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CR - Consensus Building: A Few Best Practices

Wednesday, March 14, 2012 – 10:00 to 11:30

ICANN - San Jose, Costa Rica

Elad Levinson:

Good morning. Good morning, everybody, we're going to start in two minutes.

So if you can find a seat at the table, please do that, because then you'll be closer to the microphone. Unless you don't want to sit at the table, please do sit at the table.

Okay, I've gotten the thumbs up, which means that we can begin. So welcome everybody. I'd like to welcome you. My name is Elad, E-L-A-D, Levinson, and there is three things I'd like you to know about me. Number one is that I work for ICANN. I'm the Vice President of Organizational Effectiveness for ICANN. My role there is staff development, leadership development and organizational effectiveness, improving the organization.

The second thing I'd like you to know about me is that I've spent almost 45 years of my life learning how to facilitate. So I'm a professional facilitator and the training that I've received to be a facilitator is probably over 1,000 hours. The reason why I mention that is because one of the objectives for me in this class is to give you an idea of how complex it is to build consensus. It's daunting, it's difficult, it's like slogging through mud to try to get to a point where people agree on difficult, thorny, complex issues.

The third think I'd like to have you know about me is that I've never presented where there was translation while I was presenting. So at time, I may look very ridiculous kind of going back and forth between the slides, the mike and the headset. So I apologize for that. I wish I spoke more than one language and I do this bilingually.

So welcome, and what we're going to be doing is going through a presentation and I'd like to just set one ground rule. The ground rule is that at any point you

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can ask a question. So rather than wait until the end of the presentation when you've forgotten what you wanted to say or it's no longer relevant, just raise your hand and we'll handle it right then, okay? All right, so that's the agreement I'd like to build. And so why don't we just leap right in?

So if we could get the second slide up. Can you put it on – all right good. We've got the master in the room now. So Matt, can you put it in the slide show – no? Okay, all right. We even have limits on technology like that.

So the first slide is from my perspective one of the most important parts of building consensus. So let me tell you a story that will illustrate something about building consensus. So the situation that I'm going to tell you about, the story I'm going to tell you is that it takes place in San Francisco. So this is San Francisco, California, and the time is 1975. And there is an area in San Francisco that's called the South of Market. So this is from Market Street to Mission and south.

And there are several acres of land that have been put aside by a redevelopment agency if the people who are the stakeholders can agree on what to do with it. So there are 68 stakeholders who have a material interest in how that land is used. And they've been meeting for two years, and they haven't gotten anywhere. All that has happened is that people have been stating their position, and raising their voices and it became quite bitter. And so the redevelopment agency hired a team of professional facilitators to come in and to try to come to some agreement.

Within six weeks they had an agreement that became the Yerba Buena South of Market Redevelopment process. Anybody who has ever visited San Francisco and has gone from Market Street south has seen the result of that facilitated process. They were able to come to a consensus with extremely strong positions and agree on something that everybody could implement. So that's just one example of a situation where the intention is to build consensus.

The first step in building consensus is getting people to agree on what are called desired outcomes. So it's like this. Have any of you ever tried to design

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anything? Like for example, have any of you ever tried to plan a vacation with your family? Anybody ever tried to do that? Have any of you tried to remodel something? Any of you tried to build a house? Okay, so you get the idea here.

So if you don't have a blueprint, if you don't have a design that you're working from that everybody agrees to, then you have no basis for going anywhere. And so every time that you are trying to build consensus, the first step is to get agreement on what the desired outcomes are. So here are the desired outcomes for our workshop.

The desired outcomes are to understand several ways to get to a decision, including a pragmatic definition of consensus. Secondly, to learn tools for setting up meetings for success. And three, to understand how you can impact a meeting from anywhere in the meeting.

So I'm going to elaborate on all of those points as we go forward. So if we can have the next slide please.

So how is consensus built? Well, first of all, you need engaged participants, and what I mean by engaged participants are and I'm going to say some things that may be a little bit provocative. If you're face to face, then when you're working you want people to not be doing two things at the same time. So if you're working together and you want engaged participants, then you want to request that people not be on email at the same time, or not doing something else, because human beings require concentration, and concentration means that you have to be single-pointed.

The second thing is that you have to have skills and so one of the key points from this workshop is that there are dozens of skills in consensus building. So an example of a skill in consensus building is understanding how to write a desired outcome. So what a desired outcome is, is the finish line. Like how are we going to know that we're successful? And most people when they think of a desired outcome, think of verbs, not nouns.

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So a desired outcome is not a discussion. A discussion is a verb. But as a result of that discussion, we could have an understanding that we could then use to build an agreement. So I'm just trying to introduce some ideas that maybe you haven't considered, or maybe if you have this will reinforce it.

And then the last thing I want to say in terms of consensus building is that what it takes to build consensus is what's called process wisdom or facilitation. And what I mean by that is that when you have a group of people together in a room, the tendency of all groups is to focus on the topic, which of course is important. It's important to concentrate on the facts. It's important to concentrate on the data, but the facts and the data are not going to get you to consensus.

