

# The RKI Facilitators' Working Guide

Volume 1, version 1.3, of the RKI Everyday Democracy  
Series ©RKI 1998

© RKI 1998

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>What a facilitator is and isn't</b> .....	2
<i>Here we rely on the masters of meetings, Doyle and Straus, to define four key roles in meetings and explain where your responsibilities as facilitator start and stop.</i>	
<b>What do facilitators do? The most frequently used behaviors</b> .....	6
<i>Facilitators rely on a set of behaviors and a way of speaking that gets more elaborate as we get more skilled. But some ways of behaving are the bedrock of all facilitation, as important to experts as to novices. This sections introduces "the biggies."</i>	
<b>The central importance of neutrality, and some "how to" ideas</b> .....	12
<i>Read this section over and over until you know you can act neutrally while you facilitate, and until you leave the site of the meeting.</i>	
<b>The all-important agenda</b> .....	16
<i>It's nearly impossible to facilitate usefully without an agenda — it's the group's agreement about what its work is to be for that meeting. If a group cannot construct an agenda, even a rough one completed on the spot, you are not likely to be able to facilitate that group's work. This section owes a lot to the meeting meisters, Doyle and Strauss. We show you some good examples of well-built agendas. And we offer blueprints that will help you construct workable agendas for five different kinds of typical meetings. Concentrate on the agenda well in advance if you can. You'll never regret it.</i>	
<b>How facilitators promote connection (and you'll be glad you did)</b> .....	30
<i>A connected, warmed up group of people can delight you and themselves by the ease, speed, and effectiveness of their work. It's worth investing energy in helping people connect to each other. This section suggests some approaches.</i>	
<b>Facilitating Introductions: Some engaging (but not embarrassing) ideas</b> .....	33
<i>It's a problem. You HAVE to do introductions. But it's so easy to either bore or offend people before they even get to know you. And approaches have to vary depending on the group's size. The ideas in this section will help you get started well. They help set a good tone and provide a good foundation for energetic accomplishment.</i>	

**You’ll need some conversation guidelines (the meeting element formerly known as “ground rules”)** ..... 40  
*In some ways facilitation is a matter of assisting groups in living up to their members’ higher expectations of themselves and their abilities. Facilitation is almost impossible without a set of guidelines that set out those expectations for all to use. If you skip the conversation guidelines, we promise — you’ll be sorry. Read this section for some help with working these all important meeting elements into your facilitation repertoire.*

**A reliable plan for opening well: Putting the elements together** ..... 45  
*Opening well makes all the difference. It helps place the responsibility of group success in the hands (or laps) of group members. It helps make clear what you will and won’t be doing as facilitator. We suggest you develop a checklist of meeting elements you always use to get a meeting started. We share our checklist in this section.*

**Generating lots of good ideas** ..... 48  
*Good meetings generate good ideas. Good ideas produce good actions. And — surprise — good facilitation is one important contributor to the process of generating a large, rich pool of ideas. This section presents some sample language and a variety of jumping-off points for getting ideas flowing in a variety of specific situations. Chances are this section will give you some new ideas, too, about how to facilitate stimulating sessions of idea-building.*

**How to move from lots of ideas to specific decisions** ..... 54  
*Once you have a sea of good ideas, don’t get swamped. Good facilitators offer groups effective ways to converge toward decisions and directions. This section offers some approaches and some advice on avoiding common pitfalls.*

**Use meeting props well** ..... 59  
*You’ve heard of flip charts. They still help. And so do other tools that support recording, sorting, choosing, ranking, and other group processes. This section offers some ideas about props, including technological ones, to aid facilitation.*

**Consensus decision-making: It’s not unanimity, and it’s not impossible** ..... 66  
*We urge groups to use consensus decision-making if at all possible. It boost ownership of decisions and speeds implementation like nothing else. This section explains what consensus is and how groups can learn to facilitate using consensus. The investment of time and effort pays serious dividends.*

**Helping groups evaluate and improve their meetings** ..... 77  
*Groups that discipline themselves to learn from their experiences can reap big increases in effectiveness and enjoyment. This section presents ways to evaluate and learn.*

<b>Analyzing meeting effectiveness yourself</b> .....	80
<i>In addition to the group’s evaluation of their own meetings, or in situations where the group assessment is not possible, you can make a big difference by looking analytically at meetings yourself and trying some remedies for the ills you diagnose. If you are operating according to Doyle (and Straus), you may want to engage the group’s leader in the analysis process as well. The leader can make a big difference in implementing many of the remedies suggested here.</i>	
<b>Conditions that promote equity in meetings</b> .....	85
<i>Equity is a pre-condition for genuine effectiveness in meetings. As you maintain your neutrality and work toward balanced participation you support both equity and effectiveness. This section outlines additional conditions that promote equity. Some of these are conditions you can promote through working with the leader between meetings.</i>	
<b>Recording well</b> .....	90
<i>If you follow Doyle and Straus completely, recording and facilitating are separate tasks. But facilitators often find themselves recording either as a part of their duties as members of a facilitation team, or out of simple necessity. Good facilitators sometimes say, “If it isn’t recorded, it never happened.” This underscores the way recording validates and preserves a group’s work, adding significantly to its effectiveness. This section is a good “how-to” for recording a group’s work.</i>	
<b>What else can you do? Three more ways to prepare for effective facilitation</b> .....	95
<i>The facilitator may not handle all the preparations described here. Usually the leader or a committee will do these things. Facilitators may find it useful to discuss preparation, however, and in some cases will handle preparation as well as on-site facilitation.</i>	
<b>Improving your skills: practice, focus and balance</b> .....	98
<i>We all keep getting better at facilitating if we practice our skills and reflect on them carefully. This section presents a few ideas and some sample language related to “multi-plexing” — advancing your skill level through forces and practice.</i>	
<b>Resources</b> .....	102
<i>This section presents some resources that you may find useful in improving your facilitation skills.</i>	

# Introduction

## Introduction

In meetings, as in the rest of daily life, we can choose either to act out of fundamental democratic principles, or not. Most of us, made aware of the choice, choose the democratic approach.

This is a book of ideas for people committed to planning and facilitating meetings in a democratic framework in work places, communities, and civic, faith, or educational organizations.

Democracy is a system for balancing power among people. Meetings are settings where power is shared, negotiated, seized, amassed, and distributed through countless small decisions and interactions.

When power is more equitably balanced among people in meetings, more people talk. More ideas emerge. Decisions, plans, products, and strategies improve. More people take responsibility.

This book suggests ways to bring important democratic principles of ownership, equity, and connection to your work with other people. These are parallel to the principles of “liberty, equality, and fraternity” that fueled the French Revolution in 1789. These principles are not like fine china, appropriate only for ceremonial occasions. They are intended for everyday use.

The promise of democracy is that people can live their everyday lives in a realm full of possibility and equity that they create together. We create democracy day by day, through the thousands of ways we relate to each other and do work together.

This book offers suggestions to facilitators who want to plan and conduct meetings distinguished by democratic principles. The ideas presented here apply to many kinds of meetings, including public meetings. Use these ideas as needed to increase the excellence and impact of meetings of all kinds.

---

*What a facilitator is and isn't*

Here we rely on the masters of meetings, Doyle and Straus, to define four key roles in meetings and explain where your responsibilities as facilitator start and stop.

---

## What a facilitator is and isn't

### What a facilitator is and isn't

Doyle and Straus, authors of *How to Make Meetings Work*, (Wyden Books, 1976) had a breakthrough insight about how to improve meetings. They said that great improvements in meeting effectiveness occur when the work of the leader and the work of the facilitator are separated and handled by different people.

Actually, they re-envisioned four key roles in meetings. Consider how the Doyle and Straus role definitions affect your work as a facilitator by distinguishing carefully what the other roles must do and by placing clear boundaries on facilitator responsibilities.

They identify four key roles within high performance work groups; **member**, **leader**, **facilitator**, and **recorder**. This model differs from traditional models in two key ways. First, members are expected to sustain significant, active participation. Second, the functions of leader and facilitator are split in inventive ways that promote productivity.

Let's look at **members** first. Each member of a high performance work group is part of the group for a reason. Either through invitation or self selection, high performance groups are typically filled with members who have a stake in the outcome of the group's work. In most such groups, the members form an intentional diversity. Since the products of high performance groups usually impact many other people, the most effective groups include broad representation of differing viewpoints from the outset.

A group prospers when members consider the welfare of the group important, and attend to it, in addition to advancing their own agendas and ideas. With group welfare in mind, members actively share ideas, contribute equitably to decisions, and make suggestions to the group — or to the facilitator — about how to proceed. Think how your work as facilitator will advance if you succeed in encouraging members to take on such high levels of responsibility. See Doyle and Straus, *How to Make Meetings Work* (1976), p. 86, for a discussion of the member role.

## What a facilitator is and isn't

Next, it is important to consider what you can expect from a **leader** in a high performance group. Everybody is familiar with what leaders usually do in groups. Typically a leader does it all — calls the meeting, makes the arrangements, chairs the meeting, helps make the decisions, chooses people to do things, and carries out the work. It is no wonder that leaders burn out and that members often take a passive approach to the group's work. Facilitating in such a traditional situation is often complicated by the leader's attachment to specific outcomes.

In the high performance model, the leader and facilitator functions are split. The facilitator attends to running meetings. This frees the high performance leader to pay attention to ensuring that the group stays focused on its purposes. The main job of the high performance leader is to attend to the group's long-term purpose and goals, and keep them in front of the group. The leader can participate fully in meetings, but may find that her or his most important work takes place between meetings — preparing, strategizing, and solving problems that naturally arise.

Sometimes you may work with a leader who wants to control a group or decrease its range of choice. If that happens, see p. 79 for ideas of other efforts leaders can make that retain their power without stealing power from the group.

As **facilitator** you are the person responsible for how people work together in the meeting. You function primarily within the meeting setting. The facilitator, more than anyone else, makes sure that the *process* of the group goes well.

The facilitator is the person in the room whose specific role is to see that the process is fair. Whatever the issue, an effective facilitator will not use the chair's position to side with one group or another. On any issue, your role as facilitator requires that you hold a neutral stance and take responsibility for the well-being of the whole group.

As facilitator, you also take responsibility for eliciting the greatest possible participation from individual members. In

## What a facilitator is and isn't

this way, and in keeping your own neutrality solid, you contribute to balancing the power in a group.

The **recorder** helps the facilitator and the group maintain an understanding of what is going on in the meeting. The recorder has two responsibilities. The first responsibility is traditional. The group needs to have its history recorded. The recorder creates a record of group discussion and decisions.

The second responsibility arises when the group needs to see what it is doing during a meeting in order to facilitate a particular process. The recorder either uses a flip chart or blackboard to record, for all to see, the gist of what members are saying.

---

***What do facilitators do? The most frequently used behaviors.***

Facilitators rely on a set of behaviors and a way of speaking that gets more elaborate as we get more skilled. But some ways of behaving are the bedrock of all facilitation, as important to experts as to novices. This sections introduces “the biggies.”

---

## What do facilitators do?

### What do facilitators do? The most frequently used behaviors.

To facilitate means “to make easy.” Good facilitation makes it easier for the group to accomplish its purpose.

According to Roger Schwarz, *Basic facilitation* helps a group accomplish a single or discrete task or solve a specific problem.

*Developmental facilitation* helps a group become more effective and improve its skills at addressing tasks, solving problems, accomplishing its work across issues and across time.

How do facilitators make things easy for groups?

#### The most frequently used facilitator behaviors

- Pause (and wait)
- Invite people to express a different point of view:  
*"Does anyone see it differently?"*
- Request more information:  
*"Tell me more about that."*  
*"I don't understand."*  
*"Could you please say more?"*  
*"Will you give me an example so I can understand better?"*
- For dominant talkers:  
  
Withdraw eye contact  
  
Shift attention, *"Thanks, Chris. Now I would like to hear what the rest of you think about ... "*
- For shy people:

## What do facilitators do?

Try for appropriate eye contact

Ask that everyone (or a whole section of the room or table) respond to a question

(Less often, only when it seems appropriate) Call on the person by name for a response

- For rambling types:

Withdraw eye contact after the talk gets boring

Turn slightly away from the speaker

Do not take notes or reinforce the talk in any way

At a pause say, *"Thank you, Terry. Now I want to get some other people to jump in here on this question."* Repeat the question to pull the focus back.

(Rarely) Interrupt. *"Excuse me, Lee. I'm sorry to have to interrupt you, but I see other people would also like to answer this question and I want to make sure they have time."* Then repeat the question.

