ITU-T Rapporteur and Editor Tutorial
(Geneva, 6 – 7 September 2012)

Crafting Consensus
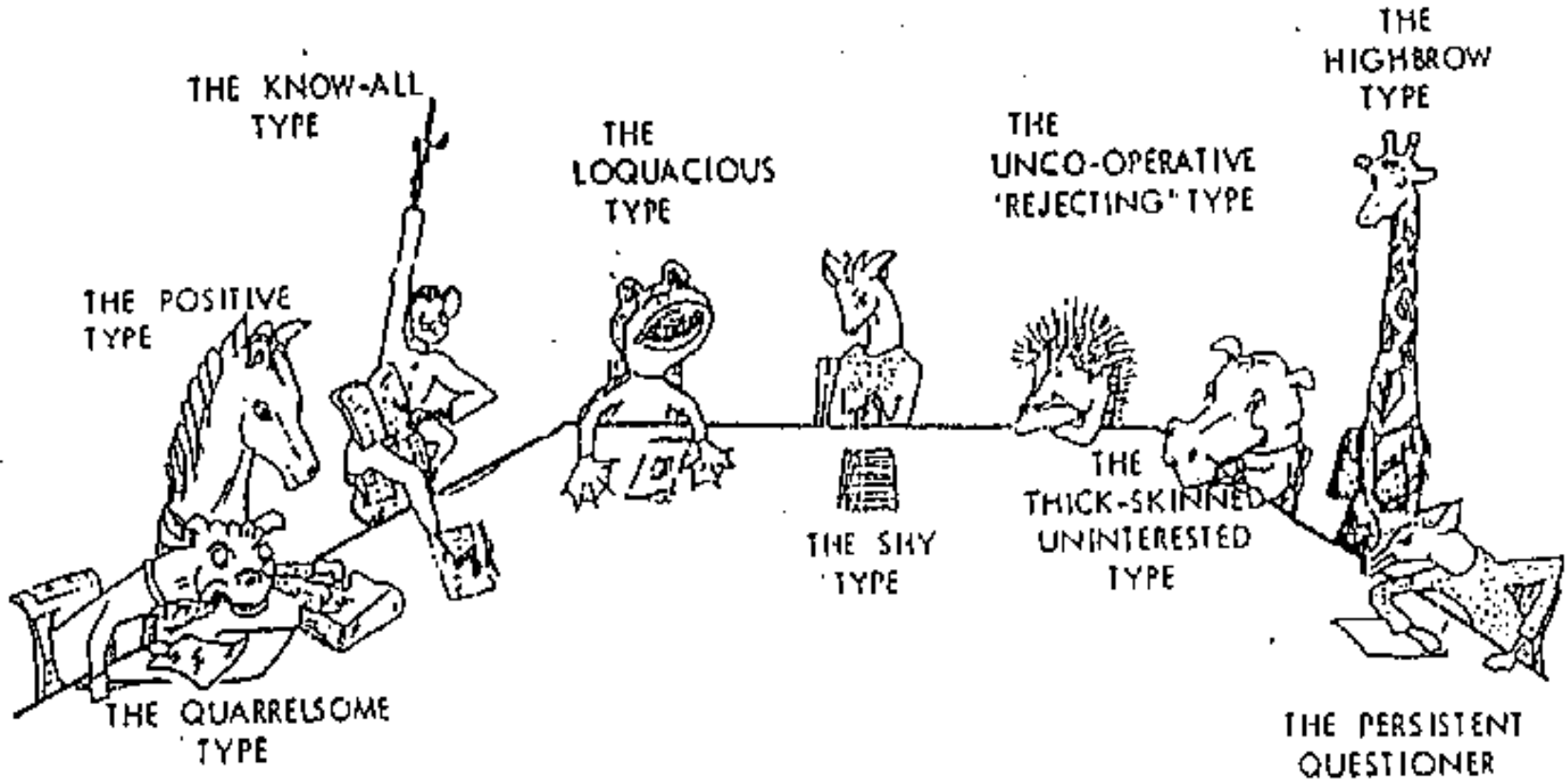
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Getting them to say "Yes"

Do you both promise to love, honour and obey with a minimum of litigation?

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Recognize anyone?

THE POSITIVE TYPE

THE KNOW-ALL TYPE

THE LOQUACIOUS TYPE

THE UNCO-OPERATIVE 'REJECTING' TYPE

THE HIGHBROW TYPE

THE QUARRELSOME TYPE

THE SHY TYPE

THE THICK-SKINNED UNINTERESTED TYPE

THE PERSISTENT QUESTIONER

Chairman needs to take into account the views of all parties concerned

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Outline

1. Consensus: What is it?
2. Crafting Consensus
3. Your Role as a Leader

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1. Consensus: What is it?

