Building consensus

1 **Work in small groups and discuss the questions. Then share your ideas with the class.**

1 Building consensus (reaching agreement) in a group can be difficult. Why is this?

2 How do we decide what *consensus* means? Does everyone have to agree, or is a majority enough?

3 Can anyone say no to a decision, or is it a manager's job to decide?

4 Some people think that different cultures find consensus in different ways. Do you agree? Think of examples from your own experience to support your arguments.

2 4.01 **Listen to the beginning of a meeting.**

1 What does the speaker want to do?

2 According to the speaker, what is building consensus about?

3 **Complete the sentences using the words in the box. Then listen again to check.**

chance	important	involved	respected

1 If we want to build consensus, we must make sure that everybody is _____ in the conversation. Everybody must have the _____ to speak.

2 And second, everybody's opinion is of equal weight and is to be _____. No one in the group is more _____ than anyone else.

4 4.02 **Listen to the next part of the meeting. Has this group reached a consensus? Explain your answer.**

5 **Listen again and answer the questions.**

1 What are the three options the manager mentions?

2 What are 'talking sticks'?

3 What does the manager mean by 'process'?

4 What does the manager mean by 'narrowing down'?

LIVEWORKSHEETS

6 **Put this conversation in the right order so that it makes sense. The first two are done for you. Then listen to check.**

Manager: Yes, Jose? What do you think? [1]

Tanya: **I'm afraid I disagree**. It will be much better in smaller groups. That way everyone gets much more talking time. [ ]

Dorothy: **Yes, I agree, too.** We can be much more efficient if we work in small groups. [ ]

Dorothy: **So we need to** find consensus about the number of sticks before we can even start a real discussion? [ ]

Jose: Well, **I don't think** my idea is that bad. **I agree that** in a big group one or two people could dominate, but that is easy to fix. We use talking sticks. [ ]

Jose: So **I think we should** stay as one big group. There are not so many of us, and it will be easy for everyone to be heard. [2]

Jose: Each person has two sticks. This gives them the right to talk twice. Each time they say something they must give up a stick. When they have no more sticks they cannot talk. That way everyone has the same chance. [ ]

Jose: That was just an example. Of course we need to decide how many sticks to use. [ ]

Sam: **I agree with** Tanya. Much better. With a big group one or two people always dominate. [ ]

Sam: What are talking sticks? [ ]

Sam: Actually **that's not a bad idea**. But we will need more than two sticks. [ ]

7A **Put the phrases in bold from Exercise 6 into the correct category in the table below.**

Expressing agreement	*Yes, I agree, too.*
Expressing disagreement	
Making a suggestion	
Reacting to a suggestion	

B **Match the phrases in bold (1–6) with the categories in Exercise 7A.**

1 **Yes, I think you're right.**
2 **Sorry, I don't agree with you**.
3 **Why don't we** work as one big group?
4 **Good idea!** Let's think about that.
5 **I'm not sure I agree with you** on that.
6 **How about if** we break into small groups after ten minutes?

LIVEWORKSHEETS

2 Complete the extract from a meeting using the words and phrases in the box.

afraid I disagree	don't agree with	Good idea	How about if	not a bad idea
not sure I agree	right	should	Why don't we	

C: So, these are some of my initial thoughts. We definitely need to invest in a smart, new website.

B: I'm [1]_____ with you on that. I think we should improve our current one.

A: I'm [2]_____. Making changes would be a long and expensive business. We want something completely up-to-date with the best technology, don't you agree, Sally?

C: Yes, I think you're [3]_____. With a new website, it should be easy to make our own changes in future. That will save us a lot of money.

A: Who is going to do it? I think we [4]_____ use the people we used last time.

C: Sorry, I [5]_____ you. I think they are expensive and old-fashioned. I have found a couple of young graduates who have done some brilliant work.

A: I'm not sure. That could be risky. [6]_____ ask three companies to make proposals?

B: [7]_____! Let's ask those two graduates and another company. Maybe one with international experience?

C: Actually, that's [8]_____. What is our budget?

B: [9]_____ we write the specification and then see what offers we get?

C: I agree. Shall I work on that with Laura?

A: That's a good idea. Can you send me a draft next week?

C: No problem.

8A Work in small groups. Choose one of the following topics to discuss, or suggest a different topic. Individually, take a few minutes to note down your ideas.

