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What the Hand Signals Mean

Thumbs up - Agree with the Proposal

Thumbs Down- Block the Proposal

Thumbs to the side- Stand-Aside (has concerns with proposal but won't block it)

Vibes signal (looks like a peace sign)- Indicates bad group dynamic or tension that needs to be discussed

Roles in Consensus Meetings

FACILITATOR

The Facilitator is responsible for getting the meeting started and helping the group move through the agenda based on the groups consensus process. The Facilitator ideally should be a different person within the group each meeting to avoid creating any power dynamics.

STACK KEEPER

The Stack Keeper keeps a stack or a list of who would like to speak and calls on people based on who raised their hand first. This keeps dominant or loud members from interjecting over others trying to speak and brings more order to the meeting. This person may also give a time limit to each speaker in order to keep certain people from talking to long or to keep the meeting within its time constraint.

NOTE TAKER

The Note Taker is the person who keeps track of group decisions and occasionally the time for groups with set time schedules. This person records group decisions and writes down concerns either in a group notebook for review or types them up for all to review. This position should also rotate amongst members each week.

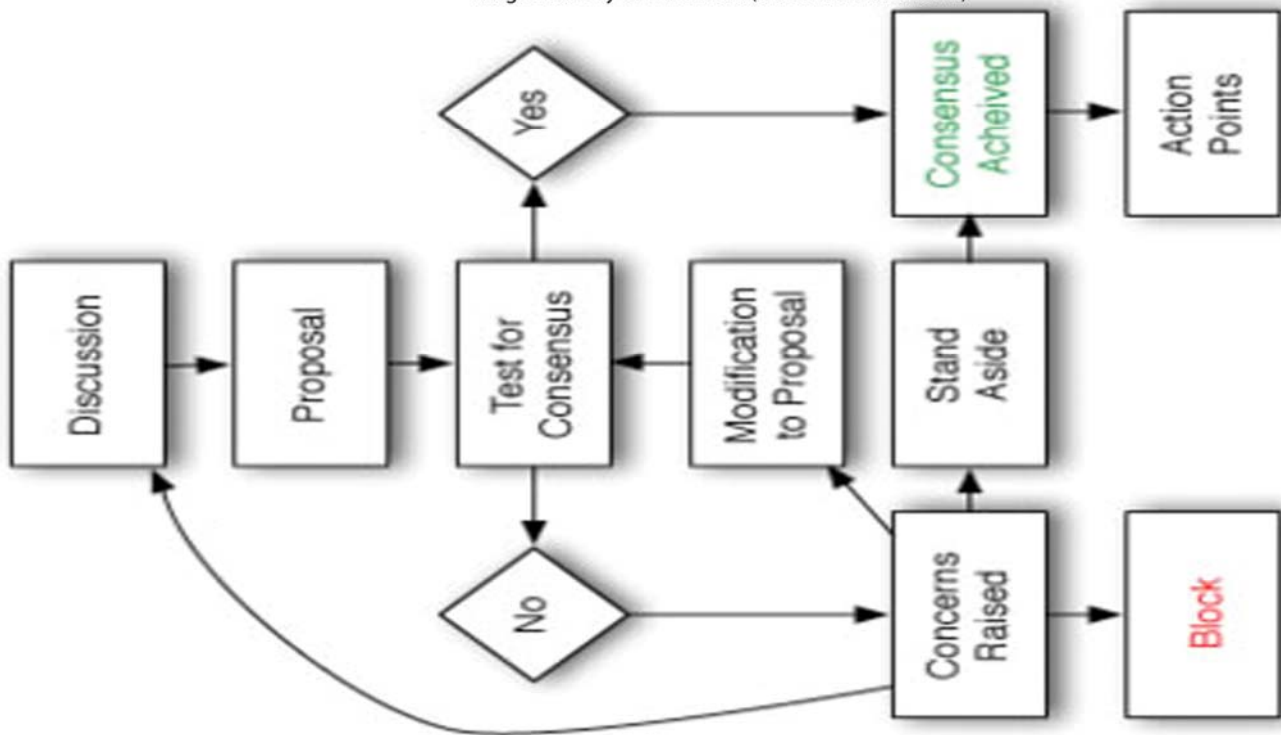
VIBES WATCHER

The Vibes Watcher monitors the emotional level of the meeting. They help diffuse tense situations such as bad power dynamics by calling "Vibes" or giving the signal. If this happens the group might take a break or engage in a group activity to calm down or discuss the source of the vibes. Anyone can call vibes, although some groups assign someone to watch for them.



Sample of Consensus Model Chart

image courtesy of wikimedia (true source unknown)



Quick Tips For Organizations New To Consensus

1. Don't speak over someone else or interrupt
2. If your group is too large, utilize a stack keeper and have people raise their hands.
3. Ideally, you should start with a check-in. Check-in's are important because it allows everybody to participate and be engaged. Also, it is common to start a check-in with one's name and whether or not they are a member of the group yet. This allows you to both learn names and meet new prospective members to your group.
4. Do NOT directly attack others as this creates a bad power dynamic and bullying people out of the conversation or issue means losing consensus.
5. Set a strong Agenda by having it ready before the meeting starts and ideally have it on the internet or in a common place so everyone can research or know of the topic ahead of time.
 - a. To create a stronger agenda, each person presenting an issue should have their name next to the item they are discussing or proposing.
 - b. For the sake of time if that's an issue, each item that is being proposed should also have a time limit.
6. Take a straw-poll to see if people would like to consense about an issue. (i.e. thumbs up, thumbs down, etc..).
 - a. If the motion passes, call for major reservations or objections before consensing.
 - b. If the motion doesn't pass, the issue msut still be discussed upon before consensing.
7. Remember that it's alright to disagree.

Looking for More Information?

Books

Consensus by Peter Gelderloos
On Conflict & Consensus by C.T. Lawrence Butler & Amy Rothstein
A Manual for Group Facilitators by Center for Conflict Resolution
Building United Judgement by Center for Conflict Resolution

Zines (All of these zines are available at zinelibrary.info)

Collective Process by the Common Wheel Collective
Build Those Collectives
A Basic Introduction to Co-operatives

Websites

ladywoods.org - Good article on Consensus basics
consensus.net - Some decent information.