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THE ELECTRONIC COLLEGE OF PROCESS INNOVATION

Course on Facilitation Skills, A

Department of Defense
Topic(s): Teams and Teamwork, Training & Learning, Project Management & Methodologies

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Abstract: This is a course on Facilitation Skills developed as part of the Department of Defense's Cadre 100 Program. The course has four main sections: Facilitation 101, Anatomy of a Session, Adding People to the Formula, and Beyond the Basics.

Our vision
is to help people create a new organizational culture
where limitations of the past are released
and
differences between people are valued,
allowing groups to routinely operate at their full creative power.

Welcome

If you always do what you've always done, you'll always be what you've always been!

Welcome to the world of facilitation! The ability to facilitate a group of people working together is one of the newest and most *in demand* skills of the 1990's. As we leave old ways of thinking and working together, we find old habits need to be released to make way for the new. This is easy to think about, but often not so easy to practice. As a facilitator, you'll be the catalyst in this process for both yourself and others.

As a facilitator, you'll be helping people communicate and work together. You'll create a framework for meetings that allows people to tap into each other's creative potential. You'll be providing an invaluable service to your organization as it changes to meet today's need for new business practices.

The more you facilitate, whether formally with a group or informally in meetings with your colleagues, you'll discover that you've strengthened and expanded your own ability to communicate and work with others. Your self-esteem and self-confidence will increase and will be reflected back to you and others in many ways.

Lois and La Dell

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Introduction:

See the Big Picture

A group of people sat in a meeting. What made this meeting different from all the others they'd attended was that their manager introduced a person whose role was to *facilitate our meeting*. After seeing the meeting begin and end on time and the purpose of the meeting actually accomplished, the group thought, "So that's what facilitation is all about--someone runs a meeting for us."

What didn't they see?

- That they could dialogue and accomplish their purpose faster.
- That they shared more ideas and knowledge.
- That their results were of a higher quality because everyone in the group had equal opportunity to contribute.
- That people in their group with differing viewpoints had their ideas *married together*.
- That everyone left in agreement and with a common understanding of what had occurred and what was to happen next.

Now, relax and imagine yourself being part of a group like that. Imagine what would be easier to do. Imagine what it would feel like. Imagine what it might do for your group.

Facilitation services offer managers and employees alike the opportunity to create an organizational environment where the full contribution of each and every member of the group is allowed, encouraged and supported. In essence, it provides the organization with a *natural* capability to tap into the hidden potential of all employees and enables the organization to create a new culture --

> A culture of employee involvement that encourages people to participate actively and to think creatively.
>
> A culture of positive management where people are involved in problem solving and decision making.
>
> A culture of ownership where people see themselves as partners and have a strong sense of responsibility and commitment to their organization.
>
> A culture of integrity where trust is built and nurtured through an open and caring flow of information.

In short, a culture of excellence.

How do facilitators contribute to this culture of excellence? Simply put, they help people talk to each other; and more. The *and more* is what this book is all about. Come join us on the journey of releasing everyone's hidden potential to create a culture of excellence.

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SECTION ONE

Facilitation 101: The Basics

Chapter 1: Facilitation, what it is, what it isn't.

What is facilitation?

Facilitation is a *service* to others.

The most important job of a facilitator is to protect the *process* of those being facilitated. The process is *how* the group goes about accomplishing their task. The problem or content is *what* they're working on.

In studies comparing the working styles of high performance and low performance groups, the only significant, observable difference was the percentage of time the group members dedicated to the *process* they were involved in. More than 10 percent of the statements made by high performance group members referred to *how* they were going about it:

> *How should we go about this?*
>
> *What should we do next?*
>
> *What do we need to do this?*
>
> *Should we stop or continue?*
>
> *Who do we need to talk to?*

Less than one percent of the statements made by low performance group members referred to the *process*. Ninety-nine percent of their focus was on the *content* of the problem itself.

The facilitator is the *protector* of the process. The facilitator's tool kit is a set of techniques, knowledge, and experience which they apply to protect the process the group is working through. The facilitator helps to create the process, adjust it, keep it heading in the right direction, and most importantly, keeps the people attached to it.

The *function* of facilitation is to keep a meeting focused and moving, and to ensure even participation. The facilitator makes sure these things occur, either by doing it or by monitoring the group and intervening as needed. The facilitator is the *keeper of the task* and doesn't influence the content or product of the group. The facilitator pays attention to the *way* the group works -- the *process*.

The facilitator sometimes acts as a resource to the group in the area of data analysis tools and problem solving techniques. The facilitator must be comfortable with team building techniques and group process in order to assist the group in performing tasks and maintenance roles essential to team building. The facilitator intervenes to help the group stay focused and build cohesiveness, getting the job done with excellence, while developing the product.

To keep the meeting on track, the facilitator must remain aware of the agenda, the time, and the flow of work. Facilitation skills are used to ensure total participation. Facilitators observe group development, noting both task and maintenance roles, and encourage group members to perform them. Facilitators handle inappropriate participant behaviors with skill and sensitivity.

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Why Do Managers Use Facilitation?

- To work better, to work smarter, to work faster.
- To get the whole answer.
- To get more people involved.
- To get new ideas, wild ideas, great ideas.
- To foster understanding, support and follow-through.

These are all things that using facilitation in your work can help you to create. Do you have to use facilitation to get them? To answer that, let's consider two universal maxims:

The measure of the power of a group decision is if the decision lives through its own implementation, and

People support what they help create.

What brings down a good decision? People. People who don't support it because they don't believe in it or understand it because they weren't part of the decision.

Most decisions require the support of many people to be implemented. These people occupy positions within and outside of organizations. They live throughout the hierarchy and they come from different functional stove pipes.

If you want to involve these people up front, you're taking on two problems; one is the diversity of the people and the other is the number of them! When they arrive to help, they bring with them, in addition to their knowledge, their backgrounds, beliefs, organizational culture, technical jargon and personal behaviors. How do you manage the participation of the masses without losing control, not to mention your sanity? Facilitation is the overall management tool kit used to manage the overhead taken on when the size and diversity of working groups is increased.

The type of facilitator you select is very important. Facilitators have specialized tools, knowledge and talents, just like doctors and mechanics. Facilitation traits within managers may be enough to improve day-to-day meetings and interaction with employees and colleagues, but for specialized sessions, such as strategic planning, you need to invest in a facilitator with that specialty. To do systems design or product review, you need to invest in a facilitator with those specialized skills.

For controversial work, the objectivity of an outside facilitator is preferred. An outside facilitator can be very effective pushing tough issues because the group doesn't suspect a hidden agenda from them and there's no fear of retribution.

When high level participation and management support is a challenge, paying for the service can enhance the perceived value of the session and the importance of attending it. People want to get their money's worth. When you compare the cost of the service with the cost of inadequate participation, you may find the facilitator's fees a veritable bargain!

Bringing people together to make a decision as a group has a number of advantages over the individual decision making process:

- A lasting decision or product can be produced much more quickly in a group setting.
- The group product is of a higher quality since it's based on all of the facts and reflects the needs of the whole system it supports.
- Ongoing support to the decision or product is optimal because everyone involved *owns* it and understands

how it came to be.
- Rework and renegotiation virtually disappear when all stakeholders initially participate.

Effective facilitation ensures group success because it protects the process of people meeting together. *How?* A facilitator helps people talk to each other. The facilitator conducts confidential sessions which create a safe and trusting environment for all participants to work through feelings as well as issues.

Simply put, you have a group and you want that group to perform at the highest level possible. A group must be provided with skills, tools and strategies to do this. Facilitation, whether it's a formal role, or a trait exhibited by a group member, provides this necessary element.

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What is a Facilitator?

A facilitator is many things:

- A consultant who designs work sessions with a specific focus or intent.
- An advisor to bringing out the full potential of working groups.
- A provider of processes, tools and techniques that can get work accomplished quickly and effectively in a group environment.
- A person who keeps a group meeting on track.
- Someone who helps resolve conflict.
- Someone who draws out participation from everyone.
- Someone who organizes the work of a group.
- Someone who makes sure that the goals are met.
- Someone who provides structure to the work of a group.
- Someone who protects the work of a group from the overhead of a group.

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What a Facilitator Isn't

There's an interloper afoot in the world of facilitation! This netherworld figure has been spotted lurking near flip chart easels around the globe. You can't spot them from a distance, because they hold the magic marker well and can rip a flip chart sheet clean at the top *every time*. However, this imposter, this wolf in sheep's clothing, *the Manipulator in Facilitator's clothing*, can be detected immediately anywhere near a fresh flow of ideas. Signs to watch and listen for are:

- Changing the wording of a participant.
- Refusal to record an idea (looks tired, got distracted, too many ideas coming at once).
- Getting involved in the content of the group work.
- Fixing the group (even in the most loving way!)
- Fixing the problem for the group.
- Attaching to outcomes.
- Judging comments of the group, liking some ideas better than others.
- Flip flopping the agenda and work processes.
- Manipulating people and behaviors through their own feedback.
- Monopolizing conversation.
- Taking sides on issues or people.
- Being closed to group suggestions on the process.
- Trying to have all the answers.

