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SOUTHWEST CAPT
APPLYING PREVENTION THAT WORKS!

Facilitation Guide for People in Prevention

beginning the journey

by Linda "Sunny" Walker

College of Continuing Education

The University of Oklahoma

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Prevention Works!

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

For years I worked with small communities, neighborhoods, and organizations, including the one I represented, making up and experimenting with ways to allow people to participate in the decisions that affected their lives. I had no idea I was participating in an actual profession—Group Process Facilitation. So acknowledgements must begin with those who so patiently allowed me to try guiding them into various patterns of participation. Of course, the guiding usually went the other way and I was the learner.

I owe a huge debt to The Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), the organization who sent me hither and yon, from deep east Texas to the Marshall Islands, from our then-headquarters in Chicago, overseeing global operations, to Caracas, Venezuela. Their insight, that local people are the best architects of their own future, especially when supported with avenues to outside resources and options, continues to shape my own approach.

Many of the facilitators who continue to share learnings are former ICA colleagues. I am especially grateful to Eunice Shankland and Gary Forbes who pushed me to think outside of the ICA box, and to get clear on the basics. Eunice created the Facilitation Landscape concept, and worked on the listening section; Gary's contribution can be found in the five-step approach to preparation. Both Pat Tuecke and Jean Watts pushed me to go deeper in terms of the tools I had from the ICA's work.

The International Association of Facilitators has been another source of colleagues and inspiration, a place where facilitators freely share their tools and knowledge, as do my training buddies in the ToP® Trainers' Network. The facilitators whose insights have become part of my own knowledge base are countless and ultimately appreciated. Those who allowed me to quote them or adapt their material are especially noted.

Finally, this publication would not have been possible without CSAP's Southwest CAPT. The Southwest CAPT has long been a user/supporter of facilitation within their staff meetings and with their clients, offering me many opportunities to continue to learn and to share my learnings through training. It was there I found the ICA's philosophy of local people claiming their destiny repeated and reinforced in the CAPT's own work. LaDonna Coy first planted the idea of a beginning facilitation guide for people in prevention and has remained a staunch supporter, encouraging me, working on the outline, reading the manuscript, and offering excellent suggestions for improvement. LaDonna also shared the first full draft with other staff members in the field whose positive response pushed me to completion. Another critical Southwest CAPT staffer was Brenda Powell whose gentle e-mails kept me on the publication track, working on final changes, permissions to quote or reprint, as well as finalizing the format, giving you the Guide in this lovely, final version. Dr. Glenda Hufnagel then did her magic as editor, a task of incredible care.

And to all of you who continue to let me facilitate your outcomes and train you in facilitation, thank you. For those I've not mentioned by name, you are not forgotten. Keep up the good work—facilitation in particular!

Sunny Walker
Denver, Colorado
March, 2003

PREFACE

"Significant and lasting accomplishment will not come from extraordinary people (individuals) but from extraordinary combinations of people who learn how to think and work together."

--Robert Hargrove
Mastering the Art of Creative Collaboration

We at CSAP's Southwest Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies (Southwest CAPT) are pleased to offer this resource – *Facilitation Guide for People in Prevention*. This project is the culmination of many conversations, collaboratively planned events, and requests from prevention service providers in the Southwest region who desire to work more effectively with the diverse groups of people they serve.

Most of us, at some time in our lives, are faced with conducting a meeting or facilitating some kind of group gathering e.g., coalition meeting, volunteer meeting, or workshop. We've all been a part of meetings or events that simply didn't work well. Why do meetings and group gatherings fail to be productive? Often as we go about the work of prevention we rely on what we've been traditionally taught for organizing and managing group involvement – the hierarchical system of Roberts Rules of Order. While these "rules" work in some settings, they are not optimal for community participation and meaningful involvement.

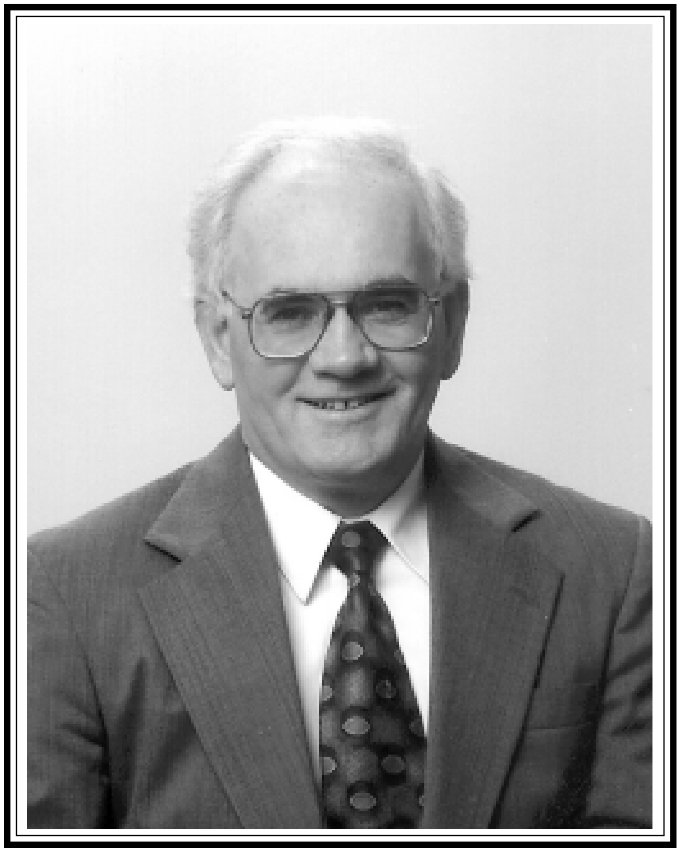
The author of this guide, Linda "Sunny" Walker, has more than 25 years of experience in facilitating groups from around the world both in developing and developed countries. She brings her experience to a convergence point in this guide to support prevention professionals and practitioners as well as community members who have accepted a leadership role in community service.

Developing successful community coalitions often hinges upon being able to effectively support the start-up and progress of community groups working to assess needs and resources, develop capacity, select strategies, plan, implement and evaluate prevention programs and initiatives.

It is our sincere hope that you will find this resource invaluable to your work in prevention as you plan, implement and evaluate meetings and events. Regardless of the type of gathering, these tools support thoughtful and intentional action in the spirit of participation and collaboration.

Janette Cline
Interim Director
CSAP's Southwest Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies

Dedication



In memory of our friend and colleague

Andrew O'Donovan

with whom we traveled many miles,
dialogued many hours,
presented, problem-solved and
worked to create responsive prevention systems
that support communities becoming better places
for all children.

His generous and thoughtful contribution to prevention
in Kansas and as a member of the Southwest Regional
Coordinating Council is immeasurable.

Introduction

In this Guide, the author and her colleagues at CSAP's Southwest Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies (CAPT) are inviting you on a grand adventure. As the *Peanuts* character, Charlie Brown, used to say, "I love mankind. It's people I can't stand!" There is nothing quite so mysterious and intriguing as that "wily human factor." Our workplaces and communities, however, is where we are most blessed. Without people, there is no group. We do not get to choose the people in our group, we get who we get. The question is "Then What?" So, in this Facilitation Guide, we offer you some basic information plus lots of hints and tips on engaging and working with groups in the role of facilitator. So, first, a little background on the difference between a group leader and a facilitator, where they overlap, and when it's important to separate the two.

WHAT'S THE BIG FUSS?

WHAT IS A FACILITATOR?

Below are three separate, but related, definitions of a facilitator.

Definition 1: From a group of facilitators in the ZHABA Collective in Eastern Europe (http://www.zhaba.cz), comes this clear and simple definition:

> "A facilitator is a person that is not necessarily an expert on a specific issue (though can be), but an expert on process. A facilitator is trained in communication (verbal and non-verbal), working with people, resistance, group dynamics, effective meetings, decision-making, workshop-design and implementation, and dealing with crises. A facilitator's specialty is, literally translated from Latin, 'to make things work.'. . ."[1]

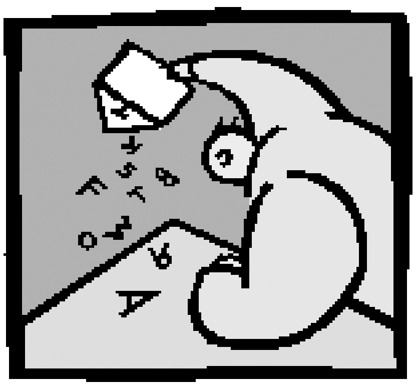
Definition 2: In terms of group dymanics, note this definition of leaders as facilitators from the Technology of Participation Group Facilitation Methods ®:

> Effective leadership is moving away from the authority of hierarchical leadership and toward a dynamic and empowering style embodied by the leader as facilitator. The facilitative approach to leadership, sensitive to the hierarchical structures of groups and organizations, seeks ways of going beyond the limits set by structure and helps to bring out the best in individuals and groups.

[1] From "What is a facilitator?" by ZHABA Facilitator Collective, retrieved online November, 2001. Available: www.zhaba.cz. Reprinted with permission.

Adopting the style of the facilitator in one's role as a leader, manager, supervisor or employee means accessing the power of the group's diverse perspectives in facing situations, problems or issues while maintaining respect and integrity within the group.

The facilitator is concerned with highly energized, productive, inclusive and meaningful participation and knows how to engage people in planning and decision making.



The facilitator seeks and is open to decisions that will be owned and implemented by members of the group or organization.

Rather than depending upon charismatic abilities and influencing skills, the facilitator relies on and trusts in the wisdom and ability of the group, receives input without judgement and works toward an experience of success for the whole group.

Technology of Participation (ToP®) group facilitation methods help a group to draw upon accumulated experience and move toward action. ToP® methods provide processes that build on the creativity, decisions and capabilities of people. Responsibility for decisions, actions and outcomes are anchored in the group.[2]

Definition 3: Here's another from the Foreword of *The Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making:* by Sam Kaner, et al.:

> I see group facilitation as a whole constellation of ingredients: a deep belief in the wisdom and creativity of people; a search for synergy and overlapping goals; the ability to listen openly and actively; a working knowledge of group dynamics; a deep belief in the inherent power of groups and teams; a respect for individuals and their points of view; patience and a high tolerance for ambiguity to let a decision evolve and gel; strong interpersonal and collaborative problem-solving skills; an understanding of thinking processes; and a flexible versus lock-step approach to resolving issues and making decisions.[3]

It is no wonder that facilitation has become a profession in its own right, with specialties,

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[2] From *Group Facilitation Methods: Effective Methods for Participation* (page 6), by The Institute of Cultural Affairs, 2002, Phoenix, AZ: Author. Reprinted with permission.

[3] From *The Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making* by Sam Kaner, et al. (p. vii), 1996, Philadelphia, PA: New Society. Reprinted with permission.

sub-specialties and a host of subtleties. But don't let that scare you. If we were talking about the profession of medicine, this wouldn't be a Guide for doctors. It would be more of an instruction manual for a sophisticated first-aid kit. This Guide is all about the basics and they are simple, fairly easy to understand and master, and can be used by group leaders as well as a more neutral outsider.

WHY USE A FACILITATOR?

I found the following explanation in my facilitation files. The source is unknown, but the explanation is a good one.

There are many reasons to engage a facilitator for a meeting. First of all, it is crucial to ensure that everyone is working on the same thing. Think of this in terms of establishing focus with the outcome, intent and context.

By outcome, we're talking about the result that is required in the situation. This could be a mandate from the funding agency, the result a team has decided for a project, a [desired] accomplishment, or whatever one decides. In this manual we will refer to this as the rational aim or objective of the event.

The intent has to do with what you perceive people need to know and experience if they are going to be able to achieve the identified result. In this manual we will refer to intent as the experiential aim or objective of the event.

The context gets everyone on the same song sheet as you describe what the situation is, clarify the outcome that is needed, state why it is important, suggest a way to proceed and then ask if people are ready to move forward together. Some of the context may be in the form of questions if things are open for the group to make a decision. A context needs to set the stage for people to think and act together, to broaden perspectives and to frame or reframe a topic, issue or situation.

Putting things in the framework of helping people work faster and smarter by focusing their attention and engaging them in the task at hand is a facilitative act.

CRUCIAL QUESTION: WHEN DO WE NEED A FACILITATOR?

Although you sometimes find yourself in a situation where you wish you had brought in an outside facilitator, that's a little late to be thinking of criteria. Do that before the meeting and use the following rules as a guide for your decision (categories thanks to facilitator Sandor Schuman of Albany, New York):

A skilled, outside and therefore, hopefully, neutral facilitator is especially helpful

- When distrust or bias is apparent or could be suspected by participants,
- When intimidation experienced by some of the participants could lessen their participation,
- When there is obvious rivalry between individuals or organizations,
- When the problem is poorly defined or differently defined by multiple parties,
- When the situation is particularly complex or novel,
- When the leadership needs to participate vs. facilitate,
- When urgency calls for process expertise, or
- When the need to be productive makes having a facilitator particularly cost effective.[4]

USING THE MANUAL

This manual is set up to allow you to use only what you need when you need it. Some of the information in different sections may appear repetitious but is hopefully presented from a slightly different perspective that will strengthen your learning about facilitation.

[4] From "What to look for in a group facilitator" by Sandor P. Schuman, 1996, *Quality Progress, 26:6,* pp. 69-72. Copyright 1996 by The American Society for Quality. Adapted with permission.

FACILITATION "LANDSCAPE"

Like most professions, facilitation has many facets and specialties. Below is a list of examples. Note that some of these are common sense and easily learned. Others are more complicated and take practice. They tend to become more complex toward the end of the list. If your group needs facilitation that you feel is beyond your current level of expertise, CSAP's Southwest CAPT can identify an experienced facilitator.

Platform Skills
- Public Speaking
- Reflective/Active Listening
- Interviewing Skills
- Clear & Readable Flip Chart and Board Work
- Eye Contact
- Inviting, Affirming Style
- Pacing, Timing

Facilitation Techniques & Approaches
- Brainstorming
- Cardstorming
- Questioning Techniques
- Managing Group Dynamics
- Graphic Facilitation
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Dialogue Method

Process Design
- Environmental Scans
- Meeting Planning
- Focus Question
- Event Formulation
- Event Orchestration
- Strategic Planning
- Search Conferences (also known as Future Search Conferences)
- Open Space

Participatory Methods
- Focused Conversation
- Consensus Workshop
- Group Study
- Case Study
- Simulation
- Role Play
- Games
- Nominal Group Process
- Fishbone
- Pareto
- Force Field
- Ground Rules

Systems Change
- Corporate Planning
- Work Unit Start Up
- Self-Directed Work Teams
- Business Process Re-Engineering
- Organization Design

Philosophy & Values
- Organization Development
- Corporate Policy
- Organizational Values
- Corporate Culture
- Philosophy & Mission Statements

BREAKING IT DOWN INTO MANAGEABLE CHUNKS

Facilitation, like meeting planning or any other well-carried out task, has **three phases**, no matter who the audience or what the task. These are:

1. **Preparation**
2. **Delivery**
3. **Follow-up**.

This particular Guide will talk about a basic understanding and set of tools for any Preventionist or community member to use in each of the three phases. Note also the special section devoted to individual meeting management.

WHAT IF I DON'T UNDERSTAND SOME OF THIS?

Hm-m-m-m. Perfectly understandable. Oh, yeah? Well, don't fret. Both training and coaching are available from CSAP's Southwest CAPT. Just phone us at 405-325-1454 or 800-853-2572. We'll put you in touch with someone who can help!

Step 1: Preparation

Facilitation, in at least one sense, is a lot like painting a room. Ninety percent of your time is spent in preparation. Facilitating a gathering requires knowing certain things about the group, their expectations, the issue and the location and setup. The key preparation phases, all built on the foundation of the meeting's purpose, look like this:

1 **WHY ARE WE MEETING?**

Answering the Primary Question First

2 **WHAT'S THE SITUATION?**

Getting Ready to Design an Event

3 **WHO'S COMING?**

Knowing Your Audience

4 **WHAT WILL WE DO?**

Designing Key Activity Modules

5 **DETAILS, DETAILS, DETAILS**

The Logistics of an Event

Now we will take you step by step through the actual preparation for facilitating an event!

1 WHY ARE WE MEETING?

Answering The Primary Question First

Before you hold a meeting, you need to know why you need to meet and what outcomes you want from the meeting. This is true whether you are coming to the meeting as an outside facilitator or you are a member of the group. Also, there are two kinds of outcomes – objective and subjective. Let's call them the **Rational Aim** and the **Experiential Aim** of the event. They can be very simple. "We want people to get to know each other and to understand the importance of prevention in our community." Understanding the importance of prevention is a rational outcome, something you want the group to know by the end of the meeting. Getting to know each other is an experiential outcome, something they may experience at the meeting.

BE CLEAR ON...

THE RATIONAL AIM

The Rational Aim is what people need to know, decide, accomplish or discuss during the meeting.

THE EXPERIENTIAL AIM

The Experiential Aim is what needs to happen to the group during the meeting, what kind of *experience* you want them to have.

"HELP!! IT'S UNCLEAR. HOW DO I FIND OUT THE AIMS OR OUTCOMES?"

Ask those who want to have the meeting to clarify what they hope will happen at the meeting.

Find out the bigger picture. Have they already had meetings? Are other groups working on this?

If all else fails, you can always ask the group who shows up at the meeting what they expect and work to meet those expectations. However, it's optimal to do this ahead of time so you can think about how to meet expectations.

2 WHAT'S THE SITUATION?

Getting Ready To Design An Event

Start with an analysis of the situation. Talk with persons most concerned, read background information, and carefully analyze the situation. This helps to identify the "givens" of the event before designing the event.

Points to consider include purpose, linking with other related events-before and after, results or products, and constraining factors. See the chart on the next page for ideas on the details you need to gather about the situation. A blank form can be found in the Appendix.

There are many ways to find out what you need to know. Begin by talking with those asking you to facilitate the event.

SAMPLE SET OF QUESTIONS TO GET INFORMATION

1. What have been some achievements in the past year that you are especially pleased about?
2. What are some challenges you see needing to be dealt with to move forward in a more positive way?
3. What do you hope happens at this upcoming event?

See "Designing a Focus Question" on page 11 for one approach to finding out most of what you need to know to design a facilitated event.

Another useful way to find out what you need to know, is to create an effective design to get input from the participants. This can be through face-to-face, or telephone interviews, or through a simple written survey—best if only 3 or 4 clear questions are sent either by e-mail, fax or mail. Often, it may require two or three attempts to get the information you need. Be sure to use the same questions with all participants. See the section on Focused Conversation for hints on how to ask questions. At the very minimum, ask each person to identify their expectations for the event. This will tell you what they know about the topic already and what you will have to do to either shift, manage (only if unrealistic within the time frame), or meet the expectations.

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF - #1

SITUATION ANALYSIS Worksheet

Event:________________________ Site:_________________________ Date:__________

Purpose:

- Why the event is being held?
- What are the key organizers assuming?
- What are the given needs, concerns, expectations the event is responding to?

