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Effective Meeting Management

Guidance for Massachusetts Agricultural Commissions

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Massachusetts Office of Dispute Resolution - www.umb.edu/modr

Loraine Della Porta, Deputy Director
100 Morrissey Boulevard
McCormack Bldg., Room 627
Boston, MA 02125
Phone: (617) 287-4040
Email: loraine.dellaporta@umb.edu

OVERVIEW – MASSACHUSETTS OFFICE OF DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The Massachusetts Office of Dispute Resolution (MODR) is a state agency dedicated to promoting and facilitating alternative dispute resolution (ADR) within public entities. MODR assists people and organizations to recognize potential conflicts and approach, prevent, and resolve them in creative and constructive ways. MODR believes that government functions best when there is collaboration between citizens and decision makers.

MODR provides tools and resources that support effective and responsive government, including consulting, conflict assessment, facilitation, mediation, arbitration, training and comprehensive dispute systems design. MODR assists public entities, including state agencies, municipalities, and courts to develop integrated conflict management systems that improve their ability to deal with conflict.
In order to promote the highest quality ADR services, MODR is privileged to work with a panel of neutrals, including mediators, facilitators, arbitrators, case evaluators, trainers, and consultants. MODR developed and implemented a comprehensive performance-based evaluation process for selecting its panel of mediators. The excellence and diversity of this panel enable MODR to provide high-quality services to a broad array of issues.

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Effective Meeting Management

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

We've Got to Start Meeting Like This!

Effective meetings will be key to the successful management of Agricultural Commission (AgCom) activities. Too often, time and effort is wasted by calling and attending meetings that are not well prepared, have no clear purpose and where attendees fail to participate in decision making. This course aims to assist in dealing with those aspects that inhibit the effectiveness of meetings and emphasize the "best practices" that make meetings successful.

Training Course Objectives

- To assist in establishing best practice at management effective AgCom meetings
- To emphasize the key aspects of effective preparation
- To practice running meetings
- To develop techniques for handling effective outcomes from meetings
- To develop techniques for dealing with difficulties and conflicts that arise from meetings

Participants in the course will learn to:

- Plan and properly prepare for meetings
- Facilitate meetings
- Prepare and use an agenda
- Achieve quality decisions that are supported by all
- Recognize and deal with problems during meetings
- Evaluate the effectiveness of meetings

Chapter 1 Think Before You Meet

The Importance of Good Planning & Preparation

Take a moment to remember the last time you went to a really good meeting. What was so good about it?

- Clear Purpose
- Productive
- Information Sharing
- Creative Solutions
- Decisions Were Made
- Good Follow-Up

Now…take a moment to remember the last time you were stuck in a really bad meeting. What was so bad about it?

- No Direction
- Key Players Missing
- Dragged On Forever
- Conflict/Tension
- Waste of Time

Well-planned and facilitated meetings sustain participants' energy and allow everyone to contribute their best thinking to the endeavor!

Steps in Planning an Effective Meeting

Step 1: Identify the Purpose or Expected Outcome of the Meeting

Before planning a meeting, ask the following questions:

- Why do we need to call a meeting?
- What outcome do we want to achieve by the end of this particular meeting?

Typically people meet for the following reasons:

- Information exchange (acquiring or disseminating)
- Learning (topics and skills)
- Creative thinking and generating ideas (brainstorming)
- Critical thinking (analysis, goal setting, problem solving, decision-making)
- Building relationships and commitment

Step 2: Build an Agenda - Decide what must be done to achieve desired outcomes and how much time each will realistically require.

Knowing the purpose of the meeting is the first step in structuring the agenda. If you have a clear idea of where you want to be by the end of the meeting, you can start to map out what must be covered during the meeting.

Each step in reaching the desired meeting outcome should be thought through carefully to determine the amount of time needed.

HOW TO BUILD AN EFFECTIVE MEETING AGENDA

1. Establish where and when the meeting will take place.

2. Establish how long the meeting is to last.

3. List the agenda items that need to be covered or process steps that need to occur.

4. Next to each major topic, include the type of ACTION needed, the type of output expected (decision, vote, action assigned to someone), and the time estimates for addressing each topic.

5. Estimate how long each item will take factoring in time for discussion.

6. Always build in 5-10 minutes at the end of the meeting to evaluate the effectiveness of the meeting.

Be realistic about the amount of time you will need to accomplish your agenda. It might be necessary to adjust the length of the meeting, or cut back on what you expect to accomplish. Keep in mind that critical thinking and decision-making take time, especially if the topic is controversial. Participants must be given sufficient time to voice opinions, ask questions and explain their positions if you are to achieve consensus. Not providing this time can lead to impasse or a breakdown in communication.

SAMPLE AGENDA FOR AGCOM MEETING

Date: June 1, 2006

Time: 6:00 – 8:30 pm

Place: Town Library, 1234 Main Street, Yourtown, MA

Meeting Purpose: 1) Finalize Plans for Community Agricultural Outreach Event

2) Discuss Plans for FY07 Legislative Advocacy

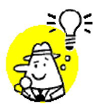
Time	Topic	Person(s) Responsible	Outcome
6:00 - 6:10	Review ground rules, purpose, agenda, action items	Facilitator	All team members agree on rules, purpose, agenda
6:10 - 6:15	Assign (recorder, timekeeper, observer)	Team Leader	Team members are clear on roles/responsibilities
6:15 - 7:00	Community Ag Outreach Event	Tom Jones Discussion Leader	Team members agree on date, location & event format Subcommittee formed
7:00 - 8:00	FY 2007 Legislative Advocacy	Mary Smith Discussion Leader	Team establishes timeline for 2007 & Identifies Legislation Priorities
8:00 - 8:10	Review action items for next meeting	Facilitator	Team is clear on assignments/deadlines
8:10 - 8:20	Create agenda for next meeting	Facilitator	Agenda for next meeting
8:20 - 8:30	Plus/Delta meeting review	Facilitator	Suggestions for improvement

Step 3: Prepare for the Meeting & Coordinate Logistics

Each AgCom should decide who will be responsible for actual meeting preparation and coordination of meeting logistics. Ideally, this responsibility should be shared and rotated among members. Some tasks included in meeting preparation/coordination include:

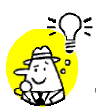
- Determine number of people to be invited to meeting and reserve meeting space that will accommodate attendees comfortably. When reserving space, provide time for set-up/break-down before and after actual meeting time.

- Once attendees are identified, send notice of meeting that includes, date, time, and location and if possible, include a copy of the agenda. (May want to consider other forms of notification including e-mail).

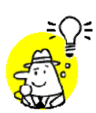
   Sending out an agenda before the meeting allows participants to ask questions about it, prepare if necessary, and in general sets a professional tone. If participants are going to be asked to read or edit documents, send the material in advance.

- If the meeting is open to the public – determine how public notice will be given (newspaper, television, etc.) and who will coordinate.

- Determine what equipment is needed to make the meeting run smoothly.

   The rip chart is standard equipment in most meetings. Make sure there is wall space close by for posting chart paper as the meeting progresses. For larger groups, some type of power-point or overhead projector may work better for presenting information. Innovative ways of presenting information enhance participants' attention and inspire creativity!!

- Determine whether there will be refreshments served at the meeting.

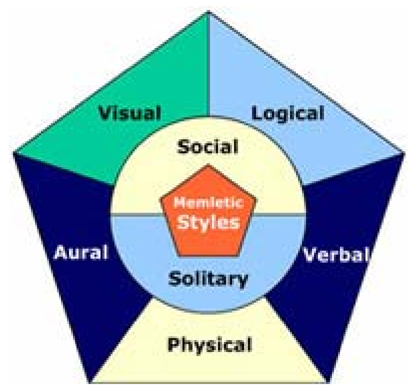
   Serving coffee and light refreshments can help sustain energy levels. If the meeting is planned for the evening, consider serving some type of light fare, as people often have worked all day and have not had time to eat.

Chapter 2 Running an Effective AgCom Meeting

In effective meetings, everyone is on the same agenda or page. People in an effective meeting share a common language and the meeting itself has a certain "rhythm". We've discussed how to prepare for an effective meeting. This module shows how you can develop a strategy to continuously improve the effectiveness and efficiency of your AgCom meetings by learning to *manage the process* before, during, and after.

Understanding Personality Types and Learning Styles in a Team Setting

Perhaps one of the most important, yet frequently overlooked, qualities of a group or team leader is the ability to understand the members of the group well enough to motivate each individual according to the member's unique and special needs. Team leaders often expect team members to meet them on their level, rather than taking the time to understand and meet the team member on their level. Understanding group dynamics, communication, and learning styles will help each member of your AgCom to develop the Commission to its fullest potential.



The following learning style descriptions and personality type article will help you better understand your fellow AgCom members.

For more information, please visit: http://www.learning-styles-online.com/

THE VISUAL (SPATIAL) LEARNING STYLE

The whiteboard is a best friend (or would be if you had access to one). You love drawing, scribbling and doodling, especially with colors. You typically have a good dress sense and color balance (although not always!).

If you use the visual style, you prefer using images, pictures, colors, and maps to organize information and communicate with others. You can easily visualize objects, plans and outcomes in your mind's eye. You also have a good spatial sense, which gives you a good sense of direction. You can easily find your way around using maps, and you rarely get lost. When you walk out of an elevator, you instinctively know which way to turn.

Working with a visual learner

Visual learners use images, pictures, color and other visual media to help them learn. They incorporate much imagery into your visualizations.

When working with a visual learner, use color, layout, spatial organization and pictures in place of text, wherever possible. If you don't use a computer, make sure you have at least four different color pens. Diagrams and flow charts can help the visual learner links.

THE AURAL (AUDITORY-MUSICAL-RHYTHMIC) LEARNING STYLE

If you use the aural style, you like to work with sound and music. You have a good sense of pitch and rhythm. You typically can sing, play a musical instrument, or identify the sounds of different instruments. Certain music invokes strong emotions. You notice the music playing in the background of movies, TV shows and other media. You often find yourself humming or tapping a song or jingle, or a theme or jingle pops into your head without prompting.

Working with an aural learner

Aural learners, use sound, rhyme, and music in their learning. Focus on using aural content in your association and visualization.

Use sound recordings to provide a background and aid with visualizations. For example, use a recording of an aircraft engine running normally, playing loudly via a headset, to practice flight procedures. Use a recording of the sound of wind and water to help them visualize sailing maneuvers. If you don't have these recordings, consider creating them while next out training.

