LAS VEGAS VOTING

I. Goal/Outcome

A simple method to winnow down lengthy lists into a manageable list.

II. Background/Context

During participative and engaging meetings, a great many ideas can be produced. Many groups utilize brainstorming for the generation of ideas. This, in turn, can create lengthy lists for the group to somehow manage. Even during average meetings, a group can create a long list of recommendations, suggestions, and ideas. The questions still remain: “What do we do with the list? How do we prioritize? Where do we begin?”

The Las Vegas vote is one of our favorite tools to utilize in collaborative efforts. It is open, democratic, and fair to all participants. Most importantly, it allows the change leader to see what people believe are the most important ideas on a list of good suggestions.

III. Logistics

Materials: Newsprint, magic markers, sticky dots (found at any stationary or office supply store)

Number of participants: Almost any size group (10 to 100)
IV. Implementation

The group develops a list of activities to be prioritized.

After all the ideas have been generated in a group, the facilitator might have a list like the following example:

**Improving Campus Morale**

1. Acknowledge and reward employees throughout campus
2. Have a campus picnic
3. Appoint a "climate coordinator"
4. Have monthly breakfast meetings with leaders
5. Have the president institute a campus update e-mail message
6. Bring together different stakeholder groups to solve campus issues
7. President needs to be more visible
8. Provost needs to be more visible
9. Have a suggestion box in the cafeteria
10. Distribute a questionnaire on campus morale

The facilitator states that, "Each one of these ideas is interesting, but where do we start? How do we choose among all these ideas?"

The facilitator explains to the participants that each person will have five "votes" to distribute among the ideas generated on the list. Participants use their colored dots to identify those ideas they believe will be the best ones to consider and implement. They can weigh their votes any way they want. (e.g., they can put all five of their votes on one idea, or put two votes on one idea, and three on another, or one vote for five different ideas, etc.)

Note: If you don't have sticky dots, you can use fingers to vote. If a participant wants to give a particular idea two votes, they would hold up two fingers. Count the votes as each idea is read aloud and mark the total next to the idea.

If you are using sticky dots, let the participants come up to the flipchart and vote for their
idea(s). In a few minutes you will have a sense of priority among the ideas. Your list may look like this:

### Improving Campus Morale

1. Acknowledge and reward employees throughout campus ✓/✓/✓/✓/✓/✓/✓/✓/✓/✓
2. Have a campus picnic ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
3. Appoint a “climate coordinator” ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
4. Have monthly breakfast meetings with leaders ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
5. Have the president institute a campus update e-mail message ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
6. Bring together different stakeholder groups to solve campus issues ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
7. President needs to be more visible ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
8. Provost needs to be more visible ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
9. Have a suggestion box in the cafeteria ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
10. Distribute a questionnaire on campus morale ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓

As you can see, ideas 5, 2, and 1 got the most votes.

### Helpful Hint

**When using the Las Vegas Vote, never give more than 10 votes per person. The votes should have some real weight in them, so that people “spend” them wisely. In small groups, five votes are plenty. In larger groups, you can use up to 10 votes.**

### Helpful Hint

**It may be helpful for the group to agree up front on a simple criterion for voting for an idea (e.g., it will really make a difference, it’s something we could do easily, it aligns with our culture and tradition, etc.). Creating a framework before voting, often helps produce the best ideas.**

### Helpful Hint

**Most of the time (90 percent), with a list of 10 ideas or more, utilizing the Las Vegas Vote will prioritize the top three or four ideas easily. There are times when a list will receive an even number of votes. When this happens, have people conduct a second round with three votes. This second vote will produce some priority ideas because participants can’t spread them around as much.**