Linking with Other Related Events:

- How is the event related to previous events or activities?
- How does this event relate to future plans?
- What follow-up activities are anticipated after the event?

Results or Products:

- What are the tangible results expected?
- Do different stakeholders expect different results?
- How will agreement be reached among participants about expected results?
- How will you know if it happened? (refer to *Discerning a Focus Question* for designing this with the client.)
- What kind of documentation is required?
- How will the results of the meeting be shared?

Constraining Factors:

- Are there issues affecting the event, e.g. need for pre-event education or training?
- Do any of the event activities require some technical knowledge or experience?
- Are there any logistical or site concerns e.g., lighting, furniture, materials, equipment issues?
- What do the key organizers say about the event?
- What are the given needs/concerns/ expectations the event is responding to?

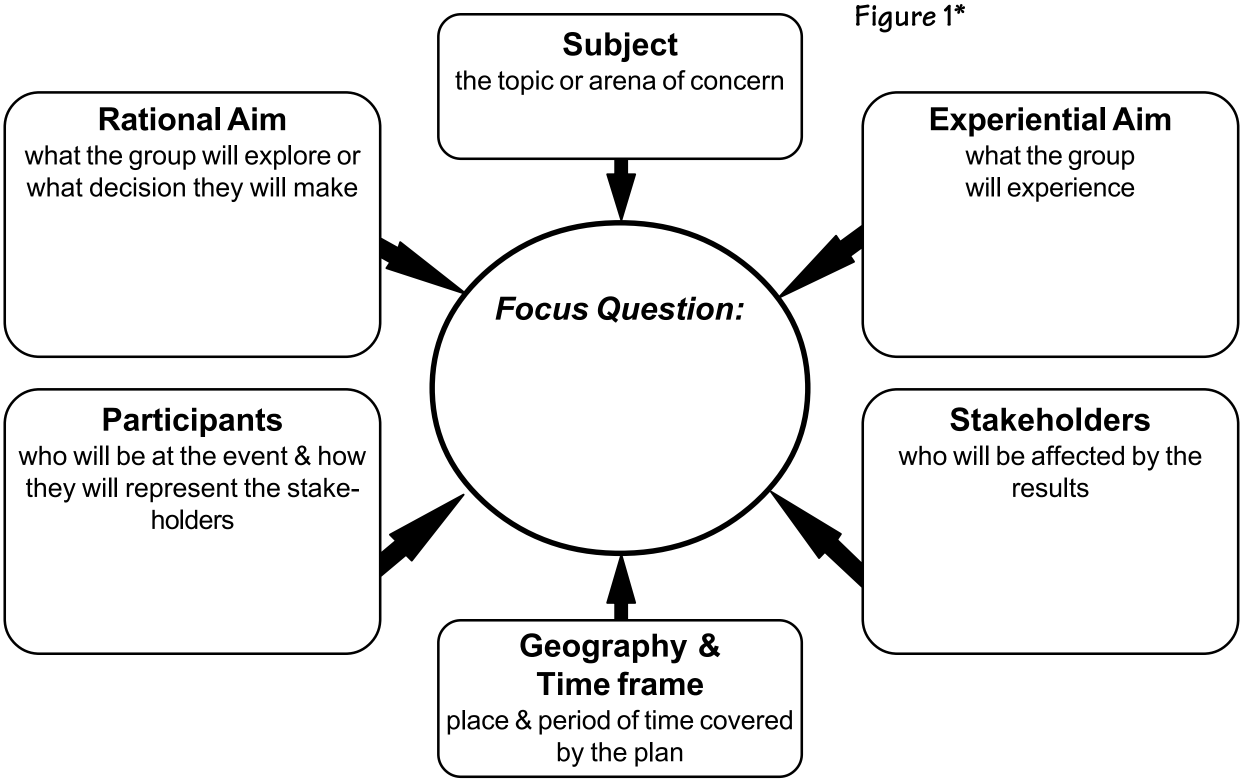
A blank form is located on page 65

ANOTHER GREAT DESIGN TOOL

In preparing for a facilitated event, getting a focus question that the participants need to answer will often help the group spend their time wisely. This tool is especially effective for events that are for the purpose of planning. See the format below. You can draw this format on one or two flip chart pages and fill it in with the people who are helping you plan the design. Or just fill it in as you talk with them over the phone. It gives you a format for what kinds of questions to ask. *This is an alternative to the previous combination participant profile and situation analysis worksheets.*

DESIGNING A FOCUS QUESTION

Figure 1*



First, clarify the subject matter of the event. Next, if this is a planning event, find out the time frame for the planning, for example 6 months, 5 years, and the geography the plan will cover. Sometimes, this means getting the group to agree on community boundaries. These kinds of decisions are important to get written down to include in the final document.

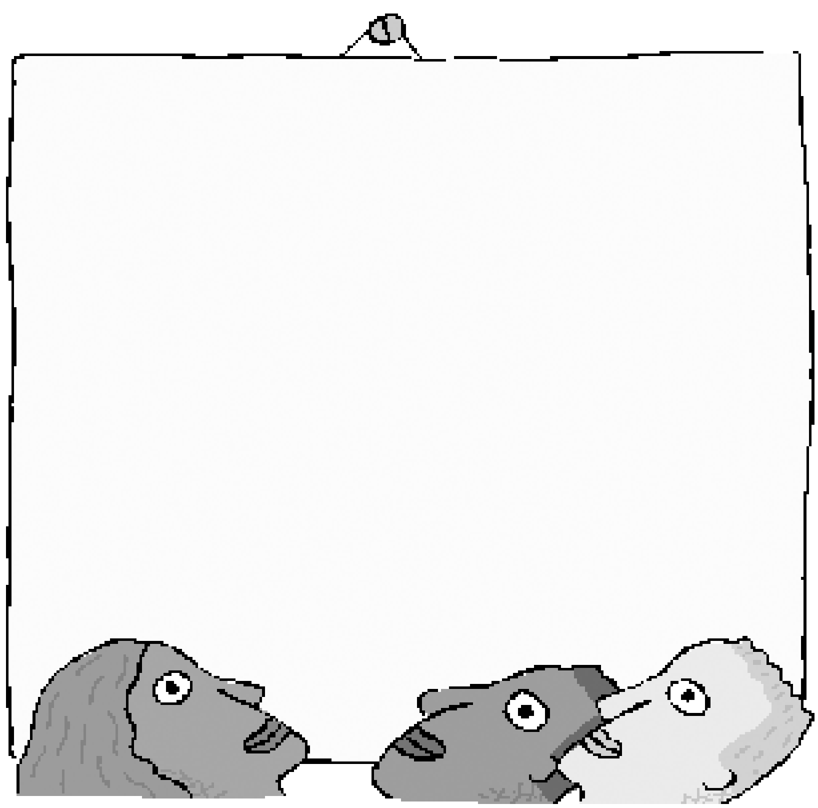
Next, clarify the Objective (Rational) outcomes they desire as well as the Subjective (Experiential) outcomes that could result from a group of people participating in this event. (See pages 33 for further help on outcomes.) Finally, have a discussion to list the stakeholders in the event and to clarify how their voices will be heard -- will they be represented or surveyed ahead of time? If they are not included, how might that affect the outcome of the planning? Finalize the participants invitation list in light of the stakeholder discussion.

**Figure 1.* Copyright 1990 by The Canadian Institute of Cultural Affairs. Reprinted with permission.

3 WHO'S COMING?
Knowing Your Audience

It is important to know who the participants will be in any facilitated event and, where possible and appropriate, to speak to them ahead of time about their hopes, and even their fears, for the event, as well as gather input from them to help focus the design of the event.

Use the following form (blank worksheet is in the appendix] to help you tailor the event to the group's dynamics.



IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF - #2

PARTICIPANT PROFILE Worksheet

Event:______________________ Site:_______________________ Date:__________

Expected Participants:

- Who is expected to participate? How many?
- What is the age range and gender mix?
- What is the sector mix (private, public, or non-profit)?
- How are they being selected?
- Why has each particular person been invited?
- What are they being told about the event?
- Are there potentially too few or too many participants for the event's purpose and limitations?

Participant Attributes:

- What are participants expecting in terms of both process and outcome?
- Are participant expectations realistic? Is there a need to "manage" their expectations? Are there particularly unrealistic expectations?
- What levels or positions do the participants represent?
- What is their knowledge and experience of the topic?
- Are the participants familiar with facilitated processes?

Special Needs:

- Are there language, literacy, or disability needs to be identified and dealt with?
- Are there part-time participants? What are their roles in the event?
- Is there any recent history of discussion related to the topic?
- What are general positions or agendas that individuals may be bringing to the event?

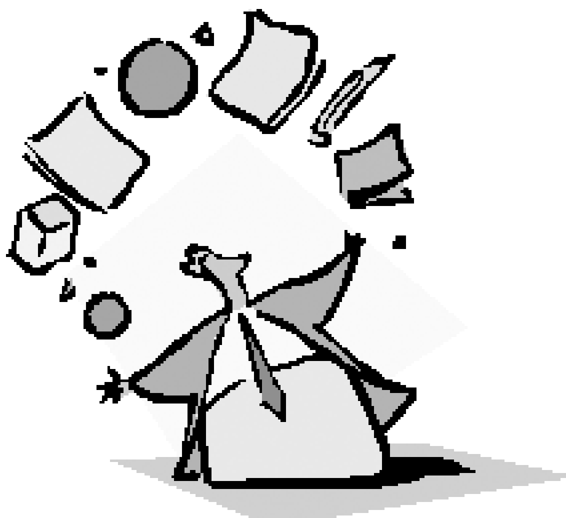
Intra-Group Relations:

- Are there guest speakers or other non-participating people attending?
- Are there political or status relationships to be considered?
- Are there potentially some group dynamics issues to be aware of, such as dominating personalities, angry participants, etc.

A blank form is located on page 66

4 WHAT WILL WE DO?
Designing Key Activity Modules

Once you have completed your situation analysis and participant profile and written out the rational and experiential aims for your overall event, it's time to figure out how to get to those outcomes from that situation with those participants.



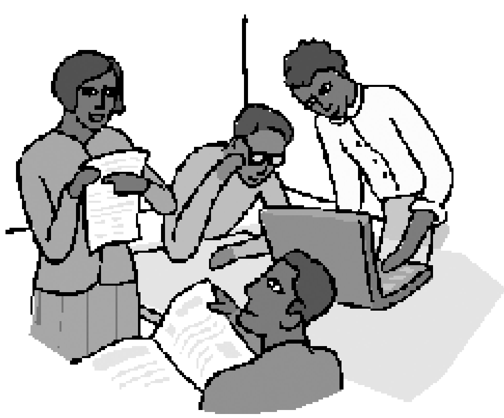
SOME GENERAL GUIDELINES

While these are the processes used in the actual delivery phase of your facilitation, they will be covered under preparation because you have to decide what to do BEFORE you stand up to facilitate.

Your preparation is simply to choose processes to help the group achieve their own outcomes. Negotiation may be necessary to match a group's expectations with what is realistic in the time frame they have chosen.

Sometimes you have to help them understand that what <u>they think they want now</u> and <u>what they are in a position to get now</u> are out of sync. For example, they may want a detailed action plan for accomplishing something <u>and</u> they are far from agreement about "what" they intend to accomplish. See the section on "Designing a Focus Question" (page 11) for additional helpful hints.

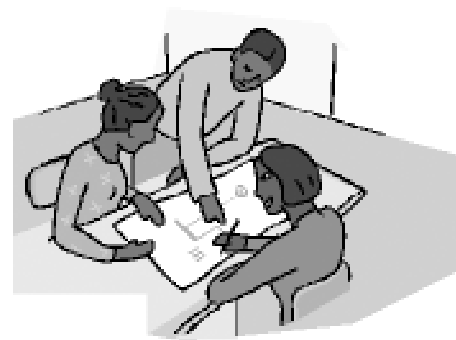
CHOOSING ACTIVITY MODULES



An Activity Module is simply a description of what you will do with a group during a given time frame. Sometimes a module is complex , such as creating an action plan, and may take up an entire session with a group. Other modules are simpler and self-contained, such as energizers, icebreakers, and conversations and will be building blocks to put with other modules to form a session. It is probably easier to plan long sessions—one or more days—in smaller chunks such as two- or three-hour formats.

To plan an activity module, you need to do the following:

- Formulate the Rational Aim / Experiential Aim (RA/EA) for the module (as separate from the whole event, if you will have more than one module)
- Gather any needed information or inputs available
- Select the method or approach you believe will work best (conversation, game, role play, brainstorm, etc.)
- Determine the intended results and products
- Select and create any needed templates, flip charts, and other visually supportive materials. This may mean finding or creating posters, slides, overheads and wall decor.
- Select and create any needed handouts including worksheets and information packets
- Determine the time needed for this module
- Consider any appropriate feedback or monitoring mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of the module



When all the modules for an event have been designed, arrange them all together as one event and make adjustments in procedures and/or timing to fit the allotted time. Sometimes, you may have to drop an entire module at this point and find another way to meet the objective[s] you had in mind for this module. This is an iterative process. That means you may have to work it through more than once to come up with your best design, so allow yourself plenty of time for preparation. Also note that logistics may enter into your timing. If meals and/or snacks are in a location that is far from the meeting space, you will need to allow extra time. If the design of your activites requires people to get up and move around, change groupings or meeting in breakout spaces, you will need to build time for it into your event. See further hints and cautions about timing on page 22.

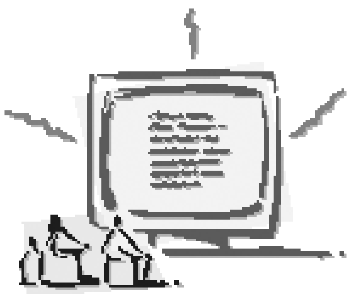
Use a chart like the one below to help you think through each activity module:

ACTIVITY PLANNING Worksheet		
Rational Aim	*Experiential Aim:*	
Brainstorm Possible Activities to Achieve Aims	*Materials*	*Time & Space*
A blank form is located on page 67		

In order to choose an effective flow, look at your entire event, which may have several activity modules. This will get easier with practice. Ask for help as you are getting started. You will find yourself going back and forth between your aims, your activities and your timing. Remember to consider the group's energy throughout the event as one part of the equation and vary activities as needed.

5 DETAILS, DETAILS, DETAILS
Logistics Of An Event

What follows here are some critical details to consider. Don't assume someone else is handling them. As the facilitator, you can't take anything for granted. Always check first to be sure. For a comprehensive view, see the "Meeting Preparation Checklist" on page 67. What follows here are some helpful hints to make your facilitation go especially smooth.



SPACE

Participatory events take place in all kinds of places, but the really great ones are preceded by careful preparation and arrangements. Always work to have space that supports the outcomes you desire. Before an event, visit the proposed setting and review the following checklist:

√ *Can the space comfortably accommodate all participants?*

√ *How will the participants sit? If using tables and chairs, are there enough available? What's the best arrangement for seeing each other?*

√ *Is the space relatively free of distracting decor not related to the upcoming events? If not, can these be removed during the time of the event?*

√ *Can the products of the event be easily displayed on the walls? Is there also room for special decorations?*

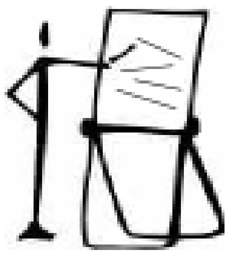
√ *Is there adequate space for small team work as well as whole group reporting, if required by the meeting format?*

For example, large meetings of 30 or more are often best accommodated by round tables. Up to 30 can be set up UN style with tables and chairs facing inward on three sides and the fourth open for the facilitator and display of group work.

If "turf" and "power" are issues, try a setting with no tables, i.e. only chairs arranged in a circle where the front or "head" of the room is not obvious and changes several times during the event. If the group will be meeting numerous times, tables can be added once the participants know each other better and the issues of turf and power have been minimized.

MATERIALS

Make a list of all materials you will need for your facilitation and find out if the meeting space provides any of these. If not, you will have to bring your own or have the meeting host/s provide them for you. This will include, at a minimum, organizing :



- ☐ newsprint pads and easels
- ☐ markers
- ☐ pens and paper
- ☐ wall decorative decor
- ☐ masking tape
- ☐ adequate copies of any necessary handouts

If you are planning special icebreakers or energizers that require props, be sure to provide these as well. See "Additional Resources" for types and sources of facilitation supplies.

REFRESHMENTS

In most cases, you won't have to be responsible for food or beverages. However, be sure to check with the person hosting the event. If it is a long meeting, snacks are important to keep people fortified . High-sugar snacks are not recommended. Protein is considered good brain food, so some fruit or vegetables along with cheese make a nice afternoon snack. Nutritious morning snacks include bagels and cream cheese, fruit, fruit juices, and hot beverages such as tea or coffee. Always have a decaffeinated option available. Too much caffeine during a long meeting will have your participants "too wired" to participate at their best.

If the meeting[s] take place over meal times, find out what has been decided about meals. Be sure to check on this early in the preparation phase so you can request adjustments that are required by the agenda, such as a working lunch or meals that take place in a different space from the meeting area.

FIRST RULE OF GOOD FACILITATION: RELAX!

TAKING TIME TO GET "IN THE MOOD" OR CALLING UP YOUR FACILITATION MUSE

Step 2: Delivery

In the section on Facilitator Style, there are many tips on leading facilitation, but one is primary. Get yourself ready. After you have set up the room and prepared all materials and before people begin to show up, spend a little time alone in the space. In terms of the "knowing and doing" of facilitation, you are ready. Now, in terms of the "being" of facilitation, relax. Take several deep breaths. Feel the tension draining out of your body. Maybe do a few simple stretches. Imagine it all going smoothly. Walk through it in your mind. Set an intention to be a useful vehicle for the participants. Now, you are really ready!

GETTING STARTED

GROUND RULES

Given the current estimate of more than 15 million meetings per day held in the United States, it is no wonder that many wind up as free-for-alls. Thus, some ground rules, often referred to as group "norms", can be extremely useful.

Letting the Group Create Their Own...Quickly

These can range from something as simple as asking a group, after having clarified the purpose and outcomes of the meeting, "What could get in the way of accomplishing that?," and "What are you willing to do to be sure those things don't get in our way?" The answers to the second question, captured on a flip chart page, become the group's ground rules for that meeting.

For groups who will be meeting for more than a brief amount of time, a serious discussion about ground rules will be important because thoughtful ground rules help a group work at its best—together. Thus, the common courtesies of "always start and end on time" and "turn off all cell phones and pagers" can help with the atmosphere and it is fine for the group to include them, even though they aren't really related to group process. However, agreement on things like how the group will deal with disagreements or how they will make and honor decisions will be more useful.

Roger Schwarz, author of *The Skilled Facilitator*, has done an excellent job of explaining how ground rules are really about a group's values. See his article in the Appendix beginning on page 74.