Some sub-species of this imposter are quite strong and come and go by their own design, but many of these poor, hapless creatures are created by those around them. They're created by becoming facilitators without the training and experience they need. They're created by being facilitators who aren't willing to work on their own personal character development every day. They're created by overworking a good facilitator. They're created by being outside of their area of specialty and, they're created by people pushing them into situations where they aren't objective.

All facilitators can be temporarily transformed into this lower element by walking into the wrong condition, so it's important for facilitators to know enough to turn a session down.

A True Story

> Once, when I succumbed to an inappropriate request that violated two rules:
>
> *No rest, as I had done an intense visioning session the day before,* and
>
> *I really cared about the content of the session,*
>
> I became a lower creature and spotted myself immediately upon throwing a marker at a participant and colleague and "letting him have it" over a comment he made. Luckily, he threw the marker back, we took a break and continued.

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What's the Difference Between a Team Leader and a Facilitator?

The responsibilities of a facilitator differ from those of a team leader. The highly skilled facilitator must have a comprehensive knowledge of group dynamics, group process, and facilitator intervention strategies. The facilitator is able to handle issues including member conflict, communication obstacles, low performance, leader domination, and group apathy. The facilitator may walk into a session and have the anger and frustration of all the people in the room directed at -- the facilitator! The facilitator is able to handle that, too!

A team leader fills the leader role on the team. They may or may not have actual supervisory duties, but they're perceived to have them because of upper management directive and placement in this role. On an empowered team (usually called self-managed or self-directed), the team will choose the leader and the team will define the expected duties of the person who assumes the leader role.

In active, expert facilitation, the team leader hires the facilitator to design and conduct one or more problem-solving sessions. The facilitator's responsibility is to provide a session that will produce products that the team leader needs at this point in the overall mission. The problem being worked and the content of the session is still *owned* by the team leader.

Typically, the leader has chosen a facilitated session so that he or she can participate with the group, playing a peer-level role instead of the management role. Sometimes the team leader will have hired the facilitator to encourage a more open exchange of ideas or faster paced, interactive work than is possible on a day-to-day basis.

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Can I Facilitate?

Here are a few questions to help you answer that question. Only *you* can answer these questions and there's no right or wrong answer, so you can't fail! Your honest answers will help you determine whether or not you would be comfortable facilitating.

1. Are you willing to listen to others without judgement or preconceived notions about what they should or shouldn't say or do?
2. Do you show respect for the opinions of others even when they disagree with you?
3. Can you release the need to have complete control of a conversation or other situations?
4. Are you comfortable dealing with conflict?
5. Are you comfortable speaking in public?
6. Are you able to laugh at yourself?
7. Can you think on your feet?
8. Do you believe that groups working together are smarter than individuals working alone?
9. Can you accept feedback from others about yourself?

Answering *yes* to a majority of these questions indicates that you would be comfortable in the role of facilitator. All of these traits can be learned and improved and the facilitation process itself will expand them in you.

If you answered *no* to any of these questions, don't be discouraged. It means these are the areas in which you'll need to change some things about yourself like a belief, an attitude, or an action. Can you change? Of course. We did. You can too. Go for it!

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Chapter 2: Meetings: the Good, the Bad and the Ugly

A facilitated session is a structured meeting. The goal and responsibility of a facilitator is to provide the atmosphere, tools and techniques that allows a *good* session to occur. We use the term *session* to distinguish a facilitated meeting from *just another meeting*. Knowing some basic facts about meetings, and how people feel about attending them, allows you to "design in" success.

In our interviews, people have expressed what they find distasteful about meetings:

- I didn't know why I was there.
- So and so started in again and talked and talked until the meeting finally ended.
- It dragged on and on.
- I had more important things todo.
- Like most of our meetings, it just led to another meeting.
- We kept getting interrupted.
- No decision was made.
- Information from the meeting wasn't passed on to the people who needed it.
- As usual, everyone left with a different opinion of what happened.
- The decision was made *before* the meeting, so I don't know why we had to meet at all.
- No one followed up on anything.
- As usual, a couple of people got all of the work and they weren't the right people.
- We didn't really accomplish anything because we didn't have what we needed to do the work.
- We never get started on time.
- We have a lot of meetings and we never have everyone there, so none of our decisions last.
- The real problems are avoided.

People have expressed the following traits of *good* meetings:

- Short
- To the point
- It was clear what the meeting was about.
- We made a decision.
- We stuck to the agenda.
- People listened to what I had to say.
- My boss listened to what we had to say.

- We finished what we set out to do.
- We decided what needed to be done quickly, then everyone took part of the task and we did the work outside of the meeting. We didn't meet again until all of that was done.
- We found out what each other was doing.
- I felt involved.

The good news is that there are techniques for improving all of the conditions that can lead to a distasteful or non-productive meeting. That's what facilitation is all about! The rest of this book is a tool kit loaded with techniques we've found to work.

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SECTION TWO

Anatomy of a Session

Chapter 3: Planning a Session

The key to successful facilitation is planning and preparation. We call this *session design.*

Your design will provide a framework or a structure that will optimize the participants' time together, allows a way for people to talk to each other constructively, and produces the desired products of the meeting. Before the facilitated session actually occurs, its success or failure may have already been determined by its design.

Session design includes meeting with your client to determine the essence or purpose of the facilitation, designing the work process for the group, and designing the environment in which the group will work.

How you approach design will vary with your own personal style and experience as well as the complexity of the session you're facilitating. An advanced facilitator may feel comfortable going through the entire design process with the client during the initial interview. Those less experienced may need to do the work process design after the interview and then finalize it in a follow-on meeting.

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Meeting with the Client

This initial meeting with your client is very important for both of you. It gives each of you the opportunity to get acquainted as well as to explore the reasons for the facilitation. Be aware that as you visit, the client will be evaluating you

and will determine how much to trust you. The more relaxed and confident you are, the deeper the level of trust that can develop between you.

Anyone doing a facilitation must be very clear about their own beliefs. Our assumptions about organizations determine, in subtle ways, our own facilitating style and the skills with which we work. For example, if you think your client's staff's problems may be solved by participating more and collaborative group, then you must be collaborative and participate more with your client to earn his or her trust.

To begin with, there are *two questions* that are the most important questions you need to ask. *Period. Always!* They're the questions you ask your client first, before you discuss anything else.

1. What do you want as session *outcomes*?

2. What do you want as session *products*?

Outcomes will usually be general in nature. You might like to think of outcomes as things that can't be measured. An example would be your client wanting his or her employees to operate like a team instead of the current *we-they* style they're using. Your client might describe the desired outcome as, "I want everyone working together like one big happy family."

The *products* your client asks for are more tangible and measurable than *outcomes*. Examples are a vision statement or plan of action, or, less tangibly, a discussion on role clarification or expectations each member has of the group.

Until you get clear answers to these questions, designing the session is impossible.

After you and the client have come to an understanding of what each of you need and expect from the other, *work process design* begins.

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Work Process Design

Designing the work process for a facilitation is a learned art. You need a solid knowledge of group dynamics and available tools and techniques in order to do it. Experience also plays an important role in becoming a good designer. Here are the basic steps to follow in the session design process.

1. Clarify the purpose of the meeting.
2. Define the desired outcomes and products.
3. Determine who should attend.
4. Design the sequence of meeting activities.
   a. Pick a method for each step.
   b. Review and adjust your design by asking:
      - Can I get from one step to the next smoothly?
      - Are all steps necessary?
      - How much time will it take?
      - Will these methods work for this group?
      - Is there anything about this method or topic that could blow up?
5. Decide how to begin and how to conclude the session.
6. Determine logistics, equipment and administrative needs.
7. Complete the agenda.
8. Finalize the design with your client.

During *work process design*, keep these factors in mind:

Group size - The number of participants will affect your methods. Groups larger than five automatically take on the traits of hierarchy. To produce highly creative products, you may want to break the participants into subgroups of five or less.

Groups of ten to twelve may not need to be broken into smaller groups for simple sessions, such as idea generation or dialogue.

Electronic meeting software (see Chapter 11) changes the rules on group size, allowing much larger groups to take on activities than aren't possible in a manual facilitation.

Gathering lots of information - When you're hosting multiple sessions that produce large amounts of information, schedule a day or two in between sessions so that you can manage the products of each one and prepare properly for the next.

Draft products - When it's appropriate, use a draft product for the group to work with. Starting from scratch can be a slow, tedious process for a group and most sessions benefit from a more robust beginning. Using draft products honors any work that was accomplished before the session and develops a positive environment. Exceptions to this are sessions where a fresh start is exactly what is called for. Visioning, for example, is a process that would not benefit from the influence of a draft product.