THE VERBAL (LINGUISTIC) LEARNING STYLE

The verbal style involves both the written and spoken word. If you use this style, you find it easy to express yourself, both in writing and verbally. You love reading and writing. You like playing on the meaning or sound of words, such as in tongue twisters, rhymes, limericks and the like. You know the meaning of many words, and regularly make an effort to find the meaning of new words. You use these words, as well as phrases you have picked up recently, when talking to others.

Working with a verbal learner

When working with a verbal learner, try the techniques that involve speaking and writing. Find ways to incorporate more speaking and writing in techniques. For example, talk them through procedures in the simulator, or use recordings of your content for repetition.

Make the most of the word-based techniques such as assertions and scripting. Use rhyme and rhythm in your speaking and writing. Set some key points to a familiar song, jingle or theme.

Mnemonics are your friends for recalling lists of information. Acronym mnemonics use words, focusing on the first letter of the word to make up another word or memorable sequence. For example, when learning the musical staff, the phrase **E**very **G**ood **B**oy **D**oes **F**ine helps you to remember the order of the lines, E F B D G. You can also make up phrases using the items you want to memorize.

When reading content aloud, make it dramatic and varied. Instead of using a monotone voice to go over a procedure, turn it into a lively and energetic speech. This helps with recall.

Try working with others and using role-playing incorporating verbal exchanges.

THE PHYSICAL (BODILY-KINESTHETIC) LEARNING STYLE

If the physical style is more like you, it's likely that you use your body and sense of touch to learn about the world around you. It's likely you like sports and exercise, and other physical activities such as gardening or woodworking. You like to think out issues, ideas and problems while you exercise. You would rather go for a run or walk if something is bothering you, rather than sitting at home.

You are more sensitive to the physical world around you. You notice and appreciate textures, for example in clothes or furniture. You like "getting your hands dirty," or making models, or working out jigsaws.

You typically use larger hand gestures and other body language to communicate. You probably don't mind getting up and dancing either, at least when the time is right. You either love the physical action of theme park rides, or they upset your inner body sense too much and so you avoid them altogether.

When you are learning a new skill or topic, you would prefer to "jump in" and play with the physical parts as soon as possible. You would prefer to pull an engine apart and put it back together, rather than reading or looking at diagrams about how it works.

The thought of sitting in a lecture listening to someone else talk is repulsive. In those circumstances, you fidget or can't sit still for long. You want to get up and move around.

Working with a physical learner

When working with a physical learner, use touch, action, movement and hands-on work in learning activities. For visualization, focus on the sensations you would expect in each scenario. For example, if you are visualizing a tack (turn) on a sailboat, focus on physical sensations. Feel the pressure against your hand as you turn the rudder, and the tension lessening on the ropes. Feel the wind change to the other side, feel the thud as the sail swaps with the wind, and feel the boat speed up as you start the new leg.

Use physical objects as much as possible. Provide opportunities to physically touch objects as they learn about what they do. Flashcards can help them memorize information because they can touch and move them around.

Keep in mind as well that writing and drawing diagrams are physical activities, so use these techniques. Use big sheets of paper and large color markers for diagrams.

Use role-playing, either singularly or with someone else, to practice skills and behaviors.

THE LOGICAL (MATHEMATICAL) LEARNING STYLE

If you use the logical style, you like using your brain for logical and mathematical reasoning. You can recognize patterns easily, as well as connections between seemingly meaningless content. This also leads you to classify and group information to help you learn or understand it.

You work well with numbers and you can perform complex calculations. You remember the basics of trigonometry and algebra, and you can do moderately complex calculations in your head.

You typically work through problems and issues in a systematic way, and you like to create procedures for future use. You are happy setting numerical targets and budgets, and track your progress towards them. You like creating agendas, itineraries, and to-do lists, and you typically number and rank them before putting them into action.

Your scientific approach to thinking means you often support your points with logical examples or statistics. You pick up logic flaws in other peoples words, writing or actions, and you may point these out to people (not always to everyone’s amusement).

You like working out strategies and using simulation. You may like games such as brainteasers, backgammon, and chess. You may also like PC games such as Dune II, Starcraft, Age of Empires, Sid Meier games and others.

Working with a logical learner

When working with a logical learner, aim to understand the reasons behind their content and skills. Don't expect rote learning. Understanding more detail helps them learn the material they need to know.

While they study, logical learners create and use lists by extracting key points from their material. They may also use statistics and other analysis to help you identify areas they may want to concentrate on.

Make use of "systems thinking" to help understand the links between various parts of a system. An important point here is that systems thinking helps them understand the bigger picture rather than focusing on details.

They may sometimes overanalyze certain parts of their learning or training. This can lead to analysis paralysis. They may be busy, but not moving towards the goal. If you find they are overanalyzing or over planning, help them refocus on activities that move them forward.

THE SOCIAL (INTERPERSONAL) LEARNING STYLE

If you have a strong social style, you communicate well with people, both verbally and non-verbally. People listen to you or come to you for advice, and you are sensitive to their motivations, feelings or moods. You listen well and understand other's views. You may enjoy mentoring or counseling others.

You typically prefer learning in groups or classes, or you like to spend much one-on-one time with a teacher or an instructor. You heighten your learning by bouncing your thoughts off other people and listening to how they respond. You prefer to work through issues, ideas and problems with a group. You thoroughly enjoy working with a "clicking" or synergistic group of people.

You prefer to stay around after class and talk with others. You prefer social activities, rather than doing your own thing. You typically like games that involve other people, such as card games and board games. The same applies to team sports such as football or soccer, basketball, baseball, volleyball, baseball and hockey.

Working with a social learner

When working with a social learner, aim to work with others as much as possible. Role-playing is a technique that works well with others, whether its one on one or with a group of people.

Mind maps and systems diagrams are great to work with. Have one person be the appointed drawer, while the rest of the group works through material and suggests ideas. The group may have varied views on how to

represent some ideas, however this is a positive part of learning in groups. Often there is no right answer for everyone, so agree to disagree!

Working in groups to practice behaviors or procedures helps them understand how to deal with variations. Seeing the mistakes or errors that others make can help them avoid them later. Whether it's via role-playing, a simulator or other technique doesn't matter too much. Be creative.

Lastly, if you are working in groups it may help to have everyone do the learning styles questionnaire (see http://www.learning-styles-online.com/). This may help everyone understand why each person has different viewpoints. It can also help with assigning activities to people.

THE SOLITARY (INTRAPERSONAL) LEARNING STYLE

If you have a solitary style, you are more private, introspective and independent. You can concentrate well, focusing your thoughts and feelings on your current topic. You are aware of your own thinking, and you may analyze the different ways you think and feel.

You spend time on self-analysis, and often reflect on past events and the way you approached them. You take time to ponder and assess your own accomplishments or challenges. You may keep a journal, diary or personal log to record your personal thoughts and events.

You like to spend time alone. You may have a personal hobby. You prefer traveling or holidaying in remote or places, away from crowds.

You feel that you know yourself. You think independently, and you know your mind. You may have attended self-development workshops, read self-help books or used other methods to develop a deeper understanding of yourself.

You prefer to work on problems by retreating to somewhere quiet and working through possible solutions. You may sometimes spend too much time trying to solve a problem that you could more easily solve by talking to someone.

You like to make plans and set goals. You know your direction in life and work. You prefer to work for yourself, or have thought a lot about it. If you don't know your current direction in life, you feel a deep sense of dissatisfaction.

Working with a solitary learner

Solitary learners prefer to learn alone using self-study. When in a group setting solitary are less likely to ask questions. They may dislike learning in groups.

Encourage them to ask questions, such as, “What’s in this for me?” “Why does this matter?”, “How can I use this idea?” Be sensitive to their inner thoughts and feeling towards various topics. This is because their inner thoughts have more of an impact on their motivation and ability to learn than they do in the other styles.

Interpersonal Dynamics: The Lost Art of Effective Team Leadership
by Hannah M. Squier

The shepherd always tries to persuade the sheep that their interests and his own are the same. -STENDHAL (cited in Lieberman, 1983)

Stephen Covey addresses this issue in his Habit 5, "Seek first to understand, then to be understood" (Covey, 1989). This principle is important not only to the team leader, but also to the team members because they will almost always mimic the mood, tone, and example set forth by the leader. Team members will usually follow suit by seeking to understand one another’s communication styles, thus enhancing the entire work environment.

The foundation of personal and professional success lies in understanding others and realizing the impact personal behavior has on those around. A powerful vocational tool to assist in understanding communication styles and motivation is the DISC Personal Profile (Carlson Learning Company, 1994), which will be discussed in detail in this article.

In a group setting there are usually diverse backgrounds, talents, strengths, and weaknesses. The most challenging responsibility of a team leader is to combine all of these strengths and backgrounds to accomplish a higher goal (Nurick, 1993). A leader’s level of understanding of the interactions and motivations among team members is a primary indicator of potential success (Ethen, 1997). **In a team-oriented work process the two major factors that are considered are the task at hand and the relationships in the group** (Nurick, 1993). Relationship competence refers to a group’s ability to solve conflicts, build trust, and communicate effectively. The group will most certainly take their lead from the team leader regarding relationship interactions. Therefore, it is important for the team leader to be knowledgeable about interpersonal dynamics in order to mold the individual team members into a truly effective team unit (Hart, 1997). "CEO’s who are skilled in understanding interpersonal relations and psychological needs will inspire their whole team by motivating each person through supportive insight, respect, and recognition" (Hart, 1997, p. 48).

Many have found that the most useful psychological tool in helping get the very most out of interpersonal work relationships is the DISC Personal Profile System (Carlson Learning Company, 1994). The Personal Profile System is designed to help individuals "identify [one’s] behavioral profile, capitalize on [one’s] behavioral strengths, increase [one’s] appreciation of different profiles, and anticipate and minimize potential conflicts with others." By understanding the four different personality types, it is possible to see why individuals function in certain ways. It is a tool to help leaders at all levels know what to expect from others and how to best motivate others.

DISC stands for *Dominance*, *Influence*, *Steadiness*, and *Conscientiousness* (Carlson Learning Company, 1994). These are the major personality types associated with the DISC and everyone possesses at least a small amount of each characteristic. In reading the descriptions the four personality types, one can often associate at least one personal friend or acquaintance who falls under each description.

DOMINANCE

A person who is strongest in *Dominance* is primarily concerned with "dominating" others to accomplish results (Carlson Learning Company, 1994). Such a person likes to get immediate results, accept challenges, make quick decisions, and take on authority. A dominant person is most comfortable in an environment of power and authority where the opportunity exists for individual accomplishment. This type of person likes to be in charge of several things at one time and does not like to be under the control of anyone else.

A positive aspect of the *D* personality is that it has a plethora of ideas, can cause action, take authority, and make quick decisions.

However, this personality type is not detail-oriented, does not have good follow-through, and is often inconsiderate of others' feelings.

