# Group Decision Room

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The Group Decision Room (GDR) is a room with electronic meeting support systems that can be used for a participative approach to complex tasks. The GDR exists out of a meeting room where each work place is furnished with a computer, with which the participants can collaborate, supported by the electronic meeting system.



Group Decision Support Room

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Within each organization many meetings and collaboration processes are preformed each day. In the ideal situation people cooperate in a meeting. They are meant to share and create knowledge and experiences, essential activities in an information society.
Many meetings are badly structured; we call a meeting where agenda and handouts are distributed in time a success. The handouts are, together with the individual knowledge of the participants, the available information that, used in a process (the meeting) leads to certain results.

Designing a good meeting, which results in satisfied participants that have collected the right information during the meeting, is a skill on its own. We call this skill facilitation, which means support. A facilitator is more that a workshop moderator or meeting chair. A facilitator can design and support a group process by combining group techniques, technology and decision-making techniques. Group support systems used in a GDR are an important support tool in this. (see picture)
The power of meeting technology is in a more productive and more effective group process. Meetings are fast and focused through the fast integration of information between the workstations, and the coupled, the use of audiovisual presentation facilities. Our customers and the participants of our sessions are very satisfied about the meeting process and the technology used. This is not an assumption, but a fact, measured by our constant quality questionnaires, where we strive for a more than satisfied rating.
A Group Decision Room supports the generation of new ideas (brainstorming) the convergence of a list of ideas, to focus the discussion, the organizing of ideas in categories or structures, the evaluations of ideas on different criteria and with different voting methods and consensus building, the process where the group works on getting more agreements and shared understanding.
Using a GDR groups can perform meeting activities and projects like strategy planning, crisis management, project evaluation, analysis, work-process design, budgeting and group training.

In a Group Decision room is not per-se the place where decisions are made for direct implementation. The system is very suitable to create an overview of the opinions and viewpoints within a group. This can be used to collect viewpoints but also to evaluate a product or to determine strategy in a later stadium, or when required we can support direct voting, ranking and even consensus building.

## Advantages

The most important advantages of a GDR are:

## Anonymity:

Each participant is anonymous during the meeting. Results are visualized in an overview where no participant or leader knows who contributed what idea. This supports a free exchange of thoughts and positive criticism, ideas are only valued on content, independent of who contributed them. Especially teams that have difficulty in cooperating will profit form anonymity. The conflicts but also the similarities within a group are clear and it is possible for a participant to change his viewpoint without being vulnerable.

## Parallel working:

The participants contribute their ideas at the same time; in fact everyone is talking at the same time. This results in a large gain in time. To give an indication; in a brainstorm with 10 persons, during 10 minutes more than 200 different ideas can be generated. Of cause there are methods available, a bit more time consuming, to reduce the overload that results.

A small group (up to 20 persons) can, in 2.5-3 hours time, and in 3 or 4 steps, create an overview of a problem situation or question. Depending on the complexity of the task, the number of participants and the requested precision or detail a session can take between 2 hours and 2 days. A facilitator can estimate how much time a group needs for a task.

## Automatic Minutes:

In a normal meeting the result can get lost by bad or uncompleted minutes. In a GDR session a complete report of the electronic interaction is available any time during or after the meeting. The report is saved in MS word format. On request we can let a student assistant, supervised by a facilitator, work out the minutes into a proper report.

## Structured discussion:

The structured approach of sessions where technology and facilitation is combined keeps the group focused on the final result and prevents the discussion from deviation to unproductive side discussions. Other than on a flip-over a brainstorm can be structured in for instance categories, both before and after the brainstorm process. This can easily be performed with a drag and drop function.

# Integration of Modelling, Simulation and GroupSupport

## User friendliness

GroupSystems for Windows is a user-friendly software program. Because the system is operated by a technical assistant that we name "chauffeur", in general an instruction of five minutes is sufficient to teach participants to work with the system. Through the clear overview the program provides, participants are encouraged to participate in the different activities that are proposed by the facilitator.

## Applicatieons of the GDR:

The following activities are preformed using a Group Decision Room:
- Defining van Project plans
- Determining criteria for project selection
- Development and design of new product concepts
- Development of Balanced Score Cards
- Development of IT-strategy

- Evaluation of prototypes and computer applications
- Expert forums
- Formulation of (human) resource management goals.
- Identification of critical success factors
- Identification of organizational problem areas
- Identification of directions for problem solving
- Management training
- Multi disciplinary approach and analysis of problem areas
- Policy development and -evaluation
- Product evaluation by customers and future users
- Risk analysis
- Simulation Games and Management games
- Strategy analysis, -development and –formulation
- Strength / Weaknesses analysis

In theory, each meeting process can be supported by GSS. A facilitator can advice and estimate how long preparation and execution will take.

## GDR Services

Apart from session facilitation we provide the following services:

- Facilitation courses for novices and intermediates
- Support in the design of GSS supported organization processes
- Advice and support on distributed meeting processes

## Experiences

To give you an impression of the customers that used our GDR:
Governmental

- Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management
- Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment
- Ministry of Economic affaires
- Police Department Amsterdam-Amstelland
- Police Department Rotterdam-Rijnmond

Semi- Governmental

- Rotterdam Port management

Organizations

- KPN
- NUON
- Amsterdam Airport Schiphol
- TNO

## Research

Our GSS research is focused on practice and most of the research projects are performed in cooperation with different partners from industry and the government. Several themes are important in the GSS program.

- Collaborative Business Engineering (CBE)
- GSS acceptation, adoption en divergence
- GSS session design
- Distributed GSS use
- The effect of context on GSS use
- Collaboration buildingblocks (thinkLets)
- Institionalizing of GSS use in and between organizations
- Support in collaborative design of simulation models

## Facilities

GDR session can have very different characteristics, from creative product development till serious finial evaluations, from meetings till workshops. Therefore our facilities are flexible and focused on a working atmosphere. Apart from the GSS system and all modern projection materials, each room is provided with whiteboards, flipover's, extra tables and air-conditioning. Furthermore the use of repro and facilitation articles like markers, sheets, paper, post-its etc. is included. Apart from a facilitator, a chauffeur technically supports each session. The chauffeur runs the program and provides and prepares equipment for the session. The system is available in a mobile version.

**Mobile Meeting system (25 persons):**
We can also offer facilitation and GSS support on location. Our mobile meeting facility has a standard size of 15 work stations, but can be extended till 25 stations. Because of its flexible size and arrangement, it can be used for a large variety of meetings, for instance, strategic company workshops, executive workshops, gaming, expert panels and conferences. The system can be arranged in small subgroups with each a separate meeting function. In the meeting room on location a u-shaped meeting table and projection screen is recommended. For information contact:

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