As Ned Ruete, another long-term facilitator, commented, ground rules aren't necessarily the best way to control group behavior. What IS important about them is for the group to realize, "explicitly, unconditionally, and plainly—that the old way of holding meetings is NOT what we're doing here. It won't meet our needs, it won't give the results we need, it will waste everyone's time, and it will build resentment if the boss [in a community this might be the funding agency] gets the final say anyway. In that environment, it's hard to beat ground rules for changing people's expectations."

Here are two sample sets of ground rules:

From indigenous cultures :

1. SHOW UP – with every part of your being – mind, body, emotions, and spirit
2. PAY ATTENTION – to what has heart and meaning for you personally
3. TELL THE TRUTH – without blame or judgement, using "I" statements
4. STAY OPEN TO OUTCOME – until the end[5]

From Meeting Needs, a Minneapolis-based facilitation organization:

Golden Groundrules

Unite

- Require MUTUAL RESPECT
- Realize INTER-DEPENDENCE
- Keep an OPEN MIND
- Contribute THOUGHTFUL EXCHANGE
- Seek COMMON GROUND

Mobilize

- Strive for RESULTS
- Share RESPONSIBILITY
- Choose EFFECTIVE PROCESS
- Help ORDER CHAOS
- Employ HUMAN SPIRIT[6]

[5] From *The Four-Fold Way: Walking the Paths of the Warrier, Teacher, Healer, and Visionary* by Angeles Arriene, 1993, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco. Adapted with permission.
[6] From *Golden Groundrules Leader's Guide by Mirja P. Hanson,* 1996, Minneapolis: Meeting Needs. Reprinted with permission.

GROUP CHECK IN

Anytime a group gathers, whether they work together on a daily basis, are from the same organization, or are strangers, they are coming from different personal or work situations. It is usually helpful to have a "check in" process that gives people a moment to share anything they choose for the group to know about their interior state of being as well as the opportunity to put that on "pause," if possible, for a moment and focus on the meeting.

With a group of strangers, this can be built into the opening introductions. If the group will be meeting for several sessions, they might even brainstorm a list of things they would like to know about each other as they continue to work together.

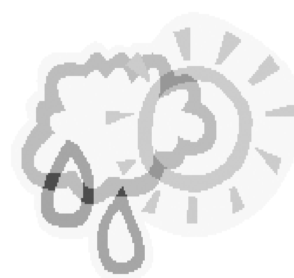
Icebreakers will sometimes suffice for a check in, especially in larger groups where individuals might be uncomfortable telling the group why they aren't participating at their usual level. In small groups, people usually appreciate this opportunity.

You might give the group some parameters around timing. You might tell the group to keep their responses to 2 or 3 sentences. Be sure the leaders or facilitators model brevity.

Also, for the visual as well as auditory learners, it is a good idea to post the questions where everyone can see them. This helps people to stop worrying about their own response to the instructions and to focus on listening to others.

A Few Simple Check In Ideas

Go around the group and give everyone a chance to say their name and to check in. This gives people a chance to say "I'm tired", "I've had a rough week", "My dog died today", "My energy is high because I just found out that I'm going to be a grandparent", or whatever else they might have going on. This builds relationships in the group. If the group is too large or time is too tight, have people turn to the person beside them and share for one minute each.



- **Very Simply**: Name, anything keeping you from being fully here, and one hope for this meeting.

- **Weather Report**: Have people say how they are in terms of weather: sunny, cloudy, overcast, calm with possible flurries on the way, stormy, icy, bright, warm, cool with warm front approaching, etc. Give them your response and maybe one other example and let *them* be creative.

- **Hypes and Gripes**: This is an exercise in which anyone can call out any "hypes", or positive things happening in their lives (business or personal), or "gripes", complaints or challenges currently faced.

- The above can be also effectively handled with a **ToP® ORID-style focused conversation** (see page 30), for example: "Give your name and one word that describes your day so far." (Go around the room, everyone responds.) Then, "Anyone who wishes to respond, what is one thing you look forward to in this meeting?" "Someone else." (Get several answers). "What's one thing that has you worried?" (Again, get several answers.) "Now think for a moment to yourself, What's one thing you'll do during the meeting to be sure we have a great one and get out of here on time?" (Some may share, but it's not necessary).

USE OF ICEBREAKERS

Icebreakers are little exercises used at the beginning of meetings when people don't know each other, as a way to "break the ice" of shyness and help people get quickly acquainted by doing something fun and sometimes a little silly. It could be simply introductions. The "check ins" on pages 20 can also be used as icebreakers. The following are some exceptionally simple ones. For many more, see the resources section of the Guide.

Two truths and a lie:
Using your own as an example, have the group write down two truths and a lie about themselves on a half sheet. Then go around the room, and have each person, say their name, where they work (or how long they've been in the organization) and tell the group their two truths and a lie. The group then has to guess which is the lie. (You lead off with your own example: "My Mother was a communist, I was vice president of Glendale/Burbank Young Republicans, I was raised Catholic - guess which is the lie.").

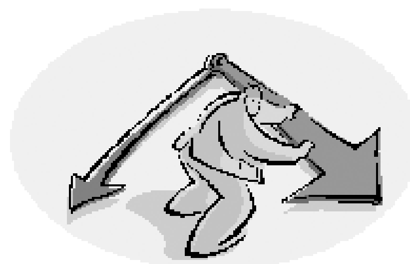
You tell the group to use their intuition to guess the lie. Usually they will guess different things, and you ask the person to identify their own lie. It doesn't matter if you get consensus on the lie. Just get the group to take a guess.

When you are all finished go back to each person, and ask the group, "Very quickly, what was Paul's lie?" This help's the group (and you) commit everyone's name to memory. End with your own lie.

Expect to spend 45 seconds - 1 minute per person, keep it moving, keep it light and have fun.

The Name Game:
Ask each person to give their name, where they work and then to quickly tell us something about the significance of their name: where it came from, what they like about it, what it means, what they were supposed to be named. You will need to stress "quickly tell us."

Tell them what you are going to have them do and give them a minute to think about it. Start off with your own name (Hi, my name is Judi, comes from Old Testament, means Hebrew queen-I was supposed to be named Julie, but my mother forgot.) People love this game and learn a lot about each other quickly. It is important to keep it moving-it can get bogged down. Plan to spend about 30-40 seconds per person.



TIMING

The effective management of time is an essential element for successful participation. Several factors need to be considered:

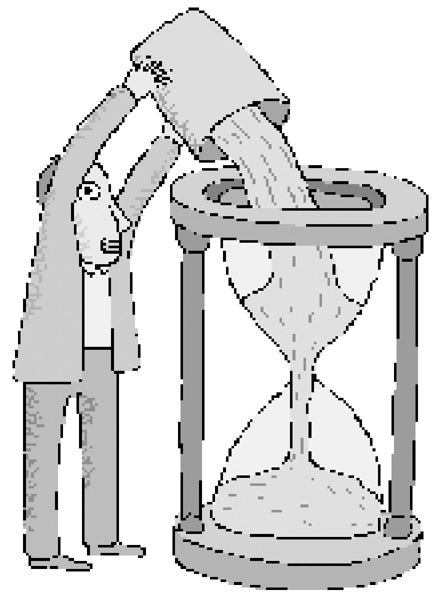
Prepare the room well in advance. Allow time to rearrange if needed, put up decor, set out refreshments, put the agenda on a flip chart, and have the room completely ready for the session.

Arrive a little early for the meeting. Being set up and ready to go, as well as able to greet participants as they arrive and help them feel welcome, will initiate their sense of participation at the door.

Pace the sessions in line with the group's energy and close at the announced time. All steps of a session do not require the same amount of time. Review the agenda items and estimated time for each with the group at the beginning of the meeting. Like running a marathon, it is also important to sense when necessary to speed up and when to slow down. Carefully estimating time in advance is a useful guide, and your ability to do so will get better with practice.

Cautions About Timing

Some things make beginning facilitation a little more difficult than when you have some experience. One of these is timing. Groups always seem to be looking for a quick fix. In prevention, the changes that make the most difference are in attitude and behavior, so there is usually not a quick fix available. But the steps toward making a difference can be easily broken down and followed. Thus, every facilitated event can move a group closer to its long-term goal. That's one piece of the timing dilemma–getting the group to see the long view and understand where they are in that picture now, plus getting their agreement to move forward, given how much time and effort it might take.



The second timing dilemma comes within a single facilitated event. How much time do you give each part of the process? How much can be accomplished in an hour, in two hours, a half day, a full day, or more? This is another point where event planning is critical.

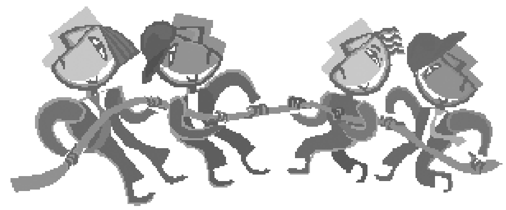
Events must have an opening that sets the stage and makes sure everyone is ready and on the same page before beginning. Then there is the "meat" or core of the event, which is where the action takes place. This could be planning, it could be information sharing, it could be learning something new, it could be discerning learnings or gathering advice, or it could be a time when decisions get made. In fact, some events are simply set for the experiential outcome of getting to know each other better in order to more easily work together at another time on more rational outcomes. At the end of any event is the closing which is also designed specifically for each event; it may be a summing up and review of decisions or simply an acknowledgement of the work accomplished and a look at what's next.

It will be important to learn, first from the Guide, and then from your own experience, how long it takes for certain things to happen. When you are planning an event, study the section on "Guidelines for Effective Timing."

Another dilemma in timing is what to do when a module or session takes longer than you had planned. This means you will have to adjust on the fly. If you are uncertain how to use the rest of the time in a way that best benefits the group, take a hint from experienced facilitators: ASK the group. Get their attention (if you don't already have it) and explain that you now see there isn't enough time to finish all that you had on the agenda. Ask them which things that are left are more important to spend time on now and when or how they would like to finish. Sometimes they will say, "we've spent enough time on this section, let's move on and we can cut out items X and Y and still get what we need." Or they may agree to meet again later (try to finalize the date, time and place before concluding the meeting). Or they may decide they can stay longer in order to finish. Be sure you have the whole group's permission to do this. When they can't agree, ask the opposing sides of the argument to propose a solution that takes into account everyone's input. Over time, you will gain experience in options and may be able to suggest a solution if they can't

EFFECTIVE TIMING Guidelines		
Type of Facilitation	Estimate of Time Required	Comments
Regular "check signals" meeting	1-2 hours	If you meet weekly, this could be as brief as 30 minutes; if you meet monthly or quarterly, it could run as long as half a day or more.
Action Planning – for a project or event where you know when you will be finished, or have a clear idea of what completion will look like.	4-8 hours for projects from one month to one year.	If you have a tested approach, such as the ToP® Action Planning Process, the amount of time will depend on how large a project you are planning.
Strategic Planning	2 or more full days – can be broken down into several sessions, but best if done fairly close together for sake of continuity	Depending on how detailed you need to be (eg. a Board of Directors, usually only need broad strategies, not detailed implementation)
Implementation of Longer-Range Plans	3 hours each time you meet	Implementation of larger plans are usually done in a series of shorter time frames, such as 3 months or 6 months.
Focus Group	2 hours	Single, clear topic
Visioning	3 hours or less	Topic and time frame need to be clear, e.g. "Healthier Community in 5 Years" or "50% Less Drug Use in Middle Schools in 3 Years"

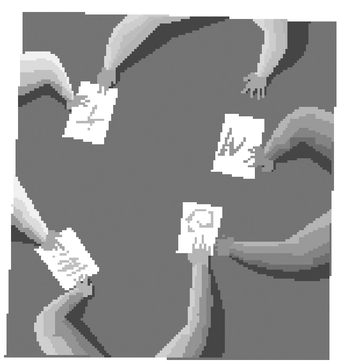
EVENTFULNESS



Boredom, when it occurs, undermines participatory events. Work to keep the sessions exciting and interesting. A good session builds in additional ways to nurture the active interest of the participants. Also note that energy can be too high as well as too low.

Maintain a good balance between different kinds of activities. Good sessions balance the emphasis between presentations, discussions and decisions. Participants need time to do their own thinking, share and work together in small groups, and report their work to each other in the whole group. Varying space and having adequate breaks is important in meetings that go beyond an hour.

Engage all participants. Small teams are asked to make reports to the larger gathering on many occasions. It is a good idea to have these reports made by as many different people as possible rather than allowing one person to emerge as the team's spokesperson. Similarly, when questions are asked from the group, a facilitator can encourage different participants in the team to answer.



Utilize humor (without telling jokes). Discussions become more interesting when people loosen up, which often happens through common laughter. Humor can be used very effectively in group events. The chief caution is to be sure that the humor never belittles a participant. Humor is usually used in the early parts of a session. As discussions become more intense, which makes them more interesting for other reasons, humor may be out of place.

Use Toys – appropriately. Participants can often concentrate better in a facilitated event if they have something to play with in their hands. Toys that are small, manipulative and quiet are good choices. Remind participants they are not party favors nor projectiles.

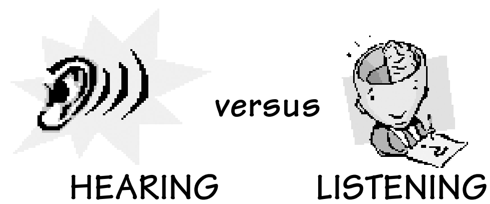
Celebrate a group's output. When teams present their work, allow the rest of the participants to affirm their work with applause or positive comments. For longer meetings, that include a number of sessions, such as a retreat, special snacks at breaks or awards, both serious and humorous, can help to celebrate the group's work.

STARTER SET OF TECHNIQUES & METHODS

LISTENING TECHNIQUES FOR A FACILITATOR

There are probably more than a thousand ways to get people involved in a meeting. And yet, there are only a few critical techniques or building blocks that go into these processes. The most important one is listening to a participant, followed closely in importance by further honoring their input by capturing it in some way, often on a flip chart.

Note first that hearing what individuals say is not the same as listening to them. Hearing uses the ears. Listening uses the ears *plus* engages the brain to focus on and give meaning to what is heard. It involves focusing attention on the speaker and on the speaker's content.



Here are some keys to good listening:

1. Mirroring - repeating the exact words of the participant (best technique during brainstorming and building trust, especially at the start of a session)

> *Repeat the participant's message using <u>their</u> words affirmingly, taking care that you repeat clearly, regardless of the participant's tone of voice or body language.*

2. Paraphrasing - describing, in your own words, what another person wants to convey

> *"What I hear you saying is..."*

3. Drawing Out - Encouraging the participant to take the next step in clarifying or refining ideas.

> *"Could you say a little more?"*
> *"Can you give us an example?*

4. Encouraging *- providing opportunities to get OTHER participants to contribute to the discussion. This technique could also be used to BALANCE participation by encouraging different ideas, insights or conclusion from other participants.*

> *"What other ideas do we need to add?"*
> *"Let's hear some other points of view."*

5. Stacking - a technique to create order when several participants want to speak at the same time.

> *"Joanna, you are first, Manuel second, then Kerri ..."*

6. Tracking - keeping track of various issues, ideas, and interests being expressed.

"Let me step back and review what I am hearing. It seems to me that there are three different (issues, conversations, tracks) going on. They are 1).... 2)... 3)... Is that correct?"

7. Intentional Silence - giving the participant a short pause to gather her or his thoughts.

Pause for five seconds, maintain eye contact, stay relaxed but focused on the speaker without commenting or saying "hmmm."

8. Listening for Common Ground - validating disagreements in order to focus on the areas of agreement or consensus.

"Let me share some themes that seem to be popping up."
"It seems to me that several of you are saying. . ."[7]

More on Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is simply restating in your own words what the other person has said. The prefix "para" means alongside, as in the word *parallel*. As a facilitator, the reason to paraphrase is important because, unlike mirroring, it can be seen as *changing* a person's thoughts and thus dishonoring their input. Nonetheless, paraphrasing can be powerful when it is used to help the person or the group gain clarity about what they have said. In such an instance, rather than dishonoring the comments, it is a form of validating them.

The process of paraphrasing is very much like catching a ball and throwing it back—except the ball you throw back is your own and perhaps a bit different from the original ball. Nonetheless, it is still a ball. You can throw back the other person's ideas by using the following phrases:

"You are saying …"
"In other words …"
"I gather that …"
"If I understand what you are saying …"[7]

The best way to paraphrase is to listen very intently to what the other person is saying. If, while the other person is talking, we are judging their comments or worrying about what we are going to say next, we are not likely to hear enough of the message to understand it and be able to paraphrase it accurately.

It is helpful to paraphrase, so that you develop a habit of doing so. You can even interrupt to paraphrase, since people generally don't mind interruptions that communicate understanding. For example, you could say "Pardon my interruption, but let me see if I understand what you are saying."

Participant 1: *"It seems the basic problem is that some of the people don't know how to use the new information system."*

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[7] Categories adapted from *The Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making* by Sam Kaner, et al. (pp. 44-54), 1996, Philadelphia, PA: New Society. Used with permission of the author.

Team Leader: *"In other words, you see the problem as lack of know-how."*

Participant 2: *"I think the most important thing is to tell people clearly and directly how they are contributing to the problem."*

Team Leader: *"So you are saying it's important to tell people directly what kind of impact they are having on the problem."*

Summarizing

There are several reasons to summarize. The group may need to pull together important ideas, facts, or data. In that case, let them create the summary. As the facilitator, use summarizing to establish a basis for further discussion or to make a transition, to review progress, to check for clarity, and to check for agreement. Summarizing information ensures that everyone in the meeting is clear about what transpired in the just-completed portion of the discussion.

By summarizing, you will encourage people to be more reflective about their positions as they listen for accuracy and emphasis. To do it well, you yourself will need to listen carefully in order to organize and present information systematically. You may summarize to ensure that participants remember what has been said or to emphasize key points made during a discussion. Or, perhaps more importantly, you may use summarizing as a way to reach a decision or bring closure to a topic and move the meeting on to the next agenda item. In these instances, summarizing is very useful. Some starter phrases to help you begin a summary are:

- *There seem to be some key ideas expressed here...*
- *If I understand you, you feel this way about the situation...*
- *I think there is agreement on this decision—what I've heard you saying is that you intend to...*

Another real value of summarizing is that it gives you the opportunity to check for agreement. If people do not agree, it is better for them to know during the meeting than to find out later when a task is not completed or a deadline is missed. One of the most common meeting complaints is that some meeting participants think an agreement has been reached, yet things do not occur as planned afterwards. In many instances, that is because there was not really agreement during the meeting.

In summary, this listening skill is a deliberate effort on the part of a facilitator to pull together the main points made by the person or persons involved in the meeting discussion.