- To get more (responses):

- ▶ Use encouraging body language: lean forward, raise your eyebrows, make eye contact (as appropriate), open your hands toward the group, manifest more energy.

- ▶ Repeat the question.

- ▶ Jolly them along a little.

[Tongue in cheek] *"Now I don't want all of you to start talking at once."*

*"Come ahead with all those good ideas. I know you have them — if we put our ideas together we will have something impressive."*

## What do facilitators do?

- Invite more response directly through follow ups.

*"That's interesting. Can you give us a more detailed explanation?"*

*"Great. Anybody else?"*

*"I'd like to hear more about that. I'm not sure I have a clear picture of what you are saying."*

*"I have heard from two or three of you. What do the rest of you think?"*

*"Is there anything else? Does anyone have a different view?"*

- To get less (from a participant):
  - ▶ Body language again: withdraw your eye contact; shift your body slightly away from the person if possible; do not write down any notes while the person is speaking; do not nod while s/he is speaking.
  - ▶ Make a general appeal for broader participation. Sometimes the overly talkative person will take this hint.

*"Some of you are looking thoughtful and you are not saying much, while others of you have a lot to say. We want to get the full range of each person's ideas while we are here. Could I hear now from some of you who haven't spoken much?"*

- Make direct statements about moving on.

*"Thank you, Chris. We have that opinion recorded. Now, how do others of you see this issue?"*

[If someone has been wanting the floor] *"Joe, you have been looking like you have something to say. Could we hear from you now?"*

## What do facilitators do?

- To get them started:
  - ▶ Use care at the beginning to set yourself up to succeed: do a really good job with creating a warm climate in the room and with your behavior before the session begins. During the opening, provide a complete but still light description of what you expect from the group. Use light humor (self-deprecating is best). Be certain the group members will find the first question easy to answer. Use open body language, light humor, and hand gestures that encourage people to begin speaking.
  - ▶ Pause after you ask the first question or state the first topic. Be willing to pause for an inordinately long time (it seems like eternity).
  - ▶ As part of the first question, describe the kind of responses you expect.

*"Quick ideas will be fine here."*

*"This will work best if you use words or phrases from your own experience."*

- ▶ If you think other strategies will fail, you can ask people to write down their responses (specify a number if you like) and let them know you will be asking them to share their responses with the group. If the group is really quiet, you may want to get people to share their responses in groups of three, before they then report significant responses to you.

*"I'm going to ask each of you to read one item from the priority list you generated. We will keep going around the room until all your ideas are recorded."*

- ▶ Don't worry too much. Some groups warm up slowly. Almost all will eventually warm up, if you do your work carefully.

## **What do facilitators do?**

- ▶ Praise them early and often for how well they are doing. Let them know how much you appreciate their responsiveness.

---

*The central importance of neutrality, and some  
“how to” ideas*

Read this section over and over until you *know* you can act neutrally while you facilitate, and until you leave the site of the meeting.

---

## The central importance of neutrality

### *The central importance of neutrality, and some “how to” ideas\*\**

We assert that good facilitation is *always* neutral. This is one of the few known cases where “always” is justified. Slipping out of neutrality means slipping out of the facilitator role. It’s delicate enough and hard enough for groups to understand facilitation. We don’t want to risk destroying that understanding by moving away from neutrality while facilitating.

In logical terms, neutrality is a *necessary* condition for good facilitation but it is not *sufficient* all by itself to guarantee that facilitation will succeed. We need more than neutrality to facilitate well, but we must have neutrality or we cannot facilitate at all.

The **purpose** of facilitator neutrality is to leave the ownership of group work with the group. As facilitator, if you practice partiality or advocacy about any issue the group is considering, or if you acknowledge differences in status among group members, the group will deal with these as ownership claims.

Groups respond to such false ownership claims in one of two ways: either they abdicate their authority and treat the facilitator as the leader who will address the issue on behalf of the group, or they resist the intrusion and resent the facilitator’s presence. Either of these outcomes is negative, not productive, and a good way to waste group time.

You do not have to *be* neutral in order to facilitate. You must learn to *practice* neutrality, or *act as if* you are neutral.

How does a facilitator practice neutrality? These are some of the ways:

- Acknowledge to yourself your own preferences for particular people or ideas, and then put them aside.
- Use language that encourages and affirms each person and her/his ideas.

## The central importance of neutrality

- Use gestures, facial expressions, and body language that demonstrate openness to each person and enthusiasm for the process of generating diverse ideas and opinions.
- Explain the neutral role and refer to it often. Most people in groups are schooled to expect the person guiding the meeting to be the key opinion leader and decision maker — the chair, department head, boss, or president. Out of habit, group members may turn to the facilitator for guidance, advice, or approval. Gently and firmly, turn these expectations back to the group for its management.
- Train yourself to resist your impulses to use subtle manipulation (whom you recognize, how you respond to particular people) to influence group outcomes. This is the most challenging aspect of facilitator neutrality — the reason facilitation is a practice, not a body of steps to be implemented over and over.
- Neutral does not mean "neutered." Facilitate with warmth and passion for the group members and their work.

Two particular cautions:

- If you love to take part in lively discussions, steel yourself with extra resolve before you facilitate. Please (we are practically begging about this one) do not yield to that temptation to say, “I know I’m not supposed to do this, but I just have to weigh in here on side A” (or “I just have to tell you how misinformed you are about XYZ.”) Just don’t do it.
- When your session is over, you are still the neutral facilitator until you are out of the building, in your car alone, or on public transit with the anonymous crowd. Do not drop your neutrality after the meeting when talking with participants. And especially, restrain yourself from beginning to “debrief” with a co-facilitator, recorder, or leader about how particular members behaved during the meeting. We speak from experience here — dropping neutrality before you are

## **The central importance of neutrality**

off site can produce some nasty problems you don't want to have. So, just don't do it again.

*\*\* RKI acknowledges Dr. Ron Hustedde, University of Kentucky Department of Rural Sociology, as the source of many of these ideas on neutrality.*

---

## **The all-important agenda**

It's nearly impossible to facilitate usefully without an agenda. The agenda is the group's agreement about what its work is to be for that meeting. If a group cannot construct an agenda, even a rough one completed on the spot, you are not likely to be able to facilitate that group's work. This section owes a lot to the meeting meisters, Doyle and Strauss. We show you some good examples of well-built agendas. And we offer blueprints that will help you construct workable agendas for five different kinds of typical meetings. Concentrate on the agenda well in advance if you can. You'll never regret it.

---

# The all-important agenda

## The all-important agenda

An agenda is an essential and straightforward tool for working in groups. An agenda is easy to put together. Because it is simple and easy, it may not look like it is very important. However, *having an agenda can be the single most important element in group credibility and in having groups work well.*

If a group has an agenda, when people come to the meeting they know what to expect and they are more likely to be prepared. The agenda is a powerful tool for keeping the group moving toward goals, and for keeping the group on task. Regularly providing written agendas streamlines meetings and uses members' time more productively.

An agenda provides an agreed-upon guide to what is appropriate content for discussion. Two key questions are involved in developing agendas:

- How can the agenda contribute to the group's greatest possible productivity and efficiency?
- Who controls the group's agenda?

The agenda contributes to a group's productivity and efficiency by reducing the amount of uncertainty members must manage during precious meeting time. Uncertainty about how to proceed causes people to waste time instead of producing results equal to the time invested. Ten people at a two-hour meeting spend the equivalent of half a week's work for a typical employee. The greater the amount of preparation reflected in the agenda, the fewer actual meeting minutes — or hours — will be spent wondering what to do or how to proceed.

An agenda can be constructed by an individual, by a small group, or by the whole group. For example, the leader can construct the agenda before the meeting or the group can construct its next agenda at the end of a meeting. If it is important for the group to have some ownership of the agenda, then the agenda needs to be tentative, or it needs to be constructed entirely at the beginning of each meeting. How you construct it really depends on what suits the group.

## The all-important agenda

Remember that *any agenda is better than none*. Here are some guidelines for deciding how to set the group's agenda and the conditions for each option.

- i. One person sets it and provides it to the group in advance of the meeting
  - When the group is brand new
  - When trust is high
  - When one person is clearly dominant, and that dominance is acceptable to the group.
- ii. A small sub-group sets it in advance
  - When ownership and buy-in are key concerns
  - When concerns about ownership and buy-in are coupled with short meeting spans. In this case, make sure the small group that plans the agenda is selected to represent each segment of the whole group.
- iii. The whole group sets it at the beginning of the meeting
  - When no trust exists
  - When time is ample and development of the agenda is a valuable investment in knowledge about each other
  - When tolerance for process is high
  - When the leader or facilitator has the skills to ensure that agenda setting is completed in a reasonable length of time and that the meeting does not get mired down irreparably at the very beginning.

Two different levels of agenda are presented on the next six pages.

## The all-important agenda

**Sample Agendas 1A and 2A** shows the type of agenda with which most of us are familiar

**Sample Agendas 1B and 2B**, based on Doyle and Straus, *How to Make Meetings Work*, shows an agenda that reflects much more preparation on the part of the leader or her or his designates

You will notice a tremendous difference in the tone and expectations in agendas 1B and 2B. These agendas make it plain that serious work has been going on in preparation for the meeting. They clearly suggest that the upcoming meeting will be productive.

Not every group has the leadership or time to have as much work done on its agenda as might be desirable. The cardinal rule is this: Any agenda is better than none.

### *Sample Agenda 1A — The Traditional Agenda*

Facilities Committee Meeting  
Monday, March 9, 1991, 2:30 p.m.  
Conference Room A

- I. Report from the Assessment Subcommittee
- II. Consideration of sites for the new office
- III. Discussion of progress report
- IV. Preparation for meeting with Long-Term Planning Committee
- V. Adjourn

## The all-important agenda

*Sample Agenda 1B — An Agenda Influenced by Doyle and Straus.*

Facilities Committee Meeting  
Monday, March 9, 1991, 2:30-4:45 p.m.;  
Conference Room A, Downtown Office

Chair: Gene Felton  
Facilitator: Joe Simms  
Final Decision Maker: Whole Group

I. Report from the Assessment  
Subcommittee

Action needed: Approval of report  
Responsible person: Blanche Terry  
Time: 15 minutes

II. Consideration of sites for new branch bank

Action needed: Choose from among several planning options  
Responsible person: Mickey Jones  
Time: 15 minutes

III. Discussion of progress report to senior management

Action needed: Brainstorm about possible items for inclusion  
in the report, then choose among them  
Responsible person: Mae Everett  
Time: 20 minutes

IV. Preparation for meeting with Long-Term Planning  
Committee

Action needed: Choose spokesperson, agree on short list of  
items to be discussed  
Responsible person: Jules Mack  
Time: 10 minutes

V. Evaluation

Action needed: Identify what worked in the meeting, and  
what needs to be improved  
Responsible person: Joe Simms

## **The all-important agenda**

Time: 15 minutes

VI. Adjourn

## **The all-important agenda**

### *Sample Agenda 2A — The Traditional Agenda*

Lincoln School Improvement Council  
Monday, March 9, 1991, 7:00 p.m.;  
Lincoln School Cafeteria

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Description of purpose (for new participants)
- III. Report from Problem Identification Committee
- IV. Report from Long Range Goals Committee
- V. Consider request to appear on WWKN talk show to describe School Improvement process
- VI. Adjourn

## The all-important agenda

*Sample Agenda 2B — An Agenda Influenced by Doyle and Straus.*

Lincoln School Improvement Council  
Monday, March 9, 1991, 7:00-8:30 p.m.  
Lincoln School Cafeteria

Leader: Principal Kurtz  
Facilitator: Jerri Gibbs  
Final Decision Maker: Cosco County School Board

### I. Welcome and Introductions

Action needed: Introduce new members to old folks  
Person responsible: Principal Kurtz  
Time: 10 minutes

### II. Description of purpose (for new participants)

Action needed: Provide a quick background to new group members  
Persons responsible: Jerri Gibbs, Tom Mascio, Rita Delaney, Sue Spires  
Time: 15 minutes

### III. Report from Problem Identification Committee

Action needed: Choose key problems which the SIC will address next year  
Person responsible: James Gill  
Time: 20 minutes

### IV. Report from Long Range Goals Committee

Action needed: Report on progress on the five year plan  
Persons responsible: Jill Maguire and Rudy Terne  
Time: 15 minutes

