



## Group Decision Tip

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

### In-front-of Messaging

**In principle**, when I talk in front of a group, even if my words are directed to an individual, I am sending multiple messages. Leaders, politicians especially, are acutely aware of who they are speaking in front of and often deliver messages designed to impact multiple groups and influence multiple issues.

When I look toward the back seat and ask my teenage daughter a question in front of her friends, I know that the answer she gives is mostly a message to her friends. When the diplomat speaks on television in front of the world her words are carefully crafted for multiple audiences.

**Practical Tip:** Don't take everything you hear in public too seriously. Give public speakers some slack. Recognize that anyone talking in front of others is inclined to temper their words. As you evaluate any speaker's words, consider whom they were spoken in front of.

Give people an opportunity to talk in front of others rather than directly to others. Group facilitators, moderators, and mediators play this role when we encourage participants to talk to us – explain your story, make your argument, whatever – in front of others. Many people are much more inclined to say their peace in front of their adversaries rather than directly to them.

Talking in-front-of is less effective than talking directly, yet more effective than not talking at all.

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