Voting Techniques[1]

Clarifying group voting techniques is essential for any team, but particularly for community coalitions where all voices need to be incorporated into decisions. For any voting technique, always make sure everyone agrees on what's needed to accept a vote **before you vote**. For example, are you requiring full consensus, a simple majority of 51%, or a super majority of 2/3 in favor?

Ballot Voting

One person is elected or appointed to collect the votes and tally them. Ensure that only one ballot is given to each eligible voting member. It is important to make sure only voting members receive ballots.

When to Use: Can be used in multiple formats, including for a yay/nay vote or to rank top priorities out of a larger group of options. Use ballot voting when the group wants to maintain confidence over each participant's vote, such as for elections or any other time the pressure of the group might keep people from voting what they really believe.

General Voting

Various types of general voting include:

» Show of hands: Raise your hand - those in favor, those opposed, or abstain

» Voice vote: Those in favor say aye, those opposed say nay, or abstain

» Roll Call vote: The secretary calls each voting member's name individually and each member verbally casts their vote: aye, nay, or abstain
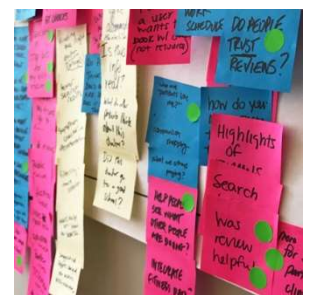
When to Use: The group has a yay/nay vote on a single proposal and confidentiality is not an issue.

Dot Voting

The facilitator gives every member of the team a set number of dot stickers (typically three). Solutions are written on individual pieces of paper and placed on a table or hung up around the room. Each team member places their dot stickers on their preferred options. The solution with the most dots (votes) wins. If you have several solutions with a lot of dots, you can conduct another round with the finalists.

You want to be sure everyone is voting at the same time to avoid group think. Try to limit talking during the voting process. When people are allowed to talk, usually the loudest person's idea wins.

When to Use: The group has multiple options to choose from and needs to select the top several priorities. Can be used a second time with the top priorities to whittle the options down to one final winning proposal.

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[1] Adapted from Clearly Agile https://www.clearlyagile.com/agile-blog/3-facilitated-voting-techniques and University of Minnesota https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/kewaunee4h/files/2018/03/6-Methods-of-Voting.pdf

Fist to Five Voting

A proposal is put in front of the group for a vote. Each participant votes by raising their hand all at the same time and holding up the number of fingers that best represents their opinion and support of the proposal.

- » 0 fingers (a fist): This idea has a fatal flaw. The group agrees in advance not to proceed with an idea that has a fist.

- » 1 finger: There are major concerns with this proposal, and I cannot support it.

- » 2 fingers: I could get behind the proposal if we can resolve some issues first.

- » 3 fingers: I'll go along with this idea, but it is not my favorite.

- » 4 fingers: This is a good idea. Excited to move forward.

- » 5 fingers: I love this idea and will support with everything I have!

Agree in advance with the group to move ahead with the proposal if every voter has at least three fingers raised. If some team members are voting 0s, 1s, or 2s, ask them why they are opposed to the idea and discuss whether there are tweaks that can be made to increase their support to at least a 3. Propose a new solution and re-vote and repeat until there are no 0s, 1s, or 2s. Since each individual holds veto power, it prevents specializations from being overlooked.

When to Use: The group has a yay/nay vote on a single proposal and needs consensus to move forward.

Thumb Voting

Thumb Voting is essentially Fist to Five voting made simple. The only difference is the voters give a thumbs up, thumbs down, or thumb to the side. Discuss any thumbs down. Agree in advance whether the group requires all thumbs up before proceeding or whether you're ok moving forward with a few sideways thumbs.

- » Thumbs Down: There are major concerns with this proposal, and I cannot support it.

- » Thumbs Sideways: I could get behind the proposal if we can resolve some issues before moving forward.

- » Thumbs Up: This is a good idea. Excited to move forward.

When to Use: The group has a yay/nay vote on a single proposal and needs consensus to move forward. This method works best when a quick and simple group decision needs to be made. When the group has to decide in a rapid manner, this can help get to a decision quickly.

Thumb voting can also be used to take the temperature of the group ("How is everyone feeling about our work so far?") or to confirm the group's understanding of an issue ("Are we ready to move on or do we need further discussion on this point?")