Sequencing activities - Block out time to produce each product. Remember that most people need to speak to stay involved. Allow for that in your calculations. Timing will always be a "guesstimate." Don't be surprised if something you thought would take less time actually takes longer and vice versa. There are a variety of techniques discussed in Chapter 7 that will assist you in managing time.

Restating purpose - Even with detailed communication about the purpose of the session between the client, the participants and yourself, don't be surprised to have participants arriving at your session wondering *Why am I here?*, *What's going to happen?*, *What's expected of me?* Participants will seldom ask these questions. No one wants to appear uninformed. Trust us, it's happening and the group can't perform until fears rising from these unanswered questions are eased. At the beginning of the facilitated session, build in a few minutes to formally explain the purpose of the session. Solicit questions after the explanation.

Mid-course correction - You may find the need to change your methods or the schedule during the session. That's okay. It's still important to have an initial plan to get the group centered and comfortable with the process. Even though you may have to change the agenda or methodology, the planned framework allows you to always know what has to be done. You know the bottom line requirements -- outcomes, products and available time.

Use positive words - Frequently, clients request a number of products for one session. We recommend you describe a session that's going to produce a variety of products as one having an *ambitious agenda.* Comments to the group like *We have a lot of work to do today* or *This is going to be a full day* are discouraging and set the session up as one of drudgery. Negative comments like this will drain participants' energy before they begin.

Breakout group assignments - If you're going to divide the group into subgroups, you may want to make subgroup assignments before the session to save time. The list can be handed out with the agenda. If there are participants who have chronic personal conflicts, this allows them to be separated. For product delivery, it may be necessary to spread a mixture of knowledge, skills and abilities throughout each of the breakout groups.

Post-session completion - Post-session work is not the job of the facilitator. Advise your client in session design of the following:

1. For your session to have lasting impact, each participant may need to receive the documented output of the session as soon as possible.
2. Ensure any follow-up actions, including the completed session documentation, has been assigned before the session ends. Ask the client to appoint a coordinator.
3. If outputs include a task list or actions, make sure a group member's name and phone number is placed on this work. This allows the member to be contacted if clarification is needed.

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Designing the Environment

The planning stage of a facilitation must also consider the requirements for space, equipment and support. Chapter 12 discusses *advanced* environmental design.

The Meeting Room

Your client's representative secures the meeting room. We recommend you spend time discussing this thoroughly with your client and his or her representative. People get into the habit of doing things the same old way and often put up with less than satisfactory arrangements. You'll discover most clients are very open to your advice and want to help you help them! They're asking for your services because they consider what they need to accomplish of major importance. We suggest you provide this person the following questions to help them decide about room selection.

- **Atmosphere: --** Is the room cheerful in color and does it have outside windows?
- **Layout: --** Is the room large enough for your needs? Will everyone be able to see the items you work with and each other?
- **Furniture:** -- Are the chairs comfortable for longer meetings?
- **Conveniences: --** How far away are the rest rooms, smoking areas, **--** lunchroom, elevators, and food?
- **Lighting: --** Is there sufficient lighting? Can the room be darkened easily?
- **Noise: --** Is the room free of excessive noise and interruptions? Will everyone be able to hear what's going on?
- **Outlets**: -- Are there enough outlets for equipment?
- **Heat & Cooling: --** Will the temperature be appropriate and can you control it yourself?
- **Telephone: --** Is there a phone nearby for participants to use privately? Is there one in the room? Do you want it there? The answer is generally NO.

One of the most important things during a session is for everyone to be able to see and hear everything that's going on. Otherwise you'll lose them and their good ideas.

The room should support good projection for your tools. If you're using a computer display, make sure that the contents are large enough and colored correctly for everyone to see easily. You also need the screen area dark enough so that people can read the screen, and the rest of the room light enough so that 1) the materials you're working with can be seen, 2) people can see each other, and 3) people don't fall asleep.

Most organizations have modern meeting rooms designed with good lighting systems. Plan the session early enough to reserve the best facilities. If possible, visit the room before the session and make necessary adjustments to lighting and the size and colors of your display products.

If you're going to be using flip chart paper, be sure that there's plenty of wall space to display all products during the session.

Equipment, Supplies and Support

The client's representative will also arrange for your equipment, supply and support needs. The following lists identify the most commonly needed items. We suggest you provide a list of your needs to the client as soon as possible.

Equipment Checklist

- Flip chart easels
- Extension cords and power strips
- Overhead projector

- Screen
- Tape recorder for music
- VCR
- Television set
- Whiteboard
- Computers
- Printers
- Extra tables for overhead projector, materials, group breakout areas

Supply Checklist

- Transparencies
- Blank paper
- Extra flip chart paper
- Folders
- Big marker pens (lots of colors)
- Colored, scented pens
- Masking and transparent tape
- Pencils and pens
- Scissors
- Stapler
- Transparency pens
- Whiteboard markers and erasers
- Large self-sticking notes for all the participants

Support Checklist

- A client's representative for the facilitation needs to be provided. *Always!* This person will schedule appointments for you, be the liaison between you and the client, and coordinate everything required for the facilitation.
    - A person to record the session.
    - A refreshment table in the room providing light snacks and drinks.
    - Transportation for participants if necessary.
    - Travel arrangements

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Chapter 4: Preparing for a Session

Now that you've planned your session and designed the agenda, methods and schedule that you think will work best, it's time to arrange for the facilities, tools, and support you need. Like good planning, preparation is critical to the success of the session.

Remember that by deciding to host a facilitated session, the client is showing willingness to invest in a productive and special way of working. Don't short them or yourself by skimping on resources. You're the expert and the client expects you to let them know what's necessary to accomplish your work.

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Preparing the Participants

For your session to go well, people need to know beforehand what the session is about and what's expected from them. They also may need background information and materials. It isn't the facilitator's responsibility to produce all of these, but it's your responsibility to advise your client that it needs to be done.

The facilitator will supply the session agenda and advise the client to prepare an invitation letter and any background information or draft products. These are either given to participants before the session or at the session, depending on which is more appropriate to the client's needs.

In interviews with managers who have used facilitated sessions, we've learned that a common mistake is not properly preparing the participants. Many people find working in a group atmosphere uncomfortable, and it's the client's responsibility to prepare them psychologically for the event. This may mean having a preparatory meeting or discussion, viewing an inspiring video tape together, or involving them in preparation work.

It's often advisable to have draft work for the group to work with in the session. Groups have even more difficulty than individuals starting from a blank sheet of paper. Encourage the client to provide draft products to you, if appropriate, and make sure you're familiar with the contents. This also honors work that has occurred before. It can alleviate resentment from anyone who has worked on this problem before who now feels their work has been rejected or that no progress has been made and "we're just re-inventing the wheel!"

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How to Arrange a Room

There are several choices for setting up the room for optimal communications. Room arrangements set expectations and can create a more comfortable, relaxed feeling among the participants. Clustered seating encourages collaborative interactions among group members.

The most commonly used arrangement is a U-shaped table for participants with the facilitator working at the open end of the U. This arrangement is important for democratic, *drop-the-rank* interaction. Everybody can see the faces of the other participants and there aren't built-in power positions at the table.

While the U is optimal for most meetings, sometimes there are too many people for the U and you may have to deviate somewhat. If you need a U-shaped configuration, hold out for a room that can support it.

> **U-Shape:** Form tables in a U-shape with chairs on the outside. The open part of the U is for presentation.
>
> **Semicircle:** The U-shape for smaller groups. Place a flip chart on an easel in the open end of the semicircle.
>
> **Round Table:** If there will be a lot of writing, use a large round table. Leave a space open at the table for presentation materials. This also works well if the facilitator will be seated.
>
> **Herringbone:** This is a variation you can use when you need a U-shape and there isn't room. Arrange two sets of tables in a herringbone shape with chairs on the outside only. The facilitator and equipment can face these two tables.
>
> **Elevated, stair-stepped, U-Shape:** Electronic meeting facilities for large groups are often arranged in this auditorium style with the workstations arranged along raised, curved rows. The facilitator is in the front at the lowest level with sophisticated projection systems. The deviation of the U-shape is successful because the electronic meeting process and software tools enlivens the attention and participation of the group.
>
> **Rows:** If you walk into a room to facilitate and see this arrangement, change it immediately. If you're told you can't change it, what are your options?
>
> 1. Run screaming from the room.
>
> 2. Refuse to facilitate.

3. Re-read option number two.

4. Get very inventive fast.

People need to look at each other to work together. Recent studies have shown that 55% of our communication is through body language and 38% is through tone of voice. Only 7% is verbal or what we actually *say*. If people are aligned in rows, they'll miss over half of what's being communicated!

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Facilitation Tools

As a facilitator, your specialty is guiding a group of people to a succinct, accepted, supported product from a myriad of facts and opinions. You need the right tools to do this.

Facilitators, like any other consultants, can fall into the trap of becoming so comfortable with one tool or technique that they use it in all circumstances *whether it's appropriate or not.* Its like learning to use a screwdriver and then viewing every problem as a set of loose screws. In fact, the solution may require pliers or a wrench or a jackhammer.

