

J JOSSEY-BASS

Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making

Second Edition

Sam Kaner
with
**Lenny Lind, Catherine Toldi,
Sarah Fisk, and Duane Berger**

Foreword by Michael Doyle



John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

PRAISE FOR THIS REMARKABLE BOOK!

“As a leader of a firm involved with the governance and strategic oversight of multi-billion dollar organizations and portfolios, we find the principles and techniques in this book incredibly valuable in advancing the thinking of executive teams and boards. It has a direct effect on the impact our organizations have. Leaders and managers of any organization can benefit from the wisdom and pragmatic advice which this book delivers so effectively.”

—Mike Mohr,
founder and CEO, Comprehensive Financial Management LLC

“The brilliant and innovative tools in this book have had a profound effect on the way we in the Playfair organization run our meetings. Many of the Playfair facilitators who have been trained in the models presented here have achieved fabulous results with their clients, helping their interactions come alive with fun, originality and innovation. Highly recommended!”

—Matt Weinstein,
founder, Playfair Inc, and author, *Managing To Have Fun*

“In the field of international development, managing participatory decision-making among people from diverse backgrounds and cultures is a necessity not an option. Our organization employs a staff of several thousand who touch the lives of hundreds of millions of people living in poverty, in developing nations across the globe. As we build our capacity to convene and facilitate multi-stakeholder processes, we have found Sam Kaner’s book and his teachings to be immensely beneficial. I strongly recommend *Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision-Making* to anyone who wants a deeper appreciation of the skills required to build sustainable agreements.”

—Jamie Watts,
Institutional Learning and Change, Bioversity International,
Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research,
Rome, Italy

“Sam Kaner is one of the world’s leading experts on collaboration. His grasp of the challenges and dilemmas of collaboration is superb, as are his models and methods for facilitating complex processes. The second edition of this widely-used book reflects his accumulated wisdom and teachings. Clearly written and wonderfully illustrated, this book makes difficult issues understandable and provides sound, practical guidance.”

—Sandy Schuman, editor, *Creating a Culture of Collaboration* and founding editor, *Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications Journal*

“*Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision-Making* is an outstanding resource for tackling complex community and business challenges. We have used it for strategic planning in our nationally recognized child welfare programs and in our innovative programs to end homelessness. The second edition adds many helpful process management tools, and the new material on difficult dynamics is brilliant. I keep a copy on my desk for easy reference.”

—Roxane White, CEO, Denver Department of Human Services

“When I first heard about participatory decision-making, my reaction was that it sounded like a nice idea but I didn’t see its relevance for my role as a leader and CEO. After seeing Sam Kaner and his colleagues facilitate so effectively in many different high-stake contexts, I have completely changed my mind. I now recognize that a highly participatory approach is often the most effective way to develop and drive strategy, particularly when dealing with complex problems with highly diverse participants.

Reading *Facilitator’s Guide* was an ‘aha’ experience for me; it described the group dynamics that had previously been mysterious, and it showed me how to work with them effectively. Kaner’s decision-making procedures are the best I’ve ever seen. At Goodwill, we use them all the time. The new edition gives us several more valuable tools to be effective at making decisions. For anyone who values collaboration and wants to put its guiding principles into practice, the book is a must-read!”

—Deborah Alvarez-Rodriguez, president and CEO, Goodwill Industries of San Francisco, San Mateo and Marin Counties

“In my opinion, *Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision-Making* is the best book on collaboration ever written. I say this as someone who has been a CEO or executive director for more than 20 years. During that time I have worked with countless facilitators and organization development consultants. For depth of impact and overall effectiveness, Sam Kaner and his colleagues are top-of-the-line. This book is loaded with the tools and guiding principles that make Sam’s work so compelling.”

—Diane Flannery, founding CEO, Juma Ventures, and director, Global Center for Children and Families, UCLA, Semel Institute

“Sam Kaner and his team have helped me create a culture of collaboration in science. This is no easy task! Twenty-five years ago I started with nothing. Now my organization has the potential to make a large impact by discovering causes of the most devastating diseases that affect children. Sam’s superb skills in strategic thinking and group facilitation, and his deep expertise in organization design and systems change have been essential for our success. In *Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*, Sam and his team translate their own learnings from many different kinds of work environments into concrete techniques that will benefit business, government and non-profits alike.”

— John Harris,
founder and CEO, California Birth Defects Monitoring Program,
California Department of Health Services

“*Facilitator’s Guide* gives readers tools and insights to enable effective participatory action and the potential to achieve strong principled results and positive social change.”