Encouraging Others to Contribute

In order to make it possible for others to contribute, or to speak up in either one-on-one or in team situations, the facilitator must make them feel that their views are valued. What helps in these situations is to enhance the process of asking questions, paraphrasing, and summarizing by using both nonverbal and verbal cues . Examples are:

Nodding one's head.

Maintaining eye contact, open body position.
Picking up on the last word or two of someone else's sentence.
Repeating a sentence, or part of a sentence.
Asking someone, "Say more about that."
Saying, "That's good—anybody else have something to add?"
Saying, "Uh huh." or "Okay..."

Possible Cultural Implications

The use of the skills we have described may vary from one culture to another, in particular those listed under "Encouraging Others to Contribute." By and large, these skills are appropriate in community settings, although adjustments may at times be necessary. They may be more difficult to do or understand between people who have different cultural backgrounds.

If you are experiencing problems in communication within a group of mixed cultural background, take the time to ask questions about what is the norm for each culture in having a discussion of the type you seem to be having problems with. In some cultures, some topics are not discussed at all in mixed gender meetings. In other cultures, individuals don't speak for themselves, but for the group they represent and often, in a mixed cultural setting, they will not speak at all because they do not feel they would be speaking appropriately for their group. These differences can be overcome with patience and a little time. If the issues or outcomes matter to the participants, they will want to spend the time needed to get communication flowing well.

According to Sam Kaner, in *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*, the use of good listening skills can be an excellent support to a diverse group and actually expand their capacity to hear each other, thereby increasing the potential for good ideas and good decisions:
• When someone is being repetitious, a facilitator can use paraphrasing to help that person summarize his/her thinking.
• A facilitator can help those who speak in awkward, broken sentences by slowing them down and drawing them out.
• Similarly, a facilitator can validate the central point of an exaggeration or distortion without quarreling over its accuracy.
• A facilitator can treat interruptions firmly yet respectfully, by assuring the speaker that when the current discussion ends, the facilitator will ask the group what to do with the new topic.
• When someone expresses him/herself with intense feeling, a facilitator can acknowledge the emotion, then make sure the speaker's point does not get lost.[8]

These situations demonstrate how important it is for a facilitator to listen skillfully and respectfully to everyone.

See the next section for some powerful tools to further good communication.

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[8] Ibid. p. 43.

WAYS TO TALK (& REALLY GET SOMEWHERE!)

There are many ways to talk together that can be productive. The one you choose should be based on your sense of the group's willingness to participate and the outcomes they've articulated—both objective and subjective. If groups don't have a chance to talk about what really matters to them, they will wind up talking about it outside of the meeting. These "water cooler" or "parking lot" conversations can even be destructive to the group's progress.

The Focused Conversation

The Focused Conversation, developed and refined by The Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) nearly 30 years ago, is sometimes referred to as ORID, the acronym for its central levels of questions that lead a group in a participatory form of guided dialogue. It is a structure for effective communication that provides meaningful dialogue, broadens perspectives, results in clear ideas and conclusions and allows an entire group to participate.

The method works through a series of questions based on a natural thinking process. It can direct the thinking of the group involved toward making an informed decision, or simply sharing insights. Adaptable to any situation and group (having been tested extensively in over 40 countries), the process uses a specific sequence of questions every time and takes participants on the four-level journey of awareness from objective to reflective to interpretive to decisional (thus ORID).

OBJECTIVE	Getting the Facts
REFLECTIVE	Emotions, Feelings, Associations, Imagination & Intuition
INTERPRETIVE	Values, Meaning, Purpose, Learnings, Insights
DECISIONAL	Deeper Sharing within the Group, Future Resolves

The method is ordered very carefully so that a progression in consciousness takes place. It is based on the way the mind functions, moving from sensory stimuli to action. It thus allows people to become conscious of how their thinking can become action and produces group reflections and decisions based on all the available information.

The Focused Conversation can be designed and used with one other person or large groups, even larger than 200, by adjusting the logistics. A conversation will usually last between twenty minutes and an hour with one focused topic. While it takes some practice to learn to lead an ORID conversation, it is a method that any group will adapt to quickly and when led well, tends to elicit greater participation and deep sharing of insights.

The basic method is taught in the ToP® Group Facilitation Methods course and its foundational principles underlie all ToP®-related work.

Dialogue

Dialogue, developed by the noted physicist David Bohm, is, on the other hand, a tool that takes some practice. The benefits to groups that will be meeting regularly over an extended period of time, or who must resolve a sensitive and controversial issue, are enormous. Dialogue's guidelines include suspending judgment(s), keeping an open mind, continuing to form and explore relevant questions, and remaining silent until the current speaker completes or gives over his/her turn. One advantage of Dialogue is the depth to which the conversation can go, once the individuals in the group have come to trust each other enough to become open and vulnerable in the process.

Following is a deeper explanation taken from the writings of Glenna Gerard and Linda Elinor of The Dialogue Group:

> Dialogue slows down the speed at which most groups converse by employing deeper levels of listening and reflection. Another important aspect of Dialogue is its open-endedness. This means letting go of the need for specific results. This does not mean there are no results from Dialogue; in fact there are many. However, in releasing the need for certain predetermined outcomes, important issues can be allowed to surface which often go undiscovered in agenda-based meetings. The result is often a deeper level of understanding and new insight.
>
> A final important aspect of Dialogue is that it creates a community-based culture of cooperation and shared leadership. It moves groups from the dependency, competition and exclusion often found in hierarchical cultures to increased collaboration, partnership and inclusion.
>
> **DIALOGUE CONTRASTED WITH DISCUSSION**
>
> It is often useful to contrast Dialogue with a more familiar form of communication, discussion.
>
> Discussion has the same Greek root as percussion and concussion, *discuss*, meaning *to throw, fragment, shatter*. David Bohm likened discussion to an activity where we *throw* our opinions back and forth in an attempt to convince each other of the rightness of a particular point of view. In this process, the whole view is often fragmented and shattered into many pieces.

The intentions of dialogue and discussion are quite different and are contrasted below.

Dialogue	**Discussion**
To inquire, to learn	To tell, sell, persuade
To unfold shared meaning	To gain agreement on one meaning
To integrate multiple perspectives	To evaluate and select the best
To uncover and examine assumptions	To justify/defend assumptions

BEHAVIORS THAT SUPPORT DIALOGUE

Suspension of judgement when listening and speaking. When we listen and suspend judgment we open the door to expanded understanding. When we speak without judgment we open the door for others to listen to us.

Respect for differences. Our respect is grounded in the belief that everyone has an essential contribution to make and is to be honored for the perspective which only they can bring.

Role and status suspension. Again, in dialogue, all participants and their contributions are absolutely essential to developing an integrated whole view. No one perspective is more important than any other. Dialogue is about power with, versus power over, or power under.

Balancing inquiry and advocacy. In dialogue, we inquire to discover and understand others perspectives and ideas and we advocate to offer our own for consideration. The intention is to bring forth and make visible assumptions, relationships and gain new insight and understanding. We often tend to advocate to convince others of our positions therefore a good place to start with this guideline is to practice bringing more inquiry into the conversation.

Focus on learning. Our intention is to learn from each other, expand our view and understanding, versus evaluate and determine who has the "best" view.[9]

When we are focused on learning we tend to ask more questions and try new things. We are willing to disclose our thinking so that we can see both what is working for us and what we might want to change. We want to hear from all parties so that we can gain the advantage of differing perspectives. For HABITS THAT BLOCK COMMUNICATION, see article of same name in the Appendix.

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[9] From "What is Dialogue?" by The Dialogue Group, retrieved online December, 2001. Available: www.thedialoguegrouponline.com. Used with permission.

"GETTING TO OUTCOMES"

THE FACILITATION PERSPECTIVE

Just as there is a focus in prevention around "getting to outcomes," there are also, as you can see from earlier parts of this Guide, outcomes to reach in any facilitation. Sometimes, simply getting acquainted or sharing information or perspectives is the desired outcome. Be clear that these are not necessarily "easier" outcomes to facilitate. They, too, take serious preparation and an understanding of why they are the desired outcomes. This will be true for any facilitation. Knowing both the outcomes and the reasons behind the outcomes will help you flex if your plan goes astray or other unanticipated factors (domineering participants, last minute changes to the agenda or the logistics, etc.) force you to make changes. Usually, such factors do not change the desired outcomes, at least in the minds of the participants.

When the outcome is a decision the group must agree on and either recommend to another person or group or be responsible for implementing, the decision making process will be important. It will need to be one in which every participant is adequately heard and due consideration is given to as many relevant possibilities as can be fitted into the time frame.

DECISION MAKING

Rare would be the group who would want you to make their decisions for them, though not so rare are those who think you can, or might. So, always be clear with a group that your role is strictly one of process, not content. You can help them get to a decision, if they need it, but you neither make nor even encourage any particular decision.

Now, how do you do it? Ah, well, that's a little trickier! And, there are some tricks. In fact, many tricks.

The first important thing to help a group with is WHAT decision or decisions need to be made? Sometimes this is clear at the outset, when you are clarifying the expected outcomes from your facilitation. Other times, the need for a decision results from part or all of your facilitation work, thus coming in the middle and not being clear at the beginning.

When you sense, or they outright say, that a decision needs to be made, ask for a clear agreement about the decision. To validate this, write what you heard on a flip chart. Check this with the whole group. "Is this the decision that needs to be made?" Then, for even further clarity, ask them to define terms. You may find that they all thought they meant the same thing, but it doesn't hold true. When a group says, for instance, they need to decide how to get more youth involved, each person's understanding of youth involvement may be quite different. Some may be thinking, "Let's get youth on our board."

Others may see youth working on a particular project. Some may be thinking of student council youth who are already accustomed to working with adults while others may see the involvement as a stepping stone for youth with behavioral issues. Until the group is clear about which youth they want to involve and what kind of involvement, it will be impossible to decide on an effectve strategy.

Once the decision topic is clear, you can use a brainstorm to get possible responses, but often you will need to provide a "think it through" kind of process. One option is to have them discuss it in pairs, then in pairs of pairs who are asked to come up with a recommendation. Then all recommendations are shared with the whole group. If, at this point, the consensus on the decision is not clear (there was no "Ahah! That's it!" during the presentations), key elements from each need to be pulled out separately and discussed. Ask them what parts of the presentations seem really on target. Use these as the initial building blocks toward the decision. If it still is unclear (note, this is one of those "iterative" processes!), have them define terms again, to be sure they are still on the same page. Then ask what about the decision is still undecided? Have the pairs and pairs of pairs go through the process again with this narrower topic. Keep going until they have clearly stated the decision.

YIKES! WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME!

Sometimes there isn't time or there isn't the energy to finalize a decision. There are some choices that a group can make at this point. They can delegate a smaller group (from this group) to either a) make the decision, having heard all comments so far or b) study it further and come back to the group at a later time (be sure to clarify who and when) with a new recommendation. Two other options are available to the whole group, if they don't choose to delegate: c) put it to a vote (see polling method below for subtleties of doing this well), or d) table it until the next meeting.

THE POWER OF CONSENSUS

Quite often, in a community group, the decision needs to be a fairly strong consensus. While some facilitators would say that reaching a unanimous consensus is the only ethical approach to decision making, there are many others who argue that the many variables within a facilitated event may make this unrealistic in some situations.

So, for our purposes, we will consider the *need* for a consensus to be when the group is charged with a common task or mission. And the *definition* of consensus will be that the power is in the center of the table. The group can decide what will constitute an adequate consensus for them.

A simple range of options includes:

1. Unanimous agreement (some call this consensus)
2. Consensus at various levels
    a. Full agreement by all
    b. General agreement by all, "the best we can do now"
    c. Near general agreement by all, but all say they "can live with it" and will therefore support it
    d. Disagreement by a few in "loyal opposition" who will, nonetheless, support the agreement
3. Multi-voting (group agrees first on the scale)
4. Majority vote
5. Smaller group vested with making the decision
6. One person decides

Facilitator Sam Kaner separates high stakes from low stakes types of decisions. With a community group (as opposed to a company with a Board of Directors or hands-on owner), his model would suggest that the higher the stakes, the more the final decision needs to be by consensus. One helpful way to understand consensus is to see that "the power is in the center of the table." Of course, this can be threatening to people who want to be in control. But it is extremely empowering to local people who have been kept away from the table for a long time.

So, now, the question is: How do you get there? Usually, the group will need to start with a discussion that clarifies how much the decision matters to the group and how willing they are to do the work to reach a clear and strong consensus. Once that is done, you can apply consensus-building processes, of which there are many. The simple one below is a good place to start with a small group. For reaching consensus with a large group, the first rule for success is to have an experienced neutral facilitator. If that isn't you, you will need to find one. Again, you may want to contact CSAP's Southwest CAPT for assistance.

A Method for Reaching Consensus from a Brainstorm of Ideas

For small meetings of up to 15 people, the following "workshop" method is a useful way of getting some information from all participants, quickly organizing it, and discovering where the consensus lies. It allows a group to see the extent of agreement that already exists on the subject at hand and to easily reach a productive conclusion, as well as document everyone's input and the areas of consensus.

A well-constructed workshop of this type has 5 parts:

1. A clear context covering the focus of the workshop, time frame and anticipated product
2. Brainstorming, both individually and as a group
3. Clustering the brainstorm elements in a way that makes sense and fits the topic
4. Naming the (clustered) elements of consensus
5. Firming the groups resolve through a closing reflection on the meaning of the workshop and clearly stating the next steps, if any.

The method can be used in many ways:

- Generating ideas on practically any subject: video content, team work, volunteer rewards. . .
- Citizen input opportunities, such as focus groups
- Simple analysis sessions (of needs assessment data, citizen input, or historical trends)
- Generating action elements for working with sub-groups within the larger group
- Generating an individual work group's action agenda
- Bringing groups attention to a particular issue or goal

It is especially appropriate for:

- Informal groups
- Simple, non-controversial topics where similarities are easy to see
- When you probably have fewer than 30 brainstorm items

CONSENSUS BUILDING WITH A SMALL GROUP

Figure 2

Workshop Question:

A question to which the workshop content & product are a response

Workshop Purpose:

RATIONAL AIM
What the group needs to *KNOW or DO* – the product

EXPERIENTIAL AIM
How the group needs to *BE* (or feel) by the end of the workshop

Workshop Flow in Five Parts:

1 CONTEXT

Setting the Stage

1. Explain product/ outcome
2. Outline process and timeline
3. Highlight the question the workshop will answer

2 BRAINSTORM

Generating New Ideas

1. Brainstorm individually.
2. Individuals select their best ideas.
3. Go around the room and get each person's idea, one at a time. Print it on a flip chart in their words, then go to the next person.

Continue until you have all the data. Number each item for easy identification.

3 CLUSTER

Forming New Relationships

1. Give 1st item a symbol.
2. Ask if 2nd item is the same. If not, place a different symbol beside it.
3. Continue through the list, placing a different symbol beside each item that is different from all previous items.
4. Continue until all items have a symbol.

(Some items may have more than one symbol at this point.)

4 NAME

Discerning the Consensus

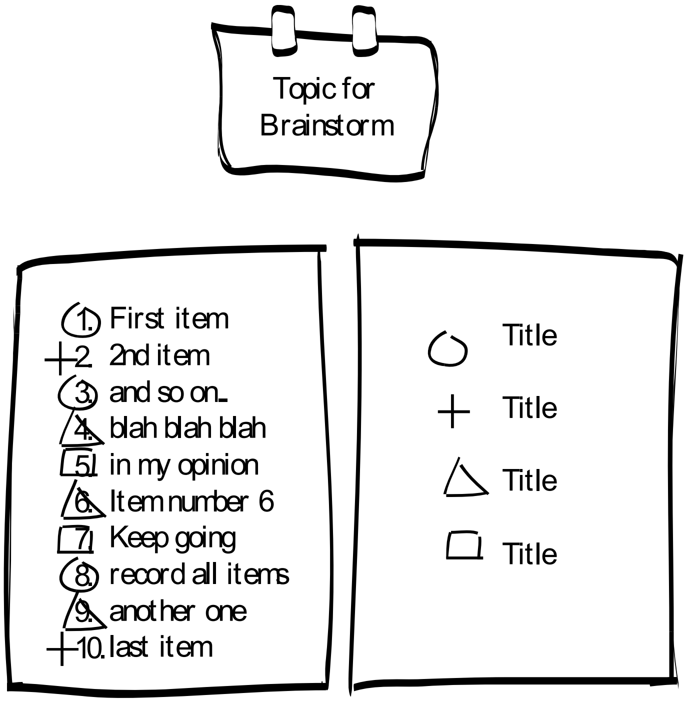
1. Draw all symbols on second sheet of flip chart paper.
2. Read all items with same symbol. Ask what that group should be named. (Use ORID.)
3. Write name on flip chart.
4. Read all items with another symbol. Ask what that group should be named
5. Write name on flip chart.
6. Continue until all symbols are named.

5 RESOLVE

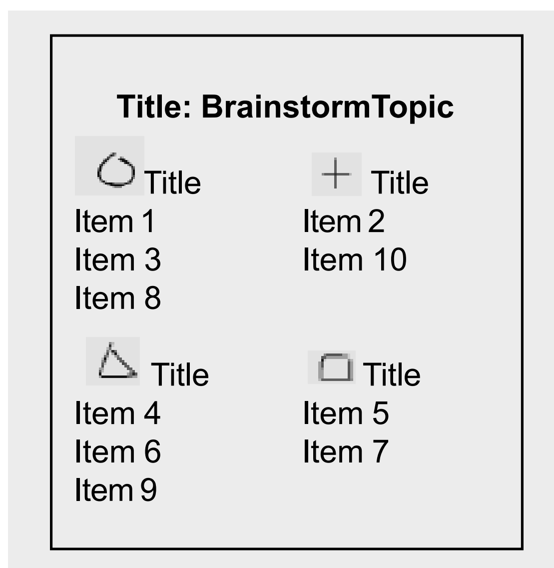
Confirming the Resolve

1. Read through all named groups out loud.
2. Discuss the results of the workshop. (Use ORID.)
3. Ask about next steps.

When you are finished, your product might look something like what you see below.



Note that the consensus is in the titles, not the individual items on the list. Be sure everyone in the group understands this key point. Your typed up document might look like this:



Title: BrainstormTopic

Title
Item 1
Item 3
Item 8

Title
Item 2
Item 10

Title
Item 4
Item 6
Item 9

Title
Item 5
Item 7

TESTING THE CONSENSUS

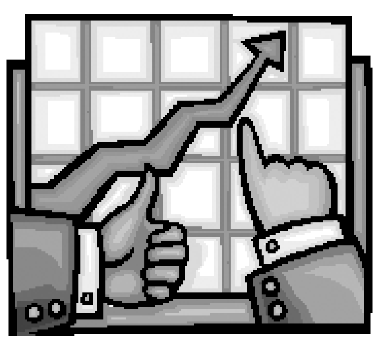
Probably the most important statement that can be made about reaching consensus is:

IF YOU DON'T HAVE CONSENSUS, FIND OUT WHY AND DISCUSS FURTHER.
Plus, don't rush to a vote.
And the second most important statement would be:

TREAT DIFFERENCES AS A STRENGTH. DON'T COMPETE.
Having said that, it would be useful to know how to test the consensus. Step one is to state what it is. It is a good idea to have a participant state it. Then, to see how closely they've stated it, do a group check in.

