

Developing norms

EXAMPLES OF NORMS

We will work together as a community that values consensus rather than majority rule.

We will be fully “present” at the meeting by becoming familiar with materials before we arrive and by being attentive to behaviors which affect physical and mental engagement.

We will invite and welcome the contributions of every member and listen to each other.

We will be involved to our individual level of comfort. Each of us is responsible for airing disagreements during the meeting rather than carrying those disagreements outside the meeting.

COMMENTS TO THE FACILITATOR: This activity will enable a group to develop a set of operating norms or ground rules. In existing groups, anonymity will help ensure that everyone is able to express their ideas freely. That is the reason for suggesting that the facilitator provide pens or pencils and ask that everyone use the same type of writing implement.

SUPPLIES: Index cards, pens/pencils, poster paper, display board, tape, tacks.

TIME: Two hours.

Directions

1. Indicate to the group that effective groups generally have a set of norms that governs individual behavior, facilitates the work of the group, and enables the group to accomplish its task.
2. Recommend to the group that it establish a set of norms:
 - To ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to contribute in the meeting;
 - To increase productivity and effectiveness; and
 - To facilitate the achievement of its goals.
3. Give five index cards and the same kind of writing tool to each person in the group.
4. Ask each person to reflect on and record behaviors they consider ideal behaviors for a group. Ask them to write one idea on each of their cards. Time: 10 minutes.
5. The facilitator should shuffle all the cards together. Every effort should be made to provide anonymity for individuals, especially if the group has worked together before.
6. Turn cards face up and read each card aloud. Allow time for the group members to discuss each idea. Tape or tack each card to a display board so that all group members can see it. As each subsequent card is read aloud, ask the group to determine if it is similar to another idea that already has been expressed. Cards with similar ideas should be grouped together.
7. When all of the cards have been sorted into groups, ask the group to write the norm suggested by that group of cards. Have one group member record these new norms onto a large sheet of paper.
8. Review the proposed norms with the group. Determine whether the group can support the norms before the group adopts them.

Source: Adapted from *Tools for change workshops* by Robby Champion. Oxford, Ohio: National Staff Development Council, 1993.