Assessment Meeting Conflict Resolution

# Concerns

* Given that we were not invited to attend this meeting to lead conflict there is a concern that we could insult the client with how we lead (if it’s seen as ‘We did not invite you here to solve this problem’)
  + POSSIBLE RESOLTUION: Have a brief conversation with the Product Owner/Sponsor beforehand stating that if conflict arises we will help facilitate it within the meeting and if the Owner/Sponsor feels we may be overstepping our bounds they can interject and take over
* Given that we have no authority over meeting attendees there is a concern that our facilitation of the conflict may not be effective
  + POSSIBLE RESOLUTION: Establish an agreement with the attendee, that has the most authority, most likely the project sponsor, to help facilitate the meeting *(possibly dangerous)*
    - Establish how the FNTG meeting facilitator might defer some of the conflict resolution to the project sponsor
    - Be cautious on relying too much on the project sponsor to aid in facilitating the meeting conflict
* Given that we leave conflict resolution follow up in the hands of the client there is a concern that there will not be follow-through
  + POSSIBLE RESOLUTION: Establish an agreement with Product Owner to have them follow-up after the meeting
* Given the possibility that certain conflicts may be seeded by deeper problems within the company, department, or personal lives there is a concern that we will not be able to efficiently or effectively facilitate the meeting
  + POSSIBLE RESOLUTION: Break the discussion, to allow attendees to mentally step away from the issue at hand, and then try to resume the discussion after a while beginning by restating the ground rules with more involved support from the Product Sponsor

# In-House Meeting Set up Guidelines

Meetings external to the Five Nines office will be hard to ensure that we adhere to these guidelines.

* Meeting room should allow for all attendees to feel equal
  + Circular seating arrangement (avoid the head of the table effect)
  + Seats that keep everyone eye level
* Meeting room atmosphere
  + Comfortable temperature
  + Minimum visual distraction
    - Windows where outside movement frequently happens
* Meeting Ground Rules and Agenda should be displayed or easily seen
  + Written on a white board or given on a document

# Our Commitment

* Establish meeting “Ground Rules” that keep the playing field level for all attending and *have the group agree* to adhere to the rules before progressing
* Guiding the meeting so that everyone gets an uninterrupted turn in expressing their ideas and encouraging others to actively listen
* Encouraging those speaking to speak **with the group** and not***to*** the facilitator (unless the conversation/question is directed towards the facilitator)
  + It’s easy for the conversation turn into more of a ‘gossip’ session during conflict if the affected do not speak to each other (encourage eye contact?)
* Refrain from contributing to conflict by:
  + Actively listening
  + Not interrupting, unless otherwise necessary to facilitate the meeting
  + Remaining unbiased
    - If you do feel a bias towards one solution, state that up front
      * Trying to act unbiased can kill your credibility
      * If this becomes impossible release facilitation responsibilities to another

# Role of the Facilitator

* Guide the meeting
* Actively listen to all speakers
* Remain neutral on topics at hand
* Help curb heated discussions to keep the focus on the meeting
* Facilitator is not there to solve the conflict issues but will help facilitate them as needed as they may arise in the Agile Assessment meeting

# Facing Conflict

When conflict happens try to help defuse it with the following:

* Actively listen to all points
  + Pick strong points from each conversation and reiterate them
  + Help a decision to be made from these points
    - Be careful to not let you own bias enter in here
* Reflect on the ground-rules established in the beginning of the meeting
* Remain neutral – even if you favor a side
* Do not interrupt, unless the conversation is becoming very heated
  + If it is becoming too heated it may be important to break the conversation/argument and take over to review what you are hearing against what you see. At this point it may be pertinent to employ the use of the product owner to help in facilitating the argument.
* After segments of a conversation have been spoken reiterate them with what you heard using neutral techniques by employing sentence starters like:
  + “What I hear you saying… …is this accurate?” – This allows the speaker the opportunity to revise their statement if they feel your recap did not encapsulate all of what they were trying to convey.
  + “I can see that this means a lot to you…” – This lets them know that their body language is conveying what you are expressing, they may not realize that their body language is putting off these signals. This also conveys that their point is clearly visible, not to say that it is or is not correct.
  + “I feel that…” – I feel statements are often best used by those who are directly in the argument. Using a feel statement will help convey how the argument is affecting you. This sometimes helps quell the intensity of an argument and bring it back to a more manageable level. When employed by the facilitator it can convey that an argument has gone too far or too long or that an attendee has over stepped their bounds.
* If conflict seems unresolvable or is will take too much time to defuse try to have those involved to agree to set this problem aside for the rest of the meeting.
  + Try to have the product owner or sponsor follow-up with them.