1 The maximum and minimum number of working hours in a week.
2 The ideal number of public holidays in a year.
3 What makes a good language learner.

B Follow the four steps to discuss your ideas and try to reach agreement.

1 Take turns to explain your ideas. When you are not speaking, listen and make notes.
2 Read your notes and decide which idea(s) you prefer.
3 Take turns to state your preferences and list them on the board.
4 As a group, discuss the preferences list using phrases from Exercises 6 and 7. Try to reach agreement on the best idea.



LIVEWORKSHEETS

Consonant–vowel linking between words

In spoken English, a consonant sound at the end of a word is often linked to a vowel at the beginning of the next word.

1 P4.02 **Listen and repeat these phrases. Notice the consonant–vowel links.**

1 everybody's_opinion
2 a moment_of silence
3 break_into smaller groups

2 **Work in pairs. Mark where there will be consonant–vowel links in these phrases.**

1 meet again next week
2 just an example
3 not a bad idea
4 I'm afraid I disagree
5 I want to remind everybody
6 decide as a group
7 listed on the board
8 narrow it down if possible

3 P4.03 **Listen and check. Then listen again and repeat.**

1 **Before you listen, mark the likely consonant–vowel links in these sentences.**

1 We want everyone to be involved in the conversation.
2 There's a lack of consensus in this group at the moment.
3 Did you find writing down your thoughts a good idea?
4 We should focus on ways of building consensus.
5 Think about group needs, not individual needs.
6 Everybody's opinion is of equal weight and is to be respected.
7 Well done everybody! It looks like everyone agrees.
8 No one in the group is more important than anyone else.
9 We can be much more efficient if we work in small groups.
10 The problem is that one or two people always dominate.

2 P4.03 **Listen and check, then listen again and practise saying the sentences.**

LIVEWORKSHEETS

2 Complete the comments from a suggestion box with expressions from the list.

why don't *have you thought about* *we could always* *couldn't we do*

COMMENT FORM

Because so many parents work here now, 1 _____ *we have a crèche for young children? Then we wouldn't have so many problems with childcare. And* 2 _____ *see our children at lunchtimes, which would also be good for motivation.*

COMMENT FORM

I don't want to complain about the new relaxation room – it's extremely comfortable and spacious! But 3 _____ having some entertainment in there? I read about employees at one company where they have a special room called an Anarchy Zone. They can play computer games, table football, or watch TV. 4 _____ something like that?

3 ▶10.4 The facilities manager is discussing the suggestions in **2** with an architect. Listen and answer the questions.

1 Why can they only choose one of the ideas?
2 Which one do they choose and why?

4 Choose the correct words in *italics*.

1 Well, it might prove *difficult / difficulties* to have both.
2 I think we should consider *have / having* …
3 Besides, I have a few *reserves / reservations* about …
4 You might be *better / the best* off without it …
5 I'd rather not *have / having* it.
6 I'd recommend *to put / putting* it here.

5 ▶10.4 Listen again and tick (✓) the responses you hear in the meeting.

I really like it. ☐
Good idea. ☐
Sorry, but I don't think that would work. ☐
I'm not sure. ☐
Great! ☐
Exactly. ☐

LIVEWORKSHEETS

1 Complete the second sentences so that they have the same meaning as the first sentences.

1 I'm not sure it's a good idea to do this.
I have a few reservations
about doing this.

2 How about changing the colour?
Why don't we _____?

3 Let's ask them to make a better offer.
I think we should consider
_____.

4 I don't think we'll be able to convince them of our proposals.
It might prove _____.

5 Perhaps we could provide some chairs.
Couldn't _____?

6 We could always have music in the factory.
Have you thought about
_____?

7 Do you mind if I don't come?
I'd rather _____.

8 I'd recommend looking at this again tomorrow morning.
I'd recommend that _____.

2 Complete the missing words in the conversations.

1 A What do you think of this idea?
B Great. I *really like* it.

2 A It seems like a bad plan to me.
B No! It's a g_____ i_____.

3 A Maybe we should change the office round so that everyone shares desks.
B Sorry, but I don't think that w_____ w_____.

