Definition of consensus...

- Is a condition in a group when every member can fully support a team Decision
- Does not mean the decision gives every group member his or her first choice
- Means that a sufficient number of people are adequately in favor of a decision to get it carried out
- Means no one will make himself or herself an obstacle to carrying a decision out
- Is a win-win solution in which everyone feels that the best solution ahs been reached and no one had to give in totally on a strongly held conviction or need

Knowing When Consensus Has Been Reached

A group has reached a consensus when everyone can say...

- I believe I understand your position
- I believe you understand my position
- I will support the decision because it was arrived at openly and fairly
- I will not undermine this decision
- I can live with this decision

Knowing When Consensus Should be Used

Consensus should be used when...

- You need everyone's support for successful implementation
- The decision is highly critical or important
- There is not one right answer
- Everyone is accountable
- The decision has a broad impact

Steps in Building Consensus

1. Clearly define the issue or problem
2. Draw out ideas, statements, assumptions, and concerns about the issue
3. Ask each member to state his or her opinion
4. Create a compromise position and ask everyone to react to it
5. Clarify ideas, assumptions, and concerns about the new position
6. Provide private "think time" and begin discussing again
7. Ideally, continue with steps 4-6 until consensus is reached

Rules for Consensus Decision-Making

1. Don't assume someone must lose and someone must win at stalemate positions; look for the most acceptable alternative
2. Don't change your mind just to avoid conflict
3. Avoid techniques like majority vote, coin toss, averages, or bargaining
4. Avoid arguing for your own position
5. Seek out differences of opinion

Knowing When the Process of Consensus is Successful

- All participants contribute resources, encourage use of one another's resources and opinions, and view differences as helpful rather than as a hindrance
- Everyone can paraphrase the issue
- Everyone has a change to describe his or her feelings about the issue
- Those who continue to disagree indicate publicly that they are willing to go along for an experimental try for a prescribed period of time
- All share in the final decision

Attitudes that Support Consensus

- Cooperation
- An emphasis on mutual trust
- Valuing the contributions of all members
- Valuing feelings
- Valuing conflict
- Making an effort to equalize power
- Common ownership of ideas