### V. Consideration of request to appear on WWKN Sunday talk show to describe School Improvement process

Action needed: Choose spokesperson  
Person responsible: Judy Meister

## The all-important agenda

Time: 10 minutes

### VI. Evaluation

Action needed: Discuss how to improve SIC functioning

Person responsible: Jerri Gibbs

Time needed: 15 minutes

### VII. Adjourn

~~~~~

## Blueprints for building agendas for typical meetings

This section presents ideas about several specific kinds of ordinary meetings.

- The first meeting of a new committee, work group, or task force
- A meeting of an established, ongoing committee, work group, or task force
- A sub-committee meeting
- A regular (more or less) staff meeting
- An ad hoc problem solving meeting

For each kind of meeting we have provided a meeting "template." Use this template as a rough guide for agenda construction.

The template suggests the type of work likely to be necessary in each kind of meeting and the estimated percentage of time each activity should take.

## The all-important agenda

### *Meeting Blueprint*

First Meeting of a New Committee, Work Group, or Task Force

% of  
Time

Meeting Activity

5% Welcome, Introduction of people in key roles

40% Introduce members/participants in some detailed way that fits with the meeting's "culture"

20% Clarify the group's charge, mission, purpose, or goals

15% Develop a plan of work together (perhaps brainstorming about what needs to be done, or working through a time frame, with important milestones, for carrying out the charge)

15% Agree on immediate next steps (next meeting dates, places, key roles, assignments)

5% Evaluate the meeting: what worked, what needs changing; adjourn

## The all-important agenda

### *Meeting Blueprint*

Meeting of an Established Group: Team, Committee, Task Force, Work Group

| % of Time | Meeting Activity                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10%       | Welcome and check-in (with reintroduction as needed)                                                                                                                    |
| 5%        | State charge, mission, or purpose, and discuss, if necessary. Make arrangements to introduce new members to the charge in some detail outside the regular meeting time. |
| 40%       | Assess progress of work already underway; review and adjust plans                                                                                                       |
| 25%       | Consider new issues; use creative approaches to generate new options and possibilities for future consideration                                                         |
| 10%       | Evaluate meeting effectiveness and make decisions about needed changes in meeting process                                                                               |
| 10%       | Summarize assignments, set next meeting(s), adjourn                                                                                                                     |

## The all-important agenda

### *Meeting Blueprint*

#### Sub-Committees

% of  
Time\* Meeting Activity

5% Welcome

20% Clarify why the sub-committee is meeting and what its work is; a written charge or statement of purpose is of enormous value

20% Assess progress of work already underway; review and adjust plans

40% Consider new issues; use creative approaches to generate new options and possibilities for future consideration

10% Evaluate meeting effectiveness and make decisions about needed changes in meeting process

5% Summarize assignments, set next meeting(s), adjourn

\* This allocation of time is based on a presumption that a sub-committee will be given new tasks by the main group quite often. At initial meetings of any sub-committee, more time may need to be spent in introductions and clarifying purposes than is provided here.

## The all-important agenda

### *Meeting Blueprint*

#### Staff Meetings (The Regular and the More or Less Regular)

| % of Time | Meeting Activity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5%        | Welcome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 15%       | Check-in; what has each person been experiencing (can be personal or work-related information)                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 10%       | Talk about breaking news and assess its impact (usually, staff members should have already received the latest news - accurate information about the organization - before arriving at a staff meeting; discussing its import together should typically be brief and purposeful) |
| 30%       | Assess progress of work already underway; review and adjust plans                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 25%       | Consider new issues; use creative approaches to generate new options and possibilities for future consideration                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 10%       | Evaluate meeting effectiveness and make decisions about needed changes in meeting process                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 5%        | Summarize assignments, set next meeting(s), adjourn                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

# The all-important agenda

## *Meeting Blueprint*

### Ad Hoc Problem Solving Meetings

| % of Time | Meeting Activity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5%        | Welcome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 10%       | Introductions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 15%       | Clarify the nature of the problem the group has convened to address; define the nature of the group's responsibility to address the problem                                                                                                                                     |
| 15%       | Develop a plan of work together (perhaps brainstorming about what needs to be done, or working through a time frame, with important milestones, for carrying out the charge)                                                                                                    |
| 40%       | Begin addressing the problem (structured problem-solving approaches like the one presented on the next page are sometimes useful; at other times, people primarily need to talk through what each knows about the problem in order to build a new, more complete picture of it) |
| 5%        | Evaluate the meeting: what worked, what needs changing in the approach to the problem                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 10%       | If work is incomplete, decide on the next step; summarize task assignments; adjourn                                                                                                                                                                                             |

---

*How facilitators promote connection (and you'll be glad you did)*

A connected, warmed up group of people can delight you and themselves by the ease, speed, and effectiveness of their work. It's worth investing energy in helping people connect to each other. This section suggests some approaches.

---

## How facilitators promote connection

### How facilitators promote connection (and you'll be glad you did)

All of us work better with other people when we are relaxed with them and feel a sense of comfort, safety, and trust. Facilitators often control or influence factors that produce the conditions for connection. Here are some approaches.

1. *Use site set up to support connections.*

Set up chairs and tables in circle or hollow square formations or use “cabaret” style — people sit in groups of six around round tables.

2. *Always provide food and drink if you want to speed up the connecting process.*

Set up refreshments in a part of the room that has space for group members to cluster. In addition to the usual coffee and decaf, include herbal teas. In addition to the usual sodas, include fresh spring water and seltzers. In addition to the usual pastries, use fresh fruit, and whole grain and low fat items, such as bagels.

3. *Assist group members in creating opportunities for building connections among themselves.*

Encourage the group to organize outings such as site visits that are related to the group's work or trips just for fun. Taking buses or vans together offer group members opportunities to get to know each other in ways that often do not come up in regular work life.

Take breaks a little more often than in typical meetings. About every 90 minutes will work in many meetings. Breaks help keep group energy high. Groups will get some of their connecting and community building done during these breaks, so the time will not be wasted. Frequent breaks will also accommodate smokers' needs.

4. *For ongoing groups, suggest that group members develop strategies for recognizing and honoring shared history.*

## How facilitators promote connection

Establish milestones for the group's work, and develop "rituals" or ceremonies to celebrate accomplishments. Whether simple or complex, serious or silly, these serve to unify the group.

Marking success is important, but it is also true that failure can sometimes be a bonding experience for a group. If a group experiences failure, consider ways to turn that experience into shared group learning. Some failures serve as touchstones for a group's later successes.

5. *Assist the members of ongoing groups in developing ways to cultivate strong connections among veteran members, while also cultivating openness to new ideas or new people.*

Through holding an intention to be open to new people while maintaining the bonds with old friends and colleagues, groups can prosper. Lots of groups succeed at this seemingly contradictory challenge. One strategy is to create a system for welcoming new people, introducing them to the group's way of working, and making them comfortable. Another is for the group to support one or more members in making particular outreach efforts to new people.

---

***Facilitating Introductions: Some engaging (but not embarrassing) ideas***

It's a problem. You HAVE to do introductions. But it's so easy to either bore or offend people before they even get to know you. Approaches have to vary depending on the group's size. The ideas in this section will help you get off to a good start. They help set a good tone and provide a solid foundation for energetic accomplishment.

---

# Facilitating introductions

## **Facilitating Introductions: Some engaging (but not embarrassing) ideas**

Introductions matter because they are opportunities for people to "get a handle" on each other's humanity. These handles form the basis for bonds that make working together worthwhile.

### **For groups of 12 or fewer:**

- If they are meeting for the first time, they will expect to "go around the room" and will relax a little after doing that. Use this opportunity strategically: put two or three non-threatening questions on the flip chart or board for them to answer as they go around. One fun question that often works well is, "Tell us what you would be doing today if you were not here with us."
- If the group has met before, use "check-in." As people go around, each person simply tells a bit about the things that are on her/his mind. Model this yourself by going first. Tell the truth, and tell it in only three or four sentences. This simple process takes a few minutes, and functions to help people speak about, and let go of, the distractions that usually plague the first stages of meetings. Often people also disclose aspects of themselves that have not been apparent before, and that help other people to want to work with them.

### **For groups of 12 to 50:**

- Our favorite process for this size group is "human spectrums." Spectrums can range from frivolous to serious, and can be tailored to any group's interests and experiences. See a more detailed description on p. 38.
- For this size group and larger, you can also create an "Autograph Seekers Game" with prizes. Fill a page with categories of interesting and obscure facts about individuals in the room, together with space for signatures. Give the game to participants at the first break, with a prize at the end of the break for the

## Facilitating introductions

person who collects the most signatures of people described by the categories. Make this game optional. It works best if you do the work in advance to make the categories truly interesting. You do not need to know that someone in the group has each experience or characteristic. Examples:

*Someone who has jumped out of an airplane in the last twelve months.*

*Someone who was born in the former Yugoslavia.*

*Someone who has a second business as an orchid grower.*

### **For groups larger than 50:**

- In beginning, ask people to find three people whom they do not know and introduce themselves. We sometimes also suggest, "Thank them for being here."
- Do "ups and downs." Announce categories and ask people to stand if they fit the category. This works well for giving the group a quick sense of itself. Good topics: tenure in your present kind of work (offer categories: up to one year, one to two years, two to five, etc.); distance you traveled to get here; distance from here to your birthplace; etc.

### **For groups of any size:**

If none of the above approaches appeals to you, here are a few additional suggestions. Some of these can be introduced at mid points in meetings as well as in the beginning. When you see group energy flagging or need a natural transition, pull one of these out of your facilitator's repertoire. [Several of these ideas came from an excellent source book called *The Bottomless Bag* by Karl Rohnke, Beverly, Mass: Wilkscraft Creative Printing, 1988.]

*Name Discovery*

## Facilitating introductions

Put the name tags or tent cards for all participants in a container. When all participants have arrived, invite each to draw one card at random. Each participant then moves through the room, looking for the person whose name card she or he is holding. Suggest that when participants meet each other in the course of this exploration, they exchange names and information on the aspects of their background that brought them to the meeting.

### *Jump Start*

Open the session in the following way:

"Welcome. We are glad you are here."

"Would you please stand up?"

"Turn to a neighbor whom you do not know and talk for three or four minutes about \_\_\_\_\_. " [You choose the topic: it could be related to the topic of the seminar, the meeting itself, or some shared interest that the participants are likely to have.]

"Thank you. Will some of you give us an idea about what you discussed?"

"Thank you. Please take your seats."

### *The Great Marketplace of Quotations*

In advance of the session, use books of quotations to develop a list of interesting and pointed quotations about life, work, or if possible, the topic of your meeting. For each participant, prepare four cards or strips of paper, each containing one quote. You can use quotes more than once. For a group of 20 it is ideal to have at least 50 to 60 different quotes on the 80 cards.

Deal the cards out to participants at random so each gets four. Invite them to walk through the room, trying to improve their selection of four quotations until the four they hold suit them perfectly. This will

## Facilitating introductions

require that they meet and talk with other people about why they like and dislike particular quotations. Inevitably, some people will be left with quotes that are not their favorites. It may be fun to hear from them about their dislike of particular quotes.

Allow 15 to 20 minutes for this process, including five minutes of description from participants about what happened as they exchanged their quotes.

Be sure to use quotations from people other than white men. (Many new excellent collections of quotations are available to make this process an easy one.)

### *The Values Exchange*

Post a list on a flip chart of ten values people might be expected to hold. Here are some examples:

robust health  
financial independence  
job satisfaction  
personal integrity  
service to neighbors and community  
good, active citizenship  
family health and harmony  
expression of personal beliefs and values  
making a difference in the world  
having adventure, fun and excitement in the big world  
being a great friend and having great friends  
mastering a field or a body of knowledge  
developing inner tranquility

Give each person a fourth of a flip chart page and a marker. Ask people to drop the three values that least interest them and then organize the remaining values in priority order from most important to least important on the page.

Ask everyone to hold their papers in front of them, walk through the room, find a partner, and talk through their lists of values.

## Facilitating introductions

Call "Shift" after three minutes and encourage people to find a new partner. Do this two or three times.

Ask the whole group, "What did you learn about other people? What did you learn about yourself?"

