



FMCS

FEDERAL MEDIATION & CONCILIATION SERVICE

Technology Assisted Group Solutions (TAGS)

Group Problem Solving and Decision Making Tools

Could your organization or group benefit from FMCS technology-assisted collaboration tools?

What Is the TAGS System?

The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) utilizes its Technology Assisted Group Solutions (TAGS) System, a powerful network of computers and customized software, to help groups:

- ♦ Solve problems more effectively,
- ♦ Make better decisions,
- ♦ Implement decisions more successfully,
- ♦ Conduct successful meetings, and
- ♦ Conduct surveys

What Are the Benefits?

FMCS customers who use TAGS can expect to conduct shorter, more productive, problem-focused meetings. TAGS helps participants share knowledge and opinions more constructively, generate better ideas and build stronger commitment to joint action. Also, in today's world, geographic dispersion of organizational members requires innovative and effective methods for bringing groups together for problem-solving efforts. It is designed to help minimize the impact of geographic separation and minimize transaction costs associated with group decision-making.

How the TAGS System Works

On the Internet

TAGS acts as a virtual conference center, accessed via a direct link in an e-mail message, or by entering their user ID and password at the TAGS website. Participants go directly to a secure, virtual conference room to either join a "live" meeting or may access one or multiple stored topics. Topics range from a survey, an asynchronous brainstorming session, an opportunity to assess ideas, a chance to view results, to an action planning session or one of several other online TAGS functions. In some cases, participants can complete entire tasks online during or between meetings that used to require multiple face-to-face meetings. The online work is designed to shorten and better focus the time spent face-to-face.



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Combined Internet/Face-to-Face

TAGS supports meetings where some attendees are face-to-face and others are attending electronically. In most cases, this is a huge savings of time and money.

Face-to-Face Meetings

In a well-run traditional meeting, participants individually voice ideas while a facilitator tries to capture them on a flip chart, one-by-one. In a TAGS meeting, participants simultaneously contribute ideas with our easy-to-use software on a network of computers. All ideas immediately post to an electronic flip chart displayed on each person's computer and on a large screen at the front of the room.

Participants build on others' ideas and continue to offer new ideas in their own words and with complete anonymity. Using a mixture of group discussion and TAGS tools, participants can categorize and prioritize ideas, use electronic "ballots" to anonymously indicate their level of support for each idea, view tabulated results on-screen, and discuss results in an effort to reach consensus.

TAGS technology does not replace expert mediation skills and human interaction among participants in a face-to-face meeting. Instead, the mediator uses this technology to enhance participant interaction and outcome. Once agreement is reached, participants can use TAGS to assign tasks with completion targets and implementation timelines. The mediator can print out complete meeting notes before participants leave the meeting and archive meeting data for future use (or shred the information to ensure confidentiality).

Applications

TAGS can be highly effective in:

- ◆ Interest-based negotiations
- ◆ Traditional bargaining
- ◆ Surveys via the Internet
- ◆ Strategic planning
- ◆ Remote meetings
- ◆ Labor-Management Committee meetings
- ◆ Negotiated Rulemaking or other Public Policy dispute discussions

Collaborative processes can be greatly enhanced by TAGS engagement linking live and remote participants in seamless problem-solving processes or simply bringing large groups of people together via the Internet.

For More Information

For more information regarding the TAGS System or other FMCS technology assisted collaboration tools, please see our website at www.fmcs.gov or contact the FMCS Headquarters Office at 202-606-8100.

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