Because of the dominant person's characteristics, they need others who think things through and use caution in decision-making. In order for persons with this personality type to be the most effective, they need to be assigned to difficult tasks, to recognize their need for others, and to slow down and think things through before acting. The *D* personality type is likely to say, "Let's get the job done now, or the fastest way." In a company chain-of-command, the *D* most likely serves as a "figure head," such as a CEO, president, or idea man.

INFLUENCE

A person who is strongest in *Influence* is primarily concerned with influencing or persuading others (Carlson Learning Company, 1994). Such a person loves to be around other people and is concerned with making a good first impression. The influential individual talks a lot and typically livens up the mood. This personality type likes to be the center of attention, and is usually upbeat and positive. The influential person is most comfortable in an environment that fosters the person's popularity and social recognition. Such a person functions best in a position that does not involve control or attention to detail, but rather places a great deal of emphasis on coaching and counseling others.

Positive aspects of the *I* personality include being very entertaining and optimistic, making a good impression, being out-going, and showing a genuine concern for people.

Unfortunately, people with this personality type also tend to wear their feelings on their sleeve, don't think things through, and don't concentrate on the task at hand.

Because of these negative tendencies, **this personality type needs others who can concentrate on the task at hand with the ability to follow-through. They also need others around them who are sincere and direct in their communication. In order to be more effective, the *I* personality type needs to have better time-management skills, more realistic judgments of others, and to be more assertive with others**. The *I* personality is likely to say, "Who cares how we get the job done, as long as I get to <u>see people</u>!" In the company chain, this person usually serves in a "people-person" position, such as a director of personnel or public relations.

STEADINESS

A person who is strongest in *Steadiness* is most likely to cooperate with others to get the job done (Carlson Learning Company, 1994). This personality type is notorious for performing a job function in a consistent, predictable manner. The steady person is patient and helpful to others and is able to calm people who are overly excited. This individual is excellent at creating harmony in the workplace. The steady person is most comfortable in an environment that is predictable and contains minimal conflict. This personality type needs to know what is expected, along with a step-by-step process of how to accomplish the desired goals.

The most positive contributions of an *S* personality are being a good listener and being very predictable, helpful, loyal, specialized, and patient.

Weaknesses include a lack of self-worth, not being self-motivated, often reluctant to change, and reluctant to making decisions.

Because of the steady person's characteristics, **this type of person needs to be surrounded by those who can adjust well to change, can apply pressure to others, can help prioritize tasks, and who are flexible in their work procedures. In order to have optimal effectiveness, the steady individual needs to be informed of upcoming change as soon as possible in order to be able to adjust.**

Persons with this personality type need to be validated about job performance and need to know how the function they perform fits into the big picture and goals of the organization as a whole. The *S* personality is likely to say, "What can I do to <u>help</u> get the job done?" This type of person is typically the "operations person" in the company.

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

Conscientiousness is scored highest in individuals who work diligently, focusing on quality and accuracy (Carlson learning Company, 1994). The conscientious person gives great attention to detail, analyzing and weighing the pros and cons of every situation. This person is diplomatic in dealing with others and is usually methodical in approaching new situations. This personality type is most comfortable in an environment in which performance expectations are clearly defined. Such a person is "at home" in situations that are reserved and business-like. Also, a conscientious person is likely to ask "why" questions. They are happy to do whatever is expected as long as they understand the reasons behind the request. This need to understand applies to rules as well. The conscientious person is a stickler for rules, but must have the freedom to analyze and decide if they make sense first.

Positive aspects of the *C* personality include being detail-oriented and analytical, having good follow-through, handling conflicts well, separating business from pleasure, and having traits of diplomacy and loyalty.

However, the *C*'s weaknesses are that they are slow to make decisions, can be overly detail-oriented, question authority, are not very forgiving, are not good at compromising, must have a reason for everything, and are overly self-critical.

Because of these characteristics, the conscientious person needs others who can make quick decisions and compromise with others. This personality type also needs others who use policies only as guidelines rather than the "be all end all" in decision-making. In order to optimize effectiveness, the conscientious person needs plenty of time to plan things out. This type of person needs specific job descriptions and specific feedback on performance. Also, such a person needs to develop tolerance for conflict.

The *C* personality is most likely to say, "Let's get the job done the right way." This type of person is typically immediately under the *D* in the company chain of command, and may carry the title of Vice-President or Assistant Manager. In Group Dynamics terminology, this personality type often fills the role of "unofficial leader."

Based on the characteristics of each personality type, there are some natural pairings of types that work well together. A *D*-*C* combination makes a great pair. The *D* is the idea person, while the *C* provides the follow through. While the *C* is more independent and does not need the *D*, the *D* needs a *C* for success. Likewise, *D*-*S* makes a good pair as long as the *D* is able to give very specific information regarding the task at hand. This is important because the *S* requires specific guidance. *S*-*C* makes a good pair because they have a shared mindset. *C* wants quality, while *S* provides stability and takes instructions well.

In the same way that there are good pairings, there are also pairings that do not work as well. *C*'s and *I*'s conflict because a *C* often requires time alone, while an *I* needs to be around people. Likewise, *D* and *I* naturally conflict. In fact, this can sometimes be the most volatile combination of personalities. While a *D* is non-emotional, bordering on *anti*-emotional, an *I* is almost *entirely* emotion based. These differences can cause conflict under pressure.

In a work setting the personality types can often be identified by their approaches to meetings. A *D* hates meetings. *D*'s feels like meetings are a waste of time. They could be doing something else that is important. An *I*, on the other hand, considers meetings a pleasure. This is the time to share how everyone is feeling this week. An *I* tends to go off on tangents and absolutely should not be put in charge of leading a meeting. It is important to note that an *I* personality can get feelings hurt easily during a meeting because these individuals are so emotional.

The *S* likes meetings because this is an opportunity to find out what the job is for the week. An *S* will follow the meeting itinerary unless there's a tangent. An *S* can go along with whatever is happening in the meeting. The *C* type runs the meeting, regardless of whether this person is officially in charge or not. A *C* sets the itinerary, sticks to it, and prioritizes. The *C* personality type will take as much time as necessary in a meeting if it accomplishes the goal at hand. A point of irony is that *D* and *C* work the best together. However, in a meeting situation, they become archenemies because the *C* can take all day, while *D* would rather be doing something else.

It is important to understand the things that irritate each personality type and the things that revive them emotionally. *D*'s are typically irritated by *I*'s, and by overly emotional situations, while *I*'s are irritated when people fail to consider their feelings. *S*'s are disgusted when others fail to recognize their contributions, while

C's get frustrated when others fail to give them the freedom to make decisions or fail to provide them with enough information to complete a task correctly.

While such things tend to get under their skin, other things can really fill their "emotional tanks." *D*'s are fulfilled by idea generation and the opportunity to *do* something – anything. *I*'s are stimulated by being around people and experiencing social interaction, while *S*'s get rejuvenated by accomplishing tasks that are given to them. A *C*'s emotional tank is filled by being alone, or having "down time" for introspection. Also, *C*'s love feeling like they have gotten "better" at something based on their own self-evaluation. Interestingly, *D*'s and *C*'s are natural loners, while *I*'s and *S*'s are not.

From a team leader's perspective, the most beneficial information to glean from the DISC profile is how to motivate each personality type. To motivate a *D*, it is important to set immediate attainable goals that can be accomplished by use of a "quick fire" method. Be blunt and straightforward, as you cannot hurt a *D*'s feelings with communication. And remember, long meetings do not motivate a *D*.

In order to motivate an *I*, you must be emotionally involved. It is important to show an interest other than just "work-related." It is important to show the *I* emotion because this personality type equates emotion with importance.

The *S* requires clear and attainable goals and steps for motivation. Give the *S* confirmation and feedback regarding performance, but don't expect an *S* to go above and beyond. This personality type does specifically what you ask.

Finally, to motivate a *C*, you must key into the person's competitive desire. Challenge the *C* to be "better." Give this personality type all the information needed, but allow such persons to make their own decisions. Give them leeway. The challenge is to set parameters, but allow *C*'s to come up with their own final product.

By better understanding the different personality types in the work place, or in a group meeting setting, one can create a more productive and effective environment

In an ideal world the opening quote would be something like, "*The Shepherd always tries to understand the sheep and their interests so that they, together, can grow and affect change*." Unfortunately, a team leader is sometimes weak in the skill of seeking "first to understand and then to be understood." By utilizing a tool such as the DISC Personal Profile System, team leaders can become better equipped at understanding the personal dynamics at work, and thus have the necessary knowledge to motivate and accelerate team members to their highest potential.

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Meeting Effectiveness Checklist

BEFORE THE MEETING:

- ✓ Determine your desired outcome.
- ✓ Decide on a process to accomplish your outcomes and the time required.
- ✓ Identify any guest speakers/special guests that should be invited to the meeting.
- ✓ Select an appropriate site for the meeting.
- ✓ Select as regular a time as possible for the AgCom meetings.
- ✓ State desired outcomes and a realistic agenda in advance (See Chapter 1).

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MEETING:

- ✓ Start on time.
- ✓ Review and confirm your objectives and agenda.
- ✓ Make the time limits clear.
- ✓ Review the evaluation and action items from the previous meeting.
- ✓ Establish meeting roles (if not already done).

DURING THE MEETING:

- ✓ Stick to the agenda and the time commitments.
- ✓ Stay focused.
- ✓ Change techniques when you feel stuck.

AT THE END OF THE MEETING:

- ✓ Establish ACTION ITEMS and responsibilities. Try not to lose even a single item between meetings.
- ✓ Summarize the session and set the date, place, and objectives for the next meeting.
- ✓ Evaluate the meeting.
- ✓ End the meeting crisply, positively and on time.

AFTER THE MEETING:

- ✓ Prepare and distribute minutes within two days of the meeting.
- ✓ Follow up on action items, and plan for the next meeting.

EFFECTIVE MEETING ROLES

Each AgCom will decide what their structure will be. Will it be loose or have a specific format? What about a facilitator or a leader? Will this role belong to one person? Shared? Rotated? Will the meetings be co-facilitated? How often will you meet? What type of support will you have? From whom? These are issues that the group must decide and the group will undoubtedly evolve and morph over time.

If you are a newly formed AgCom, you may want to check with other Commissions to see how they have structured themselves and to get their advice on what works best.

What is the purpose of assigning meeting roles? It helps to increase the efficiency of a meeting by dividing up responsibility for tasks that if completed properly, will keep the meeting focused and on track. In this chapter, we will spend considerable time discussing the role of the Chairperson/Facilitator, as this role is key to effective meeting management.