— Michael Doyle, author, *How to Make Meetings Work*

“I am a longtime client and colleague of Community At Work. They are extraordinarily talented at facilitating effective teams and teaching others to do the same. Their consulting approach creates lasting solutions by promoting organizational health through collaborative working relationships. *Facilitator’s Guide* reveals and explains many of their most compelling methods and practices.”

—Ed Pierce, founder and CEO, Leadership Quality Inc.

“Facilitator’s Guide takes the mystery and fear out of facilitating groups and provides useful tools for anyone working with groups. The materials are clear. The graphics are first rate. And complex issues are developed logically and with great care.”

—Thomas Broitman, managing director,
Executive Education, PricewaterhouseCoopers, LLP

“This book is a must for anyone working with a team! It is loaded with new information, which will make your team facilitation and decision-making even better. It highlights key concepts underlying group process that are rarely defined in such a clear manner. And, at the same time, it provides easy-to-follow facilitation techniques to ensure group participation and convergence around decisions and ideas. This is a book that rarely stays on my shelf- I’m too busy using it as a reference. Truly a golden nugget in the vast pool of facilitation knowledge!”

—Tammy Adams, author, *Facilitating the Project Lifecycle*

“What a practical, sensible guide for helping groups work together in a realistic way! The graphics help you visualize how to manage many common – and puzzling – aspects of group behavior.”

—Marvin Weisbord, consultant and author, *Productive Workplaces* and co-author, *Discovering Common Ground* and *Future Search*

“Marshall Medical Center is community based, and we have always valued a culture of participation. We frequently make inclusive decisions allowing buy-in to difficult actions we need to take as an organization. Using *Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision-Making* and working with Sarah Fisk has helped us to maintain and even increase participation while still making timely decisions. Rather than simply relying on Sarah, who is a true genius at facilitation, this book has allowed us to build our own capacity. We’ve learned how to convene multiple stakeholder teams, plan effectively, and make more sustainable decisions, thus maintaining our collaborative values as we grow to serve a wider community. I highly recommend this book.”

—James Whipple, CEO,
Marshall Medical Center, El Dorado County, California

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to Michael Doyle and David Straus,
who found the language, the distinctions, and the methods
to bring inclusive, participatory values into the mainstream
of American management practices

and who, through their own continuing efforts and those of
their students and grandstudents and great-grandstudents,
may yet inspire humanity to use collaborative technology
for finding sustainable, nonviolent solutions to the world's
toughest problems.

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FOREWORD to the First Edition **By Michael Doyle**

I see group facilitation as a whole constellation of ingredients: a deep belief in the wisdom and creativity of people; a search for synergy and overlapping goals; the ability to listen openly and actively; a working knowledge of group dynamics; a deep belief in the inherent power of groups and teams; a respect for individuals and their points of view; patience and a high tolerance for ambiguity to let a decision evolve and gel; strong interpersonal and collaborative problem-solving skills; an understanding of thinking processes; and a flexible versus a lock-step approach to resolving issues and making decisions.

Facilitative behaviors and skills are essential for anyone who wants to work collaboratively in groups and organizations today. Facilitative skills honor, enhance, and focus the wisdom and knowledge that lay dormant in most groups. These skills are essential to healthy organizations, esprit de corps, fair and lasting agreements, and to easily implement actions and plans.

Sam Kaner and the team from Community At Work have been developing and articulating these tools to further democratic action and to enable people from all walks of life to work together in more constructive and productive ways. The *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making* will give readers additional tools and insights to enable effective, participatory action and the potential to achieve strong, principled results and positive social change. Anyone wanting to increase their understanding of group dynamics and improve their skill at making groups work more effectively will benefit from this valuable book.

The Purpose of Group Facilitation

Those who work with and lead organizations today have learned two lasting lessons in the last twenty-five years of concerted action research in this field of organization development and change. Lesson one: if people don't participate in and "own" the solution to the problems or agree to the decision, implementation will be half-hearted at best, probably misunderstood, and, more likely than not, will fail.

The second lesson is that the key differentiating factor in the success of an organization is not just the products and services, not just its technology or market share, but the organization's ability to elicit, harness, and focus the vast intellectual capital and goodwill resident in their members, employees, and stakeholders. When that intellectual capital and goodwill get energized and focused, the organization becomes a powerful force for positive change in today's business and societal environments. Applying these two lessons has become a key element of what we have begun to think of as *the learning organization*.

How do leaders and their organizations apply these two lessons? By creating psychologically safe and involving group environments where people can identify and solve problems, plan together, make collaborative decisions, resolve their own conflicts, trouble-shoot, and self-manage as responsible adults. Facilitation enables the organization's teams, groups and meetings to be much more productive. And the side benefits of facilitated or self-facilitated groups are terrific: a sense of empowerment, a deepening of personal commitment to decisions and plans, increased organizational loyalty, and the building of esprit de corps.