### How to do "Human Spectrums"

In order to work well together, people need to know enough about each other to realize they have interests and experiences in common. If you are beginning work with a new group that has more than 12 members, you might use human spectrums as quick, interesting ways to get people to move around and find out a little about each other.

Structure:

1. Ask people to arrange themselves along a "spectrum" or continuum with two distinct ends or poles. The poles represent facts or preferences. None should have right or wrong preferences.
2. For the first spectrums, use non-threatening personal information about things all humans have in common. As people understand the process, move toward spectrums related to the group's work. The spectrum poles need to be defined so that all people can find a place somewhere.
3. After people are arranged, ask a few of them to tell a little about where they are on the spectrum and why. Encourage people to shake hands and exchange a few words with people on either side of them in the spectrum.
4. For work-related spectrums, ask people to share connections they see between their work and the information made plain by the spectrum.

Some non-threatening personal spectrums:

- Month and day of birth (not year)
- Place of birth, in distance from the meeting site (from zero miles to halfway around the world)

## Facilitating introductions

- Distance traveled to the meeting
- Shirt or blouse color (from lightest to darkest)
- Length of time involved in present work (started today/50+ years)

Some work related spectrums:

- Time of peak performance (4 AM/3 AM)
- Preferred role in group (leader/participant)
- Prefer to talk issues through/Prefer to think issues through
- Prefer working alone/Prefer working in teams
- Prefer tradition and the concrete past/Prefer future and possibilities

---

*You'll need some conversation guidelines (the meeting element formerly known as "ground rules")*

In some ways facilitation is a matter of assisting groups in living up to their members' higher expectations of themselves and their abilities. Facilitation is almost impossible without a set of guidelines that set out those expectations for all to use. If you skip the conversation guidelines, we promise — you'll be sorry. Read this section for some help with working these all important meeting elements into your facilitation repertoire.

---

## Conversation guidelines

### **You'll need some conversation guidelines (the meeting element formerly known as "ground rules")**

Conversation guidelines are invaluable for facilitators. Usually the guidelines get out a set of expectations group members have about how they will relate to each other. Conversation guidelines provide an agreed-upon guide to the appropriate process for talking and working together. (We used to call these "ground rules.")

Conversation guidelines can be set by a group at the beginning of a large task, they can be set by a group at the beginning of a particular meeting, or they can be set by a group within a meeting to accomplish a particular task, or to guide a particular section of a meeting. Setting conversation guidelines is a way for group members to form understandings as a group and then rely on those understandings to accomplish work. The process of generating guidelines can build a group's ownership of its work. Explicit agreement about conversation guidelines provides a way for the group to be conscious about what it ought to be doing at any particular moment.

Conversation guidelines help members know how to participate appropriately at a particular time. Conversation guidelines also help people new to a group understand what the group is doing and how it is proceeding.

Conversation guidelines may be generated in at least three different ways, depending on a group's situation.

- Presented by the leader when (a) a group is clearly dominated by a recognized leader, or (b) when the time frame for producing results is short and trust is high
- Presented by the leader for discussion and ratification by the group when early buy-in by members is important, but their tolerance for process is not high
- Developed completely by the group, with guidance from the facilitator (a) when the group includes diverse members who do not know or trust each

## Conversation guidelines

other; (b) when the need for complete group ownership is critical to successful outcomes; or (c) when the group has both a long time frame for producing results and a high tolerance for process.

A group can renegotiate conversation guidelines at any time that it makes sense to do so. Usually, since conversation guidelines are like the rules of a game, groups agree not to change them without everyone's agreement. If conversation guidelines are changed, make sure absent members learn about the changes and be sure to remind everyone of the changes at the beginning of the next meeting.

Conversation guidelines are particularly important in three areas. Each is discussed below.

**Nature of Decisions.** Especially when a group first begins to meet, it is important that it determine the nature of the decisions it will make. The group needs to be as clear as possible about its assignment — the work it is taking on collectively. One possible continuum reflecting the variety of decisions a group might make is presented below. Group authority is lowest with the first item on the list, and is highest with the final item. Conversation guidelines should help make clear which type of outcome the group intends (and is empowered) to produce.

- Decisions that result in **information** to another person or group about the opinions of your group
- Decisions that result in **advice** to another person or group charged with making a decision
- Decisions that result in **recommendations** to another person or group
- Decisions that are **subject to veto** by another person or group
- Decisions that result in **actions** to be carried out by your group.

## Conversation guidelines

**How decisions will be made.** One of the most critical questions that is handled under the general category of conversation guidelines is how the group will make its decisions. At least four common options exist. New groups need guidelines to help them know which of these decision-making strategies they will use.

- By decision of the chair
- By majority vote
- By consensus
- By consensus unless a specified level of disagreement prevails; if that happens, the group may use other strategies such as majority vote

**Courtesy and Civility.** Groups prevent some conflict and give themselves a way to handle disagreements when members agree in advance to treat each other with respect and courtesy. Conversation guidelines often express group members' expectations about these topics:

- speaking and listening
- interruptions
- frequency and duration of comments
- whether the facilitator must recognize people before they speak
- full participation
- sensitivity to quiet members
- other specific issues

Here is a set of conversation guidelines we often propose when working with new groups:

1. Share your ideas with the group.

2. Listen with respect to other people's ideas, and encourage them to speak.
3. Aim to create something new as a group during this meeting.
4. Use consensus to make decisions, unless it is impossible to reach. In that case, vote.
5. Give the facilitator the power to keep the meeting on track and recognize people to speak, if necessary.
6. Abide by common courtesy: listen without interrupting; no personal attacks; no side conversations; no disrespectful behaviors toward others.

Here is a set of conversation guidelines a group of high school students produced for a dialogue project they were conducting:

| <b>Proposed Ground Rules</b>                                                               |                                           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                                                                                 | <b>No</b>                                 |
| Speak your truth; tell what you know and believe.<br>Speak from the edge of your knowledge | Interrupting<br>Naming unnecessary names  |
| Ask questions of other participants.                                                       | Whining                                   |
| Listen to hear what others mean to say                                                     | Fixing blame without offering a solution. |
| Talk with respect for others and for yourself.                                             | Personal attacks                          |
| Follow the moderator's guidance about time and whose turn it is to talk.                   | Hitting, spitting, hairsplitting.         |

---

*A reliable plan for opening well: Putting the elements together*

Opening well makes all the difference. It helps place the responsibility of group success in the hands (or laps) of group members. It helps make clear what you will and won't be doing as facilitator. We suggest you develop a checklist of meeting elements you always use to get a meeting started. We share our checklist in this section.

---

# Opening well

## **A reliable plan for opening well: Putting the elements together**

Openings make all the difference. This is one checklist of key elements for opening a meeting.

- A statement of purpose for the meeting. (“We are here today to complete the workplan for our new café. When we finish the meeting, all of us should know what we have to do by the end of the month.”)  
Precede the meeting purpose with a statement of purpose for any larger effort of which the meeting is a part. (“As you know, the goal of Neighborhood Development Corporation is to create ten new locally owned businesses north of Main by the year 2007.”)
- Warm introduction (see p. 34 for possibilities)
- Interactive, participative introductions of participants
- Introduction of people playing key roles, (leader, facilitator, recorder, others) and descriptions of these roles. This is your chance to explain what you will and won’t be doing as a facilitator. For example, you might say, “I’ll be facilitating this meeting today. That means I will stay neutral — keep my opinions to myself — on the issues on the agenda. All the ideas about what to do will come from you. I’ll act a guide on ways to get the work done. I’ll be encouraging all of you to do your part to contribute to the group’s ideas and decisions. I’ll pay particular attention to helping you stay on task with your agenda and time deadlines. I may ask you to let me recognize you in order, if a lot of people want to speak at once. And if we get in a tangle over process, I may call a “time out” so we can sort it out and move on.”
- Presentation of an agenda. Ideally, present a tentative agenda and ask the group to adapt and adopt it.
- A set of proposed conversation guidelines for the group to change or adopt.

## Opening well

- For ongoing groups: two sentences about what the group has done so far; two sentences about what the group ultimately intends to accomplish; and two sentences about how this meeting fits in the plan.

In some meetings, you may plan in advance for the leader to handle the first four items, and then to introduce you, the facilitator. In other meetings the facilitator may handle all the set up duties for the meeting. Plan in advance which way you will handle the opening. This will prevent a fumbling start that will cause people concern about your abilities.

Give people a "road map" for the meeting early on, so they do not expect to spend a whole session just generating ideas. For example, explain that you will spend a specific amount of time on generating ideas, and then will follow with making choices, deciding on priorities, and moving through the necessary steps to produce the ultimate outcome — a consensus plan for public engagement, for example.

Put the "map" for the meeting in large and colorful form in the room where people can see it. Consider varying from the usual vertical arrangement. Show instead a "time line" for the meeting. On a long wall you may be able to lay out a colorful horizontal line showing time allocations and work to be accomplished. It might have these headings:

Create a friendly climate  
Generate ideas  
Choose the best ideas  
Organize the best ideas into strategies  
Turn the strategies into a synthesized action plan

---

### *Generating lots of good ideas*

Good meetings generate good ideas. Good ideas produce good actions. And — surprise — good facilitation is one important contributor to the process of generating a large, rich pool of ideas. This section presents some sample language and a variety of jumping-off points for getting ideas flowing in a variety of specific situations. Chances are this section will give you some new ideas, too, about how to facilitate stimulating sessions of idea-building.

---

## Generating lots of good ideas

### Generating lots of good ideas

Good idea generating is a divergent, reaching out, expanding process. To generate a generous pool of ideas from which the group can choose the best and form clear decisions and directions, you will need high quality in three aspects of your work. These three areas are: a good springboard; appropriate processes for working with each other on the ideas; and simple, effective "props" to assist in recording, creating categories, and setting priorities among the ideas.

Nothing helps idea generating as much as something new or creative that takes people a bit by surprise. Do the hard work in advance to make creativity more likely by planning a good springboard. (By the way, even planning sessions for good springboards can cause creativity to break out, and can make fun in the middle of a work day.)

- Work diligently to devise good questions to open your idea generating process. Make your questions lively and interesting, pointed in the direction of your specific topic, without being too confining. Most people cannot generate these kinds of questions on the spot, on their feet. For example, on your feet you may hear yourself asking a question such as this:

*"Well, has anyone given a thought to how we want the public meeting to go?"*

With advance preparation, you might ask instead, questions like these:

*"When people leave the meeting, what do we want them to be talking about?"*

*"What would it take to make this public meeting successful? Can we generate criteria?"*

*"What kind of experience do we intend for participants in the public meeting to have?"*

*"What do the participants need to accomplish during this meeting?"*

## Generating lots of good ideas

- Instead of relying solely on questions, occasionally use other springboards. For example:
  - ▶ Use carefully selected video or film clips to set the stage for provocative questions.
  - ▶ Assemble some objects that are evocative of the topic of the meeting. Show them to participants, perhaps with a few words of description or history for each one, before asking them to begin generating ideas.
  - ▶ Present three to five minutes of quotations, challenging statements by experts, or pithy and accessible statistics as a jumping off point for idea generating. This will work best if two or three people present the material in rapid fire, energetic fashion. Use costume props — even one hat or scarf can help. In some arenas, you could use this approach to highlight an important controversy and present brief statements from each perspective on the controversy as a way of "priming the pump" for your group.

### Choosing Specific Processes for the Right Reasons

Consider the “how” of your meeting carefully. Think about who will be coming, and what you want them to achieve. Craft a process that will make them feel comfortable, valued, and stimulated.

Here are a variety of options:

- If a topic is new, people are new to the topic, or some expert point of view cannot be ignored, you can use pre-work as part of the process. For example, send out a short concept paper, book review, or article for people to read in advance. Be careful though, do not send more than five pages of material in advance or people are likely to conclude you are no fun and your session won't be fun either.

## Generating lots of good ideas

- Instead of reading, or in addition to it, you may ask people to do pre-work that involves their own listing of ideas, resources, or other material before they come to the session. You might suggest they do a five minute interview with another group member or someone who has special knowledge the group can use. Suggest two or three interview questions. For example, "Tell me about three people who helped teach you the restaurant business." "What have been the biggest surprises you have had since you came to work here?" "What would you most like new employees here to learn their first day on the job?" Whatever you suggest, keep the load light.

Pre-work is most successful with groups that are deeply committed to a subject. Pre-work can send a message that you, too, consider the subject significant.

- If you believe the group will be filled with shy and quiet people, ask them to make their own written responses to your questions or springboards once they are on site. Then invite them to work with one other person to pool their ideas and select the best ones. If there is time, invite the pairs to join with another pair and winnow ideas again, so that the foursome can present ideas for the whole group that have already had some consideration.