What follows are some meeting roles that are based on “best practices” for effective meetings.

- AGCOM MEMBER
- CHAIRPERSON (OR CO-CHAIR)/FACILITATOR
- TIMEKEEPER
- RECORDER
- OTHERS???

Let’s take a look at the other important meeting roles.

THE AGCOM MEMBER

Each and every member of an AgCom plays an important role in the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of a meeting. Every member should be asked to commit to do the following in order to maximize the efficiency of every meeting.

BEFORE MEETINGS:

- Reread the minutes of the previous meeting as a check on whether you have completed all tasks assigned to you.
- Make necessary arrangements to avoid being interrupted during a meeting.
- Plan accordingly so that you can be at the meeting on time.
- Be prepared with any materials or data needed.
- Review the agenda ahead of time and be prepared to discuss items intelligently.
- If you must be absent from a meeting, inform others and send in a report or brief another member on anything you were responsible for.

DURING MEETINGS:

- State your opinions and concerns honestly and clearly – do not hold them in.
- Stay on the agenda item being discussed and encourage your peers to do the same.
- Ask for clarification if you do not understand what someone is saying.
- Listen and participate actively.
- Volunteer for action items.

AFTER AND BETWEEN MEETINGS:

- Follow through with assignments and action items.
- Ask for clarification if you do not understand what someone is saying.
- Listen and participate actively.
- Volunteer for action items.

THE CHAIRPERSON (OR CO-CHAIR)/FACILITATOR

BEFORE MEETINGS:

- Ensure an agenda has been developed for each meeting and distribute it to all AgCom members.

DURING MEETINGS:

- Keep the discussion focused on the topic and on accomplishing objectives.
- Encourage balanced participation.
- Make sure follow-up is done.
- Ensure major decisions are made by consensus.
- Ensure accurate meeting notes or minutes are being taken.

AFTER MEETINGS:

- Ensure meeting notes or minutes are distributed to AgCom members and others.
- Follow up with AgCom members on action items and provide support when necessary.

THE TIMEKEEPER

DURING MEETINGS:

- Remind participants and facilitator to keep process moving.
- Remind participants of time remaining for each agenda item.

THE RECORDER

DURING MEETINGS:

- Write important information on a rip chart to keep key facts, issues, and ideas visible.
- Keep notes on key data, decisions, and actions and distribute notes/minutes in a timely fashion.

MORE ABOUT RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHAIR

CHAIR RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Assist group to define and manage tasks, projects and assignments
- Ensure all hats are covered and work is done as a team
- Shepherd, monitor, and motivate group members to achieve stated goals and objectives
- Plan and chair AgCom meetings
- Serve as a problem or process owner or technical expert
- Observe and give feedback
- Report on progress and problems to key stakeholders or sponsors
- Help the group improve the way they solve problems and make decisions.
- Ensure that the group accomplishes its identified outcomes in a timely fashion.
- Make sure the group share information and seeks new information when necessary.
- Help the group members to build commitment to each other and to the goals of the AgCom.
- Buffer the group from internal or external manipulation or coercion.

Chapter 3 Decision Making and Consensus Building

AgCom members will experience challenges and have issues of concern from time to time. This is part of the natural growth of any group. This module includes skills that can guide the AgCom through making decisions, reaching consensus and solving problems.

DECISION MAKING

What are effective decisions?

- Meet the needs of the group members who make them
- Are either made by, or supported by, all group members
- Are made within a reasonable length of time (this will vary depending on the type and importance of the decision being made)
- Contribute to group cohesiveness

How should decisions be made?

There is not one single "correct" method for making decisions. Each AgCom will make decisions differently depending on:

- Who is in the group
- How long the group has been going
- The traditions of the group
- What the individuals in the group want

Decisions will be made differently at different times depending on:

- The type of decision being made
- The amount of time available
- The impact of the decision on the group and group members
- The emotional content of the options being considered

FACTORS AFFECTING THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Individual Skills

For decision making to be effective most group members will need to have some understanding of communication skills. If these are not well developed in the majority of the participants, the group may struggle with decisions for a long time.

Power Imbalance

When power is more or less equal among group members, it is easier for all members to be involved with decisions. If there is an imbalance of power, decisions may be made that are not supported by the majority.

Group Size

A group that is large (10 or more) will more easily develop into sub-groups. This might result in minority control or stronger personalities taking over.

Stage of Development

Groups that are just forming will make decisions differently than groups at the performing stage, where members have successfully made decisions together in the past. New group members are just establishing how they will interact with each other so they may not discuss as many aspects of the decisions as other more 'mature' groups.

Past History

Unresolved conflicts can prevent members from co-operating when making good decisions.

DECISION MAKING METHODS

There are two popular methods by which groups make decisions. They are:

1. Decision making by vote

2. Decision making by consensus

DECISION MAKING BY VOTE

Traditionally, groups made decisions by voting, and allowed the "majority to rule." Voting makes sense when:

- Many people are involved
- The population is diverse
- Moving forward is more important than settlement
- Before votes are cast there is ample time for dialogue
- The dialogue includes looking at and evaluating a number of options

The disadvantage of voting is that it leads to an all or nothing, win/lose outcome.

> What happens to those who voted "nay" and were outnumbered?
>
> How committed are they to supporting the outcome?
>
> What happens to the concerns driving the no-vote? Were those concerns addressed, or will they come back to haunt the yea-sayers?

Ample discussion with analysis of alternative courses of action can counteract the disadvantages of voting. Even then, voting might be reserved as a last resort. Clearly, in a small group convened for the purpose of planning, consensus is possible and more desirable.

DECISION MAKING BY CONSENSUS

Over the past 15 years, making decisions by consensus has gained acceptance, yet a number of misconceptions remain. Consensus is the cooperative development of a decision that is acceptable enough so that all members of the group agree to support the decision.

Consensus means that each and every person involved in decision-making has veto power. Keep in mind, though, that members of the planning group are team members, not adversaries. Responsible team members use power only to achieve the best results vis a vis the group's purpose, not for their own personal gain. In other words, if a team member objects, it behooves the others to find out why and give considerable thought to the concerns expressed by the dissenting member.

The remarkable result of giving individuals veto power is that they rarely use it! If participants are reassured nothing can go forward without their approval, they tend to relax, contributing more to the content and worrying less about procedural matters.

Consensus does not mean there is an absence of conflict. It does mean there is a commitment of time and energy to work through the conflict. Consensus requires taking all concerns into consideration and attempting to find the most universal decision possible. Groups able to make decisions by consensus usually demonstrate:

- Unity of purpose, a basic agreement shared by all in the group regarding goals and purpose of the group
- Unity of purpose, a basic agreement shared by all in the group regarding goals and purpose of the group
- Commitment to the group, a belief that the group needs have priority over individual needs
- Participation, ideally no formal hierarchy equal access to power and to some degree, the group's autonomy from external hierarchic structures
- Recognition that process is as important as outcome
- TIME willingness and capability to devote time to the process

Factors working against consensus include:

Competition	Individualism
Passivity	Solution-Orientation

TECHNIQUES FOR BUILDING CONSENSUS

- Frame the dilemma so participants see the big picture and recognize their interdependence:

  What decision do we need to make and why do we need to make it?"

- Remove insecurity and make sure all participants have the same key information and have the opportunity to discuss that information together.

- Build little agreements along the way:

  “So…we agree that this is a good way to state the problem we are trying to solve” or

  “At least do you all agree that something has to be done…that things are unacceptable as they are now?”

- Motivate creativity by asking:

  "Isn't there anything else you can suggest?" and then allow for a long pregnant pause.

- Summarize and fractionate:

  "This is what we agree on, and this is still in question. What are the specific causes for concern?"

  Or, "**How can we get the benefit from doing this, but not the detriment?"**

- Refer to the mission and purpose of the group for guidance:

  "If we do this, are we in line with what we are all about?"

- Finally, ask:

  "What will happen if we can't all agree?" Or, "Do you really need to make a decision on this issue?"

Voting and consensus are the "how" of decision-making. Decisions, themselves, seem to come in three shapes:

1. Some decisions have to be answered "yes" or "no." Either we close the theater for inclement weather, or we go on with the show. The outcomes are mutually exclusive and a choice is imperative for the good of the organization.

2. Other decisions require finding a solution to a problem. "How shall we solve for X?" "What shall we do about lack of attendance at our performances?" Or, reframing the problem in the affirmative: "How can we ensure record attendance?"

3. A third type of decision is even more open-ended. "Which way shall we go?" Or, "What goal shall we attain?"

Try out different ways of framing the decision using the above three formats. The way in which the decision is framed sets the stage for the solutions generated. Different framing of the same topical issue elicits very different solutions.

For example, a decision regarding regulation of outdoor advertising can be framed, "Who is going to control outdoor advertising local municipalities or the state?"

Responses will be very different from those prompted by the question: "How can local government determine the character of its land use without eliminating outdoor advertising?"

The important rule of thumb about good decision-making is: DO NOT DECIDE PREMATURELY!!

Ultimately, the thinking process for any type of decision is the same:

- Gathering and analyzing relevant information
- Careful framing of the question you want answered
- Discussing values and criteria
- Envisioning various scenarios
- Evaluating consequences of those scenarios
- Making the decision
- Refining specific aspects of the decision and ensuring its implementation

EXERCISE 1 - CONSENSUS BUILDING

Consensus decision-making is the most effective but most difficult method because every member of the group must agree to the decision before it can be adopted.

In a consensus decision, the level of agreement you have is often related not so much to the fact that everyone absolutely agrees, but that they have decided through sufficient debate that they can live with the decision. If a team member cannot live with the decision, you do not have a consensus decision.

SURVIVAL ON THE MOON

This exercise was originally designed by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to train astronauts prior to the first Moon landing. It will provide practice in Consensus Decision-Making.

The Situation:

You are a member of one of two space details assigned to the mission ship "Galaxy," which was originally scheduled to rendezvous with the mother ship "Angel" on the lighted surface of the Moon. Due to mechanical difficulties, however, the Galaxy was forced to land on the dark side of the Moon, some 200 miles from the rendezvous point. During piloting and landing, some of the crew and the Captain died. Much of the equipment aboard was damaged. No one knows for sure how long the ship's life support systems will last because all gauges broke. Survival is critical.

Listed on the following worksheet are the 15 items left intact and undamaged after landing. Your task, first individually and then as a team, is to rank order the 15 items in terms of their importance to the survival of the remaining crew of the mission ship, Galaxy.

Procedure:

1) Each team Member should rank each item individually.
2) The full team should discuss and debate each team member's reasoning for his or her ranking.
3) The group should agree on a final ranking through consensus.

