

### **Focusing on a Direction**

After a large number of ideas have been generated and listed on the board, the group can categorize and examine them. Then the group should agree on a process for choosing from among the ideas. Advantages and disadvantages of different plans can be listed and then voted on. Some possibilities can be eliminated through a straw vote (each group member could have 2 or 3 votes). Or all group members could vote for their first, second, and third choices. Alternatively, a list of criteria for a successful plan can be listed, and different alternatives can be voted on based on the criteria, one by one.

#### Categorizing and evaluating ideas

1. Examples of what to say:

*We have about 20 ideas here. Can we sort them into a few general categories?*

*When we evaluate each others' ideas, can we mention some positive aspects before expressing concerns?*

*Could you give us an example of what you mean?*

*Who has dealt with this kind of problem before?*

*What are the pluses of that approach? The minuses?*

*We have two basic choices. Let's brainstorm. First let's look at the advantages of the first choice, then the disadvantages.*

*Let's try ranking these ideas in priority order. The group should try to come to an agreement that makes sense to everyone.*

#### Making a decision

After everyone's views are heard and all points of agreement and disagreement are identified, the group should try to arrive at an agreement that makes sense to everyone.

1. Examples of what to say:

*There seems to be some agreement here. Is there anyone who couldn't live with solution #2?*

*Are there any objections to going that way?*

*You still seem to have worries about this solution. Is there anything that could be added or taken away to make it more acceptable? We're doing fine. We've agreed on a great deal. Let's stay with this and see if we can work this last issue through.*

*It looks as if there are still some major points of disagreement. Can we go back and define what those issues are and work on them rather than forcing a decision now.*

Parts adapted and quoted from the following training materials:  
Heller Hunt and Cunningham. "Advanced Facilitator" Brookline, MA 1992  
Interaction Associates. "Collaborative Problem Solving" Cambridge, MA 1987

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