



Group Decision Tip

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

E-Mail

In principle, e-mail is an efficient way to communicate in groups, but it is a relatively new way of communicating that we are still getting used to. E-mail is instant, like conversation; enduring, like a written document; and able to be copied and distributed like nothing we have ever known. The combination of these three attributes makes it rather like a chainsaw: very effective when used properly, very dangerous when used on impulse or in anger.

E-mail is most effective when used to convey facts quickly. E-mail is most destructive when used to convey a negative reaction to something, like a previous e-mail. It is so quick and easy that we are apt to forget that what we write may be distributed far and wide and long after the feelings behind it have subsided. It is so impersonal that we are apt to underestimate its effect on other people's emotions. And then there is the problem of interpretation: Very few of us are skilled enough to convey exactly what we mean with written words, or discern exactly what written words were meant to convey. E-mail messages are easily misunderstood and misunderstanding is usually at the root of bad decisions.

Practical Tip: Beware of using e-mail to convey negative emotions, arguments, or sarcasm. Be thoughtful and deliberate about who you send to and about forwarding e-mails. Consider if you should send the message at all. If you don't have something nice to say, don't say it by e-mail. If you don't fully understand something you read in e-mail, don't fill in the blanks with assumptions. If you don't understand what the sender meant, ask them (perhaps by phone or in-person). E-mail is an easy way to say something *not* to someone's face. That can be efficient and/or hurtful. It cuts both ways.

Group Decision Tips are written by Craig Freshley and distributed by e-mail to subscribers at no charge about every two weeks. Please visit www.GoodGroupDecisions.com to subscribe to the Tips and for a complete archive of all previously published Group Decision Tips. You can comment on any Tip and view comments of others. At the website you can also find useful handouts, links, and information about workshops. Group Decision Tips (tm) is the brand name for a specific set of beliefs and practices that help groups create new benefits and move toward peace in an efficient manner.

Providing Group Decision Tips to others in any format is strictly prohibited for commercial purposes and/or for any type of compensation but free distribution for non-commercial purposes is encouraged in this format with proper credit to Craig Freshley.

Good Group Decisions, Inc.

98 Maine Street, Brunswick, ME 04011
Phone: 207-729-5607

craig@goodgroupdecisions.com

www.GoodGroupDecisions.com
Fax: 207-725-8710

Helping groups make good decisions® and Good Group Decisions® are trademarks.

Copyright ©.2009 All rights reserved.