One easy method is the "hold up fingers" approach. You can consider consensus reached if participants are at levels 2-5, with no one at levels 1 or 0. The levels are as follows:

- 5 fingers. I can say an unqualified "yes" to the decision. I am satisfied that the decision is an expression of the wisdom of the group.
- 4 fingers. I find the decision perfectly acceptable. It is the best of the real options that we have available to us.
- 3 fingers. I can live with the decision; I'm not especially enthusiastic about it.
- 2 fingers. I do not fully agree with the decision and need to register my view about it. However, I do not choose to block the decision and will stand aside. I am willing to support the decision because I trust the wisdom of the group.
- 1 finger. I do not agree with the decision and feel the need to block this decision being accepted as consensus.
- 0 fingers. I feel that we have no clear sense of unity in the group. We need to do more work before consensus can be reached.

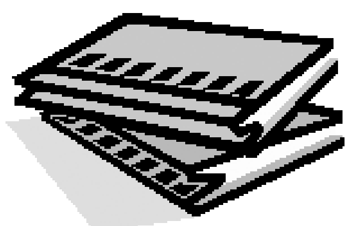


CAPTURING THE CONTENT I: SESSION PRODUCT

THE NEED FOR DOCUMENTATION

Careful documentation of participatory sessions heightens a group's sense of accomplishment. Far too often, participants leave interesting discussions only to have conclusions and decisions fade into vague memories because no tangible products were ever produced. Be sure to design the event in such a way that there are specific products.

Explain the objectives and anticipated product(s) at the beginning of the event. Participants can more confidently enter into discussions when the destination of the session has been clearly stated. People want to know the objective of their work together. Explaining the end product of the session also helps to keep discussions on track.



Document the actual results. Whatever the final product of all the various meetings or planning sessions, it will need to be in written form. Be sure there is a scribe committed to capturing the results and producing a document. You may want to be personally responsible for being sure the document is completed and delivered to all participants shortly after the event.

See "Documentation" on page 61 in the Special Section on Meeting Management.

USE OF A LAPTOP COMPUTER (LOW-TECH ASSISTS)

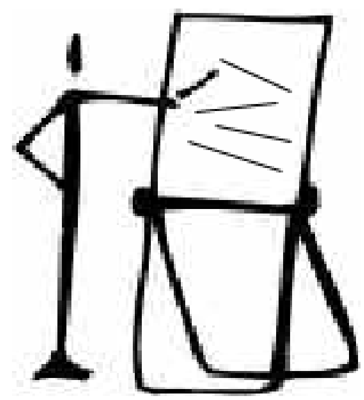
A laptop computer can be a useful tool during facilitation. If there is either someone in the group who can participate while typing or a typist who can attend, have them capture comments during discussions which can significantly enhance the value of the documentation, especially when decisions that impact people who were not present result from the discussions. It also keeps a group honest in that they don't have to revisit a decision every time someone new joins the group. Instead, they can have someone from the group spend a little time orienting the new person, "bringing them up to speed" so to speak, using the documentation as evidence of the ground the group has already covered.

CAPTURING THE CONTENT II: USING VISUALS

People take in and remember information through their eyes, their ears and by using other parts of their body (writing, dancing, even fidgeting). These are commonly referred to as Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic ways of learning. Of the three, the one that is the least developed in most people is auditory. This means that talking at a meeting won't be enough to help a group work together. You will need to use both visuals and movement. Requiring people to move around by working in different small and large groups, in different parts of the room or in other breakout spaces is the simplest kinesthetic tool to begin to use.

But to help them visually, you will need to get comfortable with what is probably the most common facilitation tool ~ the flip chart. So get those markers ready! Here's what you need to know to get started.

SIMPLE HINTS FOR USING FLIP CHARTS



When to Use

1. Use flip charts to post information for the whole group to see such as the agenda or instructions for a section of a meeting. Flip charts–a low-tech format– can be effectively used in place of overheads and have the advantage of being seen without dimming the lights.

2. Only copy a group's discussion onto flip chart pages if you intend to use the information later. Pages of full flip charts can be extremely deflating.

   Do copy information such as bullet points for developing a mission statement, possible scenarios that teams will later develop, or decisions reached at a meeting.

3. Keep flip chart pages to a necessary minimum - it saves trees and keeps a group from getting overwhelmed with data. If you will be using the same flip chart information over and over, consider a laminated sheet that stays fresh. There are now products on the market that are reusable flip pages. See the Appendix for types and sources of facilitation supplies.

HOW THEY LOOK – MORE THAN A BIG PRINTED PAGE

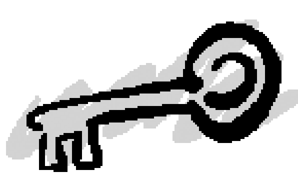
No white space, fill page & write under, over, between lines AGENDA start with intro's & then go to the next item.
Try to get them involved. Somehow. Just keep writing a lot of stuff in run-on fashion, then use your words not theirs, use all one color, write fairly illegibly and THEN try to get someone else to read it back to the group -- also be sure it's full of confusing abbreviations, info you will toss

DIFFICULT TO READ

TITLE YOUR PAGES

- use borders
- alternate colors
- write boldly
- capture what will be needed in some way

MORE USEFUL



LEARN TO USE
SIMPLE DRAWINGS

4. Use graphics to assist in illustrations. Some people remember written words best, others spoken words, still others need visual images.

5. To make flip charts more visibly useful, write neatly. If you aren't adept at this, practice. Or you could get a volunteer who prints well to assist you.

6. Use of markers:
   - Alternate colors of markers on a list , so each items stands out clearly. Use numbers or bullets to help distinguish different items on a list.

   - When filling in a form on a flip chart, draw the form in one color and fill in the information using a contrasting color. Be sure to use dark colors for the fill-in such as black, blue, purple, green or brown. Form outlines can be a little lighter (lime green, turquoise, bright orange or hot pink).

   - Remember that highlight colors such as orange, pink or yellow are nearly impossible to see from the back of the room and red is difficult for many people to distinguish clearly. Use these to highlight information–circle it or put a star beside it, for example.

IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER

7. Whenever possible, try to "never flip a flip chart." In other words, when a page is full, tear it off and post it on the wall. Visual learners will forget what is on it if it is no longer visible.

8. Be sure to preserve, type up, and distribute information you collect on flip charts. This both honors the work of the group and produces a track record of insights and decisions. See the section on Documentation, page 60.

THE VALUE OF VISUAL GRAPHICS

The reasons for using visual graphics are many. Aside from the fact that many people are more visual than verbal, visuals can be used to:

- √ hold data in a coherent form
- √ invite continual review of the data
- √ honor the content and commitment from the group
- √ provide the basis for event documentation
- √ visually beckon participation
- √ help maintain attention on what's happening
- √ re-affirm equity, transparency and shared ownership of process
- √ reinforce the ability to recall information from the session

CLOSINGS

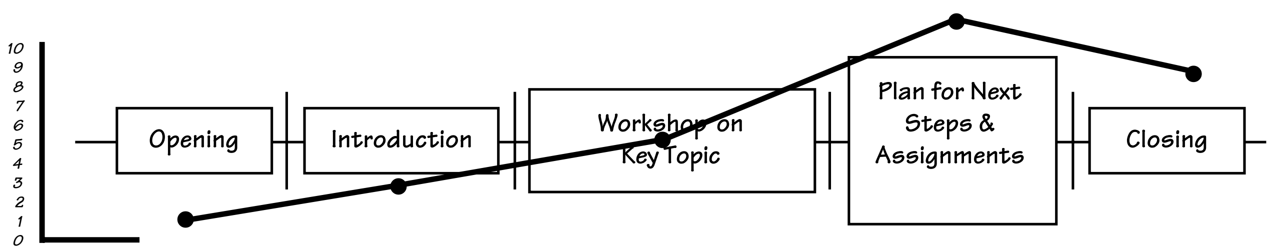
REFLECTION

Using an Evaluation (see page 44) is one way of reflecting on an event. Another way to reflect and bring closure is a simple conversation that allows each person to say something and may be followed by further group comments. For example, in a group of 25 or less, the facilitator might ask each participant to share their most significant insight from the event. This would take about 20-30 minutes and might require a context on how long one can take (1-minute or less) and an example modeled by the facilitator.

Another approach is to draw a line horizontally across a piece of flip chart paper, dividing it into the segments of the facilitated event.

For example:

On this chart, ask for an animal that characterizes each section and an explanation of why. You can have more than one for each section as different people will have had different experiences. Or ask for where the mood of the group was on a scale of 1-10 and plot this on the timeline:



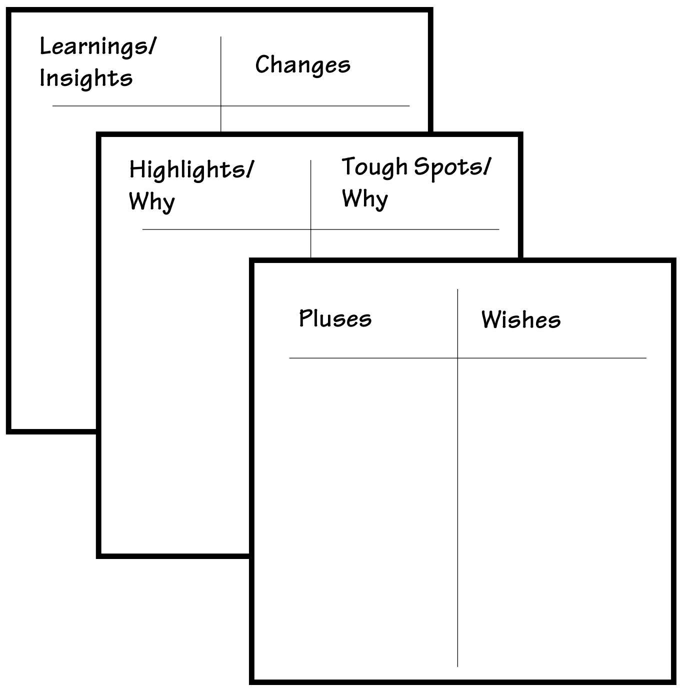
RESOLVE OR COMMITMENT

If the facilitated session produced actions that will follow, it is important to get the group's commitment to doing the actions. One way to do this is to list the actions on a flip chart and have members of the group place their names beside actions they intend to work on. If it requires more than one person, be sure there is more than one name and that one is starred (*) to indicate willingness to be a contact person for that action. Also include a "Complete by" date for each action (this can be turned into a timeline or calendar).

Giving the set of actions a catchy name or coming up with an image or slogan can increase enthusiasm and help people remember what they have decided.

EVALUATION

Evaluation at the close of a facilitated session can take many forms. The Reflection itself (previous page) can be a form of evaluation. Which one you use depends on what you intend to do with the information. One of the simplest ways to evaluate is to record participants' comments on a flip chart, using two columns as seen in the three examples below:



More formal evaluations can be set up for tabulation.

For further help, see "Evaluation" on page 60 in the Special Section on Meeting Management.

FACILITATOR STYLE

FIND YOUR OWN STYLE WITHIN A PROFESSIONAL STANCE

There is a lot that can be said about a facilitation style and there are as many styles as there are facilitators. However, some elements of style are critical to successful facilitation. A few of these have been mentioned previously. In this section we will fill out that picture. As a quick review, here are some general hints about ensuring participation.

The personal style of the person leading a participatory session, usually the facilitator, probably does as much as anything else to establish a comfortable working environment. While each individual will bring a unique style to the role, there are several things of which to be conscious that can encourage participation.

Honor individual contributions. Affirm participants' work. Receive all answers and assume that wisdom lies behind every contribution. It is the responsibility of facilitators to ask sensitive questions that enable deeper thinking. These questions are asked with respect and communicate a sincere desire to discover additional insights.

Honor the group. Attend to everything that participants have to say. Quite simply, pay attention. This is as important when you are sitting at the side of the room as when you are standing at the front.

Honor yourself. If you are fairly new at facilitation, don't be shy about telling a group you aren't sure what to do differently when they are stuck. Ask them for suggestions. Even highly experienced facilitators do this. Sometimes you can't know what needs to be done when you are preparing and will have to make changes "on the fly" during the event. If you trust the group, they will also begin to trust you.

Demonstrate the power of teamwork. The core team members and/or the facilitation team can begin to give the community a feel for the excitement of being involved in both the planning and the implementation of their plans by operating as an effective team during the planning sessions. Be ready to assist in whatever way is needed. Take notes and ask appropriate questions from the side of the room when a discussion bogs down. Get feedback and suggestions for improvement.

Stay flexible. No matter how well you have planned, your facilitation will continue to be mediocre until you learn to engage with the group and consider their input to what you are doing. *Always* check with them at the beginning of the session, sharing your plan, while remaining open to their questions and suggestions. Facilitators who continually are telling the group to "trust the process" usually haven't decided to trust the group.

A STORY

The following is an email from facilitator Mary Jackson[10] who posted it to the Group Process Facilitation listserv (see Appendix for how to sign on to this list). First, some background to this story. Another facilitator wrote to the list with a request for help on what to do. He had been asked at the last minute to step into a complex, conflicted situation and do a facilitation that had been designed by someone else. Mary writes:

I think this speaks to the heart of what facilitation is and the fundamental skills we need to have to facilitate.

Obviously, running a session on someone else's prep is not the ideal. But we should be able to help the group be more effective, keep them out of the ditches and moving forward.

I classify running someone else's workshop as facilitating on the fly. You go through the steps Jon laid out, before the workshop if possible, but at the start of the workshop if necessary. I wouldn't try to use a canned ice breaker; in fact, since one purpose of an icebreaker is to get the group actively engaged, getting everyone involved in defining the day is a GREAT icebreaker.

Use the agenda you've been given as a guideline (it may be valid), but get the group's agreement that you'll change the agenda if necessary.

Focus on objectives, deconstruct the terminal objectives into pieces you can work on, and let the group know if you feel the original objective will take longer than necessary, or can be expanded on. At every break, assess where you are and where you need to go. Call a break any time you need one. And get your head out of the idea that you are facilitating a stand-alone meeting and focus on how this session is part of a process. This day leads to others; you are facilitating the overall work, not a meeting.

Our role is to help the group do their work more effectively. We can ALWAYS achieve that goal. With experience, we get better at telling clients (in this case, Andy's manager) when their objectives are unlikely to be realized in the time allowed, with the given participants. Here's a phrase that works: "Wouldn't it be nice if we could..., but we're really not likely to get there in this session. Here is what we CAN do...after which we need to..." Frame the group's success so that they feel good about what they've accomplished.

These sessions are HARD WORK and they can be exhausting. But they can also be enormously rewarding. Give yourself credit for facilitating the group's work, not for fulfilling an agenda.[10]

[10] Used with permission.

SELF-EVALUATION

A facilitator's own evaluation is especially useful for improving their facilitation skills. The form on the following page is a reflective tool based on the four levels of the ToP® Focused Conversation: Objective, Reflective, Interpretive, Decisional.

FACILITATOR EVALUATION REFLECTION TOOL

Topic: **Facilitator:**

	Meets Objective	Participatory Mode	Appropriate Technology	Affirming Style
O What did you observe?				
R What was your experience?	e.g. comfortable with, uncomfortable with, excited/involved, disengaged...			
I Facilitator's Gifts?				
Needs to work on?				
Suggestions for improve-ment?				
D How will this experience improve your facilitation?				

Step 3. Follow-Up

WHEN THE EVENT IS OVER

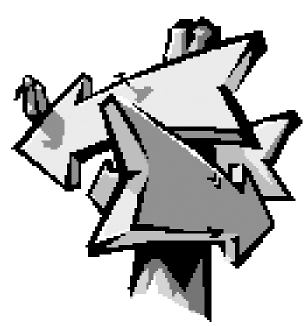
JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD GO HOME AND RELAX...

When the participants have gathered their things and left the room, the facilitator is not quite finished. First, thank everyone involved who has stayed behind to help. Then, begin carefully gathering up all the visual work to include in the documentation of the event, if it hasn't already been typed up on site by someone else. Be sure to make notes on it so you know what each piece is about and where to put it in the document. Then there is packing up of all materials, rearranging the room, if this is a requirement, and ***rechecking*** that you have everything for the document. You may even want to check a third time. Nothing is worse than having a group do all that hard work and then losing it.

TIP:
With the recent emergence of the digital camera - facilitators have a new tool for documentation. If you have a digital camera or access to one, use it to document flip chart pages for yourself and/or the group.

Before finalizing the document (see section on documentation), be sure to spell check and then have one or more people, preferably ones who attended the event, go over it and look for errors. Once you have completed all the corrections, you will want to make sure it is distributed to all participants and to any others who were unable to be there, but were involved. Don't just leave this to chance or assume someone else will do it. Be sure it gets done, even if you don't do it yourself. It bears repeating, nothing is worse than having a group do all that hard work and then losing it—and this includes in the eyes of the participants if they don't receive their own copy.

WHAT ABOUT THE NEXT MEETING?



While many facilitators are sure that all meetings must be facilitated by a professional, that probably isn't feasible. However, it is often useful to have one or two of the follow-up meetings facilitated, to be sure the group gets on track with their plans and decisions and has some method for tracking themselves. One form of facilitator follow-up is a phone call to see how they are doing once they have received the document and had a few weeks to work on any assignments they may have had.

Looking Forward

YOUR FACILITATION JOURNEY

There is no end to the many ways you can put your facilitation skills to use, including ways to talk to your children, friends, spouse or parents, co-workers and friends. Every time you set the intention of meaningful conversation with anyone, you are practicing facilitation. As your skills improve, you will find even more places to engage in a useful way.

ADVANCED FACILITATION

Once you have mastered what is covered in this quide, you will be well on your way to advanced facilitation. You may have another profession and choose to practice facilitation as a service you provide to your community. On the other hand, you may decide to pursue facilitation as a career.

To find out more, visit the International Association of Facilitators (IAF) website, www.iaf-world.org and join colleagues from around the world who are engaged both full-time and part-time in "making it easier" for groups to work together. This group of professionals is generous with their time and talent. They will be pleased to welcome you and answer questions, give you guidance about options, and encourage your efforts.

One important step toward professional qualifications is certification in core competencies. This is provided by the International Association of Facilitators, an organization that has been strengthening facilitation standards since if was formed in 1994. See below if you are interested in certification.

THE CERTIFICATION OPTION

The core competencies in facilitation fall into five arenas. In the certification process, you must produce evidence of your competence in each category:

1. Managing the Event
2. Managing the Process
3. Managing the Groups & Individuals
4. Managing Your Learning
5. Managing Yourself

Details of how to apply and where you can be certified can be found at the IAF website mentioned above.

