



Building Consensus

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Consensus Defined

- A dynamic way of reaching an agreement that everyone supports or at least can live with
- Shows us a different way of doing things
- Dismantles the toxic hierarchy
- Establishes shared power
- Increases healthy collaboration
- Builds respect for everyone's needs into collective decision making

Benefits of Using Consensus

- Sharing power - take collective control
- Build community - seek to meet everyone's most important needs and find a balance
- Make better decisions - find win-win solutions to problems
- Get things done - increased agreement means increased implementation
- Protect the voiceless - minority needs and opinions are important
- Build relationships - establish radical organization

Small Group Discussion:
What percentage would be acceptable as consensus for our group? 70%, 75% 80%, 85%? Keep in mind we currently have 55 employees in DHH districtwide.

Consensus Process

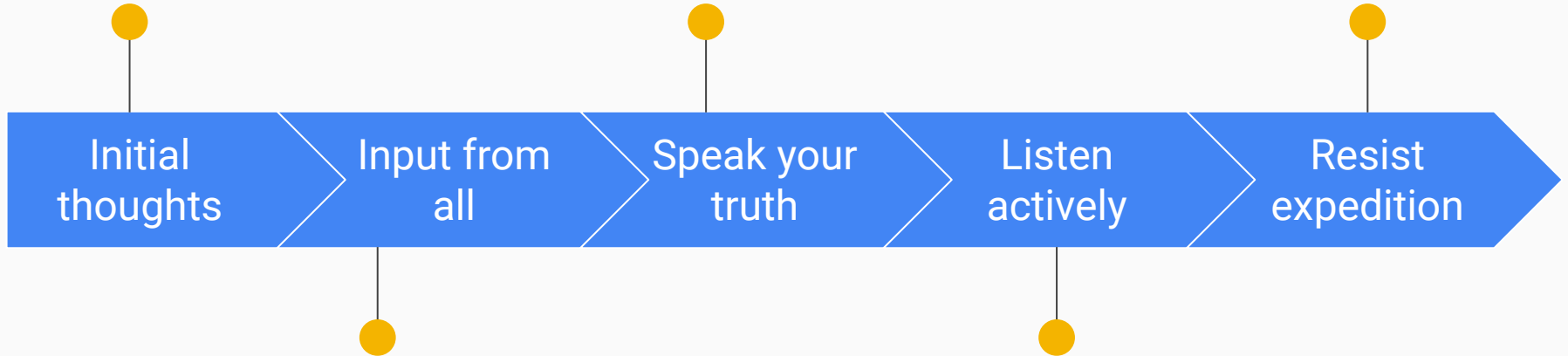
1. Introduce and clarify issue
2. Explore and look for ideas
3. Look for emerging proposals
4. Discuss, clarify, amend
5. Test for agreement
 - No consensus; blocks and disagreements? Back to #3 above.
 - Yes we have Consensus? Proceed to number 6.
6. Implement the decision

Small Group Discussion: Can you promise to support and implement a decision that you are not in favor of once the group comes to consensus?

Consensus is a process. Allow enough time.

This can be quite difficult, but be as honest as you can.

Make space to hear everyone. Putting out a proposal too early can waste time.



Use a variety of ways to gather everyone's thoughts

When you don't understand someone's position, ask for clarification.

At our next training. . .

In Attempting to Build Consensus

- Did we build shared knowledge regarding best practice?
- Did we honestly assess our current reality?
- Did we ensure all points of view were heard?
- Was the will of the group evident even to those who opposed it?

Common Mistakes in Building Consensus

- We go it alone rather than building a guiding coalition.
- We use a forum that is ill-suited to the dialogue typically necessary for consensus.
- We use a process that allows cynics and skeptics to dominate.
- We pool opinions rather than build shared knowledge.
- We feel we need consensus on each specific detail of implementation.
- We set an unrealistic standard for consensus and devote too much time and energy to persuading resisters.

Consensus

We have arrived at consensus when all points of view have been heard, and the will of the group is evident --even to those who most oppose it.

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