ITU makes many decisions by consensus

- However, there is no reference to consensus in the ITU Constitution, ITU Convention or the ITU General Rules

- Council Rules 12.5 have a reference to, but no definition of, consensus, and this rule applies only to Council:
  - "The standing committee and working groups [of Council] shall make every effort to achieve a consensus on the matters submitted to them for consideration; …"

- ITU's consensus principle is based on best practice/past practice/culture (no losers, only winners)

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What is Consensus?

- Google hits (August 2012):
  - "Consensus": 95 million
  - "How to reach consensus": 1.4 million
  - "How to chair a meeting": 78.3 thousand
- Merriam-Webster: (1) general agreement; (2) group solidarity in sentiment and belief
- Wikipedia: "Consensus decision-making seeks the consent, not necessarily the agreement, of participants and the resolutions of objections."
- From Latin: "feel together"
- "There is consensus that there is no consensus on what consensus is." (former ITU-T Study Group Chairman)

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Consensus definitions

■ ISO/IEC Guide 2 definition (most often cited in ITU-T context):

➡ "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."

■ ANSI Essential Requirements definition:

➡ "Consensus means substantial agreement has been reached by directly and materially affected interests. This signifies the concurrence of more than a simple majority, but not necessarily unanimity. Consensus requires that all views and objections be considered, and that an effort be made toward their resolution."

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Unanimity > unopposed agreement > consensus

- Definitions/explanations:
  - Unanimity: everyone is of the same opinion
  - Unopposed agreement: one single voice against a proposal stops it
  - Consensus: see previous slide

- Examples:
  - 1 in favor, 99 don't care:
    - **Unanimity: no**
    - **Unopposed agreement: yes**
    - **Consensus: yes**
  - 99 in favor, 1 against:
    - **Unanimity: no**
    - **Unopposed agreement: no**
    - **Consensus: Chairman can declare consensus**

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Consensus is the chairman's judgement call

- Chairman needs to make every effort to reach consensus
- But at the end of the day it is the **chairman who decides whether consensus has been reached or not**
  - Use gavel to indicate that decision has been taken
- And if someone wants to reopen discussion after the chairman has taken the decision?
  - Think hard whether you really want to allow it

Recommendation Approval:
Crafting Consensus and The Endgame

- The vast majority of Recommendations will pass without problems
- But, If you don't understand the endgame, months or years can be wasted
- Why? What is "The Endgame"?
  - A Recommendation will fail to be approved if only 1 Member State (TAP) or 2 Member States (AAP) are opposed

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2. Crafting consensus

How do you ask the question?

- How you ask the question can produce very different results:

1. Is anyone objecting to this proposal?
2. Is there any objection to this proposal?
3. I see no-one objecting.
4. I see no objection.
5. Is anyone supporting this proposal?
6. Is there any support for this proposal?
7. I see no-one supporting
8. I see no support.

Note: some chairmen find it better to say "is there any objection" rather than "does anyone object" (and, in analogy, prefer 4 over 3, 6 over 5, 8 over 7): it makes it less a challenge for an individual to speak out. The latter could also be taken to indicate a personal opinion rather than a member's position

Summarize the issue at hand

- After discussion, summarize: "Let me summarize now: …."

- Summarizing can be pretty tough sometimes because after a confusing discussion no one including yourself really understands what an appropriate summary would be

  → Don't move on; say instead "Let me try to summarize what I understood"

  → After further debate the issue may be clearer

  → A lot is already gained if different positions are clearly summarized. Then you can take the next step towards reaching a compromise

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Ways of reaching consensus

- Informal ways
  - which bring parties together, or allow progress despite some visible opposition

- More formal ways
  - which result in recording a statement of opposition in written form

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The informal way: "Silent agreement" solution

- "I see no-one objecting."
- "I see no objection."
- "Does anyone object to this proposal?"
- "Is there any opposition to this proposal?"

- The above are useful for large meetings with long agendas
- Note: the above variations may produce a very different result

- Even if there have been lengthy objections by some parties, chairman could announce "ok, we have heard all the voices now, and I take it that it is agreed"
  - If no objection afterwards, consensus has been reached

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The informal way: "Vocal agreement" solution

- "Does anyone support this proposal?"
- "Is there (any) support for this proposal?"
- "Could I hear from those in support of this proposal?"
- "Does anyone have anything to say in support of this proposal?"

- Can be useful
  - To quickly eliminate a proposal that is supported by no-one else
  - If you have arranged with someone in the audience to say "yes" - but don't get caught!