Nowhere are these two lessons put more into practice than in groups. The world meets a lot. The statistics are staggering. There are over 25 million meetings every day in the United States and over 85 million worldwide. Making both our work groups and civic groups work much more effectively is a lifelong challenge as rich as the personalities that people them. Thus, what I call "group literacy" – an awareness of and strong skills in group dynamics, meeting facilitation and consensus building tools like the ones in this book – is essential to increasing the effectiveness of group meetings. They enable groups to work smarter, harder, deeper, and faster. These tools help build healthier groups, organizations, and communities.

Facilitative mind-sets, behaviors, and tools are some of the essential ingredients of high-commitment/high-performance organizations. They are critical to making real what we've come to think of as *the learning organization*. These skills and behaviors are aligned with people's higher selves. People naturally want to learn them in order to increase their own personal effectiveness in groups and in their families as well as to increase the effectiveness of groups themselves.

A Partial History of Group Facilitation

The concept of facilitation and facilitators is as old as the tribes. Alaskan natives report of this kind of role in ancient times. As a society we're starting to come full circle – from the circle of the tribe around the fire, to the pyramidal structures of the last 3,000 years, back to the ecology of the circle, flat pyramids, and networks of today's organizations. The philosophy, mind-set, and skills of facilitation have much in common with the approaches used by Quakers, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and people in nonviolence movements over the centuries. More recently these include the civil rights movement, women's consciousness-raising groups, some parts of the environmental movement, and citizen involvement groups that started in the 1960s and 1970s.

Meeting facilitation started to appear as a formal process in the late 1960s and early 1970s and had become widespread by the late 1980s. Its proponents advocated it as a tool to assist people to become the architects of their own future. It evolved from the role of *learning facilitators* that emerged in the early 1960s. In learning or encounter groups, the facilitator's focus was on building awareness and enabling learning. These *learning/awareness facilitators* played key roles in the nascent human potential movement and the women's consciousness-raising movement and continue to do so in today's version of lifelong learning situations where learning is seen as a dialogue rather than a rote process. Its pragmatic roots also include cognitive science, information processing theory, sociology, psychology, community organizing, arbitration and mediation principles, and experience.

Task-oriented group facilitation evolved out of the societal milieu of the last thirty years, especially in industrial and information-rich societies where time is a key factor. We needed to find methods for people to work together more effectively. Quality circle groups, cross-functional task forces, and civic groups were the early big users and advocates of this methodology. Facilitation was an informal, flexible alternative to the constricting format of parliamentary procedure and *Robert's Rules of Order*. Group facilitation was also an approach that was proactive, solving conflicts before they arose, as well as one that could handle multiple constituencies. It was a viable alternative to mediation-style approaches. Once participants in a learning group or consciousness-raising group raised their

awareness, they wanted to take action. There was an expressed need to put their new insights and knowledge to work – to take actions, solve problems, plan, and make group decisions. Thus the role of the task-oriented facilitator evolved to serve these needs as well as the new approaches to organizational change and renewal that were developing in the early 1970s.

As two of the cofounders of meeting facilitation, David Straus and I were interested in giving people tools to architect their own more powerful futures. That meant giving them frameworks and tools to make the groups they worked and lived with much more effective, powerful, and productive. We saw group facilitation as both a social contract and a new, content neutral role – a more formalized third party role in groups. We articulated the difference and power between “content” and “process” neutrality. Content neutrality means not taking a position on the issues at hand; not having a position or a stake in the outcome. Process neutrality means not advocating for certain kinds of processes such as brainstorming. We found that the power in the role of the facilitator was in becoming content neutral and a process advocate – advocating for fair, inclusive, and open processes that would balance participation and improve productivity while establishing a safe psychological space in which all group members could fully participate.

The role of the facilitator was designed to help minimize wheel spinning and dysfunctional dynamics and to enable groups to work together much more effectively. Other key pioneers of facilitation in the 1970s were Geoff Ball and David Sibbet with their seminal work in graphic recording and graphic facilitation. The core concepts and tools of group facilitation seemed to grow out of the tight-knit organization development and training community in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1970s and '80s. It is great to see Sam Kaner and his colleagues continuing this rich legacy of theory and skill building.

Researchers at the Institute for the Future postulate that it takes about thirty years for social inventions to become widespread. Group facilitation is one such social invention. Over these last twenty-five years, facilitation skills have spread widely in the United States and are being spread around the world. And now, organizations are coming full circle to where facilitators once again are being utilized in *learning organizations* to facilitate dialogue processes that surface deep assumptions and mental

models about how we view our world. These existing mental models are often the underlying sources of our conflict and dysfunction. By surfacing, examining, and changing them, we are able to work together in new ways to build new systems thinking models that assist groups in articulating their core values and beliefs. These new mental models serve as the foundation for organizations as they evolve, grow, and transform themselves to meet the challenges of the next century.