4 A This new system seems slower than the old one.
B I agree. Replacing the old one m_____ p_____ to be a bad idea!

5 A These new meeting rooms are very large but I don't like the colour.
B We c_____ a_____ repaint them.

6 A Let's cancel the order for new desks.
B Yes, I like the old ones. B_____, we can't really afford them.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Key expressions

Suggesting

What/How about (+ verb + *-ing*)?
Why don't we (+ verb)?
Maybe we should (+ verb)
Perhaps we could (+ verb)
Couldn't we (+ verb)?
Have you thought about (+ verb + *-ing*)?
We could always (+ verb)

Recommending / Expressing doubt

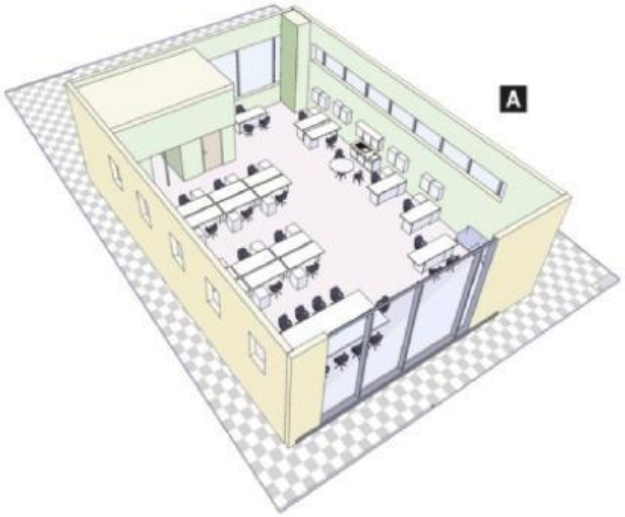
I think we should consider (+ noun / + verb + *-ing*)
We might be better off (+ verb + *-ing*)
It's probably worth (+ verb + *-ing*)
I'd recommend (+ that / + *-ing*)
It would be better to (+ verb)
It might prove (+ adjective)
I have a few reservations about (noun / + verb + *-ing*)
I'd rather not (+ verb)

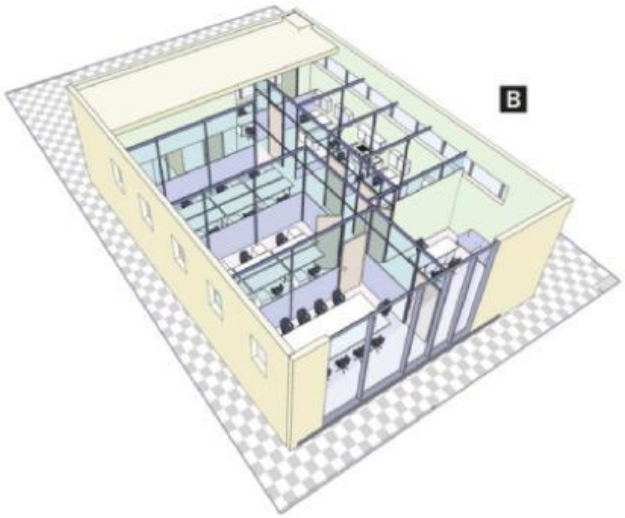
Responding

I really like it.
It's/That's a good idea.
Sorry, but I don't think that would work.
I'm not sure.
Great.
Exactly.

1 An architect is redesigning your office space. Look at these two styles of office and read about some advantages and disadvantages for each in the table. Can you add any more?

	Style A	Style B
Advantages	friendly, easy to communicate	good for concentration, private
Disadvantages	noisy, harder for private conversation	not as social, old-fashioned





2 Now prepare and give your recommendation for one of the office styles using the expressions from 4. Student A, promote style A. Student B, promote style B. Respond to the recommendation you hear. Try to come to an agreement with your partner.

Example: **A** *I'd recommend having an open-plan office because …*

B *I think we should consider building closed offices because …*

LIVEWORKSHEETS

7 Work in small groups. After redesigning your offices, imagine that your company lets you have an Anarchy Zone – an area to relax and forget about work for a few minutes – with four items in it.

1 Make suggestions for what you would put in your Anarchy Zone. For example, a TV, computer games, books, etc. Give reasons for these suggestions. Respond to others' ideas. Decide on the four items you will have in the zone.
2 Present your final recommendation to the rest of the class.
3 Comment on the other groups' recommendations.

LIVEWORKSHEETS