

Table 8-1: A Structured Decision-Making Process

- *Analyze the Situation:* Identify and describe the client's situation as fully as possible. This provides information for establishing objectives.
- *Establish Objectives/ Describe End State:* What does the client want to achieve, the ultimate outcome that the client wants to create. This should also be as concrete as possible.
- *Generate Alternatives:* The outcome of this step is to have a rich set of alternative ways to obtain the client's objective(s) and to create the end state that is envisioned. It is important not to short cut this step due to impatience, frustration, premature evaluation, or other reasons that do not contribute to achieving the goal.
- *Establish Criteria:* At this stage of the decision-making process, one must establish the criteria against which each alternative will be evaluated. The criteria should be comprehensive. It is suggested that the criteria include financial, personal, social, strategic, time, and risk dimensions. The concept of the "balanced scorecard" from chapter seven may be a useful framework for establishing criteria.
- *Evaluate Alternatives:* In the evaluation stage, one must determine how each alternative fits the criteria established. It is usually helpful to rank the alternatives if a number of alternatives are being evaluated and, depending on the nature of the problem, to assign some numerical weight.
- *Make A Decision:* Choose the alternative that best fits the criteria. In addition, does the alternative pass the "gut test," that is, is it intuitively sound, or does the consultant or client feel that there may be something wrong with this alternative. If an alternative is highly preferred analytically but does not pass the gut test then a discussion to discover the cause of the discomfort with respect to the decision outcome is appropriate. Do not go forward on important, high stakes decisions unless the choice is positive on both an analytical and intuitive basis.