

Setting Clear Expectations (Voice)

As meeting designers and facilitators, we have to distinguish among three kinds of voices: Responsive, Consultative, and Decisive. **Read** the following on the Three Voices that members might have. Consider which of your agenda items give participants a responsive, consultative, or decisive voice. The tips in the right-hand column may be helpful to you.

| Voices of Meeting Members | Tips |
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| <p>Responsive Voice Sometimes we present information at meetings (a lot of information!) and without inviting input on it. In these cases, participants are given a responsive voice. Plan ways for people to respond to the information they receive. The response could be silent, in writing, in small groups or in full group. The key is to help people make meaning of the information, digest it, and plan to do something with it.</p> | <p>For “Responsive” items on your agenda, consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What will they need to do with this information, and what will help them do it?</i> |
| <p>Consultative Voice At times, we want more than just a response to information – we want people’s input. People have a consultative voice when they are invited to offer suggestions. Their voice may influence a decision, but not to have the final say on it. As facilitator, clarify in advance who will be asked for suggestions and how the ultimate decision will be made. Prepare the terrain by making this clear to the group early on.</p> | <p>For “Consultative” items, consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How can we avert people taking on the decisive voice inappropriately?</i> • <i>How can we make sure people leave satisfied and confident about how the decision will be made?</i> |
| <p>Decisive Voice In some cases, meeting members have the opportunity to make some or all decisions around an issue collectively. It is extremely helpful for all the attendees of the meeting to understand what their level of decision-making will be for each issue. Make sure that people have the right data (relevant and complete) with which to make a decision, and that they do it at the right time (without rush and with integrity).</p> | <p>For “Decisive” items, consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What method(s) should we use to arrive at the decision?</i> • <i>How will we communicate that decision out to others who are not at this meeting?</i> |