

Alphabet Consensus Game

Purpose: This exercise aims to introduce a group to the idea of consensus or to stimulate an awareness of the dynamics of consensus for qualities necessary for consensus to genuinely work.

Time: 45 minutes

Preparation: As many sealed envelopes containing a sheet of paper on which are written about 10 letters (e.g., 'A' through 'G'). All groups get the same set of 10 letters.

Facilitator's note: This game is a good follow up to an introduction or review of what is 'consensus decision-making' either through presentation of the basic elements (for new-comers to the idea) or harvesting the group's knowledge and then agreeing on a shared way of doing consensus. Another element that the game reveals sometimes is that for consensus to work you need everyone to buy into the method.

The point of the game is to make as many words as you can and to pay attention to process of how the group determines its strategy for making those words and then what actually happens.

Description of Exercise:

- Divide the group into small groups of no less than 3 and ask them to decide their strategy for the game. Allow about 10 minutes for deciding strategy.
- Once the group has decided their method for the task, give them their set of letters.
- Now the clock starts ticking. The group has 5 minutes to come up with as many words as they can.
- Groups work to their own rhythm and up to this point the exercise should take about 30 minutes maximum -- 15 minutes to frame and explain the activity and another 15 or the small group work. The groups that get down to the task of making the words fast will probably get a bit of a break while the group(s) last to move to action will be wrapping up at the end of 30 minutes.
- Come back to plenary, count up the words (and compare if you like) to find the winner
- Ask the 'winners' to describe their strategy and facilitate a discussion about methods and strategies and identify how the consensus worked (or didn't work out).
- In facilitating the ensuing discussion you may want to ask
 - + how did they decide to make the words, did they follow that method?
 - + how did the process work? did they use anything discussed earlier (hand signals or identifying a facilitator for the process, or was it organic?)
 - + work with whatever comes up