

Steps for Collaborative Decisions

Highlight Notes

Wednesday, May 4, 2022, Online

Delivered by Craig Freshley of Good Group Decisions
Sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Maine



About the Workshop

Learning Objectives

- Understand the basic steps for successful and lasting collaborative decision making.
- Feel confident to suggest or try proven approaches.
- Meet new people, learn unexpected things, and have fun.

Agenda

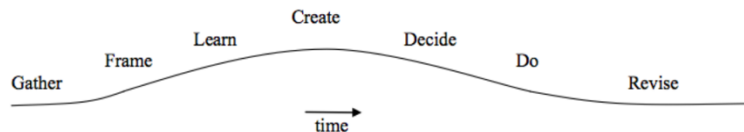
6:00 **Welcome**

6:05 **Collaboration Success Factors**

We're going to jump right in with some questions: What are the most important ingredients for successful collaborative decision making? What makes a process "collaborative?" We will share our answers and discuss them. And we will say hello and introduce ourselves as we go.

6:20 **Craig' Story and the Steps**

We will hear a little about Craig's career as a professional meeting facilitator in Maine and his work to bring Democrats and Republicans together in what are called Make Shift Coffee Houses. Craig will also provide an overview of proven Collaborative Decision Making Steps, from his experience



6:35 **Frame**

In small groups we will discuss and make lists of "things to get settled at the start." Then Craig will explain what he thinks of as the key elements of framing. We will discuss and perhaps come to some conclusions.

6:50 **Learn**

Starting with shout-outs and ending with themes, we will explore all the way that groups gather information to make good decisions. We will also explore some of the many ways that information gathering is hampered, even intentionally disrupted, and explore work-arounds.

7:00 **Create - Decide - Do - Revise**

Craig will briefly explain the last four steps in one fell swoop, inviting questions and clarifications as he goes.

- 7:10 **What Could Possibly Go Wrong?**
What gets you stuck? What are your own difficulties in actually DOING the steps like they're supposed to be done? We will share challenges with each other, and solutions.
- 7:25 **Closing**
- 7:30 **Adjourn**

Key Ingredients for Collaborative Decisions

Here's a list Craig made to reflect comments and discussion of the group

- Listen without judgment
 - Open minded - my mind is not made up
 - Learning rather than telling
- Common focus
 - Define the problem to be solved or question to be answered
- Everyone invested in the outcome
 - In the case of true collaboration, there is "no minority" after the decision
- Able to speak one's truth
 - Safety
- Someone who can "read the room"
 - With skills to read body language
 - Neutrality

About Make Shift Coffee House

Craig showed photos from Make Shift Coffee Houses that he facilitated and explained two success factors that rise above all else:

The sole purpose is to understand each other's perspectives, not to decide what's right or to persuade or argue.

It person is encouraged to speak for themselves; from their experience. No on can argue with your experience.

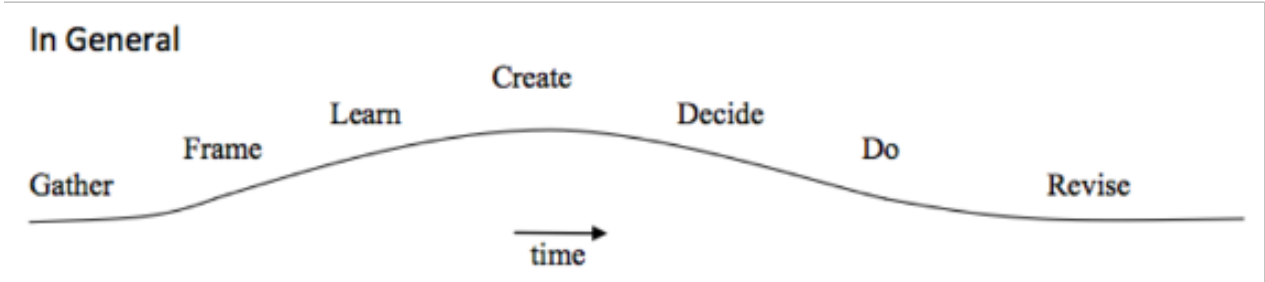
Learn all about **Make Shift Coffee House** here: <https://makeshiftcoffeehouse.com/>

Group Decision Methods

Craig showed the following diagram and explained how *Majority Rule* tends to be the domain of governments. *One Decider* tends to be the domain of businesses. *All Agree* is most common in the nonprofit sector.

