



Group Decision Tip

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

On Behalf Cautions

In principle, speaking on behalf of others is fraught with potential conflict. It warrants caution. It encourages assumptions and blurs understanding. It slows and can even clog the decision-making process. To avoid misunderstanding, conflict, and inefficiency, it helps to ask questions of each other in real-time conversation. The most efficient and best decisions are usually made face-to-face among those most affected by the decision.

Sometimes people speak on behalf of others to stir up trouble or for entertainment, and it often amounts to exactly that.

Practical Tip: Resist the temptation to speak on behalf of others. Speak for yourself and encourage others to speak for themselves. Help create a group culture of support and respect so that people are not shy about speaking and standing up for themselves.

When information is delivered on *behalf* of others take it for what it is: once removed, *half* the story. Not to be ignored perhaps, but not to base a decision on.

There are times when speaking on behalf of someone else or a class of people is appropriate, in fact called for. There are times that a group should rightfully consider voices not present. However, a position on behalf of someone not present is rarely cause to block a decision. When forward progress is halted on behalf of someone not present, conflict erupts and inefficiencies abound.

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