What's going to get you to consensus is understanding – first of all, really understanding each other's perspectives; and then secondly, how to move the discussion forward. Because if you don't know how to move the discussion forward, then what you have is and if you can map this, you can watch what happens to a group when they're not moving forward.

They go into what's called a doom loop. A doom loop is a downward spiral in which members begin to look at their laptops or they go do something else, or they vote with their feet and they don't come back.

And so what you want is someone in the room, someone on the phone who is responsible for keeping the discussion moving forward. That's how you make progress is to have somebody who is going to say well, I think that we've come to the end of this discussion, have we. Or who is going to say I think that your point wasn't understood by so and so; could you clarify it? That's called facilitation. Next slide.

And then after this slide I'm just going to stop for a moment and see if you have any questions or comments, okay? So I'd like to make a distinction between process and content. And so when you sit in a room, from my perspective, after these years of being a facilitator, I look at a meeting differently than you do. So when I'm in a meeting, I'm not listening to the content. I'm not listening to the

facts, although I certainly listen to them, that's not where my attention is. My attention is on two things. Number one, are people being understood?

We had a very good example of that in a meeting that I was sitting in a couple of days ago. Somebody used a term that was meaningful to them. I think the word was "respect". They said something about I feel that there is not a lot of respect and people are not retaining each other's dignity in this communication. And then people just went right on.

Now for me, the words "respect" and "dignity" could be construed in a lot of different ways. And so as a facilitator, my first thought is to ask a question and ask for clarification. Could you just take a moment and tell me what you mean by "respect". Like how would it look if somebody were respecting you? How do you know that you're being respected? Without that kind of digging a little bit, the conversation moves on, and now we've got this very important issue about respect that isn't being – there's no light that's being shed on it.

And so the point I'm trying to make here is that if you want to improve consensus building in your meetings, designate someone or ask for a volunteer for somebody to be what's called an "invested facilitator", an invested facilitator. So that's a term that I'm offering you. What that means is they're going to have two hats. One hat is they're there as a member of the working group or the committee, or the team. And secondly, they're also going to try and keep their eyes on making sure that people are being understood and that the conversation is moving forward.

Okay, let me just stop for a second and just see if there are any questions or comments that anybody would like to make at this point. Please.

Jean-Jacques Subrenat:

Good morning, thank you Elad for your presentation. I'm Jean-Jacques Subrenat, a member of the ALAC. What you say here is a useful reminder. But what I would like to see in this setting as a general internet user and as a member of ALAC is how to apply some of your prescriptions, or your advice.

And for that I think we have to look at the real world which is challenges facing ICANN today, what are these challenges? I think that one of them is institutional. The other is too political. We're passed the time of a few years ago, when constituencies within ICANN, could not relate to each other, or did not know how to talk to each other. They tended to talk across or beyond each other.

What you're reminding us of at this stage at least is I think addressing the first point which is how constituencies within the same organization, such as ICANN, relate to each other? But I think we've gone beyond that. The challenge is far wider and far more important now. It is worldwide and it is inter-institutional.

So perhaps you were thinking of getting to that in a few minutes, but I'm really interested in is that. I mean how can ICANN, how should ICANN go about relating with let's say ITU, in purely functional and organizational method which you're advocating. Thank you.

Elad Levinson:

So let me just respond very briefly, and thank you very much for the comment. The structure of today's session is that if you want to think of it in an analogy, it's pointing a finger at a direction and laying out a partial roadmap. And the very specific examples that many of you might have, what I'd like to propose is that a follow-up email to me would be a good way of starting a dialogue.

So if there is something I can do further to take any particular point, and make it more concrete, I'd be happy to do that. But it's just because we have so many different agendas or so many different reasons why people are in the room, I'm trying to keep this at a very basic level, so that we at least understand what the landscape looks like with regard to consensus building. Over here.

Salanieta Tamankaiwaimaro:

Salanieta Tamankaiwaimaro for the transcript from ALAC. In relation to a consensus building I really welcome the session and the training, and I think that

it's particularly useful. And I think you really touched on a key point, which is "respect". And I think another word that you used as "landscape". And I think one of the critical things that precedes respect is understanding that we all live in an ecosystem, and when we begin to understand that there is an ecosystem and there is a space for everyone.

And we can expect that different actors and different stakeholders would have different interests and that sort of thing, and then we would begin to appreciate the world view that they would have, or the perspective that they'd have and related to that also is the issue of geography. And often the different cultural contexts and even things like language barriers, different things that they hold dear to them which may not necessarily be held dear for someone else. And so those sorts of things precedes the issue of respect.

I suppose what I'm driving at is that we're all part of this huge global diverse world, but yet we have one thing in common, we live in an ecosystem. And when we appreciate that our differences and the diversity is not necessarily something that is not a weakness but is something that we can draw from, then we can begin to talk about respect, and that each person has a voice, and then we can begin to hear them. Otherwise, it's just me in my own little teapot, or in my own little silo. Thank you.

Elad Levinson:

Many of us in teapots. So let me take one more question and then we'll move forward. Please.

