So far, we studied negotiations that only contain two parties. You planned and strategized for a conflict dealing with only one other party. Not all conflicts or negotiations involve only one other party. Often times in workplace conflicts or negotiations, you will deal with multiple parties. Multiple parties offer challenges such as differing attitudes, personalities, agendas, etc. Every time a new party is added to the mix, the chances increase for[miscommunication](http://ezproxy.rasmussen.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsbl&AN=RN253703888&site=eds-live) and parties feeling as though they are not being heard. Each party feels as though their issue is the most important and wants to ensure that the others hear their side or issues.

If parties feel as though they are not being heard, then this leads to another issue: [information gathering](http://www.negotiations.com/articles/multiparty-negotiation/) . You previously learned the importance of gathering as much information from the other party so that together you could work towards the all-important win-win in an integrative negotiation or so that you have the facts necessary to negotiate for an advantage in a distributive negotiation. All of the parties come to the table with the expectation of being heard. The problem then becomes: How do you "hear" all of the parties when dealing with multiple individuals and issues?

Preparing for a multiparty negotiation mirrors that of preparing for a traditional two party negotiation, but with an emphasis on maintaining order and creating rules so that it is a fair playing field. A third-party neutral should be nominated to orchestrate the process. This person will enforce the rules and maintain order as best as possible when dealing with multiple people at the table. This will help to alleviate parties from being excluded or from a party or parties from dominating the conversation. The neutral will also help to remind the parties to focus on the problems and not the people. This will alleviate some of the emotional issues that coincide with negotiations.

Once the third party neutral is in place, the next step is to create a [negotiation agenda](http://www.negotiations.com/definition/negotiation-agenda/). The agenda states the goals of the meeting so that the parties can track their progress and mark off issues they resolved or need to resolve. This will help to focus the parties and keep them on track. When multiple parties meet it is easy for them to start discussing issues that are not vital to the issues of the day. Multiple parties can present challenges, but they also offer the opportunity for a variety of a people to look at an issue from different perspectives and offer diverse resolutions. By having a neutral in place with a [solid plan](http://www.negotiations.com/articles/multiparty-solutions/) for rules and order, the parties will be able to have a beneficial meeting.