

## QuickTip – Consolidation

Consolidation is an essential facilitation technique for making forward progress. It's a simple way to build up a series of small agreements in real time that leads to a bigger agreement by the end of a meeting. Consolidation helps the group spend more time on productive problem-solving and less time circling back to old topics.

### When to Use

Use consolidation when discussion is stuck or going in circles. For example, participants are rehashing what has already been said, are unable to close a topic, or are circling back to revisit completed topics and decisions without good reason.

Another sign that you should use consolidation is when you notice that participants forget exactly what was agreed on earlier in the meeting.

### Procedure

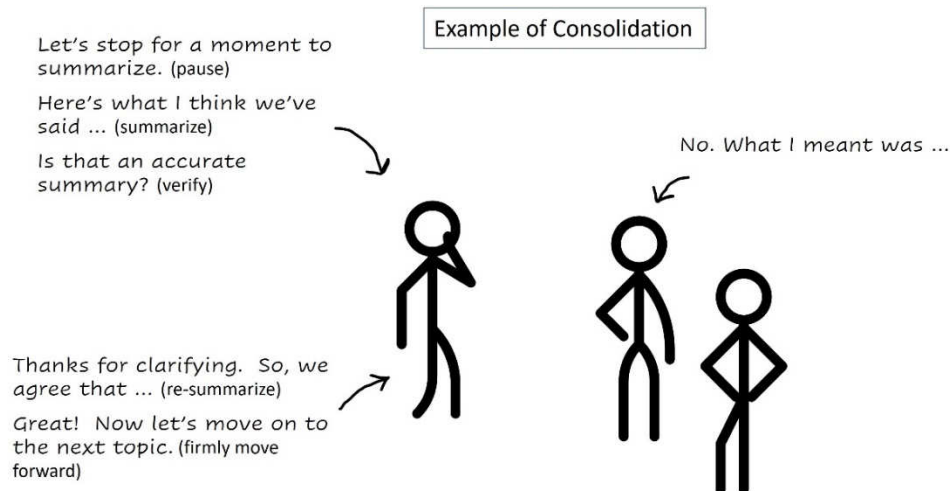
Consolidation has five quick steps. Whenever the discussion reaches tentative clarity or agreement about a point, immediately use these steps to grab a small victory.

1. Insert a verbal pause into the discussion
2. Summarize important ideas or points of agreement
3. Verify correctness
4. Re-summarize
5. Firmly move discussion to the next topic

Repeat frequently as the discussion progresses.

### Considerations

1. Here's an example of consolidation in action.



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2. Consolidation works because it intentionally builds up a series of small agreements, like a bricklayer laying a sturdy foundation brick by brick and layer by layer. Mortaring in each small agreement helps create a strong layer of mutual assent, minimizing the need to backtrack to repair a weak spot. By the end of the meeting, the series of small agreements adds up to a solid foundation.
  3. During the summarize (or re-summarize) step, you will usually get general agreement. If so, you can declare the topic closed, perhaps even writing the agreement down on a whiteboard or onscreen document, and then move on to the next topic. However, if you don't get agreement, guide the discussion to directly address the concerns and feedback so you can have a solid brick before inserting it in the foundation.
  4. Consolidation is a straightforward concept but using it fluidly and comfortably during a meeting takes practice. Try it first in a low stakes environment.