The official NASA ranking and a brief statement of reasoning for each decision is presented after the worksheet. These rankings were developed by a panel of experts and should be considered the "textbook" answers for this exercise. Based on more recent knowledge gained about the Moon, there can be viable arguments for changing some of the rankings of the less obvious items. In nearly all instances, the group's agreed upon ranking is considerably closer to the NASA ranking than are most individual's rankings.

WORKSHEET

Rank Ordering Of Undamaged Survival Items:

My Personal Ranking	The Group's Ranking	Item
_____	_____	One box of matches
_____	_____	100 cartons of food concentrate (20-day ration per person)
_____	_____	150 feet of nylon rope
_____	_____	Parachute silk (from 3 parachutes)
_____	_____	One portable heating unit
_____	_____	Two .45-calibre loaded pistols
_____	_____	One case dehydrated milk
_____	_____	Three 100 lb. tanks of oxygen (Each tank holds 20-day supply for each crew member)
_____	_____	One stellar map (of the moon's constellation)
_____	_____	One life raft
_____	_____	One magnetic compass
_____	_____	5 gallons of water (Normally a 10-day ration for each member of the crew)
_____	_____	Five light flares
_____	_____	First-aid kit containing injection needles
_____	_____	Battery-powered FM receiver-transmitter

ANSWERS

Rank	Item	Reason
14	One box of matches	No air
08	100 cartons of food concentrate (20-day ration for each crew member)	Nourishment
06	150 feet of nylon rope	Traverse ravines, carry supplies
09	Parachute silk (from 3 parachutes)	Easily spotted, carry supplies
13	One portable heating unit	Suits are self-contained
07	Two .45-calibre loaded pistols	Emergency propulsion
12	One case dehydrated milk	Can't mix it
01	Three 100-lb. tanks of oxygen	Each person must breathe - tank holds 20-day supply for each crew member
03	One stellar map (of the moon's constellation)	Navigation
10	One life raft	Carry items
15	One magnetic compass	Stellar Map better – no gravity
02	5 gallons of water (Normally a 10-day ration for each member of the crew)	Must drink
04	Five light flares	Others to find you
11	First-aid kit containing injection needles	Can't open suit
05	Battery-powered FM receiver-transmitter	Others to find you

Chapter 4 Handling Conflict and Problem Behavior

If AgCom meetings are well planned and orchestrated, conflict is less likely to surface. If it does, it probably needs to. The most common reaction to conflict is avoidance. Repressing conflict, pretending it doesn't exist, hoping it will go away, or admonishing participants for disagreeing are all forms of avoidance. Generally the conflict does not disappear, and often times, the situation worsens.

The facilitator is in a good position to help participants engage in constructive conflict. Understanding the nature of conflict, its sources and patterns helps the facilitator remain centered when participants begin to develop oppositional stances on goals or strategies for the AgCom.

If conflicts are allowed to fester, members may not be able to work together as a team. On the other hand, when participants come together frequently for a significant purpose and experience success on joint goals, often relationships improve.

When conflicts arise (and they will!), there are a few principles to keep in mind:

- Allocate sufficient time
- Help the participants clarify what the conflict is about
- Do not take sides
- Affirm the validity of all viewpoints
- Frame the conflict in terms of a problem to be solved
- Create space for problem solving to occur
- Help participants save face
- Discuss what happens if no agreement is reached
- Ask if the group can proceed with what they do agree on and hold back on areas of disagreement
- Keep in mind that ultimately, the participants have the responsibility to resolve the conflict

GROUP PROBLEM SOLVING

AgComs will undoubtedly encounter problems, either internally or externally. The following will introduce you to the steps in problem solving.

STEPS IN PROBLEM SOLVING

1. Recognizing a Problem

When results are not up to our expectations or we have an uncomfortable emotional reaction to a situation, we become aware that there is a problem.

2. Defining the Problem

- Use the “5WH” system: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?
- Identify the levels of the problem
- Restate the problem: "What is the challenge for me in this situation?"

3. Generating Ideas

- Brainstorm ideas, aiming for quantity and creativity.
- Use a diagram if you feel this would help clarify the problem.
- Combine old ideas with new ones.

4. Making a Decision

- List your priorities and important factors that may affect the decision.
- List these factors in order of importance.
- Choose the solution(s) that best meet the group standards.

5. Implementing the Decision

- Design a plan for putting the solution into action
- Anticipate problems
- Rehearse and try out the solutions.
- Be prepared to go back to some of the earlier steps
- Decide who does what by when

6. Evaluating the Decision

- Assess what happened in detail
- Determine what aspects of the solution worked and what didn't
- Rework the parts of the solution that didn't work using the appropriate steps in the problem solving process

BLOCKS TO PROBLEM SOLVING EFFECTIVENESS

1. Lack of clarity in stating the problem
2. Not enough or inaccurate information
3. Poor communication within the group
4. Choosing a solution too early
5. Evaluating or judging ideas
6. Pressuring members to conform
7. Lack of inquiry and problem-solving skills
8. Lack of understanding as to the problem's importance or relevance

RESOLVING CONFLICT

The process to resolve conflict is similar to problem solving. The most important steps, especially when viewpoints have become polarized, are the first four (below).

Frequently conflict does not get resolved because the participants begin at step five. The role of the facilitator is particularly valuable to ensure that the participants do start at step one.

1. The facilitator gains rapport and commitment from the parties to address the conflict. (Side meetings with individuals or factions.)

2. Agreement on the scope of what you are trying to solve. "What do you need to agree on so that you can proceed with your organizational mission and goals?" This question may sound easy, yet generally requires more time than anticipated. (First time the participants meet on the conflict.)

3. Agreement on ground rules, including meeting protocols, time lines, the scope, who participates and the decision making process. (Second meeting.)

4. Gathering and exchanging information on the aspects of the scope from technical data to feelings in a joint session.

5. Framing the decision to be made incorporating diverse interests into the problem statement.

6. Developing criteria by which to evaluate a wise decision.

7. Developing options to address the problem statement.

8. Negotiating over the options.

9. Making decisions, fine tuning terms and implementation plan.

10. Checking back to see how things are going.

ANTICIPATING "PROBLEM" BEHAVIORS

On occasion, AgCom members may act in ways that create tension and conflict with others. Ultimately, this behavior is unhelpful to all involved. A common danger, when this occurs, is for you and others to judge/call these behaviors by attaching labels or referring to the person in terms of their behavior.

The unfortunate consequences are that this person is seen only from this point of view. It is important to remember that we all behave in different ways for many reasons. Invariably, problematic behaviors occur when we are struggling to cope with stress, change, fear or insecurities.

Problem behavior does not make an individual a 'bad' person, but rather makes them someone who might need some help and understanding. People also need an opportunity to understand the effect their behavior has on others and ultimately on their own lives.

As you review the common problems listed on the following pages, keep in mind that this is useful information for all group members. Remember: **People will change only when they want to or feel ready. No one can change anyone except himself or herself**.

THE "INTELLECTUALIZER"

The Behavior

Individuals, who readily explain the details of their problems, rather than discussing how they feel about a situation, may be said to "intellectualize". This is often done when any effort is made by others to identify the emotional reaction of the individual to the described situation. In some instances the person may often try to change the subject or stop the conversation. Others prefer to ask questions of others by asking for helpful information.

May Be Because...

- The person is uncomfortable interacting with others in a group situation
- The person would like to avoid examining their feelings
- The person feels anxious about this particular topic
- The person does not wish to reveal anything about themselves

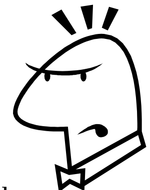
Ideas

Identify the behavior. "I notice you are describing the situation clearly, I wonder how you feel?"

Suggest the person **stay on the topic**.

Speak to the group member privately and ask if they would like some suggestions about other places to get support for their discomfort.

THE “HOSTILE” MEMBER



The Behavior

Individuals who direct their anger towards other group members inappropriately may be demonstrating "hostile " behavior. This may also be done in a cynical, sarcastic or argumentative fashion in response to statements made by other group members. In some instances the person may often try to undermine group efforts.

May Be Because...

- The hostility is used as a defense to cover emotions and feelings
- The person would like to feel a sense of control over the situation in the group
- The person feels defensive
- The person may not wish to be there but feels obligated to others

Ideas

Identify the behavior. "That comment sounded quite sarcastic to me."

Use an empathic response. "It sounds as though you feel angry about that situation."

Model responsibility for feelings. "I feel sad when my feelings are laughed at."

Divert the person. "I'd like to talk with you about the situation you described later."

In some instances it is important to remember that you have the right to ask the member to leave the group.

THE "WANDERER"

The Behavior

Individuals who have difficulty putting their ideas into words or seem to "wander" from one idea or partly formed thought to another may be seen as "inarticulate" by group members. Spoken words seem to make little sense or do not relate to the topic.

May Be Because...

- The individual is nervous, shy or lacks self confidence
- The person has a learning disability or different learning style
- The person may not be comfortable speaking the dominant language of the group
- The person may be taking some medication which affects his or her speech in some way

Ideas

Ensure the group norms are adhered to.

Reassure the group member. "Take your time..."

If necessary or requested, **other group members may be asked to assist** in clarifying a comment.

After the group, ask the person whether or not there is anything you can do to **support them.**

THE "MONOPOLIZER"

The Behavior

Individuals who constantly talk or interject comments when someone else is speaking may be seen as someone who "monopolizes" the group's time together. Often this person has a personal story to tell about someone else's problem. The person may not be aware of time allotments or the amount of time he or she has spoken during a meeting.

May Be Because...

- The behavior keeps the person at a distance and uninvolved in the group
- The person may wish to avoid uncomfortable topics or conversations
- The person may not know other ways to gain attention from the group
- Individuals may feel the group ignores their ideas or that their suggestions lack value in some way

Ideas

When there is a pause, thank the member and invite someone else to speak.

If the person carries on, interrupt.

Discuss time limits and group guidelines with the group as a whole.

Offer an observation about the behavior: "I notice you have identified with many other issues raised tonight. I wonder if you have a specific concern of your own you would like to discuss?"

After the group, ask the person whether or not there is anything you can do to support them.

THE MEMBER WHO "SCAPEGOATS"

The Behavior

Individuals who single out another group member as a target for their own animosity or anger are said to be "scapegoating".

May Be Because...

- The person may have unresolved conflicts with that person or with the group as a whole
- The person may be afraid of negative feelings or feedback from others
- The pressure can create a diversion so the individual is not asked to express his/her own feelings

Ideas

Verbalize the observation: " I noticed several of your comments tonight were addressed at (group member's name). I wonder if there is something else you would like to address?

Another comment might be, "I feel when we discuss that issue, (group member's name) gets blamed for how people are feeling."