Cheryl Langdon-Orr:

Thank you, Cheryl Langdon-Orr for the transcript record. And I think it's rather more of a statement than a question. Because we have the pressure of policy development in this huge multi-stakeholder model, and why I'm so excited about the opportunity to get some consensus building, training, running and the language established and how it's done into our own individual silo DNA. What we might need to do with all respect, and I'm using that term advisedly, is while

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we encourage that change culturally across ICANN, we need our invested facilitators to be empowered to manage, understand the diversity they're dealing with in the room, and have tools to ensure that the landscape in the room is respectful. And that really comes back to the managing of the meeting, which I think what you're getting back to now.

Elad Levinson:

Yes, thank you. Okay, well, I'm going to move on, next slide please.

So rather than just be talking, what I'd like to do is get you talking to each other, and this is an exercise, I hope that you'll have some fun with. Let me read off the exercise, and then I'll take any questions for clarification and then we'll do it.

So what I'm going to ask you to do in a moment is to group in threes. So just pick you know the person that's on either side of you, and then what we're going to do, if you don't speak the same language, you'll figure it out; I know you will.

As somebody pointed out to me when you're trying to meet somebody from another country that you find interesting and attractive, you seem to be able to find a way to talk to them. So just for right now, we'll go with that.

And so what I want you to do is to quickly list what works and what doesn't work with regard to our meetings. And you can pick any kind of meeting that you want. So you could say, well I go to a meeting with my daughter's school and at that meeting, what doesn't work is that there is no agenda. Or you could say in our RALO, we have too many chiefs and not enough Indians. We have lots of people who want to lead, and nobody who is willing to do the work. So they would be on the minus side. The plus side could be, well we have a very, very good chairperson that could be a plus.

So what you're going to do is two minutes list what works; two minutes list what doesn't work, and then we'll come back – oh, and then what I'd like you to

do is just to see if you can rank what you think are the biggest issues, what are the most important on the list. So you're going to list and then rank.

So you'll have a total of about five minutes to do this. All right, go.

[background conversation]

Elad Levinson:

Take 60 seconds to finish up please, 60 seconds. Okay, come to a close please. Okay, if you would finish please.

Okay, if I could get your attention back up here. Welcome back everybody. It's always a good sign if I can't get people to stop talking, it's always very good.

Okay, what I'd like to do is collect about half a dozen ideas on what you consider to be the most important, the rank in terms of rank ordering, what did you think was the most important, either with regard to what works or what doesn't work. And we'll just take a half a dozen, so that we don't lose too much time with this. So who would like to – we have one, so we need the microphone right here.

Andrea:

Hello, my name is Andrea, I'm from Costa Rica. We work in TV stations, so we run several categories. Number one is that the boss always scolds us, like kids, so that's number one.

Number two, lack of agenda. Number three the lack of allocation of duties, because a lot of people they have to do this and they don't want to do it at the end. Number four is that being silent is an issue because people don't want to participate. They don't tell what they think, and what they're feeling.

Elad Levinson:

Okay, hold on; hold on, that's plenty. I don't want you to take everybody else's.

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Andrea: But number five is very important. I think the boss is the problem. [Laughter]

Elad Levinson: Okay, so do we have some others, things that work or don't work in your meetings, please right here.

Marcelo Telez: I am Marcelo Telez for the record. I'm going to speak in my language, but it is written in English.

... Clarification of the meeting purpose, the important of coordinating and measuring the context. These are a positive situations or pluses. An active participation and involvement of all as equals.

Elad Levinson: Thank you, good, right over here.

Female: With regard to meetings, discussion meetings or panel discussions, the importance of have a very good Chair person, someone who can get the persons around the table to talk together and who can lead a discussion, a good time keeper as well, because very often in discussions, there is always the risk that you run out of time. So a very good Chair who sticks to an agenda and who motivates the discussion end.

Elad Levinson: Thank you very much. So we'll take one more, please.

Fatima Cambronero:

My name is Fatima Cambronero. Some points were already mentioned, so we are going to mention the new ones, something that is a plus is the working groups meetings are carried out in the same language, so this makes the working group more dynamic, and we can achieve concrete and better results in terms of time.

Something that doesn't work is when we establish the working group meetings in set schedules throughout teleconferences or doing fixed days, this is due to the internalization that we have within the ALAC group, but this falls into different time zones, and perhaps participation is not possible. Perhaps that person is interested in participating in that working group, but due to time reasons, he or she cannot participate. So we would should suggest having different days and time tables. Thank you.

Elad Levinson:

So these are really all excellent points and I hope that I'm going to cover most of them. If there are any that I miss like for example I really didn't – I didn't spend a specific amount of time or slides on virtual meetings. The reason for that is because the principles that we're going to cover are equally effective whether it's a virtual meeting or a face to face meeting.

The differences are specific as Fatima mentioned. One example in virtual meetings is what's called sharing the pain. So many working groups, many committees agree that they'll have meetings in each time zone, so that no one will ever be always asked to get up at 3:00 a.m. or 11:00 p.m., so that's just a good principle. But in addition there are many things that we're going to cover that also will work in virtual meetings.

