



Group Decision Tip

E-mailed every two weeks to help groups make good decisions

Enforcement

In principle, decisions without enforcement grow weak and eventually wither. When rules or policies are not enforced it causes confusion, resentment, and conflict. The word "enforcement" comes from a Latin word meaning "strength." To enforce decisions is to strengthen them.

Practical Tip: Take preventative measures to ensure that members of your group understand the rules of your group. Honor the rules of your group. If you disagree with the rules, either leave the group or work in peaceful ways to change the rules.

When you see someone breaking group rules, try these steps: (1) Discuss with them what you saw. Don't ignore it when you see practice out of sync with policy. Such a conversation may bring to light that they "simply didn't know better," or that they interpret the rule differently, or that a larger issue needs to be addressed. If that doesn't work, (2) Point out the consequences of the violation. "When you do _____, it affects others in the following ways: _____." If that doesn't work, (3) Impose a penalty; a hurt or burden just enough to tilt the scales of incentive toward compliance.

When rules have been legitimately crafted through good group process, it is okay to enforce them for the good of the group. Actually, it's essential for the good of the group.

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