



Group Decision Tip

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

Multiple Truths

In principle, it is very rare for any two or more people to agree that a certain thing happened exactly the same way or for exactly the same reasons. How things look always depends on where one sits and no two people have the same perspective.

Many times I have heard a single event described by multiple people in multiple ways. He says this happened and she says that happened. Does this mean that one is right and one is wrong, or that one is lying and one is telling the truth? Maybe, but if they are honest people with good intentions they are probably both telling the truth *as they see it*.

Groups can spend huge amounts of energy and create huge amounts of conflict trying to agree on a single version of the truth. Such activities rarely end peacefully or constructively.

Practical Tip: Say, "I can see how that's true for you." Understand that although someone might have a different truth than you, it's true for them. More often than not, it doesn't matter what really happened or why. I don't need to beat my fellows into seeing things my way. My group is much better served if we can find a solution that honors both your truth, whatever it is, and my truth, whatever it is.

Instead of wrestling with "this *or* that," try "this *and* that." Allow that seemingly contradictory things can both be true for different people with different perspectives. It's amazing how much conflict can be avoided, how much respect can be preserved, and how much creativity can unfold when we allow for multiple truths.

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Good Group Decisions, Inc.

98 Maine Street, Brunswick, ME 04011
Phone: 207-729-5607

craig@goodgroupdecisions.com

www.GoodGroupDecisions.com
Fax: 207-725-8710

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