So if we can move on then to the next slide. So the reason why I put this as key number one, is because I think this in rank order that this one is critical. So this has to do with making process agreements up front. So this is what I mean by a process agreement.

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My recommendation to you is that when you start a new group or a team that you start by saying how do we want to conduct ourselves. So an example would be let's agree that one person speaks at a time. Let's agree that we will listen carefully and understand, and if we don't, we'll ask clarifying questions. Let's agree that we'll have a facilitator at every meeting. Those are what I mean by process agreements. If you don't have – please.

Carlton Samuels:

This is Carlton Samuels. I didn't want you to go from the issue about participation in meeting without recognizing a couple of things.

The nature of knowledge work demands reflection. And this that we're engaged in is knowledge work. A teleconference is really a beauty contest. The knowledge work that is required involves you actually showing reflection. That is why we have different tool sets to work with. This is why for example, I personally prefer writing. That is why we have Wikis that are available for you to put your reflection on. And our staff work really very hard to make all of these tools available and telegraph them to us.

So I have a difficulty when it is said that we use teleconferences as a main basis to work, not true. Let me tell you something else about how this works.

You see these conferences that they have at the UN and every place, the real work doesn't happen when they sit in front of the microphone. The real work happens before they get there. That requires people to read a lot of documents, synthesize, think, write it down, that's how it works. The guy who is sitting at the telephone, the conference, talking, gibber-gabber, gibber-gabber, he's not the one doing the work. It's the people behind who do the work, and that work happens long before he speaks. That's one thing you need to – that's just the nature of knowledge work.

Elad Levinson:

Let me interrupt, because I want to tie what you're saying back to the point that I'm making up here. So an example for me, Carlton of a process agreement that

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you would make up front in the very first meeting is that we agree that we will be prepared for the meetings when we're together teleconference, which means that we will read the documents, that we will reflect on them, and we will come prepared being able to talk about those points. That would be a process agreement. Okay, thank you very much, excellent point.

So I think this point is made. We'll move on. So if we have the next slide, yes, Fatima.

Fatima Cambronero:

This is Fatima for the record. I agree with Carlton. I agree with you, Carlton. We need to have read the documents before; we need to have done previous work. But let us not forget that we are having matrix of engagement and participation in working groups and teleconferences in ALAC.

So we need to do work before, but we also need to participate in the teleconferences, otherwise have a reprimand if you will from the Chair. So if we have to or want to participate, we need to do prior work and we need to participate in the teleconference, not for the sake of chit-chat or for listening to our own voices, but to share our previous work, thank you.

Elad Levinson:

Comment and then I'm going to move on.

Alberto Soto:

This is Alberto Soto. I suggest that Elad should carry on with his presentation without our interrupting him with topics that we need to resolve among ourselves, thank you.

Elad Levinson:

Thank you. I also feel that the comments that you're making are an attempt to try to implement the ideas. And so I'd like to find a balance between finishing

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by 11:30 and doing all the content while at the same time respecting that your input is very valuable.

Matt, do we have a remote participant?

Matt Ashtiani:

Yes. Hi, this is Matt Ashtiani for the record, we have a comment from a remote participant, Rudy Vansnick. Rudy write ALAC is a three-fold structure where the consensus reached at the highest level could be in contradiction with what ALSs being all together decide.

Elad Levinson:

Okay, thank you. All right. So now we're going to move on. And this first slide, consensus is built within meetings. Let me define a meeting. A meeting is any time two or more people come together for the specific purpose of creating a result. So if I invite you to dinner and we're going out and just informally chatting about our families that's not a meeting. But if I've invited you to dinner, and the specific purpose I have is that I'd like to talk about something that is the work of our committee; now, in my definition that's a meeting.

The reason for the distinction is that a meeting has very important rules, that if you follow them, the meeting tends to go better and going better means that you're more likely to get to the result. So if you want to build consensus, then understanding how meetings work is going to help you tremendously.

All right, we can move on. So key number two, effective meetings start with an agenda. So I'm going to say a few things that I don't want them to appear to be criticisms, I'm giving you some coaching.

So one thing is that if your agenda only has agenda topics, then it's not going to be as powerful as having an agenda topic coupled with a desired outcome. Let me say it in a different way. So let's just visualize for a moment that you're looking at an agenda and the agenda says this is the first thing that we're going

to talk about, and then it moves on to the second thing, and this is the second thing that we're going to talk about. If I'm a participant, I don't really know what is expected of me, or what the finish line, or where we're trying to get to with that agenda item.

And so my advice to you; this is something that you can take away from today is that when you build an agenda, that you make sure that all agenda items have desired outcomes. So that's one piece of coaching. And we'll talk more about desired outcomes a little bit more.

So then secondly, there is something that makes meetings very effective, and that is to split the roles and to make sure that you have four different distinct roles as a meeting where there's some complexity, meaning it's not a ten-minute informal chat over the phone. It's one of your working groups, or it's a committee meeting, it's one of your ongoing meetings. You want to have four distinct roles. The first role is Chair. The Chair person is responsible for the results. So the Chair person's eyes and ears should be on are we reaching the agenda desired outcomes. That's their job.