- If the group is large, and full of lively and capable people, divide them into small groups and assign each the same question or task. For example, "Make two lists. The first one is what new visitors see and experience now as they enter our city from the airport. The second list is what you would like them to see and experience in 2002." Then, using a flip chart or cards, record and integrate the results of their idea generating sessions. (See the next section, *Use the right props*, for tips on flip charts and cards.) Alternatively, create intentional or random small groups and assign each to work on a different angle of a question or a topic. Then, as a whole, integrate the results from each group. This is a particularly valuable strategy when a group is addressing a complex topic and time is too limited for the entire

## Generating lots of good ideas

group to work its way through all the facets of the topic. For example, if you are working with a group of co-workers who are planning the company's tenth anniversary celebration, you might ask them what has to be done and then divide them into separate tables. Assign each table one topic (such as food and drink, entertainment, door prizes, spouse and children's programs, location, take home favors, publicity, and so on). When the table groups report back to each other, it will help the whole group spot problems and tighten the coordination.

- Instead of asking small groups to produce lists of words, ask them to produce rough visual representations using flip chart and collage materials. For example, ask a group of diverse interests charged with developing a design for a new neighborhood center to show visually who their "customers" will be and what their customers' interests are.
- Time-honored processes still work well in many situations. Simply asking each person in a meeting to respond to a questions while others listen (“going around the room”) can sometimes greatly expand the ideas and commitment in a meeting. Listing ideas individually and then sharing them without interruption or disagreement (nominal group process) can lay a foundation for a straightforward ranking, priority-setting, or weighting process that can guide strategic decisions.

In planning for action, identifying strengths and weaknesses in the internal structure and opportunities and threats in the environment (SWOT analysis) can be invaluable.

In considering desired changes, groups may benefit from identifying forces for and forces against change, and the relative weight of each force (force field analysis). This analysis is sometimes followed by planning for actions that will capitalize on strengths and help address gaps or weaknesses.

---

*How to move from lots of ideas to specific decisions*

Once you have a sea of good ideas, don't get swamped. Good facilitators offer groups effective ways to converge toward decisions and directions. This section offers some approaches and some advice on avoiding common pitfalls.

---

## Moving to specific decisions

### How to move from lots of ideas to specific decisions

After a group works on the divergent process of generating lots of ideas, it needs to change gears and work toward convergence.

- You may either bring the idea generating phase of a meeting to a close by referring to a pre-established time frame or you may wait until it becomes clear that people have run out of ideas. In either case, make it plain that the idea generating phase of the meeting is over. Sample language:

*"Unless anyone has a burning idea that we have not listed, we have now concluded the idea generating phase of this meeting. Thank you for all your good work. We have a good foundation now for going forward. Our next step will be to choose from the ideas we have generated those that we like the best and think will be most suited to our purpose. Up until now we have been broadening our options. Now it is time for us to narrow, and become selective."*

Describe the strategy you have chosen for the group to use in selecting its top ideas. Here are some options:

- ▶ You can simply ask the group to look through all of the ideas it has generated and begin to talk with you about the ideas they consider most significant. This may work especially well when a group is small and people are very comfortable with each other. It will not work well if you know you have dominating, highly talkative people within the group who tend to shut out other people's opinions.
- ▶ If time is short, use a simple priority setting approach. Tell people they each have three votes. Read each item and count the number of hands. If the resulting list seems too long, assign people one vote each, and repeat the process.

## Moving to specific decisions

- ▶ You can ask participants to make a rank ordered list of key ideas. When they share these lists, you have something of a tabulation problem unless you convert their priority rankings to numbers. For example, if a list contains 15 items, allocate 15 points to the item a participant ranks in first place, 14 to the second place, and so on. Someone with a calculator can help you get total tallies for each item.
- ▶ An alternative that yields more usable information in some circumstances is to tell group members that they can assign 100 points to the ideas within a particular category. Suggest that they apply their 100 points in any amounts, provided they use increments of five. For example, in a list of ten items, a participant might choose to assign 70 points to one item, ten points to another, and five points each to four more items. Several items would receive no points at all. This approach also requires a calculator for tallies, but it means it is possible to distinguish more accurately among items ranked at the top of the scale. It is possible to tell whether a group places twice as much value on the number two item as they place on the number three item, for example. A straight priority ranking will not give you this kind of information.
- ▶ You can use colored dots as props for decision-making. See p. 61 for a description.

### **Avoiding the pitfalls when narrowing down (converging)**

- There are ways to go wrong narrowing from many ideas to a few good ones. For example, rushing the process, sticking to your original plan even though the group needs you to be flexible, or accepting the results of a tabulation without further question. Antidotes (sample language):

## Moving to specific decisions

*"We seem to be having trouble with our priority setting system. Does anyone have a suggestion for a different approach?"*

-- OR --

*"Here are the results of our choice-making process. Do these represent the best set of ideas that you, as a group, want to use as a basis of the written agreement?"*

-- OR --

*"What can we do to make these ideas better and more representative of this group's best thinking?"*

-- OR --

*"Based on this newly chosen set of ideas, what would you expect our public meeting to be like? How can we improve on these ideas to make the meeting reflect our best intentions for it?"*

-- OR --

*"Will these ideas provide the appropriate foundation to design a written agreement that we can all be proud of? [If not] How can we improve on these ideas so that we get a high quality agreement?"*

- One way you can be useful to the group when it has finished generating a broad group of ideas is to reflect back to the group where it stands, and what it still needs to do. Sample language:

*"Working in your four small groups, you have now produced more than 75 ideas about our public meeting design. Our next task is to create some priorities within each of the four facets of the meeting that you have identified. I have masking tape here and I would like for each group to arrange your cards on one section of the wall across from me. Leave plenty of space between the groups. Once you have*

## Moving to specific decisions

*the cards up, I'm going to ask you to get your sheets of green dots. Look at each cluster of cards before you make your choices.*

*You can have nine dots that you may use to give each other an idea of what you consider to be the most important and powerful ideas. You may put as many dots by a single item as you like. Once you have placed your dots, we will begin to build an outline that synthesizes your most important ideas into a draft agreement document."*

-- OR --

*"Here's what we have done so far. We have heard from the neighborhood association members about their views on location for the sewage treatment facility. We have gotten weighted priorities from the neighborhood people, the local government representatives, and the representatives of Citizens for Equitable Distribution of Hazards. Now we need to compare the weighted priorities of the three groups and identify where you agree and disagree. That will point us in the direction of the framework for our agreement."*

---

### *Use meeting props well*

You've heard of flip charts. They still help. And so do other tools that support recording, sorting, choosing, ranking, and other group processes. This section offers some ideas about using props, including technological ones, to aid facilitation.

---

## Using meeting props well

### Use meeting props well

Whether a group is in the diverging or converging stage of work, and no matter what springboard and process you use, you will need props — ways to record ideas and manage them easily as you put them in categories, decide priorities, and organize frameworks. Using meeting props well boosts participation and adds to a sense of equity and equally valued contributions. Because people learn and work in different ways, varying the props used to support group decision-making will also contribute to equity. Here are several ideas for strengthening your use of props.

- Large index cards or 5x8 sticky notes work well if individuals or groups write one idea per card. By placing and arranging the cards on a table top, a group of no more than 15 can quickly create categories (have extra cards available for making large print category headings to help move things along quickly). Within categories, groups can also arrange cards in an order of priority, particularly if they simply assign rough priority rankings to the cards rather than ranking each card in relation to each other card. For example, if one category has nine cards in it, group members may place three of these at the top as most important, four in the middle of medium value, and two at the bottom as less significant. This is easier than putting every single card into a priority slot, and nearly always serves just as well.
- If you use the approach of having several small groups work on different aspects of a topic, and you want ideas recorded on cards, bring cards in several colors. Assign a different color to each small group, for each different aspect of the topic.
- Each time you reach closure on part of the work with cards, tape or stick them in an obvious order on the wall. Create large print headings for each grouping of cards. This will help build a group's sense of being in a productive work atmosphere, and will help people keep track of decisions already made, so that they do not go backward and reopen issues that have been concluded.

## Using meeting props well

- For groups that take consensus decision-making seriously, colored cards are a big help. Give each person an assortment, including at least a green, pink, yellow and blue card. When a member makes a proposal to the whole group, the facilitator can get a sense of group opinion on the proposal by asking everyone to show a card. Those supporting show green, those who are neutral show blue, those leaning against or having a question show yellow, and those opposed show red or pink. Then the facilitator can work specifically with people showing yellow or red. By focusing on the nature of their objections and questions, it becomes possible to reshape proposals to satisfy more and more interests. The colored cards make consensus decision-making more efficient and workable.
- Brightly colored dots are useful for assisting a group in moving quickly from idea generating to choices about the best ideas. If you give each participant a certain number of dots of a certain color (usually no more than ten), s/he can place these on the card or (if you're using flip charts) next to the flip chart items that s/he considers most important. Have a group do this all at once. Very quickly you will get a visual idea of the ideas the group considers most important. You may also use different dot colors to convey different meanings. For example, red for good opening ideas, green for good topics for dramatization, and blue for important facts that must not be missed. Or you may want to use blue dots for “definitely like” and red for “definitely object.”
- Place an ample supply of glossy magazines, catalogues, construction paper, art supplies, and inexpensive toy objects in front of the room. Invite small groups to present "seat of the pants storyboards" when they report to the whole group.
- Encourage small groups that have creative energy to present their findings or conclusions to the whole group in songs or skits. Just a few props can help

## Using meeting props well

stimulate creativity — some percussion instruments, a few toys, hats, and scarves make quite a difference.

- Flip charts are a prop that is familiar to most people. Spice up your work with flip charts through these strategies:
  - ▶ If small groups need to record their work, tear off batches of flip chart sheets in advance and give a roll of sheets, with markers, to each small group as they begin their work. Five sheets of flip chart paper is usually adequate for up to an hour of small group work. Give each group at least three colors of markers. Wrap masking tape in a strip around one marker, creating a mini-roll. This gives everyone tape without requiring you to buy multiple rolls.
  - ▶ Buy and use multiple colored markers. "Mr. Sketch" brand markers are lightly scented, strongly colored markers that will not bleed through onto a wall or table as people write on the paper. The "Flip Chart" brand is also excellent. Avoid the "El Marko" and other prominent markers that fill the room with noxious odors and cause some people to become ill.
  - ▶ Use at least three colors of markers per page. Avoid printing text in colors that don't "travel" well, such as red, pale pink, and yellow. If you are recording participant comments, take the caps off three different colors of markers, hold two markers in your non-dominant hand in the spaces between your fingers, and write with the third color. When you have recorded one person's comment, put that marker back between the fingers of your non-dominant hand, and use a different color. You can establish a rotation of colors and return each marker to the same niche between two fingers, generating variety and more interesting pages without driving yourself crazy in the process.

## Using meeting props well

- ▶ If you know you will be recording on a flip chart for the whole group, prepare a substantial number of pages in advance.
  - . . . Number the pages.
  - . . . Draw borders around each page. This takes only seconds, and makes the page far more visually appealing. You can either draw wavy lines, jagged teeth-like lines, or "straight" lines around two, three, or four sides of the flip chart paper. If you hold two or three markers together in your drawing hand, and make sure their tips are at the same level, you can make bi-color or tri-color frames for the page in the same amount of time it takes to draw one line as a frame. Vary your frame colors from page to page.
  - . . . In the lower right hand corner, write the name of your meeting, or an appropriate acronym, depending on your meeting topic.

### Consider Technological Meeting Props

As technology improves, it becomes more and more possible to generate ideas with other people in technology assisted ways that were previously not possible.

Here are three possibilities:

- Several companies are now selling software that makes it possible for a group of people gathered in a room, each using a microcomputer, to generate lists of hundreds of ideas in limited time frames. This idea features anonymity, which can be of benefit in situations where some people are reluctant to express an idea because of fear of rejection or because the issue is volatile. One company that sells software for this process, which they call MeetingKit for

## Using meeting props well

Windows, is Enterprise Solutions, 601 Union St., Suite 3232, Seattle, WA 98101, 206/467/1234. The process requires a room that accommodates the number of people who will be involved plus their individual computers. The whole system is driven by a dedicated microcomputer, with some attached specialized equipment, that projects ideas onto a screen visible to the whole group.

- "Distance meetings," made possible by satellite technology, may eventually become more familiar to all of us. Apply the usual, practical, effectiveness strategies to designing a satellite meeting. A distance meeting requires more preparation if the meeting is to be productive, instead of merely a novelty.

