

Proposal Based Decision Making

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Make a proposal	Add to or propose new	Show Thumbs 	Build support	Thumbs up! 	Commit to action
<i>I propose that ...</i>	<i>Do you want to add? Make a new proposal?</i>	<i>Where are you? Support? Don't support? Not sure?</i>	<i>What will bring your thumb up?</i>	<i>Proposal adopted!</i>	<i>Who will do what when?</i>



1. Decisions that stick

Are you frustrated when groups can't make decisions and get something done? Do you find sometimes that even when a decision is made, nothing happens? Proposal Based Decision Making is used to get decisions that stick, decisions that everyone can support and that lead to action.

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2. Proposal Based Decision Making

✓ Make a proposal

Take an idea of what you want and use proposal language to make a proposal. Use a calm, constructive tone of voice.

I propose that ... *insert a short phrase describing what you want*

✓ Add to or propose new

Explore whether people want to add to your proposal or make new proposals. Consider the proposals as different options or possible decisions the group might make.

✓ See where people are – use a show of thumbs

Ask people to show where they are by a show of thumbs. Do they support a proposal (thumb up), are they not sure (thumb sideways), or do they not support (thumb down)?

✓ Build proposals everyone can support

Ask people whose thumbs are sideways or down (not sure or don't agree) "what will bring their thumb up"? Listen to their issues and encourage proposals to address the issues. Invite everyone to make proposals that everyone can support and ask people to do the work of finding convergence.

✓ All thumbs up! Decision made

A proposal is adopted and becomes a decision when every one's "thumb is up"; or, when almost everyone's "thumb is up" and the group decides they have enough support to move forward because the people whose "thumb is not up" are okay with the group going forward.

✓ Commit to Action

The group moves to action by deciding who will do what and when to implement the decision.

3. Tips ...



Don't just criticize... Do build on a proposal or make another proposal.



Don't just advocate your own ideas... Do ask questions about others' ideas.



Don't just ignore other points of view... Do address concerns and issues with proposals.



Don't just hold back... Do make proposals and say what will bring you up.

4. The talk that moves to action

Using Proposal Based Decision Making can turn frustration into decisions that lead to action. The following are examples of frustrations turning into constructive proposals:

Frustrations	Proposal language that turns frustration into action:
The meeting is going on too long.	I propose that we conclude this meeting in five minutes, and use those five minutes to say what we want to do at our next meeting.
The meeting devolves into a circular discussion, repetitive comments and conversations that “go nowhere”.	I propose that we review the issues under discussion and then say what we want to accomplish by discussing each of these issues.
People talking at cross-purposes, or about different topics simultaneously.	I propose that we list the topics under discussion, and then decide which topic to discuss first.
You and others are using their PDAs, reading correspondence or having side conversations.	I propose that we pause and see what people want to do right now in order for our time together to be well spent.
You have been sitting too long and are about to fall asleep.	I propose that we take a stretch break, come back to this discussion with new energy and decide what to do next.

A Proposal Based Decision Making Scenario

Imagine you are a participant in a meeting that is now in its second hour. Everyone is tired, some are not paying attention and others are very tense. Noticing your own exhaustion and frustration, you propose a five-minute break and suggest people come back ready to propose what they would like to do next.

Everyone accepts your proposal with relief and rushes out into the hall for some coffee and a bio-break. During the break, you check in with some of your colleagues to see if they have ideas of what to do next, and share your own ideas.

After the break, you make your proposal. Other people build on your proposal. After the proposal is discussed and modified, people use their thumbs to show where they are. Some support the proposal and their thumbs are up, others are not sure and their thumbs are sideways, some don't support the proposal and their thumbs are down. Those who are thumbs sideways or down (not sure or don't support) are asked, “What will bring your thumb up?”

As the group listens to what will bring people up, ideas are combined and a proposal is developed that everyone can support. The modified proposal gets a thumbs up from everyone – decision made! Then people discuss who will do what by when so the decision can be implemented. People leave committed to the actions they will take to implement the decision. You and they feel relieved that the meeting “went somewhere” and moved from talk to action.