Expanding Definitions of Facilitation

These skills have become so useful in organizations that they have spread beyond the role of facilitator: to facilitative leaders; to self-facilitative groups and teams; to facilitative individuals and even facilitative, user-friendly procedures. Facilitation has become part of our everyday language. The Latin root of *facilitate* means “to enable, to make easy.” *Facilitation* has evolved to have a number of meanings today.

A facilitative individual is an individual who is easy to work with, a team player, a person aware of individual and group dynamics. He or she assists colleagues to work together more effectively. A facilitative individual is a person who is skilled and knowledgeable in the interpersonal skills of communication, collaborative problem solving and planning, consensus building, and conflict resolution.

A facilitator is an individual who enables groups and organizations to work more effectively; to collaborate and achieve synergy. She or he is a “content-neutral” party who by not taking sides or expressing or advocating a point of view during the meeting, can advocate for fair, open, and inclusive procedures to accomplish the group’s work. A facilitator can also be a learning or a dialogue guide to assist a group in thinking deeply about its assumptions, beliefs, and values and about its systemic processes and context.

A facilitative leader is a leader who is aware of group and organizational dynamics; a leader who creates organization-wide involvement processes that enable members of the organization to more fully utilize their potential and gifts in order to help the organization articulate and achieve its vision and goals, while at the same time actualizing its spoken values.

Facilitative leaders often understand the inherent dynamics between facilitating and leading and frequently utilize facilitators in their organizations.

A **facilitative group** (team, task force, committee, or board) is one in which facilitative mind-sets and behaviors are widely distributed among the members; a group that is minimally dysfunctional and works very well together; a group that is easy to join and works well with other groups and individuals.

I think you, the reader, will find this book very useful for your work in groups, whether you are a leader, a group member, or a facilitator. I especially recommend to you the insightful chapters on understanding group dynamics, facilitative listening, and the importance of values. Where this book also makes a real contribution is in the chapters on reaching closure and the gradients of an agreement. I enjoyed the learnings and insights I received from this book, and I am sure you will too.

Michael Doyle
San Francisco, California
March 1996

INTRODUCTION

The benefits of group decision-making have been widely publicized: better thinking, better “buy-in,” better decisions all around. Yet the promise often fails to materialize. Many decisions made in groups are neither thoughtful nor inclusive; they are unimaginative, watered-down mediocrities.

Why is this so?

To a large degree, the answer is deeply rooted in prevailing cultural values that make it difficult for people to actually think in groups. Without even realizing it, many people make value judgments that inhibit spontaneity and deter others from saying what is really on their minds. For example, ideas that are expressed in clumsy ways, or in tentative terms, are often treated as if they were decidedly inferior to ideas that are presented with eloquent rhetorical flourish. Efforts at exploring complexities are discouraged, in favor of pithy judgments and firm-sounding conclusions. Making action plans – no matter how unrealistic they might be – is called “getting something done,” while analyzing the underlying causes of a problem is called “going off on a tangent.” Mixed messages abound: speak your mind but don’t ask too many questions; be passionate but don’t show your feelings; be productive but hurry up – and get it right the first time. All in all, conventional values do not promote effective thinking in groups.

Yet, when it’s done well, group decision-making remains the best hope for solving difficult problems. There is no substitute for the wisdom that results from a successful integration of divergent points of view. Successful group decision-making requires a group to take advantage of the full range of experience and skills that reside in its membership. This means encouraging people to speak up. It means *inviting* difference, not fearing it. It means struggling to understand one another, especially in the face of the pressures and contradictions that typically drive group members to shut down. In short, it means operating from *participatory* values.

Participatory and conventional approaches to group decision-making yield entirely different group norms. Some of the differences are presented in the table on the next page.

PARTICIPATORY GROUPS

Everyone participates, not just the vocal few.

People give each other room to think and get their thoughts all the way out.

Opposing viewpoints are allowed to co-exist in the room.

People draw each other out with supportive questions. “Is *this* what you mean?”

Each member makes the effort to pay attention to the person speaking.

People are able to listen to each other’s ideas because they know *their own ideas will also be heard*.

Each member speaks up on matters of controversy. Everyone knows where everyone stands.

Members can accurately represent each other’s points of view – even when they don’t agree with them.

People refrain from talking behind each other’s backs.

Even in the face of opposition from the person-in-charge, people are encouraged to stand up for their beliefs.

A problem is not considered solved until everyone who will be affected by the solution understands the reasoning.

