

Whole Earth Festival

Consensus Training Workshop

January 7, 2003, Kevin Wolf kjwolf@dcn.org 758-4211

Workshop Goals;

1. The WEF staff and volunteers become skilled practitioners in the art and science of consensus decision making. This skill and knowledge will help WEF staff and volunteers in many aspects of their lives for decades to come.
2. The 2003 WEF is a more enjoyable, rewarding and successful event because staff and volunteers are more skilled in and have created the foundations needed for consensus-based and good decisions to be made.

Workshop Objectives:

1. Model a good meeting process. Use meeting groundrules, clear agenda objectives, brainstorm and weighing exercise and consensus decision making processes.
2. Clarify the definition of consensus. What is the definition that WEF uses now, in practical terms? What does "blocking" consensus mean? When should consensus on a decision be blocked? What does it mean "to stand aside" or "able to live with"?
3. Clarify the building blocks to reaching consensus. What is WEF's status in each category?
 - common goals (and strategies)
 - common values and principles
 - good meeting agendas and facilitation
4. Brainstorm, discuss and prioritize the principles and values that guide consensus decision making for the 2003 WEF meetings.
5. Discuss and identify next steps towards helping WEF become more skilled in consensus.

Agenda:

7 pm	Welcome and introductions - Anna
7:15	Agenda review - Kevin
7:20	Meeting groundrules
7:30	Definition of consensus.
7:50	Building blocks for consensus
8:00	Brainstorm principles
8:10	Discuss, categorize and debate principles
8:25	Categorize
8:30	Weighing exercise
8:35	Review results
8:40	Reach consensus on priority principles.
8:50	Next steps
8:57	Evaluation
9 pm	Adjourn

Definitions:

"Value: - A principle, standard or quality considered inherently worthwhile or desirable.

"Principle" - A basic truth law or assumption.

"Goal" - A desired result or purpose. The ultimate results of the effort or organization.

"Strategy" - A key, priority method for achieving one or more goals. If implemented, the strategy should provide significant progress toward the goal and mission of the effort.

From Resource Manual for a Living Revolution

"Consensus is a process for making group decisions without voting. Agreement is reached through a process of gathering information and viewpoints, discussion, persuasion, a combination of synthesis of proposals and/or the development of totally new ones. The goal of the consensus process is to reach a decision with which everyone can agree. Consensus at its best relies on persuasion rather than pressure for reaching a group unity.

Consensus does not necessarily mean unanimity. A group can proceed with an action without having total agreement. In the event that an individual or a small group cannot agree with a given proposal and is blocking consensus, the facilitator may ask if they are willing to "stand aside" and allow the group to act, or if they feel so strongly about the issue that they are unwilling for the group to act. If the individual(s) agree to stand aside, their disagreements are noted in the minutes of the meeting, and the group is free to act on the decision. ..."