As a facilitator, it's important to become familiar with all available tools, from the most time-honored and simple to the newest that technology offers. You then select the appropriate tools for the conditions.

New Technologies

Information technology is producing new tool sets every day and we advise you to become familiar and comfortable with them. You can read about them in trade magazines, but computer trade shows or visits to places that use them are the best place to see them and try them out. Conferences in your technical specialty often have vendor shows in conjunction with them.

New tools on the market

Smart boards: The contents of a white board are either printed directly from the board or are inserted into wordprocessing or graphics software.

Pen-based technology: The pen you use on a projection screen or board is *software smart* and sends commands like *close this document, expand into detail, or move this item* to the display.

Modeling software: Software tools that graphically depict modeling work produced in session.

Electronic meeting systems: Software and projection systems that automate and improve the basic set of facilitated functions such as brainstorming, editing, categorizing, generating lists and ideas, providing background documents and voting.

Like all facilitation methods, benefits depend on what it is you're trying to accomplish and who your participants are.

If you're considering the use of automated tools in your session, please consider the following trade offs.

Benefits:

- Can speed up the session and keep things neat and organized.
- Participants leave with their own copy of session products.
- Allows *bigger than flip chart paper* products like matrices or models.

- Can reduce or eliminate post-session work.
- Can get to the final product quicker, often before the end of the session.

Considerations:

- May distract participants if used inappropriately.
- May intimidate participants, depending on their background.
- Changes the tone and focus of the group.
- Requires a software expert and equipment.

Simple Use of a Wordprocessor and Projection

We have used simple automation very effectively by keeping it unobtrusive. A person, called a scribe, who's adept at taking notes, puts everything that's happening *on the board* into a word processor. This is done in the background to avoid distraction. As you produce lists on flip charts or an overhead, they're recorded page-by-page by the scribe. These pages can then be printed and passed out to participants as needed.

Rework of flip chart items can be very messy. Doing this rework on a word processor or transparency projected overhead is much easier. If you use this approach, make sure your scribe is very fast with the software and comfortable with what's expected of them. They need to be familiar with the terminology and acronyms that the group will be using. It's beneficial to have a practice session with the scribe before the session to work out potential problems such as, what could happen, how the information should be captured and displayed, how the two of you will communicate in session, how big the text should be and how to print.

Use projection of a computer screen selectively for work such as brainstorming, sorting or refining work that has been done. When on-line work becomes visible, with software that isn't designed specifically for group work, the entire

group dynamic can change. You'll learn through experience when the use of technology is effective and when it's a distraction.

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Chapter 5: Conducting a Session

Congratulations! The big day has arrived. All of your planning and preparation has allowed you to walk into the session with confidence. You know you have everything you need to help this group realize their purpose. You may think that statement is very idealistic and that it doesn't allow for surprises or for human error. It does! Faith in your abilities and intent, and trust in yourself, others and the environment, will supply you with whatever you need. It's guaranteed.

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Beginning the Session

Most people feel nervous about speaking in front of groups. In the United States, this is people's number one fear. Fear of death is number seven, which means that most people are more afraid to speak in public than they are to die! We point this out to help you acknowledge the *humanness* of your apprehension and that other participants will experience the same discomfort as they, too, know they'll be asked to speak.

We recommend that before the session begins, you walk around and meet and greet everyone and briefly visit with them in a light-hearted way. This simple act immediately begins relieving any fears, both yours and theirs. It allows all of you to begin getting acquainted, share your *humanness* and create an initial level of trust. If someone offers to help you do something, like test the overhead projector, let them. Most people enjoy helping others and it doesn't mean they think you're incapable of the task.

All sessions need an introductory segment. The form this takes will depend on the facilitation design and your facilitation style. The introductory segment will always include the actions listed below.

- Introductory Remarks/Ice-Breaker
- Acknowledge and thank the group for their participation.
- Explain your role as facilitator.
- State the purpose of the session.
- If an agenda is used, explain it.
- State desired outcomes and products for the session.
- Develop group norms.

Your style and the client's preferences will determine the form of your introduction.

We would like to discuss four key parts of the session's agenda in detail -- the agenda, ice-breakers, group norms and the role of the facilitator. These items are critical to the success of the session. Doing the ice-breaker and group norms segments may feel awkward for both you and the participants because they aren't something we do every day.

The Session Agenda

It's always advisable to give the group a prepared agenda. It becomes the road map for your working together. Everyone has their own style of thinking -- a visual, auditory or feeling orientation. All of us can do each of these, we just prefer one over the other. Providing a visual agenda, as well as speaking to the agenda, ensures more people are clear about the session structure. People who prefer the feeling style will *just know*!

We have learned it's best to keep the agenda very simple. Don't structure it with attached times for each portion of work or breaks. People who find comfort in clear-cut delineations of time become very uncomfortable if the advertised time schedule isn't met. By avoiding exact times for each portion of the session, there are no time expectations and no time pressures!

Ice-breakers

Sometimes when you begin a facilitation, no *formal* ice-breaker is needed. Your client may not want one or it just isn't needed for whatever the reason. Even so, it'll be to your advantage to begin with humor or something light-hearted to help remove any tensions (both yours and session participants). Getting yourself and your group "off on the right foot" is an essential part of facilitation. Just going around and giving one's name and title isn't sufficient. In fact, we recommend leaving titles out of the introductions to set the stage for more democratic participation.

Structured warm-up activities, even if very casual, help participants get involved more quickly, increase their energy and interest, and get acquainted with each other if they haven't met.

Often, your client will provide humor or a humorous event to begin the session. Most people have a great sense of humor and want to come across as "real", especially bosses who generally maintain a more formal image in their organizational role as leader. Here is an example of an ice-breaker created by a client.

A True Story

> The group was told dress would be casual. Since they'd never experienced an off-site meeting before, and the client didn't want to come across like a parent about the dress rule, here is what he did...
>
> His deputy sent out a memo inviting the participants to the session. He told them the standard facts like time, place, purpose and attire. To emphasize the statement about casual dress, he told them not only were business clothes inappropriate, but, anyone caught wearing a tie would immediately have it cut off. He

continued by saying he was bringing a large pair of scissors and would personally enforce the rule.

The client came to the session wearing a shirt and a tie covered by a sweater vest. Once everyone was present, the deputy picked up the scissors and walked around looking for ties. Since this was prearranged with his boss (the client), he quickly noticed the boss's tie and created a very humorous and dramatic scene by cutting it in half. Everyone loved it and laughed. We were relaxed and ready to begin our work immediately!

Ideas for Ice-Breakers

Here are some ideas for ice-breakers we've used successfully and recommend to you.

1. Write a note to all participants before the facilitation. This works well if you're going off-site for several days. If the session has a theme, it's easy to take the theme and work something about it into your note to them. Be sure to tell them about yourself and your qualifications, but do it in a light-hearted way.

2. A funny set of test questions may be appropriate, especially if you're going to be doing things that are new to them, like team building or process improvement. The questions can be teaching points. Few people may know the actual answers, so you can make the multiple choice answers silly to make everyone laugh and feel comfortable.

3. If the people don't know each other, use the beginning of the facilitation to have them get acquainted.

One way is to have them pair up and introduce each other. After a two to three minute interview for each partner, they each introduce the other. This alleviates the tension surrounding introductions as it's much easier to introduce another person than it is yourself.

--

4. Go around the table and ask each person to state their expectations for this meeting.

5. Before the session begins, introduce yourself to as many people as you can. If an ice-breaker isn't appropriate, this is probably the best way to "break the ice" for both you and the participants.

6. You may be able to set up something either with your client or someone you might know who's part of the group. One of the easiest to do is a question *plant*. Using whatever humor is appropriate or an event that has just happened to them, talk briefly, and then ask if anyone has a question. Your *plant* will ask it and you can create laughter. Also, current news events are often appropriate.

7. Often, the environment in which you find yourself has exactly what you need to release tension. We can't tell you what that is, these are *instant creations* you'll discover yourself! Our advice is to *be open* and use whatever presents itself. If you believe the statement, *All my needs are always met*, they will be. We do and it always works.

To summarize, the reasons for having an ice-breaker can include:

- Helping to clarify group members' expectations and knowledge.
- Introducing participants to working within a group.
- Enhancing interpersonal relationships.
- Relieving anxiety.

You may want to start a file of ideas as you discover them so that you have a variety to choose from for different types of sessions. There are books available which will give you ideas for ice-breakers. Other facilitators or trainers are also a good source of ideas. Always adapt these activities to fit the facilitation and group members' needs.

Group Norms

In the introductory portion of the session, you'll lead the group in developing the norms for their behavior. Either your client will name them to support a theme or the group will name them in the session. We often call them *House Rules*.

House Rules are developed by the participants and written out and prominently displayed during the session. Not only are they norms for the participants, they're your norms as well.