When people make an agreement, it is assumed that the decision still reflects a wide range of perspectives.

CONVENTIONAL GROUPS

The fastest thinkers and most articulate speakers get more air time.

People interrupt each other on a regular basis.

Differences of opinion are treated as *conflict* that must either be stifled or “solved.”

Questions are often perceived as challenges, as if the person being questioned has done something wrong.

Unless the speaker *captivates* their attention, people space out, doodle or check the clock.

People have difficulty listening to each other’s ideas because they’re busy rehearsing what *they* want to say.

Some members remain quiet on controversial matters. No one really knows where everyone stands.

People rarely give accurate representations of the opinions and reasoning of those whose opinions are at odds with their own.

Because they don’t feel permission to be direct *during* the meeting, people talk behind each other’s backs outside the meeting.

People with discordant, minority perspectives are commonly discouraged from speaking out.

A problem is considered solved as soon as the fastest thinkers have reached an answer. Everyone else is then expected to “get on board” regardless of whether s/he understands the logic of the decision.

When people make an agreement, it is assumed that they are all thinking the exact same thing.

As the table implies, a shift from conventional values to participatory values is not a simple matter of saying, “Let’s become a thinking team.” It requires a change of mindset – a committed effort from a group to swim against the tide of prevailing values and assumptions.

When a group undertakes this challenge, its participants often benefit from the services a competent facilitator can provide for them. Left to their own devices, many groups would slip back into conventional habits. A facilitator, however, has the skills to help a group outgrow their old familiar patterns. Specifically, the facilitator encourages full participation, s/he promotes mutual understanding, s/he fosters inclusive solutions and s/he cultivates shared responsibility. These four functions (discussed in depth in chapter 3) are derived from the core values of participatory decision-making.

Putting Participatory Values Into Practice

The facilitator is the keeper of the flame, the carrier of the vision of what Michael Doyle described, in his foreword, as “a fair, inclusive and open process.” This is why many facilitators help their groups to understand the dynamics and values of group decision-making. They recognize that it is empowering for participants to acquire common language and shared points of reference about their decision-making processes.

When a facilitator helps group members acquire process skills, s/he is acting in congruence with one of the core values of participatory decision-making: shared responsibility. This value played a prominent role in the design of *The Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*. It was written as a series of stand-alone pages that facilitators can photocopy and distribute to the members of their groups. For example, newly forming groups often benefit from reading and discussing chapters 1 and 2. These pages take less than fifteen minutes to read; they are entertaining; and they provide the basis for meaningful conversations about the dynamics and values of participatory decision-making. Within the guidelines of the policy statement on photocopying (see page 313), feel free to reproduce any part of this book that will strengthen your group’s capacity for reaching sustainable agreements.

Facilitating Sustainable Agreements

The process of building a sustainable agreement has four stages: gathering diverse points of view; building a shared framework of understanding; developing inclusive solutions; and reaching closure. A competent facilitator knows how to move a group from start to finish through those stages. To do so, s/he needs a conceptual understanding of the dynamics and values of participatory decision-making (as provided in Part I of this book). S/he also needs a standard set of process management skills (as provided in Part II). And s/he needs a repertoire of sophisticated thinking tools, to propose and conduct stage-specific interventions (as provided in Part III and Part IV).

Fulfilling The Promise of Group Decision-Making

Those who practice participatory methods often come to see that facilitating a meeting is more than merely an occasion for solving a problem or creating a plan. It is also an opportunity to support profound personal learning, and it is an opportunity to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of the group as a whole. These opportunities are only realizable – the promise of group decision-making can only be fulfilled – through the struggle and the satisfaction of putting participatory values into practice.



