

Example Activities Handout

YES and Activity

Preparation

Not much needed. No materials required. This could be run at the start of any meeting with 6 or more people. Takes around 5–10 minutes.

Round 1 — “Yes, but...”

Ask the people in the room to pair up.

The task for each pair is to attempt to make a pretend dinner plan together.

Each person takes a turn at saying one sentence, and then it is the next person’s turn.

The first sentence must be: “would you like to go for dinner this evening?”

Every subsequent sentence must start with “yes, but...”

Set a timer, confirm the rules are understood, and go.

After the time ends, ask for a show of hands to see who actually managed to make plans.

Round 2 — “Yes, and...”

Same rules as the first round, except for one change: after the first sentence, every subsequent sentence starts with “yes, and...”

Timer and start the room off. You should notice a difference after a short period of time.

Ask for a show of hands to see who managed to make plans this time: there should be more success this time. You might also want to ask “what was different this time?”

Wrap-up

The point of the exercise is to reinforce that every time someone communicates with you, it is an offer, and presents you with a choice. We can accept the offer and try to build on it (yes, and...) or we can reject the offer, and close the possibilities of building on the idea (yes, but...). Sometimes we’re not aware of how open or closed we are to building on ideas. The working day is busy, and can move at a hundred miles an hour. Exercises like this can help us to zone in and focus before starting some group task.

Setting the Frame

Introducing a new activity or discussion in a way that clarifies expectations

1. The Task: Here's what we are going to do...
2. The Outcome: "This is what we will have when we are done"
3. The Process "Here is how we will do it.."
4. The Rationale: "Here is why we're using this process..."
5. The Expected Time: "Here's how long we have for this discussion"

Round-Robin Technique

1. Facilitator clearly states the topic to be addressed by the group (for example: generate ideas for goals).
2. Members are given time early in the meeting to identify goal ideas on their own.
3. During the meeting, the facilitator collects the ideas from all members.
4. Members do not discuss any of the ideas until all ideas have been collected but can ask a question to get clarification on a suggested idea.
5. The facilitator and members avoid duplicating ideas on the list (however, you can indicate the number of times an idea is mentioned by members to show the most common areas).

Options:

Combine the ideas into common categories. Consider using the ranking, rating or consensus techniques.

Select the most preferred categories or ideas using the ranking, rating, or consensus techniques.

Discussion Technique

1. Identify the discussion topic and the goal for the Council. The goal is usually to identify, make clear, or select an item.
2. Describe the topic in the form of a "yes or no" question, or a choice among alternatives. For example, "Should we move forward with _____?"
3. Tell the group when the discussion starts and stops.
4. Let members ask questions, give suggestions and general comments until it is time to stop the discussion.
5. Facilitate the discussion to keep focus on the topic.
6. Capture key points on a flipchart.

Options: Summarize the discussion and provide conclusions or decisions from the discussions; The group can make selections from the results using ranking or rating and/or consensus techniques.

Common Techniques for Making Decisions

Nominal Group Technique

There are many versions of the overall nominal group technique (NGT). The technique usually includes various phases, including:

- The facilitator clarifies the topic or goal to be addressed by the group, for example, to select the most important items from a list.
- Ideas are collected from members of the group.
 - The Round-Robin technique is often used to compile an initial list of ideas.
 - Brainstorming is used to expand the compiled list of ideas.
- The overall list is organized and analyzed.
 - The discussion technique is often used.
 - The list is analyzed for overlaps, duplications, conflict, interdependences, etc.
- Ideas are selected from the overall list, using any of the following techniques.
 - The discussion technique can be applied, depending on the nature of the members of the group.
 - The consensus technique can be applied if the group highly values strong participation and egalitarian approaches to decision making.
 - The voting technique can be used to make a final selection.

Parking Lot Technique

This is when a member of the group mentions something that is not directly related to the topic at hand.

The “parking lot” is typically a flipchart sheet posted to the side in the meeting room.

The facilitator (or another group member) suggests the item be added to the “parking lot”.

Before the end of the meeting, members agree how the “parking lot” items will be addressed later, if at all.

Variations: Fun variations if you know you will be running low on time is the fishbowl (or any bowl) questions. Leave note cards throughout the tables for folks to write down their questions that might be off topic. If someone says their question out loud, you can suggest that is a great fishbowl question, and you can have a volunteer or that person write it down and put it in the fishbowl. You can draw from the fishbowl questions if you are running ahead on the agenda to discuss, or at the end of the meeting. If they all do not get addressed, you can gather them and record them and send out follow up emails with answers at a later time.