SPECIAL SECTION
ON MEETING MANAGEMENT

"It's just a meeting..."

Hearing the word "meeting" these days may give you a familiar, yet rather unpleasant feeling. Words like *"boring", "why me?"*, and *"waste of my time"* tend to rise in us, blocking a more positive response. Or, when we find ourselves in a meeting that is difficult to engage in, we wind up tuning out, thinking of other things such as (*"when is lunch?" or making out a grocery list*), and at times being unintentionally disruptive to what is going on.

Still, practically every time we sit down with another person, we find ourselves in a "meeting." Some go exceedingly well, some flop miserably, and may seem, once they are over, to have been a colossal waste of time. In our view, this is preventable.

The questions above are neither impertinent nor irrelevant. In fact, the first appropriate question to come to mind when a meeting is mentioned should always be: ***Why meet?*** This is because effective meetings rarely happen by accident. They are a carefully planned and orchestrated answer to a very clear reason for meeting.

You are probably more familiar with the other kind because ineffective meetings are happening all the time. They are thrown together quickly, often around a burning issue that must be resolved, and then go on and on and on, talking around and around opinions without the needed information or a process to help the group out of the quagmire created by a lack of planning.

But this isn't necessary and certainly needs to be avoided. The following section contains a series of steps, hints and suggestions to avoid a repeat of such meetings, even if you aren't in charge to begin with.

Perhaps even more important than the planning itself is the intention the meeting leader holds for the meeting and his/her own self-preparation. "The Woodcarver" is a poem that speaks to the incredible power of intention.

The Woodcarver

Khing, the master carver, made a bell stand
Of precious wood. When it was finished,
All who saw it were astounded. They said it must be
The work of spirits.
The Prince of Lu said to the master carver:
"What is your secret?"

Khing replied: "I am only a workman,
I have no secret. There is only this:
When I began to think about the work you commanded
I guarded my spirit, did not expend it
On trifles, that were not to the point.
I fasted in order to set
My heart at rest.
After three days fasting,
I had forgotten gain and success.
After five days
I had forgotten praise or criticism.
After seven days
I had forgotten my body
With all of its limbs.

"By this time all thought of your Highness
And of the court had faded away.
All that might distract me from the work
Had vanished.
I was collected in the single thought
Of the bell stand.

"Then I went to the forest
To see the trees in their own natural state.
When the right tree appeared before my eyes
The bell stand also appeared in it, clearly, beyond doubt.
All I had to do was to put forth my hand
And begin.

"If I had not met this particular tree
There would have been
No bell stand at all.

"What happened?
My own collected thought
Encountered the hidden potential in the wood.
From this live encounter came the work
Which you ascribe to the spirits." [11]

[11] From *The Way of Chuang Tsz* (pp. 110-111), edited and translated. by Thomas Merton, 1969, New York: New Directions. Copyright 1965 by New Directions. Reprinted with permission.

PLANNING FOR THE MEETING

In planning a meeting, the preparation phase alone has 10 critical steps—critical, but by no means difficult. Following is a description of each. There is also a check list to use in preparing for any meeting.

Details for planning the meeting, getting materials ready, and setting up the room

1. **Clarify the task.**
   It helps to answer the question "Our task is to _______."

2. **Define the desired outcomes.**
   This may include gathering agenda items from participants as well as other leaders. Answer the question "At the conclusion of the meeting what do we want to have accomplished."

   There will be objective outcomes (known as the rational aim), such as decisions or reports or planned future activities. And there will also be subjective outcomes (the experiential aim). For example, a meeting may have the *subjective* goal of getting everyone excited to move forward on a project as well as to *objectively* plan the details of how to move forward. Knowing the experiential aim will be helpful in supporting the rational aim.

   If it is a planning meeting, a focus question design format is often helpful. Put it on a flip chart and fill it in with the group. See the explanation and format on page 11.

3. **Design the meeting to meet the objectives.**
   Design the sequence of meeting activities and assign a tentative order and times to agenda items. Be clear on whether each agenda item is informational (reports, updates) or if it requires a decision. This can be indicated on the agenda.

4. **List participants and their roles.**
   Determine who should (or list who will) attend, list needed roles, and ground rules. Know who will address each agenda item. Find out if there are participants with special needs that will affect the design of any part of the meeting.

5. **Set realistic meeting time frame.**
   Decide both when to meet, when to end. If the times were preset before the agenda was clear, check with leadership and adjust the agenda to fit the timing or get the time extended to be able to cover the entire agenda. Beware the person who always says his item will only take 5 minutes, but then proceeds to engage in a long discussion with the group. Clarify how long it will take to *present* each item and include sufficient time to discuss and decide, if needed.

6. **Finalize logistics.**
   Confirm location, needed equipment, room set up, refreshments (avoid sugar and caffeine in

snacks if possible to keep group energy up), other administrative details (registration table, money handling, name tags, etc. as required) and notify participants.

Find out what the space is like ahead of time and arrange for the room space appropriate for this group. If at all possible, see the room in advance. Last minute changes are much more difficult to make. Does the meeting need to be arranged around tables? Ideally seat people so that they can see each other, for example in a circle. If there are more than 30 participants, team tables may be needed (rounds or small rectangles). Is there enough room for the facilitator, if using one, to move around between the tables, and for people to get in and out? If using facilitators, check with them about *their* needs and requests. Also arrange other needed location details such as parking and sleeping rooms.

7. Revise the agenda.
Revise activities based on size of group, time available, people and information available and complete the final agenda. Collect and prepare materials needed. For some meetings, each participant may receive a packet either at registration, at the beginning of the meeting, or ahead of time.

8. Communicate with participants.
Communicate the agenda to participants and confirm/prepare those who have roles or will be on the agenda. Include other information as needed (preliminary reports, directions to location, dress code, etc.)

9. Set up the room.
Come at least an hour early, if there is significant setup in a space you don't normally use. Check to see that all equipment is working. Put up wall decor if needed (agenda, key information from previous meetings, motivational quotes or posters, etc.). Have flip chart paper, markers, tape, and anything you need for activities available. Find out where bathrooms are. Check on the refreshments.

10. Mentally prepare yourself.
Take a moment to yourself, breathe deeply and relax. Know that you have prepared as well as possible and turn your attention to being present to the meeting itself. Set the intention for the meeting to be all that it needs to be. If you have allowed time for it, do a final rehearsal in your mind. (This can also be done before arriving on the scene.)

Meeting Preparation Checklist

The following worksheet may be used as a check list and worksheet for planning any meeting, from a routine weekly gathering to more major events such as a planning retreat or small conference. The same questions will need to be answered. Copies of the checklist are also at the back for you to easily copy for use each time you need one.

MEETING PREPARATION Checklist

(Staple notes to checklist or keep all in a 3-ring binder)

<table>
<tr><th>STEPS</th><th colspan="3">NOTES</th><th>DONE</th></tr>
<tr><td>1. Clarify the task.</td><td colspan="3"></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">2. Define the desired outcomes.</td><td colspan="3">Rational Aim:</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Experiential Aim:</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>3. Design the meeting to meet the objectives</td><td colspan="3">Notes:</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">4. List participants & their needs

(Attach names on a separate list if needed.)</td><td colspan="3">Make-up of Participants:</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Roles Needed</td><td>Person Assigned</td><td>Confirmed</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>5. Set realistic meeting time frame</td><td colspan="3">Date Confirmed:

Time (including ending time):</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">6. Finalize logistics.

LOCATION & ROOM Details:</td><td>Materials</td><td>Equipment</td><td>Refreshments</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Plan for Documentation:

(Who’s responsible? What will be included? When available?)</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Notices Sent?</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>7. Finalize the Agenda</td><td colspan="3"></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">8. Communicate with participants</td><td colspan="3">Agenda/other materials sent?</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Are the persons on the agenda orthose playing key roles prepared?</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">9. Set up the room.</td><td colspan="3">Reset if necessary.</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Put out materials/decor.</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Check that all equipment is functioning.</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Last minute logistics (restrooms, refreshments, etc.)</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>10. Mentally prepare yourself.</td><td colspan="3">This final step is the most important last thing to assure. Then, no matter what else isn’t ready or has gone awry, the meeting will be a good one – even a great one!</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Getting Started in a Meeting

Getting started right will put people at ease and allow them to lay aside anxieties they may have about the meeting. It sets the mood or tone of the meeting as well. Key elements to a great start are in bold along with their explanations below:

Welcome, goals, agenda, group agreements, logistics (bathrooms, food, check in, names)

- **Welcome** participants to meeting. Recognize any special guests.

- Do an **opening exercise** to start the meeting. Depending on the group and the objectives for the meeting, this could be anything from a moment of silence to a community building activity or simple introductions. See the section on Group Check In and Use of Ice Breakers, Pages 22-23, for examples.

- If this group has **group norms** or agreements, review them.

- Give **logistical information**, such as the length of the meeting, location of bathrooms, snacks, coat room, etc.

- Clearly state the **goals** and anticipated outcomes for the meeting. Clarify **expectations**. It is a good idea to have the goals and outcomes displayed, along with the agenda, in the front of the room.

- Preview the **agenda**, and if appropriate ask for any additions or changes. Be sure to indicate the estimated times assigned to each section. Also clarify any **roles** people will be playing throughout the meeting.

- **Quickly move on** into the rest of the agenda. Note that the above items need to be part of the agenda, even if listed only as "Getting Started".

The "guts" of the meeting - includes using tools, methods & processes to produce clear outcomes for each section

Orchestrating the Agenda

There are many tools for moving through the agenda effectively. One of these is written procedures. In addition to the agenda, make notes on exactly what you will do and what you will say. Eventually this will come more naturally and you won't have to write out as much. Even if you work more effectively from brief notes, write it out first for clarity and then reduce it to the key notes you find helpful.

In addition to some helpful hints, we have included an example of how to write procedures. Any method that works for you is a good one. Key things to include are the timing of each section, the actual procedures of what you will do, what processes or exercises or methods or tools; and any additional preparation required such as: 1) people to give reports or handle sections of the meeting or 2) handouts, overheads or flip chart pages. See below for a sample procedure writing format. In addition, pay attention to:

<u>Meeting Flow</u>

- Vary energy levels. Be active after lunch and in the late afternoon.
- Use combination of whole group, small groups, pairs or triads.
- Give breaks at least every two hours.
- Leave adequate time for questions, reactions, discussion, decisions.
- Start and end on time so that participants know how long they need to stay focused.

<u>Group Energy Level</u>

- If participants are quiet, use small groups or pairs to get more involvement.
- If participants seem sleepy, do an energizer, take a break, or do an interactive exercise.

Sample Procedures

CRC BOARD PLANNING SESSION I

Early: check room/materials/ask Steve about documentation. Put up large/small sticky walls.

TIMING	PROCEDURES	PREP
4:00	Intro's - Steve Overview - LJ Mix - pushy re timing/laid back re exp. Ground Rules Dynamics of planng/Agenda for Sesn I	some tape curls ready Dymanics of Plng. Proc. flip Ground rules on posts Agenda for evening
4:30	Develop Focus Question Write cleanly on blank flip. (ment. doctn)	Blank Focus Q prep flip
5:15	Env. Scan: Organizational History Context, individual/team work/wall Reflection:	List of content for history on 1/4 size flip. Year blocks on sm. strips
5:35	Read all cards. Shifts - from/to (on lg. posts) What changed in that shift? Which shifts changed what you do or how you work? Which shifts have affected your public image? Looking intuitively at the future from this picture of the past, what are some of the shifts you anticipate? Someone tell the story of your past. (get one or more versions) What title would you put on this hist?	Lg. yellow posts Use 2-3 large strips.
6:00	BREAK FOR DINNER conversation over dinner if appropriate: What brings you to this Board: When did you first hear of CRC? What are some things that excite you? What are some of your most pressing concerns? Where are you itching to roll up your sleeves? What do you hope happens, but some-one else will handle? What, in your opinion, is the primary function of this board?	Take down hist. Ask Steve to help take notes.

Facilitating for Success

Any meeting can get into trouble at just about any time, so it is a good idea to have a number of skills up your sleeve for facilitating your way out of it. Following are some of the more frequent meeting difficulties and ways to avoid or repair the damage.

Staying Focused
Getting off track is probably ***the number one*** nemesis of effective meetings.

Appoint a timekeeper. If you have trouble keeping your eye on the clock and tend to get involved in a group's long and rambling discussions, appoint someone else to help you. They can sit at the back and give you a high sign to "cut" the irrelevancies and get back to business. They can also help you keep track of time. Often, in groups who tend to get off track, a 5 minute stretch break every hour (using a timer) will break into their pattern and allow you to get them restarted each time with renewed focus.

Tips for keeping on track, tracking the progress, and moving smoothly through conflict.

Refer back to the agenda. Keep it posted and keep the timing updated as some topics take more or less time than planned.

Use other visual aids. Have a flip chart handy to note key elements of an involved discussion and keep the group focused. Have someone create a picture, chart or graph of complicated information.

Maintain a "bin list" or "parking lot" to collect data to deal with later. This keeps the meeting from being de-railed into a discussion of material not relevant to the agenda.

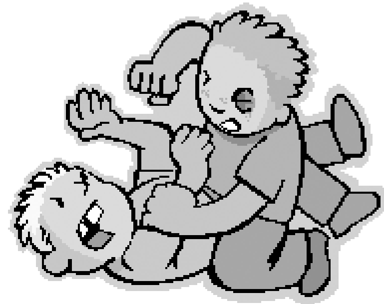
Record all decisions and actions on a flip chart. Not only will this be useful to the final documentation, but it clarifies at the time what actually got decided. In the heat of a discussion, the consensus may become clouded and writing it up will allow clarity. Be sure to note who is responsible for taking an action that is indicated.

Facilitating Around Disruptive Behaviors

Whether it is a constantly ringing cell phone, a negative attitude, confusion about lunch or emotional conflict, disruptions happen. In addition to ensuring maximum participation and that everyone is heard, the leader will often have to deal with conflicts, manage differences, keep communication open and do anything else necessary to help participants feel they can make a contribution and that the meeting is worthwhile. Some useful clues include:

Use participatory processes. Processes that allow for full participation will usually keep conflicts at bay. Plus, people get so involved, they forget some of their disruptive behaviors.

Bring people back to the original task or the group's mission. A larger context will often put petty grievances in perspective.



Remind people of the ground rules. Often this is all it takes to recreate order out of chaos.

Take a break to allow tempers to cool or heads to clear. This goes along with remembering to check the group's energy level. They may simply need a change of pace.

Ask for concrete examples. An illustration of what has someone up in arms is much clearer to the entire group.

Help sort between assumptions and facts. Just as with the ORID discussion, at times it is important to get real facts back on the table. If you sense people are speaking from assumptions, ask for examples from their experience.

Draw out people with relevant expertise or information. Ask if anyone in the room has better information or experience about the topic. If not, ask the group how they can get the information they need. It may require something to be tabled until the next meeting while someone is assigned to do the research.

Be supportive of new or partial ideas and minority views. Look for solutions that are more, rather than less, inclusive.

Remember—people are doing the best they can with what they have at the moment. And while this may not be their best moment, give them the benefit of the doubt, and move on. If you are frequently caught with behaviors you have difficulty dealing with, know that all team issues are personal issues and find help. Take a class in mediation, seek advice of another sensitive member of the group, or talk to the person responsible privately.

Staying Present to the Group. Often, the meeting leader or facilitator can get caught up in the content of what is going on. It is extremely critical to understand the content, keeping your "nonsense monitor" functioning, and drawing forth new insights when a group is stuck. But it is just as important to be a neutral, yet fully present, person. Several things will help you.

Use an outsider if you are too close to the content. Often, when you are a member of the group and the topic is either complex or you are invested in it, you need someone who is neutral to lead the meeting.

Schedule a break. If you are feeling sucked in, you need some space to reground yourself, separating from the group in order to remain neutral. They are likely to be needing a break at the same time.

Look people in the eye. It is difficult not to be fully present when you focus on who is speaking.

Don't be afraid to use your intuition. If you sense the group is not well engaged in what is going on, don't hesitate to mention it. Or change the pace with a shift in activity or a 1 minute energizer (something as simple as having everyone stand, reach for the ceiling, roll their shoulders forward and backwards, shake out their hands, and sit back down).

Conclusion

There are only THREE critical steps to the conclusion of an effective meeting. They are:

1. Closing
2. Evaluation
3. Documentation

Closing

We have probably all experienced the meeting that drifted aimlessly to an end, with various participants getting up and leaving when they chose to honor other obligations or had reached their meeting tolerance limit. Thus, it is important to not only end the meeting on time, but to end the business of the meeting with enough time left for reflection and, if needed, a review of such things as decisions or next steps.

- Bring the meeting to an end by acknowledging the hard work of the group

- Many groups close by discussing briefly what has been accomplished, how people feel about the process or accomplishments, and appreciating this session (or use the ORID conversation method described below under Evaluation)

- Other closing methods include a final closing statement and thanking people for their time and energy

Self-consciously bringing closure, including closing, evaluation and documentation

Evaluation

There are many forms of evaluation that can be done at the close of the meeting, from asking one or two pointed questions to filling out an extensive survey. Some groups have forms that their organization requires. However, a group participatory evaluation (see samples below) is a good way to keep people's concerns and discomforts as well as their positive experiences aired before their colleagues. This will usually diffuse some of the anger or tension individuals may have as well as underscore and strengthen the inspiration and motivation they may have gained at the meeting.

- Create three columns on a flip chart. In the far left hand column, put a "+", symbolizing what people liked. In the middle, put a "-", for what people didn't like in the meeting. In the far right hand column, place a light bulb, indicating what could be changed for the next meeting. Do a quick (usually not more than five minutes total) group brainstorm, filling in the columns one at a time and working from left to right. Do not respond to comments or defend the way that the meeting was run, just listen and scribe. This sort of open feedback is invaluable in setting up future meetings.

- Use the ORID method to have a conversation about the meeting. For example, ask "What was accomplished in this meeting?", then, "Where were you excited, frustrated in this meeting?", "In what ways was this meeting or were these decisions important to us?", and finally, "How will this meeting affect the future direction of our organization?"

- Ask participants to fill out a written evaluation of the meeting for more in-depth information. Using the ORID method again works well. Questions can be asked about how people felt about decisions that were made, the design of the meeting, the meeting space, the facilitator, or any other information that might be useful in setting up future meetings.

- Draw a horizontal line across the middle of a flip chart page to represent the entire time of the meeting and segment it into the various parts of the meeting. Have the group intuitively say what the mood or feel of each segment was, using the bottom of the page as "the pits" and the top of the page as "off the charts". Take a brief moment to reflect on how that affected the outcomes of the meeting and what lessons may have been learned about meeting styles.

Graphic examples of flip charts can be found on pages 43 and 44 .