Part One

**GROUNDING
PRINCIPLES**

1

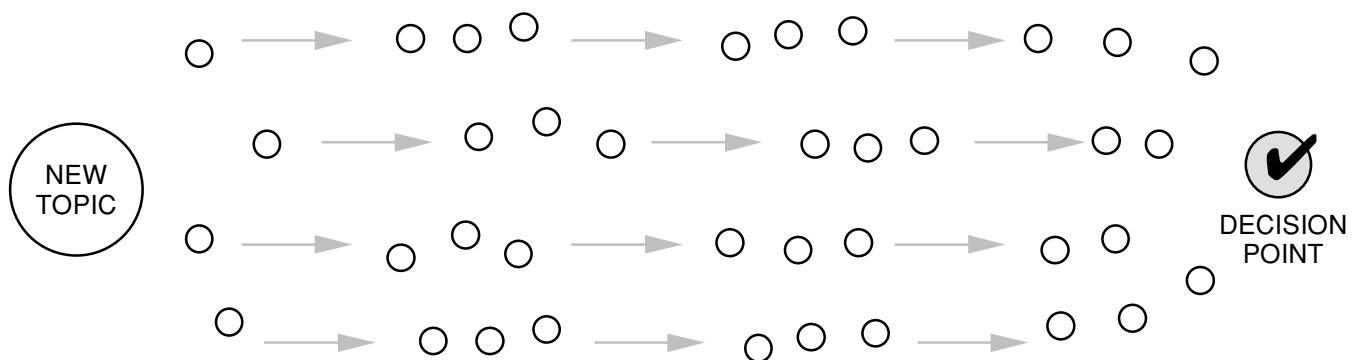
THE DYNAMICS OF GROUP DECISION-MAKING

IDEALIZED AND REALISTIC MODELS OF
COLLABORATION IN GROUPS

- ◆ **Misunderstandings About the
Process of Group Decision-Making**
- ◆ **The Struggle to Integrate Diverse
Perspectives**
- ◆ **The Diamond of Participatory
Decision-Making**

DYNAMICS OF GROUP DECISION-MAKING

INTRODUCTION



This picture portrays a hypothetical problem-solving discussion.

Each circle – ○ – represents one idea. Each line of circles-and-arrows represents one person's line of thought as it develops during the discussion.

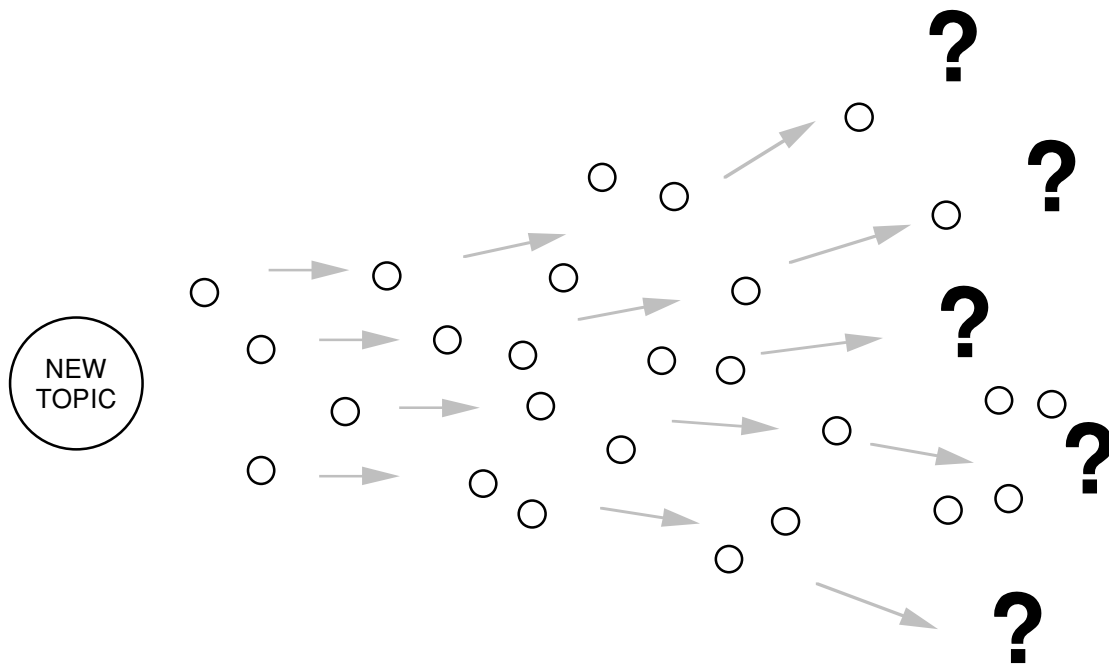
As diagrammed, everyone appears to be tracking each other's ideas, everyone goes at the same pace, and everyone stays on board every step of the way.

A depressingly large percentage of people who work in groups believe this stuff. They think this picture realistically portrays a healthy, flowing decision-making process. And when their actual experience doesn't match up with this model, *they think it's because their own group is defective.*

If people actually behaved as the diagram suggests, group decision-making would be much less frustrating. Unfortunately, real-life groups don't operate this way.