The second role is facilitator, and a facilitator, their role is to make sure that the meeting moving along. So a facilitator is the meeting chauffeur. They're the ones who are making sure that the bus continues along the right road. They're also the one that makes sure that everybody is participating. So if you're on the phone, the facilitator can call people by name. They can say so and so do you have anything that you'd like to contribute. Whereas the Chair person is focusing on are we getting to the desired outcome, the facilitator is making sure that everybody is participating, and that things are moving along.

And then there is two more roles that is you have them, great; if you don't, my proposal is that you have them. All meetings should have a time keeper. There is a piece of research that was done by a group of people that's a professional facilitator group, and they were researching what happens when meetings add a time keeper? And what they found was that meetings tend to stick to the agenda, that groups respect the time frame more likely; otherwise what ends up

happening is that if you don't have a time keeper, it's very easy to get lost into debate and discussion. So a time keeper is like the group conscience in a way. They're saying well, we only have seven more minutes for this agenda item, what are we going to do? They build urgency. And then the last role is the recorder. And the recorder's job is to accurately represent in summary what people are saying, not word for word, it's not a transcript, it's what's the essence of what the person is saying point by point. So those are four distinct roles.

And then the last in terms of my suggestions to you and this is probably the one that you would need additional coaching on or training, and that is to link what's called a process tool to the agenda item. So for example, a group of people come together, and they're trying to figure out different ways to solve a problem. And so the very first agenda item is let's list the possible ways that we could address this, and so the tool, the process tool is called listing. And there are at least 75 different process tools, and each process tool fits in a category that's called either opening, which is the opening of the discussion, narrowing, which is narrowing the conversation and trying to get to closure, and then the third stage which is called closing.

So there are tools for openings. There is tools for narrowing. And there is tools for closing. Now I tell you this knowing that it probably will require further study, but it's important to know that you want to use the right tool at the right time. Okay, we can move on.

Scaling the mountain of consensus is done by hand-holds of small agreements built by careful listening and looking for agreement. So you're in a meeting, and the Chair person says, okay we have 15 different proposals for how we're going to solve this particular problem. I'd like to get to an agreement within the next 30 minutes. Well how are you going to get there?

The first way that you might get there is to make sure that everybody understands the proposals, that would be included within listening, making sure that you understand what people are proposing. Another thing that you might do

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is for people to say, I see that there are several here that all kind of go together, that's called aggregating.

So what you're doing in that is you're listening for the proposals, and you're making suggestions for moving up the mountain. So you're moving from one hand-hold to another. So let's move on.

And then after this slide, I'll just open it up and see if there are questions. Members can influence the meeting any time. Okay, let me ask you question. How many of you have been in a meeting that you felt wasn't going anywhere, raise your hand. How many of you have been in a meeting where you felt like it wasn't following the agenda?

So we all know the seven deadly sins, right, of meetings. And you're sitting there and how many of you have ever found yourself feeling powerless; like that you didn't know what to do? So let me make a couple of suggestions. A member can influence the meeting by doing a couple of things. So here's a really simple thing that you can do that will help the meeting tremendously. If you don't know where the meeting is going, ask the question, where are we going? Or you could say, where are we? I'm confused. I'm buried in all this detail. Where are we in this process?

So the first thing that you can do as a member is you can draw everybody's attention to the fact that maybe, not just you but others are also feeling confused. A second thing that you can do that will influence the meeting is you can say, what is our desired outcome for this topic? You can remind the group that there is a desired outcome, or if there hasn't been one stated, then you can ask the question where are we trying to get to.

A third that you can use, again this is influencing from anywhere. The third thing that you can do is you can ask how will we know that we're finished with this? What will success look like? You know I found myself in meetings so many times, when I know that we're having a discussion, but I'm not sure why we're doing it. And so I'm suggesting to you that you are very, very powerful and that as a member in a meeting, if you find yourself exiting, if you find

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yourself leaving the meeting, while you're still sitting there, then it's probably because you're feeling disenfranchised, or that you're not engaged. And if you're not engaged, a quick way of getting engaged is to ask a question for clarification.

So at this point, are there any questions for clarification on anything that I've covered in the last three slides, or if you have a specific example that you'd like to give about how to apply it, this is a good time to do it. So if you'd just raise your hand so I could see it. Yes please, if you wouldn't mind going to the mike, thank you.

Male:

I have a question regarding recording, taking minutes of a meeting, because I'm always confronted with different expectations.

You were referring to the concept, that it should be a summary of what was said, et cetera, and then it must reflect on (inaudible) the content of the meeting. As the people are saying, if I'm confronted afterwards with three to five pages of meeting minutes, I will never look at them. Therefore only the outcomes are noted and what is said is not recorded, not even as a summary, because this is only interesting in the case of conflict afterwards, but normally people won't refer to it. Thanks it's a question on consultation.