Documentation

While taking minutes in certain kinds of meeting has become standard practice, many meetings today have no record of what went on. It remains a critical piece of effective meetings to have them documented. There are several key pieces and a variety of ways to do this:

- Have someone assigned the role of scribe at the beginning of the meeting.

- Have important information written on flip charts during the meeting. Collect all the visual documentation (anything put on flip charts, flow diagrams or other workshop items from the wall) and have it typed up.

- Write a summary of the meeting, including a few lines that capture the flavor of the event, as well as the objective data. Clear and interesting documentation has often made the difference between a meeting that was quickly forgotten and one that produced significant follow-up results.

- Be sure to collect any handouts from the meeting (previous minutes or documentation, committee reports, proposals, etc.) to copy and deliver to persons unable to attend the meeting.

- If it was a long meeting or series of meetings, create a nice looking document with a cover page that includes the group's logo, if appropriate, the title of the meeting and the dates and location.

- Another key piece of information to include is a participant list.
- If you are unable to have "real time" documentation that is handed to the group at the end of the session, do your best to see that a final document, with corrections already made, goes out within 48 hours of the meeting. This cements in people's minds the decisions made and responsibilities accepted during the meeting and makes follow-up easier over time.

Roles of a Meeting Facilitator

Often, a meeting facilitator can be confused with the group leader, or vice versa. To help clarify this, see the 5 key tasks or roles of a meeting facilitator, as different from the leader:

1. **Equalizing Participation:** A key role of the facilitator is to make sure that no one person dominates the discussion and participation is as equal as possible. The facilitator should always recognize someone who has not spoken before someone who has. One technique for drawing out people who may be shy is to periodically say: "I'm looking for people who have not had a chance to speak." Sometimes it is helpful to ask persons who haven't spoken if they have anything to add.

2. **Keeping the Discussion/Process Moving:** Another key role of the facilitator is to keep the discussion/meeting process moving. This should be done by keeping track of the overall meeting agenda and the time spent on each session. The facilitator needs to:

   - Make constant adjustments in the meeting agenda/process.
   - Make decisions on when to wrap up a session, and
   - Which sessions to allow to go longer,

   All this will contribute toward achieving the overall goals and objectives.

3. **Maintaining Control of the Meeting:** A third key role of the facilitator is to insure that the meeting proceeds in an effective and orderly manner. This includes:

   - Not letting the agenda get sidetracked,
   - Preventing one outspoken person from dominating a meeting, and
   - Keeping the meeting from breaking down into chaos with everyone speaking at once.

> ***Learning how to stand clearly in a facilitation vs. leadership role***

A meeting which achieves a good balance between active participation from the participants and at the same time proceeds in an orderly and focused way is the mark of a good facilitator.

4. **Clarifying the Questions or Topics:** Sometimes when a session begins, the participants are silent, either because they don't understand the topic/question, or they don't see its relevance. The facilitator should restate the goal of the session so that people are clear, and try re-phrasing the topic/question so it is more understandable or relevant to the group.

5. **Ensuring the Goals of the Meeting Are Achieved:** This is perhaps the most important role of a meeting facilitator. A facilitator should first make sure that the goals of a meeting are clearly defined, agreed upon by the meeting participants, and that the meeting agenda leads to accomplishing the goals. It is the job of the facilitator to continuously fine-tune the meeting process to ensure that the goals are achieved. A facilitator has done a good job if the participants leave the meeting feeling productive and that their time was well spent.

Appendices

Situation Analysis Worksheet
Participant Profile Worksheet
Activity Planning Worksheet
Meeting Preparation Checklist
Additional Resources
Another Key Resource...On-line
Books on Facilitation
Facilitation Training
Useful Websites
Articles

SITUATION ANALYSIS Worksheet

Event:________________________ Site:_________________________ Date:__________

Purpose:	***Relationships:***
Results/Outputs:	***Constraining Factors:***

PARTICIPANT PROFILE Worksheet

Event:________________________ Site:_________________________ Date:__________

Expected Participants:	***Participant Attributes:***
Special Needs:	***Intra-Group Relations:***

ACTIVITY PLANNING Worksheet

Rational Aim	*Experiential Aim:*	
Brainstorm Possible Activities to Achieve Aims	*Materials*	*Time & Space*

MEETING PREPARATION Checklist

(Staple notes to checklist or keep all in a 3-ring binder)

STEPS	NOTES			DONE
1. Clarify the task.				
2. Define the desired outcomes.	Rational Aim:			
	Experiential Aim:			
3. Design the meeting to meet the objectives				
4. List participants & their needs (Attach names on a separate list if needed.)	Make-up of Participants:			
	Roles Needed	Person Assigned	Confirmed	
5. Set realistic meeting timeframe	Date Confirmed: Time (including ending time):			
6. Finalize logistics. LOCATION & ROOM Details:	Materials	Equipment	Refreshments	
	Plan for Documentation: (Who's responsible? What will be included? When available?)			
	Notices Sent?			
7. Finalize the Agenda				
8. Communicate with participants	Agenda/other materials sent?			
	Are persons on the agenda or playing key roles prepared?			
9. Set up the room.	Reset if necessary.			
	Put out materials/decor.			
	Check that all equipment is functioning.			
	Last minute logistics (restrooms, refreshments, etc.)			
10. Mentally prepare yourself.	Notes to self:			

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

THE BEST WEBSITE:

The International Association of Facilitators - www.iaf-world.org

ANOTHER KEY RESOURCE...ON-LINE

This is your invitation to join the GRP-FACL listserv:
Go to the website of the International Association of Facilitators (see above). Under the heading **For Facilitators**, *select Listservs* and follow the instructions to subscribe to the list of your choice. There are both English and Spanish listservs, with other languages in process.

A FEW BOOKS ON FACILITATION

For the Beginner...

The Art of Focused Conversation: 100 Ways to Access Group Wisdom in the Workplace, Brian Stanfield, New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, BC, Canada, 2000

The Art of Focused Conversation: More than 100 Ways to Think Clearly in Schools, Jo Nelson, New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, BC, Canada, 2000

How to Make Meetings Work, Michael Doyle and David Straus, Wyden Books, New York, 1976

Methods for Active Participation, Terry Bergdall, Oxford Press, Zambia, 1992

More Than 50 Ways to Build Team Consensus, Bruce Williams, Skylight Publications, Palatine, Illinois, 1993

Winning Through Participation/Ganar Mediante la Participacion, Laura Spencer, Kendall-Hunt, Dubuque, Iowa, 1989 (specify either English or Spanish)

More Advanced...

Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making, Sam Kaner with Lenny Lind, Catherine Toldi, Sarah Fisk & Duane Berger, New Society, Philadelphia, 1996

The TEAM Handbook, Peter R. Scholtes & Other Contributions, Joiner, Madison, Wisconsin, 1988

FACILITATION TRAINING

Center for or the Study of Work Teams
The Skilled Facilitator Intensive Workshop
Roger Schwarz has developed a values-based approach to facilitation that focuses on creating highly effective groups and organizations. The Workshop is designed for participants who want to learn the principles and techniques of skilled facilitation to improve effectiveness in the workplace.
Duration: Five days
Skill level: any

Contact: Bonnie Bisset
Phone: 940.565.3096
Fax: 940.565.4806
E-Mail: bisset@unt.edu
Web: http://www.workteams.unt.edu

Facilitator4hire
Facilitator4results
A highly interactive skills-based course that prepares facilitators to consistently get the results they need from groups.
Duration: 3 days
Skill level: any

Contact: Janet Danforth
Phone: (864) 324-2991
Fax: same
E-Mail: jdanforth@mindspring.com
Web: http://www.facilitator4hire.com

The Institute of Cultural Affairs
Group Facilitation Methods
Begin the Technology of Participation series! Learn three proven processes for activating group participation. Gain hands-on experience practicing methods and explore ways to apply them to your specific situation.
Duration: 3 days
Skill level: any

Contact: Sunny Walker
Phone: (303) 861-1627
Fax: (303) 561-0841
E-Mail: sunwalker@igc.org
Web: http://www.ica-usa.org

For additional training opportunities, go to http://www.thefacilitator.com

MATERIALS & SUPPLIES

The three most often used supplies for a facilitator are flip chart pads (often with easels), bright and dark colored markers and masking tape. Another, low-tech but useful item is the "sticky wall."

Flip Chart Pads

Most pads still come in 40-50 sheets to the pad. For locations that will not allow you to tape to the walls, they will often allow the use of 3M brand Post-It® pads. These are a little smaller than regular flip pads, but still work well in most settings.

Masking Tape

Masking tape comes in a variety of colors and widths. However, blue "painters" tape, available in most hardware stores, is designed to NOT take paint off walls and can sometimes be used instead of regular tape in places that would otherwise ban the use of tape on their walls.

I have always volunteered to repaint/repair any damaged walls, but in more than 13 years of making the offer, I have never damaged a wall.

Reusable "Sticky Wall'

One item that makes use of a lot of unnecessary tape is the facilitator's sticky wall. You can make your own from a piece of rip-stop nylon, either hemmed or protected from fraying by running a candle along its edge. These can also be purchased in bright colors from ICA USA, 1-800-742-4032, www.ica-usa.org. They come already hemmed in a large, 5' x 12' size ready to be sprayed. Although there are many brands of "repositionable" spray on the market, I have found only one that performs consistently: 3M brand Spray Mount Artist's Adhesive. Spray the wall lightly (outside or in a well-ventilated area), using two light coats. This should last for 6-10 times of use. If paper posted on the sticky wall begins to fall off, hold a sheet of paper under the can as you give it a new dusting with spray, while mounted on the wall. Be sure to clear the room and open any windows before spraying, as breathing the inhalant is highly toxic.

To attach the sticky wall to a regular wall, wide painter's tape is a good approach. It can also be put up with push pins or, on a hotel carpeted divider wall, small pieces of sticky-backed Velcro, put on the back side of the wall first, will keep the wall well adhered to the divider.

Markers

In selecting markers, choose only water-based non-toxic, bright colored types. DO NOT USE PERMANENT MARKERS because of both toxicity and their tendency to bleed through paper, ruining walls and table tops. Because a number of people are extremely sensitive to added scents, unscented are also recommended. Mr. Sketch® now makes unscented markers. Faber-Castell has "Chart Markers" which, while unscented and long-lasting, are lower in color intensity and thus somewhat harder to read from a distance. Avery makes a very bright marker, but be sure to bag these in plastic or place in your carry-on luggage if you are traveling as they

sometimes have been known to leak when transported in the normal cargo section. One company, The Grove Consultants International, www.grove.com, now offers a set of 8 markers called Charters®, which, while more expensive than other brands, are a more intense color and longer lasting.

Kits:

Various facilitator kits can be purchased that already contain many of your standard materials. See options at www.grove.com and www.ica-usa.org. At The Grove site, click on products and then supplies. At the ICA site, type in "facilitator kits" in the search box and then click on the on-line store. Both sites offer additional books, materials, and training related to facilitation.

ARTICLES

consulting today

Ground Rules that Really Work

By Roger M. Schwarz

I believe ground rules can and should be central to a consultant or facilitator's work with a group—an important foundation of a group's work. Essentially, ground rules are a way of operationalizing core values.

A facilitator (I'll use facilitator and consultant interchangeably in this article) needs to discuss ground rules while planning the work with a potential client.

The client must make two decisions about ground rules. The first is whether the group wants to hire me, given that I will use a particular set of core values and ground rules to observe the group and intervene. The second decision is whether the group members want to take responsibility for using the ground rules themselves in making their group more effective.

Typically, groups adopt ground rules implicitly. A group member may find out that a norm or ground rule exists only when they've acted inconsistently with it and a more senior member of the group takes them aside and tells them that they've violated the "rules."

A much more effective way of developing ground rules is to do it explicitly, when the group openly discusses and comes to consensus on the set of ground rules they wish to use and for which they'll hold each other accountable.

Ground rules serve a number of purposes. They are a set of norms for groups to use in working together. They define what is effective and ineffective behavior. They define how the group will work together and how a consultant will work with the group. They provide a basis for the facilitator to observe the group's functioning and a platform for intervention for the facilitator or the group itself.

A common topic of concern among consultants is who should develop the ground rules. Many consultants in classes I teach believe that in order for a group to support a set of ground rules, they must create them themselves. But groups often hire a facilitator because their process is ineffective. They often don't fully understand how their process is lacking or how to improve it. Consequently, they may suggest ground rules that won't increase their effectiveness.

This creates a dilemma for the consultant. If the consultant simply uses the group's suggested ground rules, the group may end up off target. However, the consultant cannot openly present his or her own set of ground rules, because he believes the group will not embrace them. To manage this dilemma, consultants "ease in" by trying to lead the group to the consultant's ground rules or by subtly changing the ground rules the group suggests. They try to make sure that their ground rules are in place while acting as if they are not doing so.

I see it differently. As a facilitator, people hire me for my process expertise. Part of my expertise includes the specific kinds of behaviors that will lead team members to be more effective. Providing effective ground rules is part of my responsibility as a process consultant.

My approach is to **advocate** a set of core values and ground rules based on those values that I believe create effective groups. I **explain** how and why they work, outlining the risks and benefits associated with using them, and **inquire** of the group members what concerns and problems they see with these ground rules.

Often, facilitators use ground rules in a way that makes the ground rules less than central to the team's

Continued on next page

Ground Rules for effective groups

1. Test assumptions and inferences.
2. Share all relevant information.
3. Use specific examples and agree on what important words mean.
4. Discuss undiscussable issues.
5. Focus on interests, not positions.
6. Explain the reasoning behind your statements, questions, and actions.
7. Balance advocacy with inquiry.
8. Jointly design next steps and ways test disagreements.
9. Keep the discussion focused.
10. Use a decision making rule that generates the level of commitment needed.

Roger Schwarz

Ground Rules, continued

Continued from previous page

work. Essentially, they develop a list of ground rules in the beginning, then ignore them. This happens partly because the kinds of ground rules they have developed are procedural: One person talks at a time; put beepers and cell phones on vibrate.

Procedural ground rules alone won't ensure the best team result. They may be useful, but they are not sufficient for helping a group talk with each other **after** they've arrived on time and turned off their cell phones.

"Providing effective ground rules is part of my responsibility..."

To really help a group work, ground rules need to help team members understand exactly how to create conversation that leads to quality decisions, commitment, and learning. For example, one of my ground rules is to test assumptions and inferences. When team members act on untested inferences and assumptions, they reduce the ability to learn what others are thinking, reduce the quality of decisions, and increase conflict and defensive behavior.

When I see a member making what I believe is an untested inference, I check it out. I might ask: "John, a minute ago I think I heard you say you thought Fran was going to drop the project in a month. Did I capture that accurately? Your comment looked like an inference to me; do you see it differently? If not, would you be willing to check that out with Fran?" In this way, the ground rules become a central part of my facilitation approach, rather than a perfunctory exercise. The sidebar shows my ground rules for effective groups.

I base my ground rules on the following core values (the first three of which spring from the work of Chris Argyris):

Valid information, which means that people share all relevant information with each other in a way that it can be validated.

Free and informed choice, which means that people make decisions based on valid information in a way that they get to choose their objectives as well as methods for achieving them.

Internal commitment , which means that people fully support implementing the decisions given their roles.

Compassion, which means that people temporarily suspend judgment about others and themselves.

Based on these core values, the group can use a list of ground rules I propose, can change it, or can develop their own. I can feel sure that any ground rules congruent with these values will serve the group well.

Having explicit core values enables both team members and the facilitator to continually consider the question: How can I act congruently with the core values in this situation? The ground rules are specific guidelines for answering that question.

Roger Schwarz is an organizational psychologist and president of Roger Schwarz & Associates, based in Chapel Hill, NC. He is the author of The Skilled Facilitator: Practical Wisdom for Developing Effective Groups *[1994, Jossey-Bass] and consults and teaches workshops around the world on facilitation and facilitative leadership. He can be reached at 919.932.3343, roger@schwarzassociates.com or through the website www.schwarzassociates.com.*

How to develop ground rules:

1. Clarify the core values that you believe should guide effective groups. The core values serve as the fundamental things that are worth striving for.
2. Develop a list of behaviorally based ground rules that you and the group will follow to create effective behavior. Unlike the core values, which are lofty and abstract, the ground rules are specific ways of putting the core values into action.
3. When beginning to work with a group, share your approach to consulting or facilitation including the core values and ground rules you have developed. Explain your reasoning and some examples of how you and the group might use the ground rules in your relationship.
4. Reach consensus on a set of ground rules with the group. Whether they are the ones you advocate or others, they need to be consistent with your core values, otherwise, you will not be able to use them as a basis for diagnosing and intervening in the group. Reach agreement with the group about whether they will take responsibility for monitoring congruence with the ground rules.
5. Use the core values and ground rules to identify times when members are acting inconsistently with their values, and intervene accordingly. Naturally, you should ask the group to intervene if you are ever acting inconsistently with the core values.
6. Set aside time at the end of each meeting to reflect as a group on examples in which the core values helped or hindered group effectiveness. Be willing to revise the ground rules if something is not increasing effectiveness.

Habits that Block Conversation

Facilitators using participatory methods are over against a set of old mental habits that insist on eternally placing the individual over against the group rather than in partnership with it. Because of this ToP™ facilitators are playing a revolutionary role in displacing a new set of habits with another.

Many of us, especially those of us in the Western world, were educated to think in ways that restrict our ability to have real conversations. These well-nurtured mental habits include the following:

The Culture of Advocacy

An advocate is one who pleads, recommends, pushes a specific perspective, proposal, or a particular product. Advocates are commonly convinced that their position is right. Their purpose in a conversation is to find supporters. An inquirer, on the other hand, comes at a topic with an open mind looking for creative or viable options, or the facts of a particular matter. The intent is to open up new ground, or get a new take on "established truth."

We are not good at balancing advocacy and inquiry. Most of us are educated to be good advocates. While nothing is wrong with persuasion, positional advocacy often takes the form of confrontation, in which ideas clash rather than inform.

Rick Ross and Charlotte Roberts *et al.* in *The Fifth Discipline Field Book* point out that managers in Western corporations receive a lifetime of training in being forceful, articulate advocates. They know how to present and argue strongly for their views. But as people rise in the organization, they are forced to deal with more complex and interdependent issues where no one individual knows the answer. In this more complicated situation, the only viable option is for groups of informed individuals to think together to arrive at new insights. At this point, they need to learn to skillfully balance advocacy with inquiry.

Sending Not Receiving

Our egos are often so hell-bent on getting our own ideas out that we can hardly wait for others to finish talking. We feel that what others are saying is a terrible interruption in what we are trying to say. In the process, we not only fail to understand what others are saying; we do not even hear them out. Edward de Bono's description of "parallel thinking" aptly describes the kind of flow that is possible in a conversation where different ideas are allowed and encouraged:

"Instead of a conversation which is really an argument where opinions clash with each other, and the best man wins, a good conversation employs a kind of parallel thinking where ideas are laid down alongside each other, without any interaction between the contributions. There is no clash, no dispute, no true/false judgement. There is instead a genuine exploration of the subject from which conclusions and decisions may then be derived."