Call for a break so the person being "scapegoated" can respond with their feelings.

Redirect the conversation. "Let's stick to the topic and speak about ourselves."

THE "RESCUER"

The Behavior

The 'rescuer' is often ready to offer solutions to other members' problems. S/he may also want to help in other ways; for example, this individual will volunteer for any or all jobs and is often ready with ideas to solve other group members' problems. This person often 'rescues' before other group members have finished talking or before other group members have had a chance to offer their own ideas.

May Be Because...

- The person feels useful and important when they are able to help another
- The person is looking for approval from others
- Some individuals feel they do have all the right answers
- Ideas

Clarify for yourself whether this behavior is personally uncomfortable for you, as the facilitator, or whether the behavior is impeding the group process.

Thank the person for the suggestions and then ask other members for other ideas.

Make a general reminder to the group about the guidelines, such as: "We have agreed not to offer advice unless someone specifically asks us."

Ask the member whether there are other tasks s/he might like to assume responsibility for, in the group.

THE "DISAPPEARING ACT"

The Behavior

Occasionally members may get up and leave a meeting unexpectedly. Sometimes a member may express commitment to the group and yet constantly miss meetings.

May Be Because...

- The member was upset by something that was said and did not have another strategy to handle the feelings
- The member may feel disregarded by group members and be seeking attention
- The member is wanting more control in the meetings and has found "leaving" to be a useful strategy
- The individual may not feel committed to the group
- The group may not have been what the person wanted but he/she was unable to express this to the group

Ideas

Should a person leave abruptly during the meeting, consider asking a group member to **follow the person to see if something is wrong or whether the person would like some support.**

Discuss with the group how difficult it can be to stay in the group when difficult feelings or emotions arise.

Express how you felt when the member was absent.

Ask the members what sort of support, if any, they would like in the future to enable that person to stay in the group.

Recognize that people handle difficult situations in different ways. There may be a cultural reason for the person leaving, such as the need to "save face".

Respect the person's choice.

GUIDELINES FOR GIVING EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

Feedback is self-disclosing about how you are reacting to the way another person is behaving. The purpose of feedback is to provide positive information to help an individual increase their awareness of the way their behavior affects others and to reflect on their understanding of their own actions.

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF HELPFUL, NON-THREATENING FEEDBACK

Focus Feedback On:

1. Behavior rather than the person
2. Observations rather than assumptions or inferences
3. Description rather than judgment
4. Describe behavior in terms of "more or less" rather than in terms of "either or"
5. A specific situation in the "here and now", rather than about behavior that is abstract or in the 'there and then"
6. Ideas and information rather than giving or even offering advice
7. Alternatives, rather than looking for answers and solutions
8. The value of what you have to say in terms of the receiver, rather than the "release" the person offering feedback may experience
9. The amount of information the receiver can use, rather than on the amount you would like to give
10. The appropriateness of the time and place
11. What is being said rather than why it is being said

Chapter 5 Useful Skills for All AgCom Members

Regardless of whether you are the Chair, Co-Chair, or regular member, facilitation skills are valuable. At some point in your tenure as an AgCom member it will be necessary to use these skills in order to conduct effective meetings.

1. Analysis

- Ability to distinguish process from content
- Defining/framing problems
- Ability to determine "right tool for the job"

2. Communication

- Ability to listen, summarize, reframe
- Appropriate use of verbal and non-verbal
- Questioning techniques to stimulate thinking/creativity
- How to provide constructive feedback

3. Familiarity with Process Models & Tools

- Decision making, consensus building, problem solving
- Diplomacy & dispute resolution
- Tools & techniques to keep things on track and move forward

SKILL #1 - ANALYSIS

PROCESS VS. CONTENT

One of the most important things a facilitator must do to ensure a meeting is run effectively is to make sure there is a clear distinction between meeting process and meeting content.

What's the difference between PROCESS and CONTENT?

PROCESS generally refers to **HOW** the meeting is run

CONTENT generally refers to **WHAT** the meeting is about – its substance

Let's try an exercise:

Decide individually whether each item below represents meeting PROCESS or CONTENT. Mark P or C accordingly.

P	C	
_____	_____	**1. Using rip charts to capture key ideas**
_____	_____	**2. A statement which describes a problem**
_____	_____	**3. Group discussion of a problem**
_____	_____	**4. Round-robin brainstorming**
_____	_____	**5. Small group breakout sessions**
_____	_____	**6. An idea presented by a group member**
_____	_____	**7. Side conversations that distract the group**
_____	_____	**8. Three options for solving a problem**
_____	_____	**9. Discussion leader calling on a quiet group member by name**
_____	_____	**10. Using a discussion leader to keep a conversation on track**

DEFINING PROBLEMS

Much of the work of the AgCom will undoubtedly be solving problems – identifying and closing the gap between the desired situation and the current situation. Roger Schwarz, the author of the book, **"The Skilled Facilitator"** has developed a general model facilitators can introduce to the group to help them to identify and solve problems as they arise. We will introduce his full problem-solving model shortly, but right now, we're going to focus on the first step, which is defining or "framing" the problem.

Recognizing a Problem

When results are not up to our expectations or we have an uncomfortable emotional reaction to a situation, we become aware that there is a problem.

Defining or "Framing" the Problem

Defining the problem is a critical but deceptively simple task. It has been said that a problem that is clearly identified is half solved. Without a clear definition, groups can flounder. Group members often assume they know what problem they are trying to solve and that everyone agrees with the definition of the problem.
A good problem definition implies or states explicitly not only the current situation but also the desired situation.

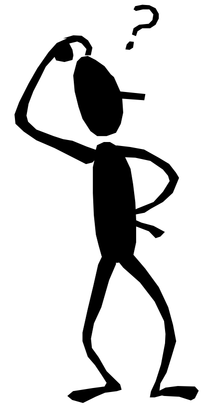
- Use the "5W-H" system: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?
- Identify levels of the problem
- Restate the problem: "What is the challenge for us in this situation?"

Developing a Good Problem Statement

A good problem statement is a clearly understandable description of a performance deficiency in an operational service, product, management or business process. In other words, a *PROBLEM* is the gap between *WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN* and *WHAT ACTUALLY DOES HAPPEN* because *SOMETHING GETS IN THE WAY.*

AgCom members need to reach consensus on what the problem (as opposed to its symptoms) really is.

DEVELOPING A GOOD PROBLEM STATEMENT



A Problem Statement Should:

- Describe clearly and accurately how the problem relates to the performance of the AgCom or a goal it is trying to achieve.
- State the problem in terms that are VISIBLE, SPECIFIC, and whenever possible, MEASURABLE.
- Be of a size and complexity that is manageable.

What to Use a Problem Statement For:

- The starting point in the search for root cause and, subsequently, for appropriate solutions.
- The baseline for measuring change.

Tips for Better Problem Statements:

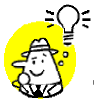
- Be specific rather than general.
- Use measurable quantities when possible.
- Define the problem narrowly enough so that the team can handle it.
- Narrow your problem down to manageable pieces and work on them one at a time.
- Keep your problem definition flexible at first. After some facts have been gathered, you may change your mind about what the real problem is.

A Problem Statement Should Not:

- Indicate any pre-conceived notion of a possible root cause.
- State or imply a solution.
- Affix blame for the problem.

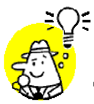
Examples:

1) Regulations limiting pesticide use have resulted in a 25% reduction in production of apples. This situation creates a potential revenue loss for apple growers, a shortage of available local product, and an increased reliance on imported product.



This is a good statement because it shows the affect the problem has. It is visible, specific, and measurable. It does not imply a solution, fix blame, or indicate a root cause.

2) USDA reports indicate that nearly 40% of farmers in Massachusetts are defaulting on their loans because they do not have a solid business plan and have not done sufficient marketing of their products.



This problem statement describes a measurable, manageable problem, but…it hints at a solution. Also, it hints at a root cause and places blame.

EXERCISE 2: WRITING A GOOD PROBLEM STATEMENT

In this exercise, you will review several potential problem statements. For each statement, ask, "Is it a good problem statement?" If so, how does it fulfill the requirements/characteristics of a good problem statement? If not, what caution or pitfall applies, and how would you re-write the statement to meet the characteristics of a good problem statement?

Note: These problem statements are intentionally not about agriculture so that you can focus on PROCESS rather than CONTENT!

1. Increase net income.
2. We have had an increase in production with no increase in staffing.
3. Our quarterly reports are being printed several days later this year than last. Our managers are complaining. We are spending a great deal of time explaining the delay, and providing the information to managers by telephone.
4. We are not meeting our delivery commitments. Managers should be told to re-schedule staff and authorize overtime if necessary.
5. The competition is offering pick-up and delivery. They are also offering 0% financing. We should negotiate with a finance company to offer our customers the same financing and also increase our marketing budget.

TOOLS OF FACILITATION

The effectiveness of the chair as the facilitator is partly determined by the range of their diagnostic and intervention tools. In this section, we'll introduce you to some tools to help generate ideas and solutions, think creatively, and make good decisions. There are many more sophisticated tools of this nature available – these are just the basics.

Tool #1: Brainstorming

What it is: Brainstorming is a participative technique for generating a list of ideas about an issue.

What to use it for:

- Generating lists of problems and topics, formulating theories, potential solutions, or items to monitor
- Stimulating group participation and energy

Types of Brainstorming:

Round Robin Brainstorming – Sequential brainstorming by going around the room in order. One person shares an idea with the group verbally, then the next person in order shares, and so on. This can be performed with or without an allowed "pass". The round robin continues until everyone has exhausted his or her ideas.

Popcorn Brainstorming – Brainstorming by throwing out a single word or short phrase reaction to a question in any order that summarizes their position on an issue or problem.

Freewheeling Brainstorming – A method where everyone spontaneously builds on other's ideas without evaluating. All team members share ideas with the whole group, with other members building on their ideas.

Card Deck Brainstorming – Individuals write separate ideas on slips of paper that are combined in a deck and then are discussed by the whole group.

How to use brainstorming:

Step 1 Decide on a topic (such as "ideas for solutions").

Step 2 Write down the key question on a rip chart or board.

Step 3 Have each member in turn offer an idea about the topic. Other members should listen carefully, refrain from commenting, and wait until it is their turn before building on someone else's ideas.

Step 4 Record all the ideas on a rip chart.

Step 5 If group members cannot think of anything to add when their turn comes, they should "pass". Keep going until the team feels it has exhausted its ideas on the topic.

Step 6 Discuss and clarify the ideas on the list.