Elad Levinson:

Yes, that's really a very good question. So there's different ways I'd answer this. First of all if you have to have a transcript that is a contemporaneous record of the meeting, of course, you'd want to have that.

But if I'm a member of a meeting, what's most important to me is a brief summary and any decisions and action items. The only thing that I want to read, if I'm a member of a meeting is a quick summary and what are the action items, who's responsible for what, and then any decisions that were taken. So that's my suggestion. Again, if it goes against the rules of your particular meeting,

you know you'll have to either negotiate or do something in addition. Okay, anybody else before we move on. Okay, I'm going to move on then, thank you.

So next slide please. Okay, so recognizing that some of these concepts or many of them are very new to you, I selected that I think are the most important and one of the most important concepts in consensus building is that consensus always comes from respecting that there are three phases. There are three phases in consensus building.

The first phase is called opening. And in the opening, it's when the discussion starts. It's where people express their opinions, it's the time when people will say, well this is my point of view about that. Then in the opening phase, also what's there is a clear understanding of what the desired outcomes are. So in the opening phase, you must state where are we going? What's our journey's destination?

And then there is a narrowing phase. The narrowing phase is taking the ideas, multiple points of view and beginning to get them from this many to this many, that's called narrowing.

And the last is closing the conversation using the decision-making method that is agreed upon. So let me just introduce that concept, and now we'll go one step further. So next slide.

So these are tools that facilitators or Chair people use to open a conversation, so a tool for opening is called listing, let's list at least seven different ways that this particular problem has been a problem for us historically, that's list. Criteria generation is a tool. So criteria generation means this, that the way we're going to come to a decision is by developing objective criteria.

And so let's list objective criteria that we're going to use to look at all the possible solutions and then to narrow that down. So what would be an objective criteria? Budget would be an objective criteria. Time would be an objective criteria, that it meets the ICANN values that would be an objective criteria. You know brainstorming, you've used it. From my point of view the most important

thing about brainstorming, is that is you're going to use it, that you remember to not judge, criticize or evaluate any ideas during the brainstorming stage. That comes later. Proposing, making proposals and then tentative hypothesis. We saw that in a meeting that I was in where somebody said, well I don't really know whether or not this is true, but I think that, that's called the tentative hypothesis.

Okay, let's move on. So we've talked about opening, and now we're going to – okay, know how to narrow down choices. So now we're in the narrow phase.

Well there are tools for narrowing. So if I'm a facilitator and I can see that there are highly contentious strong opinions on different sides, then what I will do is I'll say why don't we take ten minutes for people to advocate for their position, so what that does is it legitimizes people being able to express their opinions strongly. That's called advocating.

There is a tool that's called nominal group process. If you go on the web, and you type in nominal group process, it's an extremely valuable tool, when you're trying to narrow down a big list. Let's say that you have 35 different ideas that you're trying to narrow. In nominal group process, what you do is you give everybody, what you do is you take 35 and you divide it by three. So three into 35 would be about 12, approximately 12, right. So what you're going to do is you're going to cast 12 votes. You get 12 votes and no more. You're going to cast 12 votes for the things on that list that you think are the most important. That's a way of narrowing down people's preferences and getting an idea about where the consensus might be moving.

And then the last one is called the T-account, which is take a piece of paper, on one side you have plus, on the other side you have minus. On one side you have pros, the other side you have cons. On one side you have risk, the other side you have benefit. So a T-account is basically two different variables that you're looking at suggestions or proposals from.

Now, again I'm move very briskly through a lot of tools, the point is there are many, many tools for addressing the concerns and the problems you're dealing

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with, and probably the thing that's holding – one thing that's holding you back is not having a big tool kit. And so you might make, as one of your capacity building goals, to expand your tool kit as a working group, as a RALO, as an ALAC.

Okay, we can move on. Yes, please.

Male: Sorry, just one question on the previous slide, what is nominal group processes?

Elad Levinson: So nominal group process, which is also is sometimes called “N” over three is what I was referring to a moment ago, yes, great. Okay, so know which decision-making method you're using. So let me state something in a very strong way. From my observations at being at four meetings, four ICANN meetings, I think that a lot of groups don't know what consensus really means.

So consensus is defined by people who are in the business of decision-making, negotiation in the following way. Consensus is a decision that you can live with and that you're willing to implement. That's what consensus means. Consensus doesn't mean everybody agrees, that everybody thinks it's perfect, that everybody thinks it's wonderful or that it's the greatest solution in the world, or that it's even the best solution. It's a pragmatic view on decision-making.

So there are many different ways to make a decision and so let's move onto the next slide. So here are some ways that people make decisions. Yes, unanimous agreement is a decision-making method. You can hold a group to that standard. You can say we are going to, because this is such an important issue and we have to make sure that everybody can buy into this, it's unanimous agreement that we're going to use. That's just one way of making a decision.

Another way of making a decision is unanimity minus one or two. So you could say well, there may be one or two people that we would record as a minority opinion. But we're still going to try and get unanimity. Super majority

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thresholds, so if we have 90%, 80%, 70%, 60% as a majority, we'll accept that as a decision. And then there are other ways.