Consensus Technique

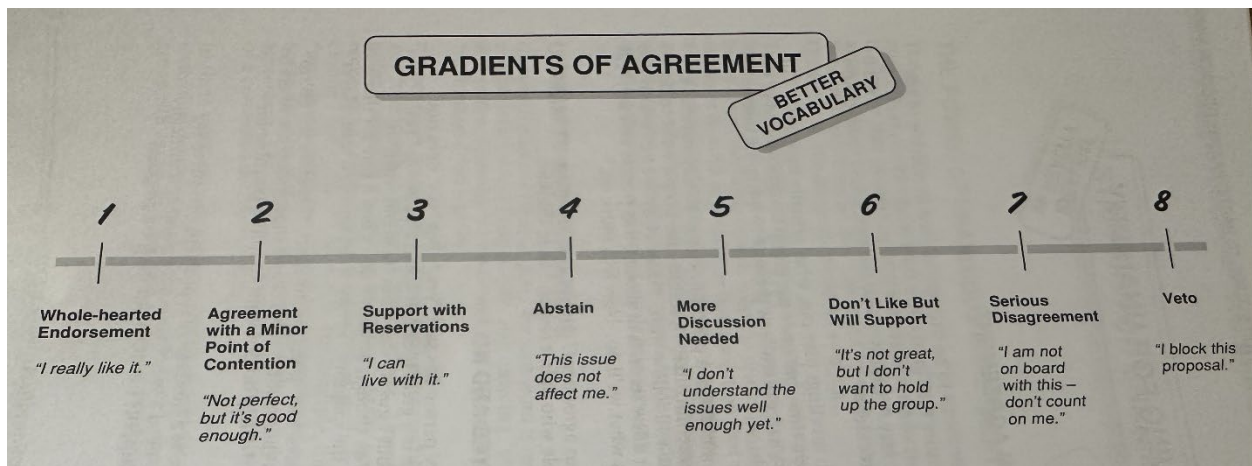
Consensus means that every Council member can live with the Council's final decision. It does not mean that every Council member completely agrees with the decision.

There are different approaches to the technique of reaching consensus.

1. Quick approach – ask for a quick conclusion to the group by suggesting a specific answer to the decision that must be made by the Council and asking everyone if they can live with that suggestion.
2. Facilitator guided process for reaching consensus.
 - a. The facilitator establishes a timeline for consensus to be reached in the meeting.
 - b. Member Roundtable
 - i. Each member gets equal time to voice their preferences and reasons regarding the question.
 - ii. Comments are focused on what is DOABLE.
 - iii. Comments do not include other members' names.
 - c. At the end of each member's time, all members silently reflect on
 - i. What they would be willing to compromise on.
 - d. At the end of the timeline
 - i. The facilitator puts forth what seems to be the most common item voice by members.
 - ii. The facilitator asks members if they can support that item.
 - e. If no consensus is reached, consider the following options:

- i. Decide what additional information is needed and consider appointing a small group to gather the information. Share the information with the members before the next meeting. At the next meeting, members hear the small group's recommendations and start the consensus process again.
- ii. Consider using a vote to decide (rating or ranking). Technically, this may not be pure consensus, but it is handy if the consensus process has not reached a decision by an absolute deadline.

Gradients of Agreement



This is the Gradients of Agreement Scale that enables members of a group to express their support for a proposal in degrees along a continuum. Using this tool group members are no longer trapped into expressing just yes and no, developed in 1987 by Sam Kaner and the staff of Community at work.

You could have group members place their specific-colored sticky note on a larger picture of the number line, or place a checkmark next to the number they agree with for more anonymity. This is a technique that is useful in taking the 'temperature' of the room when trying to come to a decision in early stages. It may help you decide whether you need to have more discussions in the future about this topic before voting or finalizing the decision, or whether the endorsement is high enough to move forward.

Voting Techniques

Ranking – ranking is when you assign a distinct value to each item to identify the most important items from a list. For example: a ranked list would have one item ranked a 1, three items as 2, and four items as 3.

Rating – rating is associating a value with each item to select a range of items from a list. Some items can have the same value associated with them. For example: a rated list may have several items rated as high, medium, or low or can be ranked 1, 2 or 3.

Dot-Voting – A common approach to using this technique is:

- Each member gets a certain number of votes that they can use regarding the items on a list. The number of dots they get is usually equal to the number of choices that are to be made (example: if three items are to be selected, each person gets three dots).
- The overall list of items is placed on large flipcharts. Each member is asked to place their dots next to the items they prefer from the larger list.
- After all members have placed their dots, the items that received the most dots are selected from the list.
 - Variations: Members are allowed to put all their dots on one item, or members are required to put their dots on three different items).