



Systemic Consensus / Systemic Consensing

Is a form of decision making that aims at determining the one proposal with the least objections and resistances within a group (instead of the highest acceptance).

Information

Ideation

Consultation

Co-Decision



<15 people

15-30 people

30-100 people

100-250 people

> 250 people



Preparation:

½ day – 3

months for set

up and invitation

Implementation:

½- 4 hours

Follow-up:

½-1 month

for tracking

results, if

applicable



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Resources for a

short workshop



At least one

person for

preparation,

moderation and

documentation



The Method: What is it, when to use it and what outcome to expect

Systemic Consensus determines an option out of multiple ones that comes closest to a consensus by finding that one option which is least objected by a group. Participants are neither asked for a majority vote and nor for approval, agreement or preference but only about their level of resistance for different options. It strives for a solution that is supported by the whole group.

This method can be used for any decision-finding process, esp. for those that have potential for strong discussions or exhaustive process.

Systemic Consensus helps to minimize or even avoid conflict, frustration, dissatisfaction and individuals dominating in decision-taking, fosters constructive and cooperative behavior during and after the process and benefits from the involvement of the voices of reserved or silent participants.

The Process: How to conduct it in an in-person setting or online using a PC/laptop with video option

The method follows four steps:

- 1. Defining a question:** A group develops a question they want a decision on. It needs to be written in a way so it can't be answered with a simple yes or no.
- 2. Collecting ideas:** Participants create solutions and proposals to the question without being commented on or discussed about, using brainstorming, card query, scribbling or other techniques free of choice.
- 3. Evaluation:** Each participant evaluates every solution or proposal on a scale from 0 to 10, representing their individual level of objection: Zero points equal 'No resistance' or 'I support this proposal'; ten points equal 'Full resistance' or 'I cannot support this proposal at all'. All evaluations are collected into a matrix. Repeat in case of a draw.
- 4. Analysis:** All points are counted up for each solution or proposal. The one with the lowest points is closest to consensus and should be followed up with.

Blended participation

The method can be done both, in person or virtually. It is recommended to conduct both in two separate processes, but with different participants. It can also be combined (Step 1 and 2 in person, and 3 and 4 as a follow up virtually). The result should be shared with all participants afterwards.

Digital communication

Digital invites can be sent to the participants, The results should be documented and can also be shared via e-mail and other means (such as whatsapp). The topic could be introduced prior to the event via digital communication (e.g. e-mail), this would save time on the day.

Good to know

- The solutions or proposals that are to be evaluated are generated by the participants themselves
- Any solutions and proposals are welcomed, and each is handled equally, striving for diversity
- A test run with a voting on an example question before the actual question may help participants to vote with more ease in the actual process
- It should be decided upfront whether anonymous voting is desired
- Helpful evaluation tools:
 - Online tools: <https://www.acceptify.at/de/matrix>
 - Consensing cards
- Read further:
 - <https://openpracticelibrary.com/practice/systemic-consensing/>
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consensus_decision-making