The Round

The Round provides a discipline whereby we can greatly enhance the productivity of a meeting or any conversation. It provides an opportunity for all participants to hear all voices. It reduces domination of the conversation. It helps to develop consensus.

Agreements of the Round

- **Each person speaks in turn one at a time:** This understanding insures to each member present that they will have an opportunity to be heard once without interruption before a general conversation ensues.
- **Individuals are allowed to pass:** This reassures each member that speaking is at their prerogative.
- **Paradoxically we will have the best conversation when all members speak:** While we honor an individual's choice to pass, 'withholding' or 'holding out to see how the wind blows' disrupts productive conversation.
- **We do not engage in cross talk:** As each member speaks other members do not respond with comments or questions.
- **We do not answer questions:** If someone asks a question during their turn in the round, we make no effort to answer that question – until we complete the round. Often a question will get answered by virtue of some other participant's comments during their turn in the round.
- **We do not initiate or participate in side conversations:** As each member speaks all other members remain silent and do not speak to their neighbors.
- **Avoid airtime:** Make your point or points and then stop talking. Long-winded rationalizations, stories of the past and irrelevant side bars do not add to the group's ability to stay focused.
- **Speak your truth:** We will have a more productive conversation if we each state as clearly as possible exactly what we have on our mind.
- **Listen to completion:** We listen to each person completely. We wait until each speaker has spoken completely before we make any assessment of what they have said.
- **The Round is a 'safe place'**
  We do not use the round as a platform to attack other members of the group verbally or otherwise.
- **We invite someone (or a couple of people) in the group, preferably not the leader, to summarize the outcome of the**

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round: Use the basic question, ‘What just happened here?” The summarizing will help the group to have a sense of how the discussion went.

- **Engage in conversation to achieve consensus on the summary:** By seeking consensus on the summary the group will get closer to consensus on the issue or subject before them.

Uses for the Round

- **Opening Check in:** Very often members of a group have things on their mind which have nothing to do with the meeting they are in but have everything to do with their mental and emotional state. It will help the meeting if those present know joys and sorrows. This way members can take into account the otherwise Unexplained reactions of their colleagues. **Sometimes** it helps to do a second check-in round that; more focused on reports of still deeper emotional states of the members. This is when anger and frustration with some aspect of life or the project at hand can be vented. **In groups where some or all people are new** the opening check in will let everyone present know who everyone else is and what they represent.
- **Open up discussion on a focused subject:** It will help to expedite the discussion if it starts from a place of knowing every participant’s take on the matter. It will also help to keep the discussion focused on the matter at hand and avoid tangents.
- **Open up discussion in order to find focus when several items are requiring attention:** Often we come into meetings where the agenda is loaded and even within individual agenda items there may be many areas to cover. The round can serve to establish the priorities of the group thus avoiding overriding anxiety that occurs when less critical items dominate the discussion.
- **Discover consensus of the group regarding a question:** A round or two can efficiently process the nuances of opinion into a decision which demonstrates the mind of the group.
- **Provide a safe place** for individuals to speak who otherwise would be intimidated. Also effective when a topic is emotionally loaded.

- **Reestablish Focus**
  Very often groups lose their focus. A round will help to get back on track.
- **Build a discussion:** As people speak the next person seeks to add their own thoughts to the ideas that have been stated before so as to ‘build’ the discussion toward a conclusion.

- **Closing Check out:** It will improve the group's team spirit if at the end of each session each person relates what went well for them during the meeting and what did not go well. It can also be helpful for each member to comment on how they individually did in the meeting.