

Group consensus: Role play scenario

Introduction

This was designed for a multi-ethnic group to role play working on consensus in a group. You need to adapt the scenario to discussion of a situation relevant to the group you are working with.

The scenario given below was read out and explained to the group. Roles were printed and assigned by the facilitators with the key roles assigned to people who might be most capable and comfortable with them; roles were subsequently swapped during the role play so different people could try different approaches.

In adapting the roles you obviously need to provide a stance in relation to your scenario but you can, if appropriate, keep the general orientation to group discussion and conflict given in this example – having people who have the good of the group at heart, some who are for the proposal outlined, some against, some undecideds, one or two participants who want to stir things up or are jealous of someone else. You also need to have the appropriate number of roles for the size of your group.

Only their individual role was given to each person but you could have all the roles 'open' (everyone knows everyone's role).

The 'Mela' referred to is a large multicultural festival held in Belfast each year at the end of the summer.

In this workshop the group also undertook an inclusive voting exercise (www.deborda.org and <https://debordavote.com/>) to experience using that in deciding on an issue. This is an option in addition to looking at using group consensus mechanisms to arrive at an agreed result.

The scenario

[Read to the group and discussed so everyone is clear]

Everyone here is from the same country, A-land, and the same ethnicity and you are known as "A-listers".

You are involved in the local A-listers Community Group which has quite a lot of members since many people have come from A-land to work in the treacle mines, and related industries, in the local area.

It is proposed that your group organises a cultural event both to showcase your culture and to make links with other local people, both those from Northern Ireland and people of different ethnicities.

However tension rises in the committee for the group; some want a big event with other ethnicities involved – a sort of "Mini-Mela" over a weekend – while others prefer something a bit smaller but taking place in different parts of the area over a period of several months. Others would prefer something much smaller, perhaps just in one evening, and by invitation only. Some people are undecided. Agreement is difficult and there are strong feelings and there are also questions about who would do the work for it.

You have a meeting to try to sort it out.

Different roles are given to different people in the role play. The chair and secretary want to get a good level of consensus/agreement on what to do although they are known to support the 'Mini-

Mela' larger event. Other people fight for what they want or have other aims in the meeting.....these are given to each person individually.

Aside from what you are told about your role, you can make up your own mind about what to support in the meeting.

After someone has been doing a role for some time you can move to take over that role by getting up and standing behind their chair. If you move to take someone else's role, your role description stays on your chair – you no longer have that role. If someone else sits down on that chair they take on your former role and you take on the role of the chair you move to.

The facilitators may intervene to keep things moving or suggest a move by the chairperson and secretary....

The aim of the role play is to use the tools for consensus, and see them being used, in a challenging situation!

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The roles

for assignment to individual group members

1. You are chair of the group.

While you support a fairly large event over a weekend involving a variety of ethnicities in the area – a lot of work but focused and just over that one weekend - you want to get agreement in the group and will use whatever tools you feel will help to arrive at a reasonable consensus.

2. You are secretary of the group.

While you support a fairly large event over a weekend involving a variety of ethnicities in the area – a lot of work but focused and over just that one that weekend - you want to get agreement in the group and will support the chair to do that, including suggesting whatever tools you feel will help to arrive at a reasonable consensus. You are the chair's 'right hand man/woman'.

3. You are jealous of the chair and think you should be chair

While wanting the group to succeed you want to make it difficult for the chair so you will make personal criticisms and intervene to make him/her look bad. You don't mind whether the event is big or small.

4. You are 'Uncle Colm' (or 'Auntie Columbina') from 'Derry Girls'

You are long-winded and boring, you go on and on about irrelevant things so that others wish you would just shut up before everyone falls asleep.

5. Mr/Ms Practicality

You are always thinking of the practicalities – will that work, how would it work, who would do the work, could we afford to do it.

6. Mr/Ms Flamboyant

You want to really show off what A-listers can do and what you personally can do – you are a reasonably good A-lister traditional dancer but you think you are a great (the best ever) A-lister

traditional dancer and you think showing off A-list dancing is by far the most important thing. You support a big event.

7. Mr/Ms Wary

You are afraid things will go terribly wrong and the events will be a disaster. Besides, you feel the group will be left penniless and in debt if the event is bigger. If anything is to happen you want a very small event.

8. Mr/Ms Agent Provocateur

You enjoy throwing a spanner in the works and disrupting things to see who gets angry and what else happens. You like that kind of excitement. You don't care what decision is made.

9. Mr/Ms Big Event

You see this as an opportunity to showcase not just A-land culture but what A-listers can do.

10. Mr/Ms Small Event

You would like a small event – “Let's see how a small event goes, then we can decide if we want to do something bigger.”

11. Mr/Ms Series

You are not against a big event but you want it spread out over months, perhaps with one event every fortnight.

12. Mr/Ms Big Undecided

You tend towards a big event but are open to persuasion and will participate to ask relevant questions before deciding for definite.

13. Mr/Ms Small Undecided

You tend towards a small event but are open to persuasion and will participate to ask relevant questions before deciding for definite.

14. Mr/Ms Undecided

You are open to persuasion but will participate to ask relevant questions before deciding.

15. Mr/Ms Undecided

You are open to persuasion but will participate to ask relevant questions before deciding.