You begin by asking the group to develop the rules under which they, as a group, desire to guide their behavior during the session. You might wish to ask them to think about the following two questions as they decide what would be effective rules for the group:

1. -- What behaviors do you feel are important to achieve success for this meeting?

2. -- What behaviors would you like others to exhibit and to which you are also willing to commit?

Facilitators and group members may feel uncomfortable the first time they develop norms. Don't be surprised if you feel this way also. Know that groups appreciate having these rules and will develop them. Often simply generating this list is all that's needed to create a framework of order for the session. There are several reasons for this. If the group works together daily, the list allows everyone to agree on rules for this particular meeting. If there have been interpersonal conflicts, this list can suspend fears about conflicts arising during this session. If the group doesn't know each other, it allows them to create a framework that can avoid any potentially troublesome personal behaviors.

One important rule to remember when you're creating *House Rules* is to record the participants ideas exactly as stated to you. If you're unclear about the wording or it doesn't flow easily, ask the person to repeat the idea. Often, this is all that's needed for the person to restate the idea or the group will help the person develop a clearer statement if they also like it.

We suggest you prepare the format in advance. You may receive a couple of desired norms from your client like *I want them to have fun* or *I want honesty*. You can have these printed up and let the group members develop the rest. The following is an example used in a session:

House Rules

- Exercise trust, openness, and honesty
- Focus on solution and resolution
- Be open to new ways of thinking
- One conversation at a time
- Everyone stays on time
- Have fun

If you've developed a theme for the session, it's easy to use the theme as part of group norms. Here is an example. The theme is about going out into the future. Space ships are being used for the visual representation. The *House Rules* become "Crew Rules." The visual emblem designed for the theme goes with the words "Crew Rules." If a rocket ship blasting off is the visual, draw the ship and write "Crew Rules" on the flip chart paper. If you're using automation, print it out and tape or glue it to the flip chart paper and write the norms on that page.

We highly recommend you begin the development of group norms by stating your own operating position, which is one of confidentiality and non-attribution. Allow discussion on this, if the group desires it, and frequently they do. There are several reasons for this. One is you. If you're unknown, the group may be fearful you'll leave and tell others about their behaviors and actions. If they don't trust you, they'll hesitate to be open and candid.

The second reason is past management practices. Many people are fearful about speaking what they perceive as their truth because, in the past, they may have been punished in some way by their organization for their candid behavior. Our organizations are changing and managers now realize it's important to be open to truth, empower employees and involve them in designing an organization that will survive and thrive.

If you discussed this issue with your client in your initial meeting, and the client indicated his or her desire to hear the truth, you can ask the client to talk about this with the group during the development of group norms. Group discussion of this issue with you, the client, and each other can allow a deep level of trust to begin.

We highly recommend that when you and the group finish developing the group norms, you ask the group to shake hands with the people on either side of them. You shake hands with the persons sitting to the left and right of you to close the circle. This symbolic physical act strengthens the agreement the group just made on paper.

Role of the Facilitator

Always be sure to explain, at the beginning of the session, who you are and what your role is. You and your client understand your role very well by this time, but the group probably doesn't. Even those participants who have experienced facilitated sessions need this explanation since facilitation styles and responsibilities differ from session to session.

Things you might discuss are:

- The group is the customer, *I'm working for you.*
- The group is there to talk to each other, not you.
- The group has the answer and the skills to produce it.
- You're there to help manage *group overhead.*
- You're objective.
- Your responsibility is to protect the process and keep the session on track.
- Your job ends at the end of the session.
- You might have to call "time outs" if the group is wandering.
- *The Hanger* and *the Task List* and what they're for (see Chapter 6).
- You have a tool kit of techniques to help them work their issues.
- How your role relates to the client during the session (often their boss).

A True Story

> I've skipped this a number of times and every time I've regretted it. It's going to come up anyway, so it's your choice -- *now* or *later*.
>
> It's a lot better if it comes up at the beginning. Otherwise, the group, not understanding your role, will hold back their trust. They'll question what gives you the right to be doing and saying what you are. When that happens you have to deal with it. Usually you end up almost starting over with the group.
>
> The times I've skipped it were either early in my experience as a facilitator or later with groups who were operating from a state of resentment or distrust. I'll never forget how it happened with "the toughest crowd I ever played."
>
> The group was so non-receptive to my being there I was actually *afraid* to explain my role! I rationalized it by thinking that they understood my role because they were *top* managers. About ten minutes into the heart of the work, one of the participants said, "Well, I don't know what the role of the facilitator is, but I think we ought to talk to each other, not her." Translation: Circle the wagons, crew, with *this* person on the *outside*. I've never skipped this step since!

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Producing Session Products

Once the initial introductory portion of the agenda has been accomplished, you begin producing the session products. The group will be guided through this by the methods and schedule you developed.

As you do each of these, you'll make any adjustments to the methods and schedule as needed. Your goal is always to deliver the outcomes and products the client requested. Don't hesitate to work with the group on their needs. As you gain experience, you'll sense when a break or a change-of-pace activity is needed. If you aren't clear, ask the group. Sometimes situations arise that aren't anticipated but are one of those *golden opportunities* for the group to realize success. Don't hesitate to adjust the activity if the client doesn't mind.

Some facilitators will advise you to never allow the group to change the agenda. We would like to modify this to *Never change your agenda unless there's a good reason.* Participants sometimes will try to modify the agenda because they're uncomfortable or they don't understand what's happening and where you're heading. Re-clarify the task and the steps you've designed if this happens. Occasionally, a group member may have a need to derail the session, or the facilitator, and may use an agenda change as one of their strategies.

If an agenda change is requested, first examine these possibilities and then use your own knowledge of tools and techniques and your *feel* for how the group is doing before making the change. If your client is present, he or she decides.

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Closing the Session

Close the session by summarizing what has occurred. Do it verbally *and* visually so that everyone sees and hears what has been realized as *outcomes* and *products.*

Help put the results of the group's work into an overall, big-picture framework. During the session, the group was doing the parts. You, as facilitator, tie the parts together into the whole when you summarize the session. This gives group members a sense of completion and feedback for work well done.

Thank the participants for their efforts and their cooperation with you and each other to make this session so successful, easy and fun. We won't deny that you may experience a difficult session. However, with careful planning and preparation, you seldom will. If you do, process your emotions and let them go. Become objective and this experience will provide you with very valuable "lessons learned."

If your client is present, turn the session over to him or her for closing remarks.

SECTION THREE

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Adding People to the Formula

Introduction

You've planned, you've prepared, you've followed every bit of advice we've offered. Your equipment is working perfectly, the room couldn't be nicer, the fruit tray looks enticing and your agenda reflects your belief in an ordered universe.

The session begins and you become a self-adjusting, self-correcting process control mechanism. You load your *sample-feedback-adjustment* program into your head and keep it running until normal system shutdown!

As you observe

```
Motivation waxing  -- Motivate them.

Conflict arising   -- Go Around or intervention.

Low energy         -- Take a break, do an energizing activity.

Hopelessly lost    -- Get knowledge, quick!
                   -- Find the problem-solver.
                   -- Summarize and re-clarify the task.

Avoiding the task  -- Force and direction.
                   -- Create ownership.

Distracting topics -- The Hangar
                   -- Use a more structured technique.

Low participation  -- Throw index cards around.
                   -- Go Around
                   -- Turn the marker over and sit down.

Underlying conflict-- Root it out.

Subtle sabotage    -- Confront.
```

Got it? What a menagerie of talents a facilitator must have! It sounds so complex in a book. Don't worry, it comes together in session. This section will provide you with the tools, techniques and insights into others and yourself that you need. Chapter 7 provides some structured techniques. Chapter 8 presents insight into group and individual behaviors, and Chapter 9 presents ways to expand your own personal facilitation traits. Like any other specialized skill, *the book* gets you started and real learning comes through doing.

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Chapter 6: Tips for Facilitators

We have facilitated many times for different kinds of sessions. Every time we do a session, we usually learn one more new thing about how to facilitate. We recommend you keep your own file of lessons learned and review them before every facilitation. Facilitating is evolutionary. As organizations change, our facilitation styles and methods must also change. The purpose of this chapter is to share what we've learned, sometimes through trial and error, with you.

Rule #1: A facilitator ALWAYS remains neutral, objective and fair.

Rule #2: Reread Rule #1! If you remember nothing else, remember these two rules. They're that important. The moment you stop being neutral and take sides, stop being objective and interject your own opinions, and stop being fair by siding with one person or group over another, you no longer are the facilitator. You're just another person running a meeting.

Keep everything visible. It's imperative for keeping people involved.

Keep everything recorded. Don't let ideas evaporate into the ether. *That's* what happens in *regular* meetings and creates "a lot of talk with no results." You need to post every comment, idea or criticism where everyone can see it so it has to be addressed.

