

More On Concordance

Making the Method Practical

After years of using the Concordance decision-making process in everyday, practical ways, I've learned how to make huge mistakes with it, and also how to make it successful. In working with union shift teams at Procter & Gamble, we were able to use Concordance successfully and consistently to produce measurable, and often amazing, results.

Concordance is About Accountability

Concordance is designed to nurture empowerment and ensure responsibility. It eliminates the opportunity for us to play victim.

Choice

In a Concordant decision I can get anything I want, but not necessarily everything I want. I am, however, forced to choose between getting what I want and getting my way.

Concordance requires a maturity of the group (members) that democracy does not. One reason Democracy (majority wins, thus win-lose) has such wide use is the belief of most people that they can get what they want only when the other side gives up what it wants.

What Do I Want?

It becomes essential to the process that as a member of the group/team I know what I really want. By

design, Concordance forces me to get clear for myself what is most important to me.

Openness

Concordance works when during the proposal formulation, polling, and voting discussions I express what I want openly and explain why I want it—not why I am right. If I index to being right, “sides” will quickly form, followed by the familiar frustration and waste of time of the “win-lose” conflict.

A Concordance group is characterized by total commitment to honesty and an unending quest to gain more self-awareness. We use each other to determine when a group member is self-deceptive, thus the “yes” technique/requirement to ensure that all members are expressing their feelings.

No Abstaining

As a group member I can surrender control at any time, but I am bound by the final group decision, no matter what. If I am not present *for any reason* at the time of the final vote, I am likewise bound by the decision. To not participate is to give up my veto. Whomever



Don White is a Senior Human Element Practitioner and Coach. He builds upon his 26 years in Procter & Gamble in his consulting practice which includes working with CEOs to new-hire team managers.

continued

More On Concordance

chooses not to attend a Concordant decision meeting in effect is voting “yes”. *There is no abstaining*. This closes the door on the sabotage of “I didn’t vote on this so I don’t have to abide by it.” Sabotage of decisions is no more allowed than sabotage of machinery.

More About Veto Power

If I disagree with the majority and I think they do not understand my position or appreciate how strongly I feel about an issue, I am reluctant to go along. However, after I have expressed my opinion, described the basis for it, and told you how important it is to me, if you still want to take another direction, then I am more likely to consider your position. No matter what the outcome, Concordance allows everyone’s thoughts and feelings to be considered. To be complete with the process, however, I must leave free of the preoccupation that my viewpoint would have prevailed if others had only understood what I *really* had in mind.

No terrorism. It will not work to use my veto power to hold the group hostage. If I cannot persuade them, I join them, and keep working from my point of view, always ready for my next opportunity to influence the group. If indeed I am more wise, then the group will come around to my point of view and change its decision to accommodate it—Concordantly. If this never happens, I probably don’t fit in this group anyway.

I can change my “NO” (veto) to a “YES” for the sake of the group/team/organization getting on with an action rather than remaining at indecision. Such a change in vote is not to be confused with submission, but rather a reflection of the reality that, in concordance, I will get all of what I want some of the time, but not all I want all the time. It is important to me that I leave with the following point of view relative to my teammates: “I have had sufficient opportunity to sway you to my point of view, but have clearly been unable to do so. I will now gladly go along with what most of you want to do.”

Implementation

Just as in more traditional decision-making systems, where the boss made the decisions, a Concordant decision is binding, and non-compliance with the decision leads to the same consequences ranging from performance review through the disciplinary process.

When the Concordance process is followed thoroughly, the need to police the implementation phase is minimized if not entirely eliminated.

Representative Groups

Where teams are spread out or working separate times, as in situations where members of an organization are divided into two or three shift teams working different times of day, it is useful to use the representative group or “core team” process. Each team selects representatives to meet and work issues that affect the whole organization. It is very important that this core team makes *proposals*, not decisions. This proposal is then taken back to the separate teams by the reps, and each team either agrees with the proposal Concordantly, or (and this is important!), the team changes the proposal so it is acceptable to the team, then sends their rep back into the core team. When the core team reconvenes, each member either has agreement from their team or a new, revised proposal. These proposals are then worked by the core team into a single new proposal, which is then taken back to the separate teams. This process repeats until all the separate team representatives report Concordance from their team back to the core team. Systems in which the core team has decision-making power, rather than proposal power, quickly become simply subsets of management making authoritative or participative decisions, *not* Concordance.)

Comments and questions welcome:
donwhite2@mindspring.com.