



Wiser: Getting Beyond Groupthink to Make Groups Smarter

Cass R. Sunstein, Reid Hastie

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Why are group decisions so hard?

Since the beginning of human history, people have made decisions in groups—first in families and villages, and now as part of companies, governments, school boards, religious organizations, or any one of countless other groups. And having more than one person to help decide is good because the group benefits from the collective knowledge of all of its members, and this results in better decisions. Right?

Back to reality. We've all been involved in group decisions—and they're hard. And they often turn out badly. Why? Many blame bad decisions on “groupthink” without a clear idea of what that term really means.

Now, *Nudge* coauthor Cass Sunstein and leading decision-making scholar Reid Hastie shed light on the specifics of why and how group decisions go wrong—and offer tactics and lessons to help leaders avoid the pitfalls and reach better outcomes. In the first part of the book, they explain in clear and fascinating detail the distinct problems groups run into:

- They often *amplify*, rather than correct, individual errors in judgment
- They fall victim to *cascade effects*, as members follow what others say or do
- They become *polarized*, adopting more extreme positions than the ones they began with
- They emphasize *what everybody knows* instead of focusing on critical information that only a few people know

In the second part of the book, the authors turn to straightforward methods and advice for making groups smarter. These approaches include silencing the leader so that the views of other group members can surface, rethinking rewards and incentives to encourage people to reveal their own knowledge, thoughtfully assigning roles that are aligned with people's unique strengths, and more.

With examples from a broad range of organizations—from Google to the CIA—and written in an engaging and witty style, *Wiser* will not only enlighten you; it will help your team and your organization make better decisions—decisions that lead to greater success.

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