In his book on Native law, *Returning to the Teachings: Exploring Aboriginal Justice*, Rupert Ross speaks of the huge weight that is lifted off his shoulders when he is submerged for some time in a group of Aboriginal people, knowing that he is not expected to judge everything that everybody says or does (much less declare his judgements as quickly as he can come to them). He speaks of this weight that so many English speakers carry—"the weight of this obligation to form and express opinions at all times and about almost everything." (Ross, *Returning to Teaching, p.* 108.)

Possessing Absolute Truth

Some people would much rather be right than happy. Conversations that are moving along nicely meet a sudden death when someone declares, "That statement is simply not true!" Then, of course, the response is, "Well, who made you the sole possessor of the truth?" People who have had their observations ruled invalid by a critic will think twice about participating again. Many get really fired up about possessing the truth, but, as de Bono says, "standing for absolute truth overrides the reality of complex system interactions, favors analysis rather than design, leads to smugness, complacency and arrogance, preserves paradigms instead of changing them." de Bono suggests we all learn the use of such wonderful words as possibly, maybe, that is one way of looking at it, both yes and no, it seems so, and sometimes. (de Bono, Edward: *Parallel Thinking*, p. 66)

Insights from the Aboriginal justice system are helpful here. Aboriginal people often dispute the determination of white people to use adversarial trials to "get at the truth." Traditional aboriginal teachings seem to suggest that people will always have different perceptions of what has taken place between them. The issue, then , is not so much the search for the "truth" but the search for--and the honoring of—the different perspectives we all maintain. Truth, within this understanding, has to do with the truth about each person's reaction to and sense of involvement with the events in question, for that is what is truly real to them.

The Tyranny of the OR

If ten people are conversing round a table, the truth lies not with any one of them, but in the center of the table, between and among the perspectives of all ten. They are together co-creating what is true (or real) in their situation. This is not good news for the more opinionated among us. In *Built to Last*, James Collins and Jerry Porras speak of "the tyranny of the OR." This particular tyranny pushes people to believe that things must be either A OR B, but not both. For example, "You can make progress by methodical process OR by opportunistic groping." "You can have creative autonomy OR consistency and control." Instead of being oppressed by the "tyranny of the OR", visionary organizations liberate themselves with the "genius of the AND"—the ability to embrace a number of dimensions at the same time.

The Allure of Criticism

Around 1900, at the high noon of British empirical thought, the young mathematician Bertrand Russell said that the purpose of conversation is to distinguish truth from error. To the present day, many of us believe him, and never miss an opportunity to correct a colleague or loved one. A lot of us were taught as children to "never contradict your elders." But we weren't taught not to contradict our peers. In fact, those of us who learned the art of debating were trained to tear other people's arguments apart. Rupert Ross describes how language differences cause us to respond very differently to common events in our lives: "I never realized how harsh the English language is or how judgmental and argumentative we become as we speak it. I had no idea that people could—and do—live otherwise, without having to respond to everything round them in such combative and judgmental ways." Ross goes on to list the extraordinary number of adjectives like horrible, uplifting, tedious and inspiring, that are not so much descriptions of things as they are conclusions about things. He also writes of the almost endless supply of negative nouns that we regularly use to describe each other: nouns like thief, coward, offender, weirdo and moron, to name a few. By contrast, Aboriginal people seldom express such judgements in their everyday conversations, even when speaking English. There does not seem to be any loss of communication.

Edward de Bono in *Parallel Thinking* says that Western culture has always esteemed critical thinking too highly. Teachers are always getting students to "react" critically to something put in front of them. The easiest kind of critical comment is a negative one. In a meeting, or conversation, any person who wants to be involved or noticed has to say something. The easiest form of contribution is the negative. Criticism is also emotionally attractive and satisfying. When I attack an idea, I am instantly made superior to the idea or the originator of the idea. Criticism is also one of the few ways in which people who are not creative can look powerful.

Moreover, says de Bono, criticism takes very little effort. All you have to do is to choose a frame of judgement different from someone else's, and you have a free field of fire for your intellectual howitzers. If the conversation is about architecture, and someone is admiring a building done in the Bauhaus style and I prefer imitation classical, I can simply point out that the Bauhaus is stark, lacking in grace, and downright boring. If someone is in favor of the whole-word approach to teaching reading, I can point out its lack of emphasis on phonetics. If the conversation ends there (as it usually does), I will never understand my friend's sense of beauty which leads her to admire the Bauhaus style. I will never hear the teacher's story of trial and error, as she sought to help children overcome their inner blocks to learning.

That, in brief, is the problem—criticism as the first step in a discussion is generally the last. It is an entirely different matter if I hear the other person first, understand what she is trying to do, then talk with her about better ways to do it. de Bono does point out that criticism is a valuable and essential part of thinking, but, of itself, it is totally inadequate.

Criticism is an intellectual tool beloved of ideologues. It can come as a shock to a dedicated critic when they discover that this is their style of thought. Over years of unsatisfying experience, such people may slowly realize:

- I am focusing my attention on finding flaws in others.
- I hope to discredit what they say.
- I am setting up adversarial relationships with my colleagues.

The Adversarial Mode

As someone said, the opposite of one great truth is simply another great truth. Yet there is something about the archetypes of Western culture that do not readily let contrasting ideas lie together side by side. If two views are presented, they are often presumed mutually exclusive, as if thought was a Darwinian battle for the survival of the fittest. At the prospect of such mental combat people tend to fight, flee, or freeze. Some of us are so trained to treat others as opponents, that it is difficult to restrain ourselves in such a conversation. We feel all the old warrior impulses rising within us. We may try to oppose an idea by discrediting the person who offers it. We may label another person's concerns as negative, and their motives as suspect. If the object of this behavior is to drive others away, it works. After even one instance of being treated as an unwanted adversary, people tend to withdraw or shut down. They retreat into enemy camps, and become rivals rather than people discussing a mutual concern.

Perhaps it is our mental cast itself that needs redoing. Our training has produced an outlook based on Cartesian and other dualisms that insist on dividing the world up between us and them, good and bad, those in step or not in step. We, of course, invariably belong to the good, the right, and the in-step. Redoing that mentality would allow us to live more easily with ideas that are the opposite of ours. ♦

Modified from Chapter I of The Art of Focused Conversation: 100 Ways to Access Group Wisdom in the Workplace, *edited by R. Brian Stanfield, published by ICA Canada, Toronto, 1997.*

Note: Used with permission.

International Association of Facilitators

Ethics and Values Think Tank

IAF Statement of Values and Code of Ethics

Adopted May 21, 2002

Preamble

Facilitators are called upon to fill an impartial role in helping groups become more effective. We act as process guides to create a balance between participation and results.

We, the members of the International Association of Facilitators (IAF), believe that our profession gives us a unique opportunity to make a positive contribution to individuals, organizations, and society. Our effectiveness is based on our personal integrity and the trust developed between ourselves and those with whom we work. Therefore, we recognise the importance of defining and making known the values and ethical principles that guide our actions.

This Statement of Values and Code of Ethics recognizes the complexity of our roles, including the full spectrum of personal, professional and cultural diversity in the IAF membership and in the field of facilitation. Members of the International Association of Facilitators are committed to using these values and ethics to guide their professional practice. These principles are expressed in broad statements to guide ethical practice; they provide a framework and are not intended to dictate conduct for particular situations. Questions or advice about the application of these values and ethics may be addressed to the International Association of Facilitators.

Statement of Values

As group facilitators, we believe in the inherent value of the individual and the collective wisdom of the group. We strive to help the group make the best use of the contributions of each of its members. We set aside our personal opinions and support the group's right to make its own choices. We believe that collaborative and cooperative interaction builds consensus and produces meaningful outcomes. We value professional collaboration to improve our profession.

Code of Ethics

1. Client Service

We are in service to our clients, using our group facilitation competencies to add value to their work.

Our clients include the groups we facilitate and those who contract with us on their behalf. We work closely with our clients to understand their expectations so that we provide the appropriate service, and that the group produces the desired outcomes. It is our responsibility to ensure that we are competent to handle the intervention. If the group decides it needs to go in a direction other than that originally intended by either the group or its representatives, our role is to help the group move forward, reconciling the original intent with the emergent direction.

2. Conflict of Interest

We openly acknowledge any potential conflict of interest.

Prior to agreeing to work with our clients, we discuss openly and honestly any possible conflict of interest, personal bias, prior knowledge of the organisation or any other matter which may be perceived as preventing us from working effectively with the interests of all group members. We do this so that, together, we may make an informed decision about proceeding and to prevent misunderstanding that could detract from the success or credibility of the clients or ourselves. We refrain from using our position to secure unfair or inappropriate privilege, gain, or benefit.

3. Group Autonomy

We respect *the culture, rights, and autonomy of the group.*

We seek the group's conscious agreement to the process and their commitment to participate. We do not impose anything that risks the welfare and dignity of the participants, the freedom of choice of the group, or the credibility of its work.

4. Processes, Methods, and Tools

We use processes, methods and tools responsibly.

In dialogue with the group or its representatives we design processes that will achieve the group's goals, and select and adapt the most appropriate methods and tools. We avoid using processes, methods or tools with which we are insufficiently skilled, or which are poorly matched to the needs of the group.

5. Respect, Safety, Equity, and Trust

We strive to engender an environment of respect and safety where all participants trust that they can speak freely and where individual boundaries are honoured. We use our skills, knowledge, tools, and wisdom to elicit and honour the perspectives of all.

We seek to have all relevant stakeholders represented and involved. We promote equitable relationships among the participants and facilitator and ensure that all participants have an opportunity to examine and share their thoughts and feelings. We use a variety of methods to enable the group to access the natural gifts, talents and life experiences of each member. We work in ways that honour the wholeness and self-expression of others, designing sessions that respect different styles of interaction. We understand that any action we take is an intervention that may affect the process.

6. Stewardship of Process

We practice stewardship of process and impartiality toward content.

While participants bring knowledge and expertise concerning the substance of their situation, we bring knowledge and expertise concerning the group interaction process. We are vigilant to minimize our influence on group outcomes. When we have content knowledge not otherwise available to the group, and that the group must have to be effective, we offer it after explaining our change in role.

7. Confidentiality

We maintain confidentiality of information.

We observe confidentiality of all client information. Therefore, we do not share information about a client within or outside of the client's organisation, nor do we report on group content, or the individual opinions or behaviour of members of the group without consent.

8. Professional Development

We are responsible for continuous improvement of our facilitation skills and knowledge.

We continuously learn and grow. We seek opportunities to improve our knowledge and facilitation skills to better assist groups in their work. We remain current in the field of facilitation through our practical group experiences and ongoing personal development. We offer our skills within a spirit of collaboration to develop our professional work practices.

Note: Used with permission.

Magic of the Facilitator

Excerpts of Brian Stanfield's article published in the Facilitation News

The lineaments of a new intellectual and practical discipline are brewing that, as yet, cannot be found in any university or college course. Lurking in this fomenting pot of human-to-human relations is as one devotee put it, "what every newly elected politician needs training in before taking office."

Competence n. (also competency): *being competent, ability*

Thirty years of ICA research and training have generated a band of facilitator-consultants around the world who are second to none in their grasp and practice of the dynamics and "how-to's" of the art and science of group facilitation. In many nations, these practitioners have labored for years facilitating community consultations assisting organizations, government departments and sometimes major corporations to work cooperatively to solve problems which may have been entrenched for generations. These facilitators then trained others in the same art and science of participation. Some of these graduates and co-creators of ICA training have now teamed up with representatives from other traditions of consultation to create a bold new organization: The International Association of Facilitators (IAF). Among other items on the IAF's agenda is a statement on the specific Competencies involved in participative facilitation. Facilitator groups in different locations have forged out their own skill listings, and all these have been amalgamated with the ability charts of other facilitation traditions. The end product will be a statement of the multifarious abilities needed by a facilitator. This will give both ICA and the IAF and platform from which to evaluate where trainee facilitators are on the journey toward facilitation mastery.

Competence #1: On Top of the Methods

The Facilitator is effective in using core methods

The facilitator is competent in designing and leading larger or smaller group processes and events: a conversation or discussion, a meeting, a workshop, a design conference, an environmental review, a strategic planning session or a macro program of consultation. Behind this is a complete familiarity with the process of creating and sequencing questions that move the group from surface considerations into the depth implications of nay topic. Underneath this again is the capacity to distinguish process from content, and the discernment to decide which bracket of methods best fits the client's needs.

Competence #2: Able to Deliver on the Deal

The Facilitator carefully manages the client relationship and prepares thoroughly

The facilitator has to be able to care in depth for the client organization. This involves knowing how to customize programs to fit the client's situation, and how to close a deal and deliver on the contact. It also presumes the courage to say "no" to a deal if facilitation is not an appropriate solution or will not work. It means preparing every aspect of the program ahead of time.

Competence #3: Both Janitor and Metronome

The Facilitator uses time and space intentionally

It is not enough to merely select a good space for the group event. The facilitator has to know how to create the event environment. If the janitor has not cleaned the space the facilitator has to do it, and, at break times, keep on doing it to ensure that the environment remains an ally of the event. It is important to know how to best arrange the space so that it works for both the process and the group. This means checking out the space ahead of time and making sure there are walls appropriate for holding data charts. It means arranging tables and chairs to communicate intentionality and maximize face-to-face participation. It also means skillfully using decor tuned to the nature of the event and communicating its significance.

The facilitator also has to be the metronome for the group, sensing the rhythm that is most enlivening at a particular time of day; pacing the activities so as to capitalize on the "beat" of the group; apportioning available time both to get the job done and to reach timely closure.

Competence #4: The Evocateur

The Facilitator is skillful in evoking participation and creativity

More than a methodologian, the facilitator also has to be an evocateur, with an unshakable belief that the group itself has the wisdom and creativity needed to deal with the situation. What is involved here is the ability to create a climate of participation. The facilitator knows how to elicit the latent wisdom in the group by catalyzing everyone's participation and involving the whole group in taking responsibility for its own decisions. The ability to create a group climate conducive to both participation and creativity requires a bag of tools up every facilitator's sleeve. Eliciting the wisdom of the group is the name of the game. It is here that the

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facilitator's magic is most needed. Objective skills are in setting enabling contexts that corral and focus the group's insights toward a specific topic and a focus question.

Competence #5: Affirmation on the Hoof

The Facilitator is practiced in honoring the group and affirming its wisdom

Appropriating a group's diversity as a gift is more than just a skill, and much more than what is involved in the facile "I'm OK-you're-OK." It stems not only from methodological necessity but from a root recognition of the wonder of life and the implicit wisdom and greatness of each human being. This requires a foundational stance of affirmation, a constant decision to reference situations positively, and the habit of responding with the "yes" before the "no."

Competence #6: Under the Neutral Flag

The Facilitator is capable of maintaining objectivity

A key role of the facilitator is to provide objectivity to the group process. While one side of the facilitator is more like an orchestra conductor who wants a first-class product, the other side is more like a dispassionate referee who knows the importance of maintaining a neutral stance toward what is coming out of the group. The facilitator sets aside personal opinions about the data from the group, being careful not to react negatively to people's insights, and maintaining detachment from the group-generated data. This same neutral universe contains the capacity to buffer criticism, anger and frustration with a non-defensive stance whenever the group energy overheats.

Competence #7: Antennae Up

The Facilitator is skilled in reading the underlying dynamics in the group

The facilitator is practiced in sensing dynamics in the group. In particular, the facilitator is versed in interpreting the silence of the group, identifying individual "axes" and hidden agendas, and not only sensing the group's uncertainty at particular points but taking steps to clarify it. Deft a picking up non-verbal cues, the facilitator listens with a "third ear" to pick up the significance of what lies behind participants' words. On the more active side, the facilitator is facile in pushing negatively phrased data for its underlying insight and probing vague answers for their fuller meaning.

Competence #8: The Orchestrator

The Facilitator orchestrates the event dramas

Paramount to engaging the group's commitment to the process is the development of audience rapport. The facilitator engages this rapport from the start, creating icebreakers that loosen a group up. Then, as the group goes through its alternating ups and downs, the facilitator is inventive in shifting time and mood intentionally to get the job done, savvy in using personal illustrations to release the group, and sagacious in using humor catalytically.

Competence #9: The Drano Function

The Facilitator releases blocks to the process

The facilitator has creative ways to release blocks to the process. This demands a light touch to gently discourage side conversations. It calls for shrewd tactics to discourage "speechifying" and argumentation, and demands tactful ways to discourage the dominance of particular individuals, to handle "difficult" people and to deal helpfully with conflict.

Competence #10: Highwire Balancing Act

The Facilitator is adroit in adapting to the changing situation

Facilitation involves a balancing act on the highwire. Ancillary to all the skills so far described is the capacity of the facilitator to flex with the changing situation. The facilitator knows how to balance the process on the one hand and the results of the process on the other; to harmonize the needs of the participants at any one moment with the total demands of the task. This based on a foundational understanding that the process for arriving at the results is just as important as the results themselves.

Competence #11: Big Shoulders

The Facilitator assumes responsibility for the group journey

Facilitating a process for an organization is much, much more than using a bag of tricks to occupy the audience for a day or two. The facilitator has the maturity to assume responsibility not only for the process, but also for the overall task, the participants and the outcome of the event. This assumes the willingness to take on a big load, to take responsibility for every single aspect of the program, to deal successfully with ambiguity, to use one's critical intelligence to make hard decisions and then to take the consequences of those decisions. This assumes a solid personal discipline and strong spiritual base.

Competence #12: Hard Copy

The Facilitator can produce powerful documentation

Coming up with a finessed group product — a documentary record of the group's insights — is a bottom line of facilitation. With the help of an assigned documentor who inputs the group data and decisions in tandem with the process, the participants can be handed a hard-copy product before they leave. Vital to this is the ability to keep track of all the group-generated data and enough versatility in using computer programs, typewriters and copiers to produce the final carts and documents.

Competence #13: Group Role Model

The Facilitator demonstrates professionalism, self-confidence and authenticity

The development of a professional self-image, self-confidence, and an intentional style and dress is an important asset of the facilitator. But more important is the willingness to play the role of a model of authenticity for the group. The facilitator takes on whatever role the group requires to provide a walking image of authentic selfhood in the midst of practical tasks.

Competence #14: The Iron Pillar of Freedom

The Facilitator maintains personal integrity

Finally, the facilitator knows the secret of maintaining personal integrity; and has learned how to authentically process and relate to rejection, hostility and suspicion; how to let go of any personal pain arising from a program; and how to take care of personal renewal.

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The Southwest CAPT serves a nine-state region that includes Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. The Center functions as a diffusion mechanism for knowledge transfer and research application, linking scientifically defensible research to prevention practice in the Southwest region. For more information about the CAPT, contact us at 1-800-853-2572 or 405-325-1454 or visit our web site at www.swcapt.org

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