

# Group Consensus

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The method of “group consensus” in reaching decisions can be beneficial in situations where there is no clear expert and where relevant information is held by different group members.

Group consensus can be a good decision-making technique for using all the available resources in the group and for resolving conflicts in an innovative manner. Complete unanimity is not desired, nor is it often achieved. However, each group member should come to accept the group decision in terms of logic and practicality.

The following guidelines, developed by Jay Hall, can be used to attain consensus:

1. Avoid arguing for your own decisions or choices. Present your position as logically, lucidly, and succinctly as you can. However, pay attention to the reactions of the group, think about them and use them when restating or pressing your opinion.
2. When a stalemate is reached in discussion, do not get into a win-lose confrontation where someone must win at someone else's expense. Instead, find the next most acceptable strategy or alternative for the contenders which is also acceptable to the group.
3. Do not change your mind just to avoid conflict or disagreement for the sake of harmony. When agreement seems to come too quickly, be skeptical, explore the reasons why, and make sure that everyone accepts the solution for similar or complementary reasons. Yield only to positions that seem to you to be objective and logically sound.
4. Do not use techniques such as majority vote, coin tosses, averaging or bargaining to reduce conflict. If hold-out members finally agree, neither punish them for holding out nor reward them for giving in (e.g., by letting them have their way on some other point).
5. Differences in approach and opinion are natural and to be expected. Seek them out and try to have everyone participate in the decision making. Disagreements can help promote better decisions. With a range of opinions, and a variety of information, there is a greater probability of hitting upon a more innovative solution.

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