Lay out for yourself a total "design" for spending available meeting time, considering carefully which parts of the work may be done by small groups at their own sites, and which parts need to be completed with all groups connected to the originating site.

Make a complete agenda, discussion guide, and set of springboard approaches for a distance meeting. It makes sense that distance meetings will have more liveliness if you choose springboard methods that are visually appealing. For example, using a skit with some very simple props, introducing topics with video clips, or showing objects that are related to the topic may make a great deal of sense in stimulating ideas at several remote sites. Similarly, small group work that results in "seat of the pants story boarding" in a visual format may be interesting for people at several remote sites to show each other electronically. This can be a significant improvement over lists on flip chart paper.

- Through either e-mail or other computer communication, a traditional idea generating process called "the Delphi process" becomes more sensible and more manageable than in the past. A Delphi process requires that either an individual or a small group serve as conveners. The conveners invite a specific number of participants, usually no more than twelve. The conveners may choose to produce a short

## Using meeting props well

concept paper or a list of questions that require responses as a way to launch the process. They circulate the paper or questions to the participants who respond within a certain time frame. The conveners integrate all the responses, produce a new product (a revised paper, a new draft, a set of lists) and circulate this new product to the group. Group members respond again within a certain time frame, and the conveners again integrate and synthesize the responses into a new or revised product. This process can continue for as long as time and interest sustain it, or it can be specifically limited from the beginning to either a certain time frame or a certain number of "turns."

- A projection television is a handy device that has recently become more affordable. Connected to a portable computer, a projection TV can make it possible for a recorder (who may also be the facilitator) to sit with a group at a table, face them, and record the group's work by typing into the keyboard. The group can see what is being written as it is projected on a wall or screen behind the recorder. This technology works extremely well to support brainstorming, priority setting, action planning, or joint editing of a written product.

---

***Consensus decision-making: It's not unanimity  
and it's not impossible***

We urge groups to use consensus decision-making if at all possible. It boost ownership of decisions and speeds implementation like nothing else. This section explains what consensus is and how groups can learn to facilitate using consensus. The investment of time and effort pays serious dividends.

---

## Consensus decision-making

### **Consensus decision-making: It's not unanimity, and it's not impossible**

Much of this section originally appeared in *Working Together: Making it Work*, a manual for high performance work groups produced by Roberts & Kay, Inc. and educators from the Fayette County Public Schools, Lexington, Kentucky. It is used here with permission. Much of the following material is based on a section entitled Consensus Defined and Illustrated, from *Team Management: Leadership by Consensus*, Wynn and Guditus, 1984.

The origin of the word consensus is a Latin word which means "to think together." Wynn and Guditus point out that consensus — thinking together — was originally a process. Now it is both a process and a product, because groups use a consensus process as a way of generating a product — consensus — on an issue.

Consensus is the preferred method of decision-making for high performance work groups. The process of thinking together is empowering to individual members, and that sort of empowerment is the strategy that leads groups to high performance.

When groups are guided by voting and majority rule, rather than by consensus, conflict may be suppressed. Issues may be forced to decision without any airing of the reasons behind people's positions. Dissenting group members may feel that decisions are imposed on them. They may be forced to accept the result, but they are unlikely to feel the need to support decisions with which they have disagreed.

Through consensus, because it requires thinking together, members are more likely to form a decision which all can support. When individuals disagree, their opinions will be heard, and they will hear the reasons behind other people's positions. Dissenters may be more likely to support the whole group product.

Wynn and Guditus point out that consensus decision-making has these effects on an organization (p. 44):

## Consensus decision-making

- opens communication
- creates an open climate
- brings latent controversy into the open
- calls for appropriate styles of leadership and management behavior
- creates job enlargement and job enrichment for all who participate in it
- stimulates organizational development
- generates motivation
- rearranges accountability in organizations.

Most groups confuse consensus with unanimity. In fact, consensus means "general agreement," and includes some space for diversity. Members who are committed to consensus may occasionally choose to support group decisions that they did not prefer personally.

Wynn and Guditus note that: ". . . a group has reached consensus when each member can attest to these convictions: (1) I believe I understand your position; (2) I believe you understand my position; (3) I will support it, whether I agree with it or not, because it was arrived at openly and fairly." (p. 43). This presumes that the decision reached through consensus does not violate the deep convictions of any member of the group.

Wynn and Guditus suggest the following protocol for consensus decision-making:

1. Those who will be significantly affected by a decision participate in making it, directly or through representation.
2. All who have valid and relevant information are fully heard.

## Consensus decision-making

3. Everyone is free to express dissent and welcomes the expression of others' dissent.
4. Everyone strives hard for open-mindedness and understanding of others' views.
5. Everyone strives to avoid categorical "aye" and "nay" choices, in favor of integrative decisions that accommodate the expectations of all.
6. Everyone feels some obligation toward voluntary deference toward consensus in the interests of group accord without surrender of his [sic] advocacy of a minority view.
7. The minority accepts the position of "loyal opposition," while pledging support of the consensus.
8. The group accepts the right of the chief executive, or small executive committee, to substitute a decision for the group's decision when (a) consensus is unattainable or (b) sufficient time is unavailable to reach consensus.
9. The loyal opposition maintains the right to have the decision reevaluated after a trial period and subject to later reconsideration.

Consensus can emerge in a situation like this:

- Most members of a work group favor adopting a new evaluation system for administrators.
- Some members have neutral feelings and choose not to object to the new system.
- Other members oppose the new system on several grounds: the review panel will include neither administrators nor people outside the school system, and the evaluation results will be used to make promotion decisions.

## Consensus decision-making

- After hearing these reasons for the dissenters' objections, the entire group considers ways to change the system so that it relieves as many of their objections as possible. The group decides to make sure that administrators and the community will be represented on the review panel. They cannot agree to any change in the plans for the use of the evaluation instrument to make promotion decisions.
- Feeling that their interests were taken seriously and that they have made some gains, the dissenting members agree to proceed with the new system. They yield on their own personal preferences in honor of a greater good—the long term health of the work group, and solidarity within the school system. Consensus is reached.

Clearly, consensus is a lofty approach to decision-making. It requires that members be willing to look beyond immediate issues to larger goals, and that members recognize that their own preferences cannot always dominate. Effective consensus requires careful listening to the views of opponents, an active interest in accommodating those views if possible, and an interest in protecting the greater good of the group instead of an interest in winning on each issue. All of these are higher-order interaction skills, and most of us are beginners in these areas.

Even groups with deep commitment to consensus will occasionally face situations where consensus seems unattainable. In such cases, your high performance work group will benefit from having a "back-up" plan if the attempt to reach consensus fails. The commitment to consensus represents the ideal that each person functions as a fully contributing member of the group. The back-up plan represents the reality that consensus is not always possible.

When consensus seems out of reach, consider the following options:

- If there is no real time pressure, postpone the final decision until another meeting. This will allow new thoughts to come up and new insights to develop.

## Consensus decision-making

- If a deadline is creating serious pressure to reach a decision, consider as a group whether it is possible to change the deadline, or get it changed, if it was imposed from outside the group.
- If all reasonable alternatives have been tried, the group can place this decision in the hands of the leader or a small sub-group, or the group can agree to vote and be guided by majority rule. This backup strategy should be used sparingly.

Consider a ground rule such as this:

- We will use consensus decision-making as much as possible. If we are having trouble reaching consensus, we will postpone the decision for one meeting if we can. After that, we will agree on a limited time frame for continued discussion. If that time elapses without consensus, we will rely on the leader to make the decision that will be in the group's best interest.

Alternatively, a group might choose this ground rule:

- We will use consensus decision-making for a specified time for each proposed decision. That time allocation will be specified on the agenda before discussion begins. If we do not achieve consensus but we have 75% agreement, we will consider discussion on that item complete. If we cannot get 75% agreement, the proposal fails.

Consensus works best when group members form the habit of making proposals to each other, rather than motions. The facilitator can then help the group discover the extent of agreement or disagreement, the reasons for objections, and ways to amend or revise the proposal so that it comes closer to meeting all members' interests. See p. 67 for ideas about using colored cards to make this process of proposing and revising significantly more efficient.

The struggle for consensus is worth the time invested only if members use that time to listen to each other, and to really

## Consensus decision-making

hear each others' opinions. A consensus decision, hammered out after careful listening to different views, will often be a truly creative, enlightened decision, powered by the collective thinking of a group of interested people. The possibility of a high-quality decision makes the work toward consensus worthwhile.

It may be useful for groups working toward consensus decision-making to recognize a spectrum of group commitment to a specific decision, from level one, indicating unanimity, to level six, indicating complete absence of commitment due to failure of a proposal. Here are the levels:

- Level 1. All of us agree on what to do. All of us will explain and defend the group decision (product, result) adequately. (This is unanimity.)
- Level 2. Some of us are enthusiastic about a certain decision. For others, it is not our first choice, but we can all live with it. All of us can explain and defend the direction (decision, product, result) adequately.
- Level 3. We have arrived at a decision or direction that is no one's first choice. We have explored options adequately and we know the decision/direction offers the most to the most team members. We can all live with it. All of us can explain and defend the decision/direction adequately.
- Level 4. We have reached a decision/direction that we can all live with. Some members of the group will not be able to defend or explain it adequately.
- Level 5. We used voting or another method to reach our decision. Those whose views are not reflected in the decision or direction cannot, or will not, explain and defend it adequately.
- Level 6. We could not reach any decision.

# Consensus decision-making

## The straight forward consensus method

### Pure Consensus

Under conditions of full or pure consensus, no decision is made unless all agree to it. No person need fear that he or she will be ignored, or discounted, or overridden by the group. The group is committed to satisfying all objections to any proposal brought forward.

### Modified Consensus

Groups use a modified consensus process when they feel that time or other constraints make full consensus potentially unworkable. All modifications provide a means for moving forward when the group is having difficulty reaching consensus.

Modifications have a wide range. At the modest end are structures that allow a group to make a decision even though one person objects. At the extreme end are structures where any member with an objection may offer a motion and call for a decision by majority vote.

### Pure Consensus and Trust

Use of pure consensus for making decisions is most appropriate under two opposite conditions. One is when there is a high level of trust among members of a group. The other is when there are clearly divergent interests and little trust among group members. In both situations, using consensus is effective and builds trust.

When there is a high level of trust, the group believes that the power each group member has to stop a group decision will be used wisely, with respect for each of the other members and for the needs of the group. Shared values and goals ensure that the group will be able to make decisions in a timely and effective fashion.

When there is a low level of trust, the consensus process functions as a protection for each member. Pure consensus

## Consensus decision-making

guarantees each member of the group that no group decision will go directly against that member's interests. With each member secure in his or her power to prevent an adverse decision, the group is able to conduct very frank and open discussions, and to consider controversial issues. Such conditions are conducive to identifying common interest and common ground.

### How Consensus Works

In its simplest form, the consensus process has four phases.

#### Phase One: Proposal

A member states a proposal or presents a written proposal to the group. This is the basis for discussion.

#### Phase Two: Comments or Questions

Members of the group make comments or ask questions about the proposal. This phase is for clarification, and also gives a first indication of the level of support for the proposal among members of the group.

#### Phase Three: Concerns

When there are no more comments or questions, any member with a concern about the proposal states that concern. As the word suggests, "concern" means that the person is not quite comfortable with the proposal, doesn't agree with it totally and wants to let the group know that. A concern may be raised and let go, or the proposal may be modified to meet the concern, or the concern may become an objection in the next phase.

#### Phase Four: Objection

In this phase the group is ready to make a decision about the proposal. Any person objecting to the proposal states that objection. If no one objects, the proposal is considered to be adopted by the group.

### The Heart of Consensus

## Consensus decision-making

The heart of consensus lies in the difference between a concern and an objection. People may have concerns about a proposal that they voice. They may not agree wholeheartedly with a proposal and may wish it were slightly modified. They may even ask the group to modify it in some ways. But finally the proposal is put before the group for a decision. If no one has serious enough concerns to raise actual objections, the proposal is adopted.

Consensus does not always mean that no member of the group has concerns about the proposal. Consensus does mean that all the members of the group can live with the proposal and are willing to support it.

Most groups that operate by consensus have an understanding that once a proposal has been adopted by consensus all members are obligated to support it. Some groups state this understanding explicitly in their operating procedures, while other groups have an implicit understanding. Even if members of the group have raised concerns that have not been wholly satisfied, their obligation is to support the decision of the group. A person who cannot support a proposal has the obligation to object and keep the proposal from being adopted.

