



## BUSINESS TORQUE SYSTEMS

# How to Build a Safe Zone for Robust Decision-Making

Typical “safe zone” characteristics are listed below. Do not impose these characteristics, but guide your group to consider ones that could be appropriate for them. Let them come up with the ideas if possible, and ask one person to record, in words the group chooses, the characteristics they wish to adopt. They are roughly grouped in themes. Remember a safe zone isn't necessarily warm and comfortable, but a place that is safe enough to have very robust discussion. I'd love to hear how you've added to the list - use my email below.

### Personal basics

- No question is a silly question
- Mutual respect and positive relationships
- Fear is overcome by being courageous
- Honesty
- Openness and equity among people
- Transparency
- We declare conflicts of interest
- No hidden agendas
- Be authentic -the courage to be imperfect, vulnerable, and to set boundaries
- There is self-awareness and the understanding and consideration of others
- We are each personally aligned with the purpose
- We trust one another
- The Chatham House Rule applies
- Always acting in the best interests of the company (others)

### Listening/Questioning

- Active listening
- I never learn anything when I talk
- People seek first to understand, without judgement
- Excellent questioning
- Don't interrupt

### Contributions

- Everyone has a voice
- Everyone contributes
- Loud ones moderate their voices

### Debate

- Healthy robust debate
- Explorative debate
- Non-personal debate
- Challenge is good
- Constructive dissent
- Disagreement is OK (because of the other characteristics of respect, non-personal, etc)
- Even conflict is OK for the same reason

- Use a mediator/facilitator

### We're all learning

- We're always learning
- No-one knows it all
- Mistakes are welcomed
- Risk-taking is encouraged

### We're a collective

- No repercussions
- Unity of purpose
- Consensus -voting is failure
- Unanimity -we all agree on the way forward, even if someone has a different opinion personally
- All decisions are owned collectively
- No groupthink (no-one rolls over)
- No Abilene paradox (no-one wants to rock the boat so no-one voices a contrary opinion)
- An “effective working group” (not necessarily an effective team -Bob Garratt)
- Constant vigilance and awareness of what's happening in the room
- Sense of humour!
- Fun

### Give your 'safe zone' a name

Examples:

- “Tikanga a hui”
- “Our meeting values”
- 

This list becomes a 'living' document. Be constantly aware of developing and 'tuning' the list to who you have sitting at the board table, and what becomes necessary as a result of regularly evaluating how well you are working collectively.

Peter Allen, [peter@businessstorque.co.nz](mailto:peter@businessstorque.co.nz)