

**Topic:** AIF Support Series #8:  
*Building Consensus in the Virtual Environment*  
**Date:** May 15, 2020

**Presenters:** Rachel Hawthorne, Sally Seitz

### **1. Opening of the meeting**

- ANSI staff provided a presentation (see AIF N369-2020) on consensus, one approach on how to reach consensus, and tips and challenges on building consensus in the virtual environment. We want to hear from you to learn how we can best support you throughout your U.S. TAG and ISO committee work. Submit any inquiries or comments to ANSI's ISO Team (isot@ansi.org).

### **2. Key points from the presentation**

#### **Definition of consensus and sustained opposition**

- Consensus: "General agreement, characterized by the absence of sustained opposition to substantial issues by any important part of the concerned interests and by a process that involves seeking to take into account the views of all parties concerned and to reconcile any conflicting arguments  
NOTE Consensus need not imply unanimity."
- Sustained opposition: "Views expressed and recorded at a meeting which are maintained by an important part of the concerned interest and which are incompatible with the committee consensus."

#### **Approach to consensus building**

- The presenters went through a 4-step approach to help achieve consensus. It was noted that this is just one approach.
  1. Define the Issue or Need
  2. Gather Information
  3. Evaluate Information
  4. Agree on a Solution

#### **Tips for the virtual environment**

- Use balloting options to help demonstrate consensus
- Have smaller discussions with key stakeholders on sticky issues before going to the broader group
- Encourage people to speak up and use the chat features

#### **Challenges in virtual environment**

- Hard to "read the room"
- Silence does not imply agreement
- Ensure all participants understand the expectations of the meeting
- Opposition may be louder and you may need to be more assertive to keep control of the meeting

### **Session Questions and Answers**

**1. What happens if it is obvious that one person is participating in a manner to sabotage progression of work?**

**Answer:** The leadership needs to determine if the person is part of a concerned interest group to see if there is sustained opposition. If so you may be able to note the opposition and move on. Ensure that the issue is documented so that the person feels heard. It is also good to ask others in the room to respond to see if there is any traction to the issue or if only 1 person or small group is concerned with the issue. Sometimes people closely involved can be very passionate about issues and getting others involved who can speak more technically and rationally on the topic. Depending on the issue, you may be able to bring the discussion up a level to help identify where consensus is.

**2. Voting at a virtual meeting is sometimes a challenge. Can asking for any opposition to a position be a tool for consensus in the virtual environment?**

**Answer:** Yes - that could be a valuable strategy. Sometimes the Zoom/WebEx functions, such as thumbs up or thumbs down, can help gauge the virtual room too. You can document all the participants and then when you vote, you can ask for those who are against or abstain as those will likely be a smaller set of the participants.

**3. Can you run a separate polling program to capture votes by delegations, or would that be too complicated?**

**Answer:** Yes, you could; however, you need to ensure that the participants are confident in using the various tools and possibly have a backup option for those that might find it challenging. It might be good to do a test run before actually running it in a meeting.

**4. Is abstain an appropriate option if a participant has a conflict of interest?**

**Answer:** It may be. We think this question is issue specific and suggest reaching out to [isot@ansi.org](mailto:isot@ansi.org) with more details so we can provide better guidance.

# AIF Support Series #8 – Consensus building in the virtual environment

Welcome!

- We will mute all lines. Please stay muted so everyone can hear each other and the presentation.
- If your sound quality is low, try using the call back feature.
- Please disable video.
- To ask a question, please use the Q&A or Raise Your Hand features. We will closely monitor both.

# Consensus building in the virtual environment

AIF Support Series #8

**May 15, 2020**



# Housekeeping Items

- All participants will be muted until the end of the presentation
- Use the Q&A function to “All Panelists” / Raise Your Hand to ask questions
- If we don't get to your question today, reach out via email [isot@ansi.org](mailto:isot@ansi.org)
- Follow-up/repeat sessions will be held if necessary
- Slides and one-page summary to be circulated after the call
- Keep us informed of your experiences!

# Session Overview

- Agenda
  - Review of the definition of consensus
  - Tips for managing consensus
  - Challenges in the virtual environment
- Speakers
  - Rachel Hawthorne, Sr. Manager, ANSI's ISO Team
  - Sally Seitz, Sr. Manager, Int'l Secretariats

# Definition of consensus

- Consensus (Clause 2.5.6 ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1)  
“General agreement, characterized by the absence of sustained opposition to substantial issues by any important part of the concerned interests and by a process that involves seeking to take into account the views of all parties concerned and to reconcile any conflicting arguments  
NOTE Consensus need not imply unanimity.”

Source: Clause 2.5.6 of ISO Directives Part 1. Also see B7.2 of the ANSI International Procedures.

# Sustained Opposition

**Sustained Opposition:** Views expressed and recorded at a meeting which are maintained by an important part of the concerned interest and which are incompatible with the committee consensus.



# Building Consensus

The U.S. TAG Administrator or ISO Committee Manager shall forward the views and objections received on a ballot to the U.S. TAG Chair or ISO Committee Chair. The Chair shall determine whether the expressed views and objections shall be considered by telephone, correspondence, or at a meeting.

The Chair, in consultation with the U.S. TAG Administrator or ISO Committee Manager, shall determine if there is sustained opposition (i.e. is the opposition being sustained by an important part of the concerned interest?)

- If not, the leadership will note the opposition (i.e. in the minutes, records, etc.) and continue to lead the work on the document.
- If it's determined that there is a sustained opposition, it is required to try and resolve it in good faith.

NOTE: The responsibility for assessing whether or not consensus has been reached rests entirely with the U.S. TAG or ISO Committee leadership.

# Tactics for Resolving Sustained Opposition in Good Faith

1. Developing a consistent U.S. TAG voting procedure
2. Conducting recirculation ballots as needed
3. Using “Abstain” as a viable voting option

According to the ANSI International Procedures (B6.3), “If no U.S. consensus has been established, abstain.”

# Steps for Determining Consensus

- Step 1: Define the Issue or Need
- Step 2: Gather Information
- Step 3: Evaluate Information
- Step 4: Agree on a Solution

# Tips

- Suggest using the balloting process to demonstrate consensus
- On sticky issues suggest smaller calls ahead of time to get agreement from key players before the larger group
- Encourage meeting participants to speak up.
- Reach out to participants via the chat function

# Challenges in the virtual environment

- Hard to “read the room”
- Silence does not imply agreement
- Understanding expectations of the meeting
- Opposition may be louder on virtual calls
- It’s easier to lose control of the meeting

# Q&A / Open Dialogue

(please use the Q&A or Raise Your Hand functions to join the queue)

# Additional Resources

- ANSI's AIF support series #4
- ANSI TAG chair training: <https://ansi.talentlms.com>
- ISO Code of Conduct:  
<https://www.iso.org/files/live/sites/isoorg/files/store/en/PUB100397.pdf>
- ISO/IEC Directives: [www.iso.org/directives](http://www.iso.org/directives)
  - Part 1, Procedures for the technical work
  - Part 2, Rules for the structure and drafting of International Standards
- ANSI International Procedures:  
[www.ansi.org/internationalprocedures](http://www.ansi.org/internationalprocedures)
- Additional ISOT Resources (including Guide to Delegates):  
<https://share.ansi.org/isot>

# Thank you!

Rachel Hawthorne  
ANSI's ISO Team

Sally Seitz  
International secretariats



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