond to the improvement you are recommending according to the following.**

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Resist/ Sabotage the Idea</i>	<i>Discourage/ Not Support the Idea</i>	<i>Neutral/ Allow the Idea</i>	<i>Encourage/ Support the Idea</i>	<i>Drive/ Promote the Idea</i>

- ♦ **Multiply each influencer's response estimate by the influence indicator.**

For example, Jane Doe is a high influencer (3 influence units), who might discourage a new idea (2 on the response scale). Her total influence value is 6.

John Smith is a low influencer (1 influence unit), who would encourage a new idea (4 on the response scale). His total influence value is 4.

Bill Farland is a medium influencer (2 influence units), who will drive a new idea (5 on the response scale). His total influence value is 10.

- ♦ **Add the totals.** By adding the three totals (6, 4, and 10), you get a sum of 20.
- ♦ **Divide the sum total by the number of influence units.** Divide 20 by 6, and you get a readiness average of 3.67.
- ♦ **Evaluate.** There are more factors that could be plugged into a formula for determining congregational readiness to make a decision, such as time required to make a change and leadership capacity, but this figure offers a rough estimate of how a new idea will go over in a church. Use the following scale to determine if it's time to push influencers—and the congregation—for a decision:
 - (0.4-1.5) *High Risk.* Plan on a bumpy ride if you push for change at this readiness level.
 - (1.6-2.9) *Careful.* The fruit is still green. Realize some may not make the transition.
 - (3.0-4.9) *Positive.* You should do well at this level. Make sure you do a thorough job in the transition as it could go either way, depending on the momentum created.
 - (5.0-20.9) *Optimum.* This level is prime for pursuing well-planned improvements. If you've picked the right strategy, success should follow.
 - (21.0-50.0) *Overly Ripe.* You have waited a bit too long to pursue improvements and have left some potential on the table. Proceed without hesitation. Next time, start sooner with improvements.

—Adapted from *How to Change Your Church (without killing it)*, Alan Nelson & Gene Appel, 2000, W Publishing Group, Nashville, Tennessee. All rights reserved.

Discuss

1. To whom did you go for advice when you had to make an important personal decision? Name some important influencers in your life.
2. What kind of advice does 1 Corinthians 10:31–11:1 offer to decision makers? How would you balance that with a situation like the one in Numbers 14:1–9?
3. How could we work with influencers in our church to decide whether to make a major change?