

Voting. A fair and representational way to decide if A is better than B... Isn't it? A simple mechanic where people are asked to express their opinion by way of simply ticking a box, or clicking a button or whatever.

However, as we can see time and time again, this is not actually as fair as it seems on the face of it. Instead of being a fair view of what people feel about something, it actually turns into a popularity contest.

If you set up a competition where the criteria is "he who has the most votes wins", what do you think is going to happen? Are those involved going to just sit back and wait for votes to come in, or are they going to campaign? If they campaign, who will they campaign to? Will they be people who can make an informed decision on what is actually the best option, or will it be friends, family and social media followers? Worse still, will it be people who have been encouraged into voting (read bribed)?

What you get then is people with the biggest networks winning the vote, rather than the best option winning. It also creates some abhorrent behaviour. I have seen simple votes fall into farce when people try to buy votes, or "bend" the rules to create a situation where they just win by the sheer volume of "friendly" voters.

I've seen systems that tried to balance this by only allowing a pool of experts in the field vote. In theory, this is better, as at least it gets those who may know what they are talking about involved. However, again, this is easily gamed when the definition of an expert is not solid. What can happen then is those who are desperate win start to get their friends to appear to be experts to get into the voting system. Again, it falls apart and becomes a popularity contest.

I am not offering an alternative, though I often feel that expert panels are a better way to go. The point is that if you create a system that heavily relies on a popularity vote, be prepared for unexpected results and a backlash! Make sure that any rules around eligibility are strongly enforced. Be sure that checks and balances are in place to prevent a pure popularity campaign winning. This just sours it for those who entered in good faith. Everyone should have a fair chance of winning, not just those with the most "friends"...

Oh, the image has nothing to do with the topic - that's some of the pages from the new second edition of Even [Ninja Monkeys](#) Like to Play - the Unicorn Edition! Coming out in the next week or so ☐

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*Also published on [Medium](#).*

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