But let's go back to the consensus, so let's go to the next slide. So here's a working definition. So the first point that it makes up there is a consensus is a decision that everyone has been engaged in coming to collaboratively. So that means that you've had a voice. It means that you've had opportunity to give input. It means that you've had a chance to influence the outcome. And the ability to move forward towards consensus has much to do with how skilled the Chair, how skilled the facilitator is in making sure that all points of view are represented.

The second one is the choice that you could live with. A third is the decision that you're willing to implement. The point I want to make about this and then I'll take the question. The point I want to make about this is have you ever been in situations where a decision was made and then two weeks later, people go back and they say well, wait a minute, I'm not so sure that was really a decision. Anybody – yeah.

So if you are the Chair, or you're facilitating the meeting, you have to call the question. You have to call the question explicitly, am I understanding that we have a decision and go around the room, go around the phone. Do we have a decision? Or conversely you can say this is called negative polling, you can say right now is there anybody that has disagreement with this decision, speak up or we will have made the decision and it's done.

So I'm saying bring it to closure strongly. Yes.

Male:

Thank you just one question, what you're describing or more precisely the type of problems that ICANN has is the one you describe. But there is also another problem which is having the capacity to participate doesn't mean that everybody may feel concerned by the decision has participated indeed. And there may even be cases where people have voluntarily not participated in order to be able

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afterwards to say I'm not committed to this consensus. There is no perfect solution to that, but what are your hints or suggestions on how we should address that kind of problem?

Elad Levinson:

Well, first of all let me say that it's a very thorny or complex problem, but if you look at the best practices from other organizations who have to deal with very similar kinds of issues, one of the things that they do, is they send out communications that say we are having a meeting at this time and the purpose of that meeting is that we are going to come to an agreement. If you do not attend that meeting and your point of view is not represented the decision we made anyway and it will be done. That's one thing that I think is very useful.

Okay, let's move on then. So again going back to the theme that I started with which is open, narrow, close. So now we're talking about closing.

Well how do you close to get to a decision? I've been in meetings, where sometimes you get to closure is that you say look, let's take the next two hours and let's start with making proposals. And so if you're the Chair, or you're the facilitator, then you have to be very rigorous about going through one proposal at a time. So you say okay, let's close, we're getting into the closing phase but we're not a decision yet. Let's hear proposals or suggestions. So one the proposal is made and then you say okay, let's work on this proposal. And you take that proposal and you go as far as you can with it. Somebody may make a counter proposal. They may say I like that very much, but I think you've missed this. Let me add that. And so the person who proposes, has the opportunity to say I accept that and now we can continue to move forward integrating what had been a part of the counter proposal.

So one way of closing is to make proposals. Another is to listen for themes and trends. If you're the Chair, or you're a member in the meeting, one of the things that you can be listening for is whether or not there has been some agreement amongst people about what they think the right solution is. So sometimes the solution is already agreed upon, but nobody has said, let me see if I understand

where we are. It sounds like there is at least six people who have said the same thing in different ways. Here is what I think you're saying.

So listening for themes and trends, listening for whether or not we're edging towards consensus is a way of building consensus. And then going back to match possible solutions with objective criteria, one way of getting to a decision is to go back and look at the proposals and see whether or not they meet those objective criteria that you developed back in the first phase.

So in the first phase if you said well we have a budget of, or we can't add any more people or it has to meet the goals of our organization, then you can use those objective criteria to go back and look at solutions and see which fit, and which don't, or which fit best.

And then sometimes the best thing you is to say what can you live with? Again, it's a matter of what will satisfy the members' need, to be able to move forward with a good solution, but not necessarily the absolute best. So let me just see if there are questions or comments before I proceed. So we've gone through opening, narrow and closing, please.

Sandra Hoferichter:

Sandra Hoferichter, ALAC for the record. One question, we are a group of people working and due to time constraints and time differences, not everybody is able to participate in any discussion, telephone conference, meeting, whatever. If I go through the steps and find consensus between the building – between the people online, how can I bring this decision to the other people which were not included in the decision, thank you.

Elad Levinson:

Let me just clarify. There is two different parts or two different ways I could understand that. One is how do I include the people who are not participating and the second is, how do I make sure that they know about the decision. Which of those, or is it both?

Sandra Hoferichter: More the first one.

Elad Levinson: Okay. So how many of you are familiar with the term synchronize and asynchronize, how many of you have heard of that, synchronize and asynchronize. So in virtual meetings or meetings where you have some face to face and then you also have virtual, you have two different ways that you manage time. One is what's called synchronize meaning we're all in the same place at the same time working on the same problem. That's very rarely the case with ICANN work. More likely the kind of work that you have is some people who are on the phone together working while you have some members who can't make it. That's called asynchronize.

And so what you want to do is you want to structure the participation so that the people who are not present have an opportunity for like public comment. So for example in the opening phase you could say well the group of people who met at – you know on Saturday came up with these ideas as possible solutions. You have the next 24 hours or 48 hours to add yours to the list. That's the way of making sure that you have the people who able to attend and the people who are not able to attend both be able to give input. Good, anyone else before on? Okay, let's move onto the next slide then.

