In some cultures, higher value is placed on building consensus as part of the decision-making process, while in others, decision making is largely invested in the individual. These differing styles of decision making have a dramatic impact on the timeline of a typical project. In a consensual culture, the decision making may take quite a long time, since everyone is consulted. But once the decision has been made, the implementation is quite rapid, since everyone has completely bought in and the decision is fixed and inflexible - a decision with a capital D, we might say.

By contrast, in a top-down culture, the decision-making responsibility is invested in an individual. Here, decisions tend to be made quickly, early in the process, by one person. But each decision is also flexible - a decision with a lowercase d. As more discussions occur and new information arises, decisions may be easily revisited or altered, which means that implementation can take a long time.

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**CONSENSUAL OR TOP-DOWN: WHICH DO YOU PREFER?**

*Source: Erin Meyer, ‘The Culture Map’*

**Consensual**

Decisions are made in groups through unanimous agreement.

**Top-down**

Decisions are made by individuals (usually the boss).

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**WORD OF THE WEEK**

**Ta’arof**

(Iranian noun) ‘You go first’, says Mr A as he meets Mr B at the doorstep. ‘No, it’s not possible, you go first’, Mr B insists in response.

**Ta’arof** dictates a ritual that may see them both waiting for a couple of unnecessary minutes before one steps forward. It is an etiquette that is seen almost in all aspects of Iranian life, from hosts insisting on guests taking more food from the table to the exchanges in the bazaar.