

10 Characteristics of Effective Meetings				
	1	2	3	4
Meetings start and end on time.				
The agenda is available for review before the meeting.				
Members regularly attend, actively participate in, and stay for the duration of meetings.				
Members honor past decisions and actions, moving discussions forward not backward.				
Meetings are effective: The agenda has clear objectives and timeframes.				
Members come prepared for meetings, having reviewed materials or information that supports agenda items.				
When meetings stray from their purpose members have a process for getting back on track.				
Every meeting concludes with action items and accountability.				
Once action items are assigned, there is a process for future follow up.				
Members actively try to bring solutions to the meetings.				

1 – We consistently practice this

3 – We rarely practice this

2 – We sometimes practice this

4 – We never practice this

The goal of Robert's Rules of Order is to structure the debate process and passage of proposals that win approval through majority vote. This process doesn't emphasize the goal of full agreement nor does it foster whole group collaboration nor the views of minority concerns. Critics of Robert's Rules believe the process can facilitate adversarial debate and competing factions. These dynamics may harm group member relationships and undermine the ability of a group to cooperatively implement a contentious decision.

Consensus decision making is a process used by groups seeking widespread levels of participation and agreement. In the traditional political process, one side wins and another loses. Some issues come back time and again or never get resolved. A consensus agreement is more likely to be stronger, more comprehensive, and more practical since people with diverse viewpoints participate in its development.

Principles of Consensus Decision Making

Inclusion: as many stakeholders as possible are included in discussions.

Participatory: all members are encouraged to contribute to the discussion. Members use disagreement to uncover and address unmet needs.

Collaborative: Proposals are authored with input from all members. Individual authorship is subsumed as members modify the proposal to include the concerns of all group members

Agreement seeking: the goal is to generate as much agreement as possible. A group using consensus makes a concerted attempt to reach full agreement.

Cooperative: Members are encouraged to keep the good of the whole group in mind. Each preference should be voiced so that the group can incorporate all concerns in the decision-making process. Individual preferences should not be allowed to obstruct the progress of the group.

* Courtesy of Tim Harnett, PhD., <http://www.groupfacilitation.net>