Okay, so I have a couple slides about what's the work of the leader. So if you find yourself currently in a role as a leader, or you think that you may be interested in being a leader in the future, these slides pertain to you. So here are some things that leaders do. They encourage effective representation and participation of key stakeholders. So one question that I find myself asking when I'm with a group of people and they represent others is to say, is that your opinion or are you representing your stakeholders or your constituents. That way you remind people when they're representatives that they are both representing their own point of view, but they also have a duty to make sure they represent others too.

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Listening carefully and inquiring frequently, helping the group meet its goals by a well-constructed agenda and management of the meeting, identifying resource needs. So for example you may have a meeting that's coming up and you don't have resident expertise in a particular area, then a leader, their job is to make sure that the group has the right kind of resources intellectually or cognitively for adding to a decision, helping the group with process of joint fact-finding, that means that in between meetings, let's agree that we're going to go out and look for this data. Okay, next slide.

So this probably the most difficult part of leading, and that is being in the position of being the negotiator. So let me recount a little bit of research to you. Have any of you heard of the Harvard Negotiations Project? Anybody aware of the Harvard Negotiations Project? Okay, we have one or two.

So probably the most important work that's been done on the process of negotiation was done by the Harvard Negotiation team and the reason why is because it's used now in hundreds and thousands of very difficult meetings where people have very strong differences of opinion. This is their central finding, so I'm going to summarize it for you.

The central finding of the Harvard Negotiation Project is this. That any time that you come to two people, or two points of view that are arguing with each other, you have an impasse and you'll never get to consensus. You cannot get to consensus when you have two points of view that are at war with each other.

So the second point that they found was that what you have to do is to get people to brainstorm, to work together to try to generate new solutions that would be acceptable to the members of that negotiation or meeting. So for example if you're stuck with just two alternatives, and you can't get anywhere, then that's the time to say wait a minute, we're in a battle here between two points of view, let's stop and let's brainstorm and see if we can come up with at least three or four ways that we could solve this problem. Now, you have people instead of arguing at each other, you have people on the same side of the table looking at a common purpose, trying to generate a solution.

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Okay, let's move on. So just in summary what is consensus. It's bridge building, because whenever you are in a situation like ICANN, there are three things that are always present. You can be sure that every meeting you go to has three things present. Number one, people really feel that the outcome of that meeting is important. So there's importance. Secondly, that there are strong opinions on many different sides of the spectrum. So there's differences of opinion. And number three, there is strong emotions and often they're negative. You know people get angry, they get frustrated, they're upset, they feel disenfranchised. And so the way you get to consensus is by bridge building, it's by trying to find where the common vision is. And I mentioned from the Harvard Negotiations Project one way of doing that is to be asking frequently what are some other ways that we could approach this.

Second point bad process leads to no consensus or years of hard work. So a very strong point that I'm making is that if you want to improve your consensus building, learn more about process. You have capacity building sessions. Make that one of the capacity building sessions, invite people in who are experts on process and facilitation, ask them to teach you.

Third, listen for the trend, tort consensus because in meetings often there is a movement towards consensus that somebody could point to and say it looks like we have the beginning of an agreement, or I'm hearing a common theme, and then the last one really the way you get to consensus is by being creative, not by being loud. You know the person who is the most vocal isn't necessarily the person who will build consensus. The person who build consensus or the people who will build consensus are the ones who can keep on finding ways that are not either this or that, but something new.

So we are at 11:30. I want to respect your time and I thank you very much.

[Applause]

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Sergio Salinas Porto: Thank you, this is Sergio Salinas Porto and I'm going to speak in Spanish. Is there any chance we could get this material that you have just presented, because it would be really good for all of us to have it, so that we can further reflect upon it. So I would like to know if this presentation is available and if it will have any intellectual property restrictions so that we can duplicate it and share it with other persons. Thank you.

Elad Levinson: Heidi, just a clarification. This will be available to everybody? And how do they access it?

Heidi Ullrich: We can send that out if people just request it to At-Large staff, then we can send copies of that.

Elad Levinson: Heidi, because it's my material and I work for ICANN, it's ICANN's and I think that there is no restriction. I think we would want people to use it, that's my understanding.

[Applause]

Matt Ashtiani: Hi, Matt Ashtiani, for the record. I actually put a dropbox link in the chat, in the beginning of this presentation. If you click that link you'll be able to download the presentation. I'll put it again, just for ease of reference.

Elad Levinson: Any further logistical or –

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Female: Yes, here, Elad.

Elad Levinson: Yes, please.

Filiz Yilmaz: Filiz Yilmaz, ICANN staff as well, Participation and Engagement. Actually we need to be uploading this on the website. I think that was a glitch there, it should be available for everybody, not only for ALAC, but the entire people out there in the universe, thank you.

Elad Levinson: Good, thank you.

[Applause]

[End of Transcript]