You don't have to record every word, just record the idea or fact. You don't have to record it on the product you're currently working on. We begin every facilitation with two lists already hanging in the room. One is *The Hangar* where ideas that are off the point are recorded. The other is *The Task List* where things that need to be done are recorded. Hang them both in the back of the room and when someone brings up an item that belongs on one of them, toss a magic marker to them (not at them!) and have them post it.

Doing this causes a few things to happen. For starters, in order to record the idea, the provider will have to get concise and specific in what they are saying. If you don't understand it well enough to record it, then you need clarification and focus and so does everybody else in the room. The participants will learn quickly that they have to summarize ideas and this behavior adds clarity, understanding, and speed to the entire session.

Once the group sees that everything is getting recorded and will have to be dealt with, they tend to reduce their "talking for talk's sake" and that helps keep the session moving.

Use colors to clarify changes. When you're making later changes to a list or product, use different colors so that people can see what has changed, or what's new.

Face the group. Learn to hug your flip chart or white board or computer so that you're always facing the group.

Involve the participants whenever you can. Meetings are boring when all you do is sit. Many techniques lend themselves to active participation from the group. When designing the work process steps for the session, always question activities that involve the traditional *I'll stand up front and write, you take turns talking.* These activities can often be done in a style where the participants take a physically active role.

For example, in brainstorming, have participants write their own ideas on large sticky notes, pass them to you and you post them. Besides engaging the group, it speeds up the process.

One of the most powerful aspects of electronic meeting systems is that participants are actively involved throughout the meeting. They talk through their computer and don't have to wait for others to finish.

Don't be afraid to cut off people who are going on and on. This can be hard to do the first couple of times, but you'll have to turn in your facilitator license if you don't learn it by your second session.

One technique is to suggest *The Five Minute Rule* during the development of group norms. This is the right for anyone in the session to call *"five minutes"* on anyone else if they think the discussion is going on and on and not leading anywhere. State the group's right to call it on you too! Usually it will be used at least once in a session and it's always done with humor. For some reason, this technique "saves face" of the talker or talkers. Once it's called, it's effect seems to last for quite some time.

Honor break times, lunch times, and quitting time. Your credibility and the trust level the group has for you is put at great risk if you don't honor these times. The only deviation should be at the suggestion and agreement of the group.

Call people by name. This practice will build trust and a personal relationship between you and your participants. It also makes people feel good, and people who feel good produce better work. Name tags are fine, but if the session lasts more than a day, learn everyone's names without tags. *Not being good with names* isn't an acceptable character flaw for a facilitator and will keep you out of the ranks of the experts. If you aren't good with names, learn and practice until you are.

Use the space you're in. Standing allows you to *own* the space and move easily. However, with the changing work environment, there are times when it's desirable to be seated. Standing can be a power and control tactic and there are situations where that's undesirable. As you become a strong facilitator, you'll discover you can be even more effective under certain conditions by being seated. Sitting at the end of a table conveys authority. Sitting along the side of the table with participants reduces authority.

Don't favor one side of the room or one section of participants. Often your attention will be drawn to one area of the room or one section of participants. Be on the lookout for that and be sure to look towards, talk to and listen to all portions of the room and audience.

Walk into problem participants. If someone is being destructively aggressive you can temper them by taking advantage of their personal space.

Step away from shy, retiring participants while they speak, but keep your attention focused solely on them so that others will give them time to speak.

The group needs to speak to each other, not to you. We recommend you always tell people this up front, during your facilitator's role introduction. Say something like, "You'll tend to address your comments to me, because I'm standing up front, but it's really each other you want to talk to. You also might seek my approval on ideas since I have the biggest magic marker, but remember, I don't own the *outcome,* I just care that there is one."

You then need to reinforce this with your actions because the natural tendency *is* to talk to the person up front. Here are effective ways of redirecting the conversation back to the group:

- If you're asked a question, especially if it's a "content approval" question, put it out to the group or an individual for answering. Ask *Would anyone like to answer that?* or *I don't know, ask the group*. Begin this early in the session and soon participants will skip the middle man (that's you) and begin addressing each other directly.
- Move behind the speaker. The speaker usually will speak to the group in front of them instead of turning 180 degrees around to talk to you.
- Look at another group member while you're being spoken to.
- Sit down at the side of the table and direct your focus at the group, away from the speaker.
- A round table or U-shaped configuration naturally encourages conversation within the group.

Know when to be quiet. The greatest compliment to a facilitator is to have the group outgrow them. Remember, high performance groups don't need facilitators. Your job won't be at risk until the world has only high performance groups!

There are two factors for you to consider. One is to not build a dependency on you in the first place. The other is to provide the group with tools and experience they can use on their own.

Many facilitators build in dependencies on themselves, from the group, through their behavior. This may happen because the facilitator doesn't believe in the inherent intelligence and capability of the group. Telltale behaviors include:

- Allowing the group to address them instead of each other.
- Answering too many *content* questions.
- Not making the work visible and available for everyone.
- Always having to have the answer.
- Unwillingness to release control when the group is doing fine on their own.
- Disrupting progress by taking the group on a tangent or forcing them to do it *your way.*
- Being closed to suggestions.

To build the group's capability to manage themselves, allow the group every opportunity to accomplish things without you, as soon as they appear to be working together. Start this early in the session if possible.

Do not allow the group to transfer ownership of the process, problem, or recommendation to you. Some groups don't want to own their problem. That may be the reason the problem couldn't be solved in the normal work environment. Ways to make sure this doesn't happen are:

- Always be on the lookout for signs that you're being held responsible for the solution.
- When an after-the-session task is identified, have the group assign a responsible person to it.
- When an in-session task arises, like sorting a list, categorizing ideas, or editing work, have the group or a sub-group or a participant perform it.
- Don't accept or volunteer for follow-on work from the session.
- Make sure the group addresses all issues raised in the session.
- Follow the guidelines for getting the group to talk to each other.

Read the group and respond. The group and the individuals in it are giving off continuous signals about their attention level, frustration level, participation level and enjoyment level. Learn to read the energy signals of both the group as a whole and the individual members and take appropriate action. Ask yourself *What am I seeing or what am I sensing*? If you aren't presently comfortable trusting your intuition, you can learn to trust it. You'll sense *energy flows* of the group or individuals being blocked. Ask yourself *Why*? Trust the first answer that pops into your mind. There may be a need for a break or for a few minutes of talk to clarify a task.

Test your equipment. Always make sure all of your equipment is working before the session. Nothing turns the group off faster than watching you fight with your equipment.

Reconfirm all arrangements. Strange understandings can occur at the most unexpected times. Always confirm and reconfirm your facility, equipment and support arrangements. Visit the room after it has been equipped, before the session. Arrive an hour early the first day.

What to do when you don't know what to do. Ask the group. Enlist them as your allies. You're much more credible if you know when to ask for help. If they invent a technique, it becomes their technique and they love it. Remember, *people support what they help create.*

Check the mood meter. Sometimes facilitators become so enamored of the session and its progress and their own excitement and ego that they fail to recognize frustration in the group or in individuals. Learning to read body language and faces is certainly important, but sometimes, just for the heck of it, when everything appears to be peachy, ask something like:

- How are we doing?
- Are we accomplishing what we want to?
- Is the pace right?
- Are we getting anywhere?
- Do you like the technique we're using?
- Are you having fun?

You may be shocked on occasion to find out that things aren't as lovely as they appeared. When this happens, the individuals who speak up usually have a constructive solution for fixing the problem, and if you follow it, the group will appreciate your awareness and responsiveness to them.

Never say *I told you so.* This is one of the many facets of always preserving the integrity of every individual in every group.

Many times, as a problem solver, you'll see, in advance, what the group needs to do to get from here to there. You suggest it and the group will tell you why it won't work. So you don't do it. Then after a few gyrations of getting nowhere someone will suggest what you did, the group uses it, and it works. Don't say *I told you so!*

That side trip was more valuable to the group than your need to be right. The group had to go through the experience to see how to get where they needed to go. Once they decide what they need, they *believe* in it because *they* decided. That's medicine more powerful than any you can administer.

Know your art, be confident, and be flexible. Any rigidity in your character will be blown away in the first five minutes, so you might as well go in loose!

We've talked a lot about planning and preparing and its importance. That's still valid. However, being a facilitator is rather like being in quantum physics these days. You must consider the possibility that the real nature of the universe is one of chaos. But even in chaotic systems, the physicists tell us, the random and unpredictable movements never exceed finite boundaries.

Your plan, your techniques, your knowledge and your agenda are the boundaries. The people, their personalities, the problem and you are the random and unpredictable movements. Confidence and intelligent flexibility is your lifeline.

Sessions: When and where is best? Off-site sessions, Tuesday through Saturday. Local sessions, Tuesday through Thursday.

Warning! May impair your ability to be creative. If creativity is an important element of the session:

- Get the group members as far away from their offices as you can, mentally *and* physically.
- Provide a relaxed atmosphere.
- Turn off the left brain by doing something that disorients it: something wild, fast, up-side-down, inside-out, too slow or too fast. Get them laughing. Pop them out of their normal world and normal way of doing business. Turn on the music, get out the crayons.

