

Building Dynamic Groups



Multi Voting

When a group has a decision to make, there are several ways in which a facilitator can involve the group members. Obviously, the means by which the ideas are brought forth can vary. But so, too, can the means by which priorities or decisions are made. The process of voting on an action, priority, or idea can, in and of itself, become a group process. What follows are a few ways of voting—especially useful tools for decision-making and priority setting.

Single Votes

- Dots. Each group member has one or more dots which are used to “vote” by placing the dot(s) on priority items, ideas or decisions. This is usually done as a part of a break following a brainstorming session.
- Posting. In the past, 3x5 cards and tape were used; now, individuals write their reasons for their vote on the card/post-it (post-its are easier) and then “post” their rationale with the vote. Reasons are summarized for the group.
- Placement Activity. Before discussion on a vote, people make a preliminary vote by moving to one part of a room or another (support over here, oppose over there). These groups then discuss why they held that position. The groups report back as to the reasons held by the group. This is a means of reducing strong emotional diatribes on personal positions.

Series of Votes

- Continuum. A line (string, chairs, crack, etc.) on the floor is identified as a continuum. One end is labeled “yes,” and the other end is “no” (or support/ do not support; try/ignore, or whatever is appropriate for the group and its votes). The line must be large enough to allow all people to assemble on or near it. The center is marked by a highly visible means (upside down chair, etc.). The facilitator instructs people to place their support for each of the series of votes/decisions by physically moving to the point in the continuum that “feels” like their level of support. No one can be absolutely neutral. A couple of participants should note numbers and general placement of support for each vote, and then report back to the full group on its outcomes. This is an excellent way to initiate discussions.
- Recorded Group Votes. The questions are; succinctly recorded on an overhead transparency, flip chart, etc. The facilitator informs the group that the voting will be done by just reading all the questions/statements; second read each question quickly and have a group vote—one way of getting a “fast” vote is to only have those who agree/support raise their hand or stand. Count the votes and record on the sheet/overhead. Do all questions quickly before comment or discussion.
- Dots. As with single votes, all people receive sticky dots—one per vote they are to make. As part of a break, participants place their dots to identify preferences.

Reference: Compiled/adapted by Joe E. Heimlich. (1994). Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University