

Challenge

Ways of strengthening this voice:

1. When it becomes clear to you that a discussion has lost its way or become unproductive, intervene by saying so: *'It doesn't feel as if we're getting anywhere here.'* *'I think we've got stuck because of a lack of hard data...'* (Challenge is an interruptive and re-focusing voice, so it is often the bridge to carry a discussion into another, more productive pattern.)
2. Support your challenge with a non-verbal signal: raise your hand just enough to catch the eye of your colleagues, into the conversational space. This signals your need for a 'turn' in the conversation.
3. Chose your (few) words of intervention with care, because Challenge is a voice that is easily mis-heard, often as attack or personal criticism or intrusive advocacy. *'Hang on a moment.'* *'Can we just pause there?'*
4. Frame your challenge as a comment on the quality and effectiveness of the discussion, eg *'The assumption that we are making there is...'* or *'The problem with the way we're going about this is ...'*
5. Learn facilitational skills and take on the facilitator's role. Chairing a discussion gives the formal position from which the Challenging voice is most readily expected and accepted. Taking on the role of facilitator provides a similar, though less formal opportunity to assume this voice.