Preserve the integrity of the group and every individual. We've avoided the use of *should* and *mus*t and *never* in this book because *we* don't like other people's fingers shaking in *our* faces....but here is an exception: you must never violate the integrity of the group or anyone in it.

Never

- Admonish a participant or the group
- Insult the organization or anyone in it
- Insult an outside organization or person
- Argue with a participant
- Ignore a participant
- Endorse gossip
- Support deprecating remarks
- Take sides on an issue
- Endorse some participants and not others
- Disapprove of an action, comment, or behavior (watch body language)

Do

- Take diversity training
- Welcome all feedback from participants
- Allow all comments, even "the stupid ones"

Learn to laugh at yourself. The trait that we've received more compliments on than any other, from people who have attended our facilitation sessions, is the ability to hold up under fire. If we didn't have this ability, we wouldn't facilitate. The key was learning to laugh at ourselves. It wasn't an inborn trait for us, we actually had to force ourselves to do it during our early facilitated sessions.

Learn to recognize signs of when a good laugh is in order: things like 1) wanting to rip someone's lips off, 2) defending what you are doing, or 3) qualifying your right to say what you're saying.

Force yourself to think "Heaven forbid, I'm are not perfect!" and laugh. Laughter depersonalizes the comment or situation so that you can manage it, which is what you were hired to do.

Two camps, no movement. All occupational groups have their own nightmares, those they sleep through and those they live through. The nightmare of the facilitator is to have the group stake out two camps as solidly as the North and the South in the Civil War, hashing and re-hashing the issue, getting nowhere. Most facilitators will have this kind of nightmare. There's good news from the front: You can do something about it!

When a group can't reach consensus, when two camps have been posted, there's a reason, a valid reason, behind the disagreement. We've found that usually the *argument* is over one thing, but the actual *disagreement* lies below the topic being argued. It's your job to root it out.

The *Go Around* technique works to explore the reasons for the disagreement (see Chapter 7). In *Go Around*, everyone hears all facets of the issue. Each member listens to what the others think, thus all important factors come forward. In addition, this technique is effective for refocusing a discussion that may have become heated, confrontational and, possibly, personalized.

When everyone is given the opportunity to contribute, "air time" and pressure are removed from the more vocal members of each camp. The viewpoints are depersonalized. The very fact that *Go Around* takes awhile can help cool down participants.

Through this technique, you'll get a feel for how many people are in each camp, but don't use this for a majority vote. By knowing where participants stand on the issue, you can narrow your focus and surface the real cause of the disagreement. Listen like a detective to what each side is saying. Listen objectively, looking for facts, trends and commonalities.

At the end of the *Go Around*, summarize what you believe to be the essence of the problem. Ask the group how the issue can be dealt with. Keep them focused on the isolated issues you've found and keep them in problem solving mode. Usually once you work through this process, the group will discover the real nature of the disagreement.

It's important that you stick with the issue (if it's an important one) until it's resolved. It may not be simple, quick and conflict-free, but if you take them to the depths, the reason for disagreement will be found and the problem solved.

Usually, lack of consensus results from a lack of common understanding.

If consensus can't be reached, you may have to ask one camp or the other to live with the decision or you may request that the group *table* it for later. DO get closure on the issue. DO NOT brush it away or try to avoid the inherent conflict. If you must ask one camp to concede, either permanently or for now, be sure and get them to agree to the concession. You can't order them to do it. Your goal is to get spoken closure agreement, so that the issue isn't left hanging open where the group will continue to stumble over it.

A True Story

> In my most memorable Two Camp Experience, I took them through *Go Around*, did my detective work and finally gave up. In desperation, I asked the last holdout if he could just live with the decision of the rest of the group and trust them. That's when the real problem came out. He said, "It's not that I don't trust this group, I don't trust management, and I think that if this group produces this information, it'll be used to all of our detriment." Guess what? The rest of the group agreed completely with his sentiment. The group had another view of how they could publish and use the information in a way to disarm it's negative effect. As soon as they worked out those details, all were in agreement.

Consensus Here are some guidelines for helping the group to achieve consensus.

- Help group members to avoid arguing for their own position. If needed, help them present it logically, but be prepared to intervene.
- Look for win-win alternatives. As the facilitator, you're working for collaboration and cooperation, not

competition where there are winners and losers.
- If agreement seems to come too quickly, be suspicious. Some people change to avoid conflict. Explore the reasons. Be sure everyone accepts the solution for similar or complementary reasons.
- Avoid conflict reducing techniques such as majority vote, coin flips, and bargaining. Differences of opinion are natural and expected. They increase the group's decision-making ability by providing a greater range of information and opinions. As the facilitator, you have techniques to use for the group to come to consensus, such as the *Nominal Group Technique* or *Multi-Voting*.

Putting it all together. By now you may be absolutely overwhelmed by all of the things a facilitator must do. Don't worry, remember that this book is a compilation of we have learned in hundreds of hours of facilitation. The most valuable tips came from mistakes we made. To help you keep on track, as you integrate and add to your knowledge, you might use questions such as these during breaks and between sessions to evaluate your own progress.

- Are we producing the products?
- Am I sticking to the agenda?
- Is everyone participating?
- Any dysfunctional behavior?
- Do they need a break or change-of-pace activity?
- Is anyone frustrated?
- Can everyone *see* what the group is doing?
- Am I being objective?

Intervention. In an intervention, the facilitator's role is changed from that of a passive observer to that of an active participant. This highlights the distinction between observation and intervention. A facilitator *observes* to determine if intervention is needed. Intervention is deliberate breaking into the task and process of the group and should be done only after observation has occurred. Lacking observation, the facilitator has no valid reason for intervening. Interventions are primarily focused on the *process* of group operation.

The facilitator has the unique role of ensuring that the meeting remains organized and productive. For that reason, the facilitator must, in addition to his or her other capabilities, acquire an ability to intervene during a meeting when it becomes apparent that members need assistance.

Intervention strategies are a particularly sensitive area. It's important to remember that the facilitator usually isn't a member of the group. The facilitator is, or acts as the third party, the neutral observer possessing the interpersonal skills to foster more harmonious relationships.

When to intervene?

1. Immediately -- because the consequences of not intervening would have some serious impact on the group.
2. At the first opportunity (end of a topic discussion or at some change in the task activity). The facilitator may choose to allow small conceptual or process issues to go uncorrected to see how and when anyone handles the issue or to allow the group to learn from its own behaviors.
3. At some later time because the activity will occur again and provide a better opportunity for the group to accept intervention.

Why intervene?

There are three types of intervention, each serving a different purpose:

1. Procedural intervention is used to clear up confusion concerning process improvement procedures -- what to do or how to do it.
2. Conceptual intervention is used when the facilitator observes confusion or lack of understanding concerning a major concept, technique, or problem solving tool. It's frequently instructional in nature.
3. Process intervention is used to focus attention on some interpersonal or group dynamic obstacle which will seriously affect the outcome of the group's effort. It seeks to identify, solve, and remove the obstacle.

Where should the facilitator intervene?

Most interventions occur in the meeting room. Interventions made outside the meeting normally involve issues or problems best handled with a specific member of the group. For example, a personality clash between members or continued disruptive behavior by a group member would best be handled outside of the meeting.

How might the facilitator intervene?

This is the most difficult question to answer because it's an intricate aspect of the facilitator's style and everyday behavior. The question breaks down into whether the facilitator will simply *tell* or, through questioning, help the group *discover* the problem.

Each question needs to be thoughtfully considered before intervening. Using a casual and unplanned intervention strategy is opening the door to potentially adverse consequences for both yourself and the group. Frequent interventions may lead to dependence on the facilitator, lessening the group's ability to develop competence and independence.

An overly aggressive facilitator can adversely affect group relationships if he or she intervenes or interrupts too often. Frequent interventions may be perceived as undermining the responsibility and authority of the group. On the other hand, a timid facilitator will miss critical opportunities for intervention that could enhance group process and relationships.

Several principles that guide good facilitation and answer the *when to intervene* question include:

1. Group cohesiveness and morale are highly desirable.
2. A positive relationship between the leader of the group and members of the group is important.
3. A good facilitator is a skilled listener, speaking only when absolutely necessary or when responding to a question.
4. Interventions during meetings will be positively viewed by members if they're perceived as necessary, timely and productive.

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Chapter Seven: Techniques for Facilitating

This chapter describes specific techniques for you to use with your group in session. They may be applied in a variety of ways to produce products or solve problems.

When you design a session, you select the techniques you think will work for the specific agenda items. Be prepared for the unexpected! Don't hesitate to create a new technique on the spot.

Don't hesitate to tap into the group's ideas. Ask them to help. Enlist them as your allies. If they invent a technique, it becomes their technique and they love it. Never forget the basic rule p*eople support what they help create*.

