

## What Do You Do When Someone is Dominating the Discussion?

### *The Problem:*

Everyone has experienced “**The Dominator**”. This is the person in the group who seems to be taking over the discussion. Sometimes they are just over zealous talkative types...other times they are overly aggressive personalities sucking up all the air in the room. Unfortunately, sometimes they seem to talk over others and won't let them express their opinions or ideas. As the facilitator, we're expected to help create and support an inclusive and safe environment where various ideas are expressed. But when you're faced with a dominator (or two!!), what do you do???

### *Try these techniques....*

- Thank the dominator for their feedback and ask for other's input (e.g. “*Steven, that's an interesting idea. Let's see if others have suggestions as well.*”)
- Reiterate the dominator's comment, write it visibly for all to see, and then ask for other ideas to complete the list. (e.g. “*Steven, it sounds like you're recommending that we use these three vendors as our short list...is that correct? That's a great suggestion. Let's compile a list of several suggestions, then discuss them all. We'll list your suggestion as #1 on the list. I'd like to get at least three other suggestions from the team. What do others think?*”)
- Instead of having the group respond to an issue verbally, ask them to take 2 minutes to jot down their idea, issue, or recommendations on a post it instead. Then ask each person to share one comment they wrote.
- Suggest the group use the round robin technique (go around the room asking each person to share a comment) and start at the opposite end of the table from the dominator (e.g. “*This is such an important issue that I want to be sure I'm getting everyone's ideas. Let's do a quick round robin starting with Jill...*”)
- Call on a few people you haven't heard from (e.g. “*Michael, what are your thoughts on this issue?*”)
- Take a break and solicit the dominator's support offline (“*Steven, you've brought up several key points. I'm hoping to get some of the other team members involved in the discussion to hear their ideas as well. Some members of the group are not as assertive, but I want to be sure we hear from them.*”)
- Break the group into pairs or triads and let them discuss an issue in those smaller groups before initiating a large group discussion
- Gain agreement with your team to use a physical object (e.g. sponge football) to balance discussion. The person holding the football has the floor, and they must toss it to someone else once they make their point.

If you have other tips on this challenge, please email us at [tips@meetinggenie.com](mailto:tips@meetinggenie.com)!

### **Next Month's Meeting Challenge:**

*“How do you manage rambling discussion and keep the group focused?”*