Additional suggestions for effective brainstorming:

- Discussion leader clearly announces, prompts, and maintains the focus.
- Set a time limit for the brainstorming session.
- Offer ideas only when it's your turn. Between runs, write down your ideas so you do not forget them.
- Any idea is acceptable, even if it seems silly, strange, or similar to a previous idea. Some of the best ideas are simply variations on what somebody else has said.
- Be unconventional, imaginative, and even outrageous! Suspend self-criticism and self-judgment.
- Never criticize, question, or even praise others' ideas during the brainstorming session.
- Discourage analytical or critical thinking in the group at this time. Rather, aim for the most ideas in the shortest possible time.
- Maintain a fast pace by having one person lead the discussion, and second write participants' contributions on a rip chart.

Keep in mind; brainstorming can be applied at four points in a problem-solving sequence:

- During project definition, to develop a list of possible problems to work on

- To formulate theories at the diagnostic stage
- To generate possible solutions
- To identify resistance to proposed solutions

Brainstorming should not be used as a substitute for data in the problem-solving process., nor should it be used to prioritize projects, analyze symptoms, test theories, identify root causes, or verify the effectiveness of a solution.

The issue to be brainstormed should be carefully phrased. It must be specific enough so that participants clearly understand it, yet broad enough so that useful and creative ideas do not get excluded.
When possible, participants should be given time before each session to think about the issues being addressed.

EXERCISE 3 - BRAINSTORMING

<u>Situation</u>: A family is visiting from Australia. They have never been to the United States before and only have one day to spend in Massachusetts before continuing on to New York. The family seeks your group's advice as to what they should see while there are here for the day in Massachusetts. The family consists of two elementary school-aged children and their parents. They have approximately $200.00 USD to spend and they would like to get the most for their money.

Directions:

1. You will have 15 minutes for this exercise.

2. Appoint a discussion leader and a recorder.

3. Determine the method of brainstorming you would like to use and review it with the group.

4. Brainstorm a list of sightseeing options for the Australian family that will fit with their time restrictions and their budget.

5. Be prepared to discuss your process and how effective it was.

Tool #2: Multi-voting

What it is: A technique for narrowing down a list of ideas or options. It is used in conjunction with brainstorming.

What to use it for:

- Selecting a problem, a topic, a solution, or an item to monitor.

How to use it:

Step 1 — Brainstorm a list of topics. Have one person record the ideas on a rip chart. Review and clarify each idea. With the consent of the group, combine similar ideas.

Step 2 — Have each member assign ten (10) points to one or more of the ideas. Team members can assign all ten points to one idea, five to one and five to another, one to each idea, or any other combination.

Step 3 — Ask team members to record their points for each idea on a separate sticky note and to place this next to the idea on the rip chart. Or, alternatively, have team members call out their votes in turn to the recorder.

Step 4 — Tally the votes for each idea. Narrow down the list to the three (3) to five (5) ideas that received the most votes.

Keep in mind:

- People should be free to distribute their votes any way they like without judgment
- To preserve anonymity, multi-voting can also be done by written ballot. (This is also sometimes called the Nominal Group Technique or NGT)

EXERCISE 4 – MULTI-VOTING

This is a very simple and quick method for committees or groups to use in setting priorities when there are many options-Which are most important? What do we need to do this year? Which project should be started first? What core values are most important?

Let's start off with a simple example. A tour group from Fiji has contacted your group. They want to visit Massachusetts during their tour of New England, but only have one or two days to spend here. The tour group wants your recommendations of the best sights to see while in Massachusetts.

What you'll need:

- Flip Chart/Markers
- One package of self-stick dots (post-it notes can be substituted)

Steps:

1. Brainstorm possibilities. In your group, take about 5 minutes to generate a list of all the places they believe the visitors from Fiji should see while they are in Massachusetts. They know they can't do it all. This method would help give a sense of which places are most important and should be seen first. Therefore, begin by brainstorming all the options. List these on a flip chart in any order. Leave enough space between the items for the self-stick dots.

2. Give each person in the group 10 self-stick dots. (For this exercise, color is irrelevant.) Instruct them that to choose their priorities, they are to use "all 10 dots but no more than 4 on any ONE item." Therefore, 4 dots would indicate their top priority. Some items will have no dots. Participants actually walk up to the flip charts and place their dots next to their items of choice. (If you have a larger group, split the items on 2 flip charts on opposite sides of the room so as not to take too much time or cause congestion. Start half the group on each side.)

3. When everyone has placed his/her dots, count them for each item and make a priority listing on a new flip chart page. There usually are a few clear winners. You may then discuss with the group if they agree those should be top priorities on which to recommend. It does not necessarily mean that the others are eliminated.

4. If the list is still too long, give each person in the group 2 or 3 self-stick dots and ask them to vote for their top priorities from the existing priority list (one vote per item).

Tool #3: The "Parking Lot"

What it is: A list on the wall that the group uses to save valuable tangents for later conversation or consideration.

What to use it for:

- Keeping the meeting on track and in focus
- Being diplomatic and polite
- Public place for new insights
- Points not relevant to the topic or agenda, but too valuable to lose
- Issues to consider later or at a future meeting
- Innovative ideas

Tool #4: Meeting Minutes

What they are used for:

- To keep a journal of AgCom activities. Good minutes (or "meeting notes" as some call them) are accurate, brief, well organized, readable, and explanatory. They provide a record of what occurred and should be distributed immediately.

Minutes should include:

- The date, time, attendance, and agenda
- A brief description of AgCom activities
- Reports of action taken between AgCom meetings
- Discussion summaries for each agenda item
- Decisions "we decided" on
- Agenda items for the next meeting
- Informational attachments distributed at the meeting

Minutes are used to:

- Allow the AgCom to record its progress
- Help the AgCom accurately recall considerations and reasoning
- Help reconstruct thinking to find wrong assumptions if a dead end is reached
- Make it easier to compile progress and make reports

Suggestions for constructing minutes:

- Use a rip chart as a public record during the meeting for a continuous group memory, and then copy key words or phrases from the rip chart notes so that the minutes contain the minimum necessary words, are readable, and jog the group's memories
- Have the group contribute to what is written and check it for accuracy
- Assign someone to take the minutes and distribute them (can be rotated among group)
- Have co-chair (or leader) follow up to make sure everyone received minutes and monitor progress on action items between meetings

Tool #5: Plus/Delta (+/Δ)

What it is: A quick method for collectively assessing what has worked effectively in a meeting and what needs to be changed in future meetings. (Delta is the Greek symbol for "change")

What to use it for:

- Continuously improving the process of holding AgCom meetings.

How to use it:

Step 1 At the end of every meeting; select a group member to facilitate the plus/delta. The facilitator draws a line down the center of a rip chart page. He or she places a plus sign (+) at the top of the left column and a delta sign (Δ) at the top of the right column.

Step 2 As a group, brainstorm those things about the meeting that were positive and helped it succeed. Write these in the "+" column.

Step 3 Brainstorm those things that can be done to make the next meeting even more successful. Write these items in the "Δ" column. (We'll talk a bit later about how to give constructive feedback!)

Step 4 Distribute a copy of the plus/delta items with the minutes of the meeting to all meeting participants, and review them at the beginning of the next meeting.

EXERCISE 5 – Plus/Delta

Practice doing a Plus/Delta on this training so far (5 minutes).

1. Select a facilitator

2. Evaluate the training

Tool #6: Action Plan/Work Plan

What it is: A map used to identify what items need to be accomplished, and who will do it, and by what date

What to use it for:

- Assign accountability and responsibility to AgCom members
- Visualize as a group the steps needed to accomplish the tasks ahead of you
- Monitor the AgCom's progress

How to use it:

Step 1 Determine *what* actions need to be taken

Step 2 Determine *how* these steps will be taken

Step 3 Determine *who* will take the responsibility

Step 4 Determine *when* these steps will be accomplished by

Step 5 Determine *how* it will be monitored (and *how often*)

SKILL #2 - COMMUNICATION

The communication skills discussed here include the basics needed for facilitators and AgCom members to hold effective AgCom meetings while interacting with one another in a respectful and productive way. These skills support individuals to:

- Listen to others respectfully
- Share personal and professional experiences
- Be heard
- Listen
- Solve problems

Although many people use these skills naturally, the situation and the way in which there are used can vary greatly. From one person to the next and in different cultures, communication follows a set of rules and patterns, some of which are easier to learn than others.

THE CONTEXT OF COMMUNICATION

Communication is about more than words and listening or even conversation. Spoken language (and our facility with the language in use around us) body language and the context or situation in which the communication is occurring all impact the message.

Spoken Language

Words are only one part of communication. They give our communication form; they shape and describe our thoughts. It seems so simple. I think something, I tell you, you hear me and I think you have understood. And yet you many have understood something quite different. The meaning of words depends on our experiences, the context in which the words are spoken and our language skill.

Body Language

Research has estimated non-verbal communication accounts for anywhere from fifty to ninety percent of any given message. Facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice and body posture all affect how the message is received. Non-verbal clues are also open to misinterpretation. Are their arms crossed because they are angry or because they are cold? Is eye contact a sign of respect or disrespect? Are their eyes closed because they are bored or because they are thinking? Check out what you think the body is saying in the same way you would the words.

Contextual Clues

When attempting to understand what someone is saying we must consider the context or situation. For example, if someone in the group seems angry or upset, there is probably a reason. Anything that the person says must then be taken within the context of their current state – about which we may know nothing. The receiver also has an emotional, cultural, experiential "filter" through which the message is received. The more we can understand about each other, either from previously shared experience or present situation, the more likely we are to understand one another.

WHAT ARE THE BASIC COMMUNICATION SKILLS?

The basic communication skills are presented in isolation so each one can be developed for use in a variety of situations. In the beginning they may feel unnatural; through practice they will become easier. This communication section has been broken down into two parts.

The first part includes the "**reflective listening**" skills. These are:

- Centering
- Attending
- Paraphrasing

These skills are generally associated with the receiver of the message.

The second part includes the set of skills that are categorized as "**assertive expression**". These are the tools of the sender of the message and are related to sending clear, responsible messages and establishing clear boundaries.

REFLECTIVE LISTENING

"Attitude is everything!!"

A good listener is one who:

- Wants to hear what the other person has to say
- Gives undivided attention to the speaker
- Genuinely accepts the other's feelings
- Trusts the other's capacity to handle his or her feelings and find solutions
- Realizes that feelings pass and are not permanent
- Sees the other person as a separate person
- Listens with the intention of hearing the other person
- Learns and recognizes when to use appropriate skills
- Summons the courage to use reflective listening skills in difficult situations
- Intends to convey and build trust
- Demonstrates a willingness to become involved with the speaker and to understand his/her thoughts and feelings
- Offers a response that validates the other
- Provides the opportunity to clarify thoughts or feelings if necessary
- Lets the speaker set the pace
- Hears what and how something is being said
- Watches for both verbal and nonverbal cues to the person's feelings

CENTERING

Centering is the process of becoming quiet and calm. The attention that is so often used to focus on the world outside is turned inward. It is an opportunity to listen to what we want or need.