	One Decider	Majority Rule	All Agree
Task at hand	Implementation	Planning and implementation	Planning
Length of impact	Short	Medium	Long
Width of impact	Few	Medium	Many
How much time to decide	Quick	Moderate	Ample

The Steps



See **Group Decision Making Steps** handout here: <https://tinyurl.com/nybe99kr>

Frame

Here's a list Craig made to reflect comments and discussion of the group

- Agree on the problem to be solved
 - Desired outcomes
 - Measurable goal/s
- Socializing
 - Allow for chatter at the start
 - Food
 - Chocolate in the afternoon is always good
- Time Parameters
 - How much time to allocate?
- Membership
 - Acknowledge who is there
 - Define who should be there
- Roles
 - Who's taking notes?
 - And other roles
 - Who's the moderator?
 - Roles of Committee Members
 - Helps if these are defined and written
- Ground Rules
 - Might include:
 - Time frame for speaking
 - demonstrate listening
 - Sit in a circle
- Clear agenda
 - All have access to agenda-setting
 - Everyone knows how things work
- Scope of the work
 - What's in bounds and out of bounds?
- Lead responsibilities
 - Who is accountable?
- How to be decided
 - So everyone knows from the beginning who the decision makers will be

Craig emphasized that establishing good framing is all about preventing and managing future conflict.

It's all about minimizing mismatched expectations

Learn

- Sources and Methods
 - Experiential learning
 - Experts
 - Empirical data
 - Stakeholder input
 - Surveys
- Sometimes learning is a simple conversation with a key person or group of people. Other times it's a multi-month process.
- It's good to make deliberate, pro-active efforts to engage people not typically heard from, and/or the people most affected by the potential decision.
 - This requires meeting them in places and talking to them in ways (both medium and jargon) that work best for them.
- Brainstorming is a typical and effective way to generate new ideas
 - 10% rule
 - No matter how crazy an idea is, it has at least 10% validity
 - Next person: Name the 10% that's valid and make an additive statement
 - Encourage people to participate by asking questions

Create – Decide – Do - Revise

- Craig briefly explained these steps and how “decide” typically happens in a meeting.
- He provided the following resources about Meetings in particular:
 - **Agenda and Meeting Tips:** <https://tinyurl.com/2p8pnr9p>
 - **Seven Secrets for Successful Meetings:** <https://tinyurl.com/2p865zfy>
 - **How to Facilitate Meetings Video:** <https://tinyurl.com/yckh7yej>

Other

How to Handle a Contrarian

- If you have a member of a voluntarily-assembled group, such as a nonprofit board or committee, belief in the group's purpose is essential.
- If you have someone who is consistently at odds with the group's stated purpose:
 - Ask them to leave
 - Help them see that they are not a good fit
 - Make them leave
 - Each group should have such provisions, although to be used very sparingly

- Work around them and minimize their impact
 - Show respect and follow rules but otherwise “don’t feed that energy.”
 - Don’t appoint or elect them to anything of consequence

About Online Meetings

- We are at the dawn of the Age of Internet Technology
 - Relative to our history of evolution, we’re really bad at communicating through screens.
- Online meetings help widen participation
 - Allows access like never before
- In-person meetings help deepen participation
 - Especially useful for handling conflict and for maximizing creativity

About Committees

- We discussed committees briefly: about forming committees and establishing member expectations.
- Not provided IN the workshop but here’s a one-page Tip that might be helpful
 - **Committees:** <https://tinyurl.com/t56k39at>

For more **Tips, Videos, and Handouts** from Craig: <https://goodgroupdecisions.com/blog/>