### **A useful consensus tool**

Colored cards (a red, blue, yellow and green one for each member) can help in working toward consensus. The group can use them to take straw polls as discussion proceeds.

The cards clarify how near a group is to consensus — often much nearer than people think — and make clear who has objections or questions. The group can then focus on learning from those showing cards other than green how a decision would need to be shaped to win their support.

---

*Helping groups evaluate and improve their meetings*

Groups that discipline themselves to learn from their experiences can reap big increases in effectiveness and enjoyment. This section presents ways to evaluate and learn.

---

## Evaluating and improving meetings

### Helping groups evaluate and improve their meetings

Evaluations are like physical exercise. Even after people know how valuable evaluations can be, they have a hard time using them regularly to tune up their meetings.

Some groups, like some disciplined individuals, train themselves and form the necessary habits of self-improvement. These are the groups that use their members' time with the greatest effectiveness.

The simplest evaluation tool can be highly effective. Simply allocate time regularly to ask the group "What worked well?" and "What needs improvement?" If you can, place the topic of facilitation effectiveness squarely on the table and invite comment. Record answers to both questions on the flip chart, and make sure the answers are transcribed and circulated. Take each suggestion and work through how to implement it.

Some groups prefer to use a three-part evaluation called "Continue/Stop/Start". Put these three words at the head of three columns on the flip chart and record member comments.

In tense situations with groups that meet more than once, you may ask people to write individually their assessment of what is working well and what needs improvement. Collect and analyze these before the next meeting. (You can also do this after the first day of a two day meeting.) Promise them anonymity but not confidentiality. In other words, make it clear that you will use and share the contents of people's comments, but not their authorship. [RKI acknowledges Vivian Elliot, President, Elliott & Company, of Denver, Colorado, as our source for this idea.

# Evaluating and improving meetings

| What worked well? | What needs improvement? |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
|                   |                         |

---

### *Analyzing Meeting Effectiveness Yourself*

In addition to the group's evaluation of their own meetings, or in situations where the group assessment is not possible, you can make a big difference by looking analytically at meetings yourself and trying some remedies for the ills you diagnose. If you are operating according to Doyle and Straus, you may want to engage the group's leader in the analysis process as well. The leader can make a big difference in implementing many of the remedies suggested here.

---

## Analyzing meeting effectiveness

### Analyzing Meeting Effectiveness Yourself

| <i>Got a nagging problem?</i>                      | <i>Try these strategies.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| People resent and resist meetings.                 | Make meetings optional. Make the people closest to the task responsible for calling and preparing for meetings.                                                                                                                                                           |
| Meetings produce no new directions.                | Don't have the meeting. Or see that the group gets a new statement of purpose. Recruit several new members with more diverse perspectives.                                                                                                                                |
| Meetings drain energy.                             | Change to a location with natural light and fresh air. Offer fruits, vegetables, and crackers; add sparkling waters to the usual colas. Schedule meetings to take advantage of members' peak energy times. Take five minute stretch breaks often. You lead the stretches. |
| People pay only half attention, or less.           | Don't have the meeting. Or reconsider its purpose. Put participants in charge of planning and running meetings. Give as many people as possible key roles in meetings. Commit as a group to asking for each others' opinions often, and to listening.                     |
| Nothing changes as a result of the meetings.       | Give each meeting a funny, memorable name that suggest its purpose. Improve the agenda-building process. Encourage people to innovate, create, and give their best thoughts. Use puns, games, absurd jokes, and silly props. Reward risk takers.                          |
| Someone dominates; others suffer silently.         | Don't have the meeting. Or work toward new ground rules that support equity in participation.                                                                                                                                                                             |
| For most of the meeting, people are off the point. | Invest in serious agenda preparation. State the purpose of the meeting at its outset. Print the purpose in the agenda if possible. Find a skilled facilitator to guide the group through getting its work done without unnecessary side trips.                            |

## Analyzing meeting effectiveness

Although good facilitation is a wonderful way to improve meetings, it is not the only way. Facilitators often help plan meetings, or a series of meetings, from the first idea through full implementation. If you have the opportunity to provide guidance to the leaders and conveners, suggest these strategies to further strengthen group autonomy and authority.

1. *Make participation in meetings voluntary.*

Many workplaces that we know overuse the MANDATORY meeting. Attendance at these meetings make full-grown people feel the resentments and rebelliousness of a young teenager, and rightly so. When people have no choice, they often behave like immature dependents, make bad decisions, and produce no commitment to actions or results.

2. *Seek or create written charges that make choice possible.*

The written charge that serves as the reason for holding a meeting, or a series of meetings, must make choice possible if people are to put their whole attention on the tasks. This means no meetings to rubber-stamp other people's ideas. It also means no meetings to conduct "suicide missions" — efforts to bring about change in an impossible or extremely rigid context.

3. *Encourage leaders to see their role as one of expanding choice.*

Leaders can find productive roles to play in meetings that move beyond the control model. Encourage leaders to lead in ways that foster choice and responsibility, not dependency, among participants.

4. *For leaders committed to control, show some new options that minimize the damage to group choice and responsibility in meetings.*

For the control freaks among us — never fear. There will still be plenty left to do for the controlling "top" type. Here are some examples of power-based activities a leader can pursue

## Analyzing meeting effectiveness

that retain authority and power to make things happen even while loosening control over meetings to create increased choice for group members:

- Pay attention to who the group members are and whether the membership could be changed to create a more powerful group.
- Assist in encouraging reticent people to participate in meetings more actively.
- Think about and work with the group to define quality and excellence in its performance. Help the group set standards.
- Scout for issues, trends, innovations, and ideas related to the group's work, and make them available to group members.
- Practice and refine your statement of the vision toward which the group is working — the vision of what will be different if the group accomplishes its work successfully.
- Work to articulate the group's goals clearly and succinctly, and practice doing this with the group often, so that effectiveness and efficiency improve.
- Find additional resources and support to make the group more likely to accomplish its goals.
- Consider whether it is appropriate and possible to create apprenticeship, or mentoring opportunities for learning within the group, or by bringing new people into contact with the group as it works.
- Focus on developing a leadership stream for the group, so that the group becomes rich in leadership capability. One way to do this is to coach people so they learn different meeting roles and can rotate the roles among themselves.

## Analyzing meeting effectiveness

- Figure out how the group's work relates to other work outside its mission. Make connections and pave the way for integrating the group's eventual products into larger wholes.
- Establish and express specific expectations about group process and products.
- Consider ways to get recognition for members of the group, either internally within the organization, or externally from the public. At a minimum, find ways to reward the good work and ideas of group members through such things as direct praise, certificates (these can be humorous and still be deeply appreciated), or bringing higher-ups in the organization to the meeting to deliver messages of appreciation and praise.
- Manage the relationships between the group and any media or public to which the group relates.

---

### *Conditions that promote equity in meetings*

Equity is a pre-condition for genuine effectiveness in meetings. As you maintain your neutrality and work toward balanced participation you support both equity and effectiveness. This section outlines additional conditions that promote equity. Some of these are conditions you can promote through working with the leader between meetings.

---

## Conditions that promote equity

### Conditions that promote equity in meetings

When the following equitable conditions and practices are in place, facilitation is more likely to succeed. Use this list of conditions to work with meeting leaders or planners in advance of meetings in order to make equitable conditions more likely.

Equitable conditions will make it easier for you to facilitate in ways that promote creativity, extensive and evenhanded participation, leading to the generation of a large, ample pool of ideas. The production of the greatest possible number of good ideas is always hampered by inequitable conditions. It is worth working hard to create the best possible conditions for equity in meetings. Here are some of the desired conditions.

1. *Each meeting participant should care about the issues to be addressed. No interests should be without representation in the group's composition.*

When people are affected by issues, they are more likely to work on them. To increase equity in meetings, make sure that the people who will be affected by the meetings' outcomes are present at the table. Do this to the maximum extent possible.

2. *The group should hold high expectations of each member.*

Each person participating is a member. Aim for a situation in which each member wants to contribute.

Avoid situations in which people are designated to represent some interest about which they care very little. Resist the tendency to pack meetings with representatives of constituencies that simply need their interests protected.

3. *Diversity should be sought and valued.*

Recognize diversity as a source of improved meeting outcomes. Diversity may mean making sure the group includes people who differ along any of these dimensions:

power

## Conditions that promote equity

gender  
race  
age  
ethnicity  
ability  
sexual orientation  
organizational level  
community position  
home location  
types of experience or knowledge  
extent of experience with the issue under  
consideration  
other dimensions specific to the issue  
under consideration

In diversity lies the fertile ground for a wider, larger idea pool and more powerful solutions to problems. This is true because the frames of reference and bodies of knowledge diverse people bring to a problem are larger overall than those frames and experiences shared by people who have much in common.

In order to benefit from the possibilities diversity offers, groups need to work directly on building connections across cultural or other divides. Working successfully with diverse groups requires a time investment before the payoff of more powerful results can be realized. Part of every meeting, and additional special meetings, should be devoted to activities that will help meeting participants understand each others' frames of reference and value each others' contributions. Some possible activities:

- Share food from different cultures.
- Invite stories about ancestors or traditions or childhood experiences.
- Ask people to show or describe a useful or treasured object.
- Arrange visits together to events based on historic or group identity.

## Conditions that promote equity

- Conduct field trips to sites important to one or more groups.

If the group is unfamiliar with basic premises of diversity, bring experts on diversity to the group to provide a solid orientation and assist members in developing a shared language and approach to benefitting from diversity and addressing diversity-based conflicts. It may seem ideal to have all members share a particular learning event and the frame of reference that event brings, but members must have choice about participating in developmental work on diversity. An alternative strategy is to make sure that members have ready access to a variety of approaches to individualized and group training in valuing diversity and reducing prejudice.

A more powerful and direct approach is to work with trainers and facilitators skilled in helping groups identify and work with the power imbalances that cause most of the trouble in diverse groups. Choose these experts with extreme care. Be sure to check with *diverse* members of groups they have served to make sure they are solid, fair, and effective.

4. *Information and data should flow freely in all directions.*

Perhaps the most persistent and annoying inequity in many groups is that some people are in the know and other people are in the dark. The group itself can take steps to equalize the flow of information. The organization or person who sets the meeting up can make a big difference in this arena by planning and organizing so that all group members get adequate information at the same time in order to do their work well.

5. *Room arrangements for meetings should promote equity.*

The best and simplest arrangements are circles, ovals, or hollow squares, where all people can see and talk to one another directly. Anything you can do to a room that will change it so that more people are facing each other instead of facing a special area of the room (stage, platform, dais) will make a difference. Even huge conference rooms set up in

## Conditions that promote equity

theater style seating can be improved by angling the rows to create a wishbone pattern. This pattern makes it possible for a person in any row to see the faces of more people than is possible in conventional theatre seating.

### 6. *Name use should support a climate of equity.*

When some members of a group are addressed by title while others are addressed by first names, a subtle climate of inequity is set up, and it affects decision-making. Ideally, all people participating in a meeting will use first names. If such informality is not possible, it is best if all people use titles or honorifics.

One way to promote equity in the use of names is to give persons at the first meeting a blank 5x8 index card to fold and use as name tents. Ask each person to write in large letters with a marker the name s/he wants to be called during the meeting. Except in formal situations, even people accustomed to honorific titles will rarely place those titles on the card. Most people (in the United States, at least) will put their "everyday" name on the card, either a first name, a nickname, or the name they are commonly called by friends and colleagues. When Dr. Bostwick becomes simply Sherry, in a meeting filled with Judys, Joes, and Jims, some progress will be made toward equity.

### 7. *The primary tone of the meeting should be one of mutual respect.*

The facilitator models respect for each group member and for each member's ideas. It can't be faked. Good facilitators often work hard at their own personal growth in order to set their prejudices aside and accord true respect to each group member. When facilitators model authentic respect, group members find themselves unfolding their best ideas, and treating each other with respect as well.

---