In order to listen fully to another person, it is important to take a moment to reflect on what thoughts or feelings are occurring outside us. The time we take with ourselves can increase our ability to take the time to listen more fully to someone else. In some instances, we may realize we are not able to listen to that other person right now.

You are centered when:

- You are more able to give someone your undivided attention without wandering off into your own thoughts
- You are more able to listen to emotions expressed by others
- You are more able to understand the feelings being expressed to you are the other person's feelings and not about you or your feelings
- You are more able to set clear boundaries about what you can or cannot do

ATTENDING

There are often times in listening when it is of paramount importance to let the speaker know you are interested and involved without responding. To speak might distract the speaker or move them away from sharing something they have gathered a lot of courage to express. The act of only listening establishes a respectful and trusting relationship.

Attending is conveyed by:

- Demonstrating your undivided attention through appropriate body language and posture
- Using a caring and unhurried tone to express vocal fillers such as 'uh-huh', 'hmmm','OK', 'mmm' or 'ah'
- The use of encouraging comments like 'Tell me more', 'Go on', 'Yes' and 'Really'
- Appropriate body language – are you nodding 'yes' when you do not want to encourage the behavior being described?
- Cultural sensitivity in the use of eye contact, the space between the speaker and listener and other body postures
- Assuming a posture where you can comfortably and appropriately maintain your focus on the speaker

PARAPHRASING

This skill allows you to state in your own words what you have understood the other person to have said. It shows you are interested in the other person and willing to try to understand what is being said.

Paraphrasing focuses on the actual content of what the person has said rather than the feelings or ideas, which have not been expressed. An effective paraphrase is best made as a statement, as this shows you are listening. If you don’t understand, simply say so or paraphrase the part you do understand.

An effective paraphrase will either be greeted with ‘yes’ or ‘no’. If ‘yes’, the speaker will likely go on to add more information. A ‘no’ response is an opportunity for further clarification. An ineffective paraphrase is one where the speaker feels copied or ‘parroted’. The result may be that the person feels you do not care about what is being said.

Paraphrasing is when you:

- Reflect back key words used by the speaker
- Put in your own words what you understood the speaker said
- Encourage the speaker to go on keeping the paraphrase short and to the point
- Respond to what you hear, add nothing more
- Are honest – let the person know if you lose them or don’t understand

EXERCISE 6 - REFLECTIVE LISTENING

We aren’t magically born with the ability to listen. Most of us have perfectly good hearing, but hearing is not the same as listening. Poor listening costs businesses money. Sometimes, poor listening costs lives. But all is not lost you can learn to be a better listener. One excellent technique you can use is reflective listening. Not only will your listening ability rise, you’ll also improve relationships. Now, the rest is up to you.

A.

Before learning how we can become better listeners, let's take a short test. First, take the test yourself. Then repeat with a coworker.

Here are the rules. Read the following story once, and only once.

You're the manager of a shipping department. One morning the mail brings orders for 25 items. The phone rings and a store orders 10 more items. The buyer from a department store phones and says his store is overstocked, please cancel his order for 20 items. The boss drops by and says 15 more items should be shipped to another customer. A salesperson comes in and orders 20. Without looking back at the story, answer the following question: *What is the name of the shipping manager? (The answer is at the end of our exercises)*

How did you do? If you answered correctly, it's because you followed the first rule in developing good listening habits: you resisted distractions. The distractions in this story were all of the statistics! Other listening situations may call for you to look past a speaker's bad habits and concentrate on their ideas.

B.

Break into pairs. Take about five minutes to tell your partner about a problem at work. Your partner should, on occasion, paraphrase back to you what he or she heard along with showing interest through a nod, smile, or comment like, “I see” or “Tell me more.” Paraphrasing is nothing more than occasionally repeating in your own words what the other person has said to you.

This method has two positive effects on the speaker: 1) It lets the listener check to make sure he or she understood and 2) It sends the message to the speaker that the listener cares what the other person is talking about.

Now for the hard part: your partner, the listener, should avoid trying to solve your problem for you. THAT is not reflective listening!

When you and your partner are done with this exercise, discuss how the technique made you, the speaker, feel. Then ask your partner, the reflective listener, how difficult it was to paraphrase. You and your partner will discover what it takes to be a good reflective listener is taking an active part in what some consider a passive activity: listening!

When you're done with this exercise, reverse roles. You'll be the reflective listener; your partner is the speaker. Then repeat the discussion following the exercise.

Remember that this is a new way of doing business. Expect reflective listening to be difficult the first or second time you do it. But keep in mind the benefits that come from the process.

(The answer from above is….YOU!)

WHY REFLECTIVE LISTENING WORKS*

1. The Other Person Sets the Pace.

   The other person takes the lead and sets the pace in conversation.

   The result **- *builds trust*.**

2. The Other Person is Completely Free to be Natural.

   That is a rare opportunity. The other person will probably take advantage of it by relaxing and behaving in the ways that are most real and honest. When you show that you can be trusted, other persons are free to tell you about their hurts, their secrets, and their ambitions.

   The result ***– you can really know the other.***

3. The Other Person Gets More Self-Understanding.

   In a mirror you can see things about your physical self that cannot otherwise be seen. In the same way, Reflective Listening serves as a mirror in which persons can see their behaviors and attitudes more completely.

   The result – this ***helps them understand themselves better,*** *and forces them to decide whether or not they like themselves the way they are or whether they want to change.*

4. To Listen Reflectively is to Give Something of Value.

   Reflective listening is hard work and the other person knows it.

   The result – ***you show you really care.***

5. It Keeps You Out of Trouble.

   While you are engaged in Reflective Listening, you will not do anything that is punishing, painful or hurtful to the other person.

   The result – ***the other person is supported.***

6. Reflective Listening Reduces Confusion.

   The intention is to clarify for mutual understanding rather than to swap stories.

   The result – ***allows for accurate information to be communicated.*** *The other person feels listened to and supported.*

**Adapted from Peavy, Empathic Listening Workbook, University of British Columbia, 1977*

THE ROLE OF QUESTIONS

Facilitators ask questions to control the process and to spark thinking. A question signals progress and that we are moving on with our agenda:

> "Shall we begin?"
> "What did you hope to walk away with by the end of the meeting?"

Questions bring the discussion back on track:

> "Shall we add that topic to the agenda for next time?"
> "Do we need to make sure we cover the other items before we run out of time?"
> "Do we need to decide this in order to decide that?"

Questions can provide closure:

> "Is there anything else before we move on?"
> "What are our next steps?"

Questions also stimulate thinking, and rethinking. Statements can be perceived as, or actually are, challenges provoking a counter challenge or assertion of a superior idea. Questions, on the other hand, create a temporary vacuum a time for reflection. The facilitator, by posing questions, eliminates much of the superfluous posturing and banter.

Questions maintain an air of openness, an attitude of, "Let me hear more before I decide."

Examples: "If you do this, what will happen?"
"Could you describe the process of communication you currently use?"
"If you could change one thing about the design, what would it be?"

In other words, questions, rather than directives or advice, are the most potent way to encourage the group to focus on something, rethink a course of action, or evaluate options.

REFRAMING

"Reframing" combines skill in communication with an ability to analyze what's happening on the spot. Reframing is a way to "launder language." The facilitator extracts inflammatory or negative impact from a statement, and crystallizes the legitimate underlying motivation for that statement.

For example, a board member emphatically states, "There's no use in going forward with this planning process. What we need is a new executive director!" The facilitator quickly reframes the remark to highlight a valid concern: "You want to make sure staff can carry out the board's policy directives."

Reframing a statement so the language is palatable to others does carry the risk of the speaker admonishing the facilitator for not summarizing the statement accurately, as originally stated. If that happens, the facilitator would have to rework the wording more to the speaker's liking. On the other hand, the speaker may be relieved to see that there is a more constructive way to present the concern and feel affirmed that someone has taken the concern seriously.

SKILL # 3 - FAMILIARITY WITH PROCESS MODELS

One of the biggest advantages of having a facilitator is that he or she brings “process models” to the group. We’ve discussed “process” vs. “content” as well as several tools facilitators can use to keep a meeting focused and moving in the right direction.

Process models include:	Decision Making Consensus Building Problem Solving Dispute Resolution

GROUP PROCESS

There are two stages of “Group Process” for a facilitator to manage:

1. Task Actions
2. Maintenance Actions

TASK ACTIONS

Start	Suggest the meeting begin. Call the meeting to order. Offer ideas. Propose agenda items. Initiate new procedures.
Offer	Provide information, facts, ideas, and alternatives. Give opinions.
Ask	Look for facts. Ask for opinions. Seek out new ideas. Make inquiries.
Define	Repeat suggestions. Ask for clarification. Check for other interpretations. Explain words or terminology.
Introduce	Suggest new people be introduced. Offer new agenda item or procedure. Introduce rounds, problem solving activities.
Record	Keep written record of decisions made, tasks accomplished, goals or guidelines changed. (called “Documenting the Process”)
Summarize	Bring all ideas together. Paraphrase a person’s comments.
Conclude	Ask whether a conclusion is possible. Are people ready? Offer a decision to the group. Determine acceptance or rejection based on guidelines. Check for group consensus.

MAINTENANCE ACTIONS

Encourage	Be warm, friendly and responsive will all members. Invite participation from members. (VERY IMPORTANT!)
Non-Verbal	Use body language that is accepting, respectful and congruent.
Attend	Use minimal sounds such as “yes” and “go on” to indicate you are listening and to encourage the speaker.
Harmonize	Attempt to reduce tension and be willing to work out disagreements.
Compromise	Admit mistakes, change proposals, suggest alternatives, and encourage all ideas.
Help	Keep the communication channels open. Encourage everyone to participate. Check in with quieter members (but don’t embarrass them).
Remind	Draw attention to ground rules, guidelines and goals.
Test	Inquire whether members are satisfied with the way the group and they themselves are working. Check out procedures.
Observe	Offer what you have noticed to the group. Ask for comments.
Sense	Express feelings and moods that seem to arise in the group.
Share	Bring your own personal feelings to the group.
Recognize	The group may get off track or lose focus. There may be individuals who are aggressive, offensive, or ill prepared for a meeting. Everyone must want to be there to uphold the group guidelines/ground rules.

Adapted from: Biagi, B., Working *Together: A Manual for Helping Groups Work More Effectively*, 1978.

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