

Multiple Anonymous Authentic Dissent (MAAD)

This involves asking experts, including all those involved with a given proposal, to act as dissenters. Each person independently writes all potential defects that he perceives in a proposed campaign. They then send their defect lists (unsigned) to an administrator who organizes, edits, and circulates the list to the group. Each expert then assumes that each of the objections has merit, and he describes ways to deal with the objections and sends them (again unsigned) to the administrator. Finally, the suggested improvements are then summarized by the administrator and provided to the group so that they can make appropriate revisions to the campaign. This process can be repeated.

To ensure that group members respond in a timely fashion, the MAAD process can be conducted during a meeting by taking time out for individual work.

Judging from related research on group processes, MAAD should be effective at improving proposals. Because many people can be involved in finding defects, the likelihood that important defects will be discovered increases. This process is analogous to a scientific peer review. As is known from research on peer reviews, individual reviewers catch only some errors when they review papers for publication. For example, in an experiment on medical research, 68% of the reviewers of a fictitious paper with intentional errors did not realize that the conclusions in the paper were not supported by the results (Baxt and Berlin 1998).

Properly used, efficiency will be higher with MAAD than with traditional meetings (or with DA) because time is not wasted in defending the original campaign. Instead the group effort goes into improving it. Acceptance under MAAD might also be higher because everyone can be involved in finding defects. Acceptance of changes would also be more likely because the process does not lead the group to bolster its arguments for the original campaign.

The need for anonymity in dissent is often critical to one's survival in an organization. This calls for contributions by everyone on the project as well as a summary that is done in a way that will protect identities.

Reference:

Baxt, William G. & Jesse A. Berlin (1998), "Who reviews reviewers? Feasibility of using a fictitious manuscript to evaluate peer reviewer performance," *Annals of Emergency Medicine*, 32 (3), 310-317.