### *Recording well*

If you follow Doyle and Straus completely, recording and facilitating are separate tasks. But facilitators often find themselves recording either as a part of their duties as members of a facilitation team, or out of simple necessity. Good facilitators sometimes say, “If it isn’t recorded, it never happened.” This underscores the way recording validates and preserves a group’s work, adding significantly to its effectiveness. This section is a good “how-to” for recording a group’s work.

---

# Recording well

## Recording well

A skilled recorder can make a big difference in how well a group does its work. The recorder's job is to make a group's work visible to it in large print on flip chart paper.

### The recorder:

- Supports facilitation
- Serves the group
- Keeps the agenda in mind
- May ask clarifying questions
- Records quickly, accurately
- Uses people's own words to capture the gist of their statements
- Listens closely for real meaning
- Assists in building consensus
- Is impartial about what she or he records

The recorder's mission is to make the group a success. If you serve as recorder, your goal should be empowerment; the tools are accuracy or faithfulness to what is said, completeness, fairness, and description.

The recorder empowers by putting the ideas of group members on paper, as faithfully as possible, so the ideas become part of the group product and process. During the meeting, this is done by writing on a flip chart. After the meeting, this is done with good minutes. Accurate flip chart notes can form the basis for good minutes. Accuracy and completeness help the group remember what it has done, and help it be fully equipped when decisions are made.

Watch the stimulus/response effect: Some people play to the recorder just because of the feelings of power they get from having their words recorded. On the other hand, the comments of some people wither away to nothing if they see the recorder is not writing anything as they speak. Group empowerment partly depends on the recorder's fair and neutral service.

A recorder can manipulate either process or product by failing to record some people's contributions while emphasizing

## Recording well

others. That, of course, leaves the group incompletely equipped for decisions and is harmful to the group in the long run.

Skilled recording requires the level of attention and concentration you may have experienced during a good game of tennis, or when making something complicated. You need to be fully present, but you do not need to be tense.

- If you have the human resources, it works well to have two people record on two separate flip charts. Simply alternate recording items. While one person is finishing an item someone has already stated, a participant can proceed to state the next item, and the second recorder can begin work. If you know in advance that you will be working with several different topics, you can plan in advance to use specific colors for each topic. Once the flip chart pages are posted, this color cue will make it easy for people to keep track of what they have done.
- If you are acting as both facilitator and recorder, talk to your audience instead of to your flip chart. Keep your body turned sideways between the flip chart and participants. Do not turn to face the flip chart, placing your back to the participants.
- You must write quickly on the flip chart in order to keep group idea-generating energy flowing. Slow writing often produces a slow group that must wait on the recorder to catch up. This is damaging to the rhythm of exchange in the group, and to the group's product.
- Write or print in letters that are at least one inch high. Typically, record no more than seven items per page. Leave some white space for adding things later and for using colored dots and other kinds of indicators to suggest priority for the ideas.
- For flip charts, write fast and fairly large — use your arm as well as your hand. There is no grade for

## Recording well

penmanship on flip charts, as long as the writing is legible.

- The most empowering, accurate, and descriptive recording comes from using people's own words. Usually, close to the beginning of a comment, or near the end, you will hear a likely "nugget" which you can write down, just as you hear it.
- If you are a little bit uneasy about what you have written, ask the speaker if you have captured what she or he said. If you are completely in the dark about what to write, say something like, "I'm sorry, but I didn't get that. Could you please clarify your comment for me?"
- In the recorder's ideal situation, you have new markers in at least two colors, a full pad of paper, plenty of masking tape, lots of wall space that won't be damaged by masking tape, and a friendly hand to help hang sheets as you fill them. Obviously, you can make the situation more ideal by handling some of these things before the meeting. See p.60 for tips on "props".
- The visual record of a group's progress is particularly helpful if all of it can be seen by the group. It assists in priority setting, decision-making, and persuading people that they have completely aired a particular topic.
- Latecomers can often get "up to speed" by reading the flip chart pages posted around the wall when they enter. This reduces the distraction latecomers often present when the facilitator takes time to fill them in (wasting other group members' time) or when a side conversation develops between the latecomer and a member who tries to answer questions about what is going on.
- Number your pages. Write headings for each section as you go (you can use the language the facilitator uses in posing group questions) and note names or

## Recording well

initials beside comments when you think it will help later.

- You may want to develop a set of symbols that help you and group members keep track of things: two lines for the end of a section; asterisks in a different color for a statement of group consensus, or whatever works.
- You may ignore any rule or suggestion which doesn't suit, except for two: Stay neutral, and your job as a recorder is to provide the kinds of records needed to make the group a success.

---

*What else can you do? Three more ways to prepare for effective facilitation.*

The facilitator may not handle all the preparations described here. Usually the leader or a committee will do these things. Facilitators may find it useful to discuss preparation, however, and in some cases will handle preparation as well as on-site facilitation.

---

## What else can you do?

### What else can you do? Three more ways to prepare for effective facilitation.

1. *Give adequate advance notice and information.*

All groups need adequate notice of meeting times. For standing (repeated) meetings, ten days in advance of the meeting date, people need to receive thorough agendas for the next meeting, specifics about date, place, and time, and notes from the previous meeting. Twice a year send a calendar covering a year of upcoming meeting dates.

For ad hoc or one-time meetings, participants need two meeting notices. The first should come at least six weeks before the meeting. The second should come one week before the meeting. The second should contain a complete agenda, purpose statement and list of participants.

Reminder calls the day before either type of meeting may boost participation significantly. The call helps members keep your meeting high in their priorities.

2. *Choose a room that will work for you, not against you.*

Aim for a meeting room that accommodates the group without crowding and without having large portions of the room go unused. When groups meet in an appropriate room, an intangible sense of comfort and relaxation contributes to good work.

Ensure that meetings take place in spaces where there are no physical barriers to full participation. Check on parking as well as entrances, elevators, and restrooms. People appreciate knowing in advance about all of these features.

Attend to the environmental factors that influence energy in groups. The ideal meeting room will have these features:

- Full and easy wheelchair accessibility.
- Natural light. If that is impossible, look for meeting rooms with the capacity for bright, cheerful lighting.

## What else can you do?

- Heating and air conditioning controls you can adjust as the room temperature changes.
  - Access to fresh air.
  - Chairs and tables that are comfortable and appealing to the touch.
  - Easy presentation of healthful fresh food and drink.
  - Restrooms that are close by and fully handicap accessible.
  - Easy to use, effective technical supports: sound and video systems, screens, flip chart stands or white boards, and so on.
3. *Anticipate who the participants will be.*

Make sure all the people who will be affected by the work of the meeting will either attend or have authentic representation at the meeting. This step alone sometimes takes extraordinary time and effort in complex or delicate situations, but it is worth the investment. Leaving out key constituents or stacking the deck, consciously or unconsciously, will make the meeting less effective.

If possible, develop for yourself a preliminary picture of the nature of the status and power dynamics to be expected when the group convenes. Plan the approaches you will use to create equity and extensive participation among the particular people you expect to participate. Often it makes sense to pay advance visits to key players.

---

*Improving your skills: practice, focus, and balance*

We all keep getting better at facilitating if we practice our skills and reflect on them carefully. This section presents a few ideas and some sample language related to “multi-plexing” — advancing your skill level through forces and practice.

---

## Improving your skills

### Improving your skills: practice, focus and balance

- Facilitation is a practice, like doing Tai Chi or calligraphy. No one can facilitate in a high quality way when preoccupied by other things. It helps your facilitation if you do some kind of concentration practice in your regular life, so that you are able to devote your full attention and awareness to the work at hand when it is warranted. Meditation, certain kinds of yoga, precision crafts and other hobbies are all preparation for the kind of attentive focus that makes for great facilitation.
- When you are facilitating, if you can bring your full attention to the moment you will find that the demands on your own information-processing capacity can be met. In fact, with practice, you can listen to someone who is speaking, finish recording what someone has already said, and at the same time have a constant awareness of whether the group is engaged in the appropriate task at the moment and what intervention from you might be necessary. You cannot do all these things at once if a part of your brain is occupied with worry or interests not present in the room.
- Because it is partly a balancing skill, like riding a bicycle, the "multi-plexing" becomes easier the more you do it. Even so, like bicycle riding, it is difficult to describe by breaking it into parts. It is a whole experience. As your brain gets experience in doing some of the tasks, it requires less concentrated energy, and some of its functions are handled with expertise and without seeming effort on your part. One key to excellent facilitation is to facilitate often.

Your skills will improve even faster if you reflect on what worked and what did not work each time you facilitate. It is a great idea to write or dictate a short summary of your experience, and to look back through these summaries occasionally.

## Improving your skills

- If you face a lot of challenges at once, it will help to know what should receive the highest priority. To make your own multi-plexing successful, give highest priority to these three revolving needs:
  - ▶ Keep holding your position of neutrality. You may run thoughts in your head that are far from neutral. Hold your non-verbal and verbal language in the neutral zone through giving yourself over to the role play of facilitator.
  - ▶ Pay attention to who is speaking and who is not. Keep welcoming and encouraging those who are reticent, while containing the talkers.
  - ▶ Know exactly what the group is doing at each moment and what it needs to be doing. This means that you keep track of whether the group is in an idea generating mode or a decision-making mode. Is it solving a small problem on the way to creating a full outline or has it gotten sidetracked? Keep your eye on the specific goals embedded in each portion of the meeting. (This is easier, of course, when you have done a good job setting up the session.) To get results, and to add to the group's capability, tell the group what you see about what they are doing, and what they need to be doing. Like a mirror, reflect to them your observations. Here are several examples.
  - ▶ *"Let's not lose sight of our overall goal of getting a rough outline by the end of this session. I see you are having difficulty deciding about which things go in the second and third time slots. Do you feel you have to reach a conclusion on this before you can move on, or can you leave this loose for the time being?"*

\* \* \*

## Improving your skills

*"We are still in the idea generating phase of this meeting. What I hear going on now is a discussion about the relative merits of a cluster of the ideas. I wonder if you are willing to return to broadening our idea list?"*

\* \* \*

*"What we need here as you pointed out earlier, is a good list of possible resource people who could help us figure out the best way to demonstrate this complex point. We have gotten stalled in a debate over which experts each of us prefers. Given that our goal is to create a good list with as many choices on it as possible, I suggest we proceed without fully settling whose expert is best."*

\* \* \*

*"We are working now on building a rough outline from the ideas you have chosen as the best ones. We are sticking with those ideas that got at least 16 votes. That is the cutoff point that you established. Right now some of you are suggesting that we include some ideas that did not make it into the top list. Do we need to stop and reconsider which ideas belong in our 'best' group? Or do we have the right collection in those that got the highest votes? Give me some idea of how you feel as a group about this."*

---

## *Resources*

This section presents some resources that you may find useful in improving your facilitation skills.

---

## Resources

### Resources

Bohm, David. *On Dialogue*. Routledge Press, 1990.

CDR Associates offers excellent training in managing and mediating environmental and public policy conflicts. 1-800-MEDIATE (633-4283)

Doyle, Michael and David Strauss. *How to Make Meetings Work*. Wyden Books, 1976.

Fletcher, Winston. *Meetings, Meetings: How to Manipulate Them and Make Them More Fun*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1984.

Frank, Milo O. *How to Run a Successful Meeting in Half the Time*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989.

Gordon, Myron, Ph.D. *Making Meetings More Productive*. New York: Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 1981.

Hackett, Donald, Ph.D and Charles L. Martin, Ph.D. *Facilitation Skills for Team Leaders*. Crisp Publications, Inc., 1993.

Hammond, Sue Annis. *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry*. Second Edition. Plano, Texas: Thin Book Publishing Company, 1998.

Haynes, Marion E. *Effective Meeting Skills: A Practical Guide for More Productive Meetings*. Crisp Publications, Inc., 1988.

Hegarty, Edward J. *How to Run Better Meetings*. McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1957.

Kearney, Lynn. *The Facilitator's Toolkit: Tools and Techniques for Generating Ideas and Making Decisions in Groups*. Human Resource Development Press, Inc., 1995.

## Resources

- Kelsey, Dee and Pam Plumb. *Great Meetings! How to Facilitate Like Pro*. Hanson Park Press, 1997.
- Kieffer, George David. *The Strategy of Meetings*. Simon and Schuster, 1988.
- Mandell, Terri. *Power Shmoozing: The New Rules for Business & Social Success*. First House Press, 1992.
- McMahon, Tom. *Big Meetings, Big Results*. Lincolnwood, Illinois: NTC Business Books, 1990.
- Owen, Harrison. *Open Space Technology*. Abbott Publishing, 7808 River Falls Dr., Potomac, MD 20854, (301) 469-9269.
- Rohnke, Karl E. *The Bottomless Bag*. Beverly, MA: Wilkscraft Creative Printing, 1988.
- Schwarz, Roger M. *The Skilled Facilitator*. San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass Publishers, 1994.
- Snell, Frank. *How to Win the Meeting*. New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1979.
- Spencer, Laura J. *Winning Through Participation: Meeting the Challenge of Corporate Change with the Technology of Participation*. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1989.
- Stanfield, R. Brian, Ed. *The Art of Focused Conversation: 100 Ways to Access Group Wisdom in the Workplace*. Toronto: The Canadian Institute of Cultural Affairs, 1997.
- Thomsett, Michael C. *The Little Black Book of Business Meetings*. American Management Association, 135 West 50th Street, New York, NY, 10020, 1989.
- The 3M Meeting Management Team. *How to Run Better Business Meetings: A Reference Guide for Managers*. McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1979.

## Resources

Wynn and Guditus. *Team Leadership by Consensus*.  
Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co.,  
1984.