DYNAMICS OF GROUP DECISION-MAKING

SAD BUT TRUE



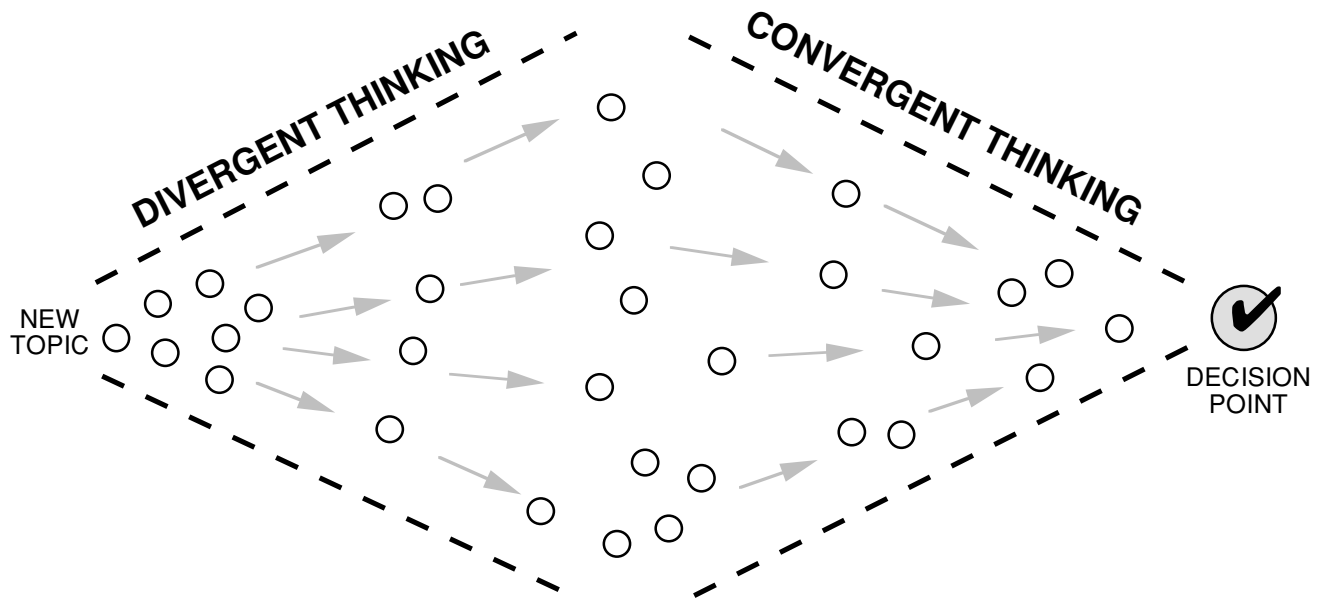
Group members are humans. We *do* go on tangents. We *do* lose track of the central themes of a discussion. We *do* get attached to our ideas. Even when we're all making our best effort to "keep focused" and "stay on track," we *can't* change the fact that we are individuals with diverging points of view.

When a discussion loses focus or becomes confusing, it can appear to many people that the process is heading out of control. Yet this is not necessarily what's really going on. Sometimes what appears to be chaos is actually a prelude to creativity.

But how can we tell which is which? How do we recognize the difference between a degenerative, spinning-our-wheels version of group confusion and the dynamic, diversity-stretches-our-imagination version of group confusion?

DYNAMICS OF GROUP DECISION-MAKING

CLOSER TO REALITY



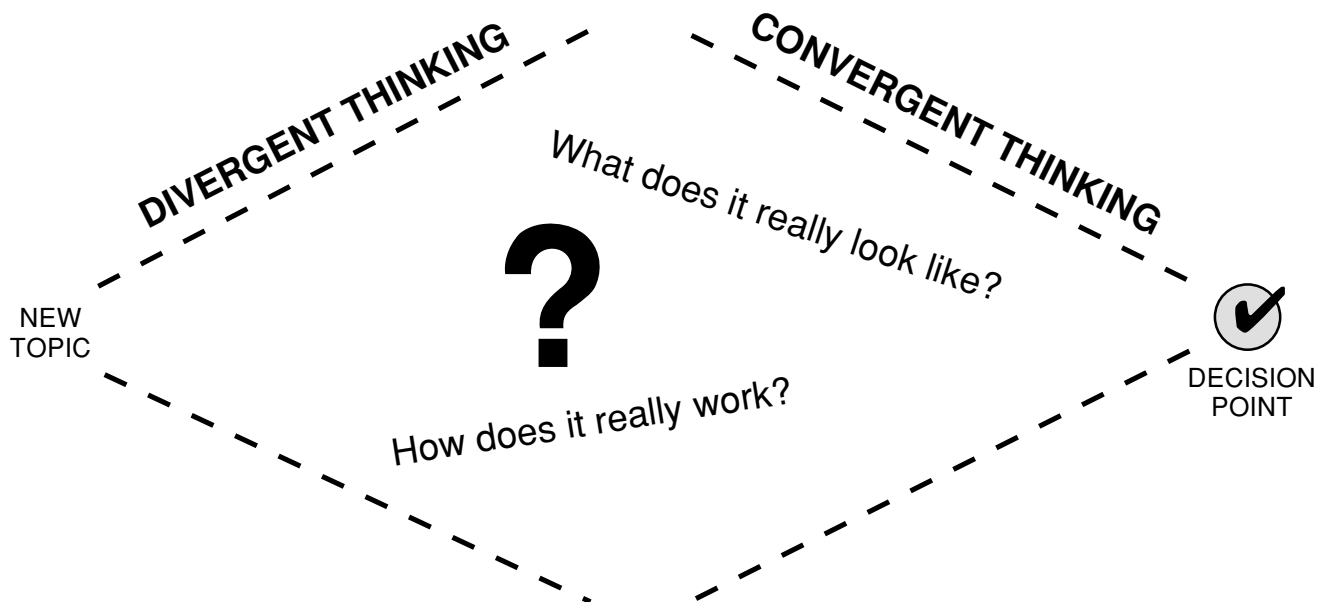
At times the individual members of a group need to express their own points of view. At other times, the same people want to narrow their differences and aim the discussion toward closure. These two sets of processes will be referred to as “divergent thinking” and “convergent thinking.”