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The informal way: "Coffee break" solution

- "Let's have a coffee break now and see whether we can reach an agreement"
  - Useful when parties are not yet ready to reach a compromise but the Chairman feels that a solution could be reached in an offline discussion among the concerned parties

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The informal way: "Chairman's proposal" solution

- The Chairman may propose a solution
- The Chairman's proposal could be
  - something brand new, or
  - close to one side of the issue, or
  - a compromise
    - Note that a compromise might not necessarily be the best solution

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The informal way: "Adhoc group" solution

- Form antagonists into an adhoc group
  - <u>they</u> have to find a solution
- Useful if you feel that there is still some time needed to resolve differing views

The informal way: "Sleep on it" solution

- It may be too early to resolve different views

- Encourage the different parties
  - to sleep on it and continue the discussion in the session the next day
  - to continue discussing the issue off-line, e.g. in the evening at a dinner in the restaurant

The informal way: "Show of hands", or "The Mood of the room" solution

- Rather tricky, especially if Member States see it as voting
- Can be a simple thing to request, but difficult to interpret
  - Not every participant carries the same weight
  - What is the conclusion when the show of hands is, say, 70/30? Or 80/20?
- Asking "Who is in favor" vs "Who is against" will produce very different results
- A show of hands can be useful if the Chairman is trying to make it visible to all that it's just 1 or 2 trouble-makers against 150 people
- Chairman needs to know when to ask. Timing is everything

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A more formal way: Recording non-supportive voices in the meeting report

- "<company/country> requested that the following statement be recorded in this meeting report: <statement>"

- This way, <company/country> has a written record that it does not support the proposal but that it does not stand in the way of reaching consensus either

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A more formal way: Recording non-supportive voices in the Recommendation

- Include a statement in the text of the Rec that some companies/countries (list explicitly) have expressed a degree of reservation

- This is a valid, but extreme, solution – ITU is famous for reaching consensus, so the Study Group Chairman needs to explore all other avenues first

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How hard should a Rapporteur try to reach agreement?

- Rapporteur could say: I can't reach agreement in my Question, so I will forward the issue to the Working Party or to the Study Group plenary for decision
  - But: why should reaching agreement be any easier in a much larger WP or SG plenary?
  - In general, a good SG Chairman would say: don't bring unresolved issues to my SG closing plenary
- However, some participants may not want to compromise at the Question level because they may want to use their position as "negotiating mass" for other issues or want to escalate the debate to a higher level
- Nevertheless: try as hard as you can to reach agreement in your Question

3. Your role as leader

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Your Role as a Leader

- At some point, those in leadership positions, such as a Rapporteur or Editor, will be the Chairman of a meeting.

- The term "Chairman" in this section refers to anyone chairing a meeting, including a Study Group, a Question, an ad hoc group, an editing group, etc.

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The integrity of the Chairman

- A Chairman must <u>be</u> fair & impartial
- A Chairman must <u>be seen</u> fair & impartial
- A Chairman needs to earn trust - a long process
- Wear only one hat – that of the Chairman
  - If your company or government wants to take a position, they should send someone else to present it
  - Make sure your company/government knows you need to be impartial in the Chair before you take up the Chairmanship
  - View yourself as working for ITU, not for your company/government
  - View the delegates as customers

Communicating means listening

- Communication is indispensible for the Chairman:
  - Listen to the delegates on both sides of an issue
  - Consult with your TSB Counsellor
  - Listen to the SG Chairman, the WP Chairman, the SG management team, and get their advise
- Be visible
  - Attend the relevant meetings including ad hoc meetings

Communicating means being involved

- As chairman you need to be **<u>actively</u>** involved <u>before and during</u> the meeting period:
  - Consult with relevant parties
  - Discuss issues with delegates to gain a good understanding of the issues, the various perspectives, the strength of differing views, who holds them etc.
  - Identify potential opposition ahead of time, spend effort to understand their position, develop good relationship with them
  - Ensure all parties understand clearly the proposal to be decided on
  - You will be less successful if you are not visible and spend much time isolated in an office or behind your computer

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Communicating means involving

- Give everyone a chance to talk
- Involve new delegates in the process
  - Make an effort to get to know new participants in your group
  - Consider having "newbie" sessions at e.g. the study group level, perhaps even at the Question level

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Communicating means responding

- If a delegate asks you a question (e.g. via email), do respond

- If you need time to find an answer, or if you don't have time for an immediate comprehensive answer, do send a short acknowledgment that you received the question and that you will get back later

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Communicating means understanding languages

- Many delegates don't have English as a native language
- Talk slowly, and have other people talk slowly
- Make sure everyone understands the issue at hand and where you are going
- Ensure that written proposals by non-native English speakers are not defeated through eloquent verbal interventions from fluent English speakers – only because they are much more at ease with English

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Communicating means understanding cultures

- In some cultures you can be rather direct of saying that you don't agree with something
- In some cultures you don't easily voice different opinions openly
- "Losing face" is probably not a nice thing to happen to anyone in any culture, but in some cultures it may be more serious than in others
- So: always be polite

Thank you

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