

Colored Consensus Card / Hand Sign Usage

Overview

Facilitators have ample opportunity to practice reading minds. Despite continuous practice, most of the time we fail. At CoHo we have found it helpful if the members give us a hint prior to our calling on them, thus the colored consensus cards and agree upon hand signs. Our cards have text on both sides. One side gives direction for use during discussion, the other during the check for consensus.

Discussion

A conversation can go sideways when a member does not understand the topic being discussed. It is often useful to the facilitator to know who has clarifying questions, such that she/he can call upon those people first. Members use the yellow card and the American Sign Language (ASL) sign xxx for this.

During discussion it is often the case that the facilitator would like to complete discussion of a specific topic before allowing the conversation to move onto other related topics. Without some method of indicating intent prior to being called on, members are unable to assist the facilitator (without speaking out of turn). In such situations, members show a blue card or the ASL xxx sign to indicate that they have a comment or would like to share an opinion on the specific topic and an orange card or the ASL xxx sign to indicate a desire to comment or share an opinion on a new topic.

Often non-presenting members have as much or more information on a given topic as the presenter. Even if the presenter is the best informed, the conversation is often aided by someone other than the presenter answering questions. Members use the green card or the ASL sign xxx to indicate that they have an answer or useful information on the topic being discussed.

Discussion Topic	Card Color	Discussion Sign
Ask clarifying question	Yellow	ASL – sign for a question which is a question mark
Provide answer to another's question	Green	Loose upright fist with thumb out (American sign for "a") (answer)
Make a comment or supply an opinion	Blue	ASL – sign for "c" for comment/opinion – hand in a C shape
Question or comment on a new topic or subtopic	Orange	ASL for "n" new and "q" question – Loose upright fist with thumb between second and third fingers; followed by first finger pointing down and thumb crossing joint of outstretched middle finger; 3 rd and little finger coiled in.
Not used during discussion	Red	

Consensus

When asking if the group has reached consensus it is necessary to be very clear that a true consensus has been achieved. Anything less may present problems during the implementation the decision. Members use a green card or thumb up sign to indicate that they are in agreement with the plan/proposal. A blue card or thumb sideways sign indicates that the member has some reservations, but nothing that would impede her/his helping to implement the chosen action.

Members raise an orange card or angled wagging thumb, when they hold serious concerns about the proposal. Immediately after completing the consensus check, the facilitator will give any member who indicated such serious concerns and opportunity to voice them. It is the community's expectation that each such member will be open to engaging in a conversation about those concerns. Often these lead to modifications to the proposal, such that the concerned member can move to supporting the plan. However, after such discussion, the facilitator can declare that a consensus has been reached, since the member did not use a red card or a thumb down sign, which blocks the consensus and indicates that the member believes that the proposed action will harm the member and/or community. It is the community's expectation that the blocking member will be open to engaging in a conversation about the block. Often these lead to an NVC discussion of the needs of the blocker and the needs the blocker feels that the community has that are not being met by the proposal. These can lead to modifications to the proposal, such that the concerned member can move to supporting it. If not, the facilitator remands the proposal back to the originating team, if the blocker agrees to work with the team to work toward a satisfactory solution. Do to the importance of all CoHo Members knowing that our community works to meet everyone's needs; it seems reasonable that the NVC, CPR, or Facilitation Teams might be able to suggest steps to aid movement toward a satisfactory solution. Only on last resort would we choose to move to a decision by voting.

Consensus Topic	Card Color	Consensus Sign
Not used during consensus	Yellow	
Consent	Green	Thumb Up
Consent with some hesitation, but do not need to share.	Blue	Thumb sideways
Serious concerns, card holder is expected to discuss them immediately	Orange	Thumb angled downward and wagging
Block, member believes that proposed action will harm member and/or community. Card holder is expected to discuss reasons immediately.	Red	Thumb pointing down