Here are four examples of the differences between the two thinking processes:

DIVERGENT THINKING	vs.	CONVERGENT THINKING
Generating a list of ideas	vs.	Sorting ideas into categories
Free-flowing open discussion	vs.	Summarizing key points
Seeking diverse points of view	vs.	Coming to agreement
Suspending judgment	vs.	Exercising judgment

DYNAMICS OF GROUP DECISION-MAKING

UNANSWERED
QUESTIONS



Some years ago, a large, well-known computer manufacturer developed a problem-solving model that was based on the principles of divergent thinking and convergent thinking.

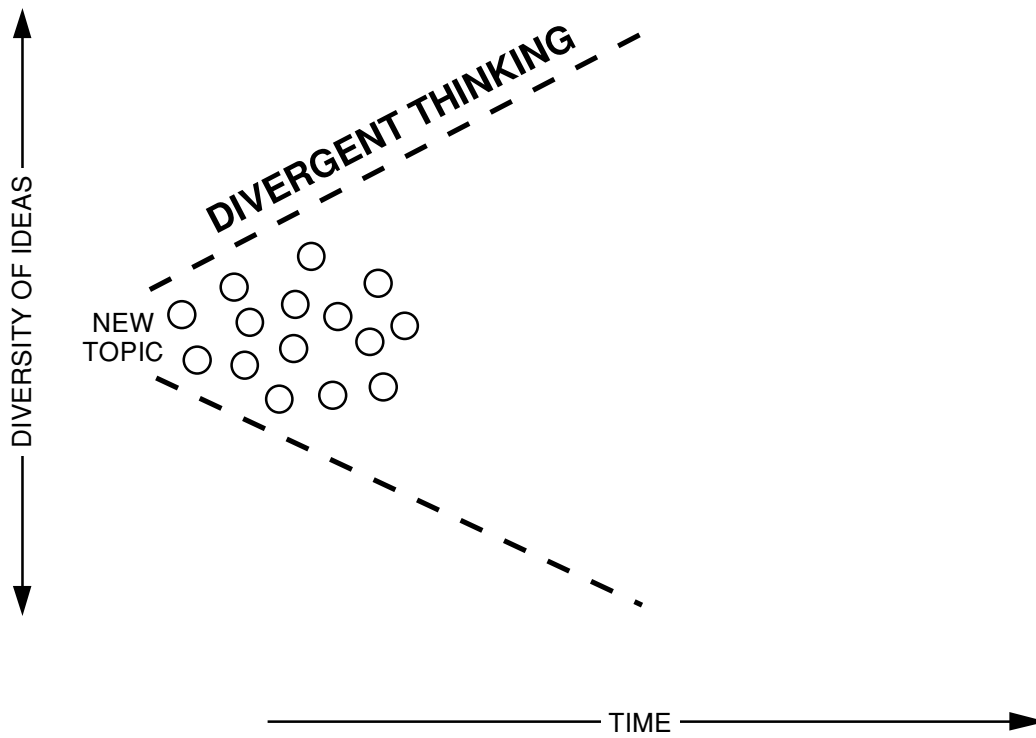
This model was used by managers throughout the company. But it didn't always work so well. One project manager told us that it took their group *two years* to revise the travel expense-reimbursement forms.

Why would that happen? How does group decision-making *really* work?

To explore these questions in greater depth, the following pages present a series of stop-action snapshots of the process of group decision-making.

DYNAMICS OF GROUP DECISION-MAKING

DISCUSSION
BEGINS



The early rounds of a discussion cover safe, familiar territory. People take positions that reflect conventional wisdom. They rehash well-worn disagreements, and they make proposals for obvious solutions. This is natural – the first ideas we express are the ones we’ve already thought about.