

# Managing Team Differences

The popular book *Getting to Yes* (Fisher & Ury, 1981) identifies a range of strategies for groups to use when working together to help solve problems. They emphasize the potential of win-win scenarios through integrative bargaining rather than the typical win-lose scenarios that come from negotiation.

Principle	Description	Strategies
<b>Separate the People from the Problem</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Be soft on people</li> <li>› Be hard on the problem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Use active listening to move beyond differences, anger or attitude.</li> <li>› Sympathize and try to see it from their perspective. Ask them to do the same.</li> </ul>
<b>Focus on Interests Not Positions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› People start with positions—explore their interests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Seek to understand why: “You state that you want X. Explain why you want X.”</li> </ul>
<b>Invent Options for Mutual Gain</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Develop multiple options</li> <li>› Decide choices later</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Once you understand interests, seek outcomes that satisfy everyone’s interests.</li> <li>› Develop a checklist: “How do we make sure we are addressing everyone’s interests?”</li> </ul>
<b>Insist Upon Using Objective Criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› What are our standards for making a decision?</li> <li>› Reason and be open to reason</li> <li>› Yield to principle but not to pressure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› What are we using to judge whether an agreement will work for us?</li> <li>› Discuss why an outcome will or will not meet our criteria.</li> <li>› Incorporate everyone’s criteria when we try to think of solutions.</li> </ul>

## Strategies for Consensus Decision Making

Source: Kaner, Sam. 2014. *Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision Making*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.

Big and complex problems often take time to work through collaboratively. Here is a quick summary of some steps that a group can use to support a consensus based approach:

- **Brainstorm:** take time to generate lots of ideas (individually and as a group) without pausing to assess, critique or analyze.
- **Sort:** categorize, vote on top ideas, categorize by criteria (time, cost, feasibility, etc.).
- **Survey the territory:** specify requirements, speak from own perspective, review facts and opinions, seek perspectives not represented, ask: who, what, when, where and how?
- **Search for alternatives:** raise difficult issues, brainstorm again, anything you are not saying?, share three complaints, gather diverse points of view.
- **Create shared context:** learn about each other’s perspectives, get to know each other, identify meaningful themes.
- **Explore inclusive solutions:** identify common ground, “how can we do both?”, use case studies, reframe the problem or constraints, identify what is unchangeable and what is not, clarify evaluation criteria.

## Managing Team Differences Worksheet

### Types of Disagreements

In the conflict resolution literature, there is a range of different ways to describing conflict. Sometimes it is important to understand the nature of the conflict to resolve it [Adapted from several sources].

Conflict	Example	Strategy 1	Strategy 2
<b>Personal</b>	You don't like someone's idea because of their personality.	Focus on the problem rather than the people: "What are our criteria for making a decision?"	If you are affected by someone's behavior try to share it with them: "Your responses to my ideas makes me feel undervalued."
<b>Technical</b>	You disagree about the facts.	Do more research: "We seem to disagree about the effectiveness of this, let's each investigate."	Clarify the criteria: "Let's check the assignment (or with the instructor) to make sure we are approaching this correctly."
<b>Interest</b>	You disagree about how an outcome will affect people's interests.	Win/Loss/Other: "Who is going to win or lose from this? Can we compensate the losers or come up with a win-win scenario?"	Wins/Losses/Other within the group: How can we address the needs of someone not getting what they want from this project?
<b>Value</b>	You disagree about values and value choices.	Explore value differences: "Why do you believe this is inherently right/wrong?"	Agree to disagree: "Rather than forcing change, we're going to point out different interpretations or different options."

### Gradients of Agreement

Even if a group decides to operate by complete consensus, it does not mean that every member is completely satisfied with every decision. You can use a "gradient of agreement" to determine where you stand and use quick votes (show of fingers) to assess where you are [Source: Kaner, Sam. 2014. *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.]

5: Endorsement	4: Endorse with Reservations	3: Abstain	2: Stand Aside	1: Block
"I like it"	"I can live with it"	"I have no opinion"	"I don't like it but I don't want to hold up the group."	"I veto this proposal"
Response: Explain why if necessary	Response: Explain reservations and how it could be addressed	Response: None	Response: Is there anything that could improve your view?	Response: Explain your concern. Do you have an alternative?