Go Around: A technique to encourage contribution toward group decision making. The facilitator begins at one end of the table. Each person is given the chance to say how he or she views the issue, state their idea, etc. If a person chooses to say nothing in this round, he or she says "pass."

Each person should be satisfied that he or she had a chance to influence the decision and declare a willingness or unwillingness to support it.

The term *consensus* means that support is derived from each person feeling heard and understood. This technique helps build and maintain group cohesiveness.

Please State Your Needs: A technique to gain clarity and honesty.

Simply ask the person or ask the group (by using the *Go Around* technique) to please state their needs. Here's an example: The facilitator senses the group needs a break even though it is not scheduled and they would say, "Please state your needs. I need to know if you feel a short break is appropriate."

The Constructive Response: A technique used to create a product from breakout groups' individual products. This is a very simple and very effective technique used by facilitators.

Basic Version: Using the *Go Around* technique, have each person:

1. Say what they like about the idea or proposal under consideration, etc.
2. Next, ask each person to state their concerns.
3. Assist and encourage people to find ways to overcome the concerns.

Alternative Version: This technique is especially valuable when a facilitator has a large group and must break them out into smaller groups. When each team brings their proposal or solution back to the whole group, use *the Constructive Response* to examine each group's proposal. On the easel or chalkboard, list the *likes* and list the *concerns* with each group's proposal. Place them with that proposal on the wall or hang them together using easels.

When this is completed, the facilitator begins the process of having the group come up with the final product. One of two things generally happens:

1. The group combines the *likes* from each sub-group and there is no further need for the *concerns* lists.
2. The group combines all the *likes* from each sub-group and uses the *concerns* list as a check to make sure the group product has avoided anything that has caused concern to someone. If there is a *concern*, the group talks it out.

Take Five: A technique to accommodate different thinking styles or preferences and help discussions begin quickly and on-track.

Individuals have preferences in how they think and make decisions. Some people, extroverts, prefer thinking out loud. Introverts prefer thinking silently. The *Take Five* technique guarantees those with an introverted thinking style the time and silence they need for organizing their thoughts. Understanding others without trying to alter or judge their behavior is an ability in itself. Allowing for differences maximizes each person's ability to contribute.

After you begin the session by stating the purpose for bringing the participants together, acknowledge the differing preferences or styles that people will be using during the session. Tell them you'll use a technique that will accommodate their different thinking styles.

When assigning members to breakout groups, suggest each person take a few minutes (like five) to organize their thoughts and ideas. They can make a written list if they wish. You may ask participants to do this before the session begins and bring their notes. After this brief quiet period, the group then begins discussion. This procedure permits those who need it, quiet time to organize their thoughts without distraction.

It's *always* advisable to provide advance information about a meeting. Extroverts don't need it and probably won't even read it, but introverts DO and WILL.

Put It In The Hangar: A technique to avoid sidetracks. During the session, it's easy for groups to get off the issue, or get sidetracked by other issues, ideas or even people. Although such issues or ideas may later be determined to be relevant, their relevance is unclear at the moment.

To capture these, label a piece of flip chart paper as *The Hangar*. Whenever a side issue or idea emerges, list it there. These issues can be addressed at a later time.

This technique captures all ideas and issues during a session. It acknowledges the contribution or participation of each member, even if their idea or issue is not the primary one under consideration.

Brainstorming: A technique to generate ideas quickly. Everyone is familiar with brainstorming.

The conceptual rules are:

- No criticism or evaluation
- Be unconventional
- Aim for quantity
- Hitchhike on other ideas

The practical rules are:

- Everyone contributes
- One idea per turn
- You may pass

Brainstorming can be modified and effectively used in certain situations which require the fast generation of ideas from a group. In addition, varying the technique introduces a new way of brainstorming and of enjoying the unconventionality of these modifications.

Alternative #1

1. A time limit is set.
2. Each participant works alone.
3. Each participant puts his or her ideas on a 3 x 5" self-sticking note. Only one idea per note is allowed.
4. Each idea is posted to a wall, board, or easel.
5. At the end of the time period, the group uses grouping techniques, like the *Affinity Diagram,* to combine ideas.

Alternative #2. Same rules as above except:

1. Instead of self-sticking notes, each participant uses index cards. Again only one idea per card is allowed.
2. As they finish each card, participants say the idea out loud and throw the card into the middle of the group. The facilitator collects them as they're being thrown.

The alternatives have very real advantages for certain situations.

1. They take away judgement and censorship.
2. Pressure to perform is removed.
3. The volume of ideas generated increases.

Because *brainstorming* produces a lot of ideas without filtering, be sure you know what to *do next* with the product of the brainstorm and make sure that the participants know what is going to happen as well.

Nominal Group Technique (NGT): A technique which combines brainstorming and the benefits of individual thought. *NGT* is a technique used to:

1. Identify processes.
2. Develop a process statement.
3. List the causes that reduce process effectiveness.
4. Prepare for data collection.
5. Identify solutions that improve processes.

NGT reduces the tendency of groups to evaluate ideas when they're presented.

NGT is a method of drawing out as many ideas as possible and then reducing the field of ideas to just a few.

The goal of *NGT* is to be as expansive with ideas as possible and then to select the most workable ideas the group can use to go on to the next step in the process.

The facilitator guides the group through the *NGT* steps.

1. Group members silently generate a list of ideas on paper.

2. All ideas are recorded on a large sheet of paper. Once group members appear to have finished listing their ideas silently, the facilitator will begin by having the member to the immediate right or left give the first idea on his or her list. The facilitator will write the idea, exactly as expressed, on the paper. Initials of the individual giving the idea may be placed on the sheet by his or her idea if further clarification may be needed. Otherwise, don't *pin* ideas to people. Let ideas become *group ideas*.

   Items should be numbered and written so that they may be easily read by the entire group. When an idea is recorded, it shouldn't be explained or clarified, merely posted. This process continues with each member giving one idea per turn, until all of the members' ideas are exhausted.

3. Ideas are discussed for clarification. Once all the ideas have been listed, the facilitator will go around the group again and ask each member in turn if there are any items on the list which are not understood or which need to be clarified.

4. Once all items have been clarified and are understood, the group participates in an anonymous vote on the ideas.

   The voting is accomplished on secret ballots, which are then passed to a group member to be read and recorded. After tabulation, the group can easily see which of the items is of greatest interest to the group. The natural by-product of this step is that the group's attention is directed to the items that received the largest number of votes.

   If votes are evenly distributed, that fact captures the group's attention. The purpose of this step is to determine where group interest lies. Remember that all items listed, no matter how few votes they may have received, remain candidates for future consideration until the group decides otherwise.

5. The group discusses remaining items, if necessary. At this point, all group members should understand what is meant by each item on the list. If a member has strong feelings about an item that was not selected, the member should explain to the group why he or she feels so strongly. If the individual feels strongly that the item should be placed on the selected list, place it there.

6. When all discussion has been exhausted, the group ranks items selected through a weighted voting process. Once again, each member will cast an anonymous paper ballot, but this time each vote will be weighted on the basis of the total number of items included in the vote. For example, if five items are included in the vote, each member will give five votes to the item that is most important, four votes to the second most important item, and so on.

Multi-voting: A technique to reduce the number of ideas to a manageable size. The objective in *Multi-Voting* is to reduce the number of ideas, not to arrive at a final choice. It can be used when brainstorming has generated too many items to be addressed at one time.

1. Group members vote for as many ideas from the list as they wish, but may cast only one vote for each item.
2. The list is trimmed by one-half, with those ideas having the fewest votes dropped.

3. Each member votes for half of the remaining ideas.
4. The voting process continues until the predetermined number of ideas is reached.

Guided Discussion: A technique to guide group discussion. Sometimes it's advisable to facilitate a group discussion at your session. In can be built-in when you design the session. You may need to use it unexpectedly when the group raises an issue that is new or controversial and a timeout from what they are doing to discuss the issue is necessary. This technique allows for specific subjects to be discussed in a specified amount of time.

1. Prepare an open-ended question for each of the topic areas to be discussed.
2. Give about two minutes of introductory background information and briefly mention each topic or issue that will be covered during the discussion. State the amount of time that will be allowed for each topic or issue.
3. Ask the question you prepared for the first topic.
4. Saying nothing, observe the process intently. Don't become involved in the content. The facilitator guides the discussion but can't become part of the discussion.
5. Intervene quickly, but only when needed, to assist the process.
6. Monitor the time and move to the next topic using a transition statement.
7. Ask the question for the second topic.
8. If discussion digresses from the topic, bring it back on track without stifling additional ideas. Use *The Hangar* technique if appropriate.
9. After discussing all topics, give a quick summary of the ideas presented and decisions made. Express appreciation for the group's participation.

Mediating Conflict Between Two People in a Group Environment: A technique for improving interpersonal relationships. A facilitator can help group members resolve conflicts which can improve interpersonal relationships. Unresolved conflicts negatively affect group productivity and relationships. The following process can be used with the entire group present.

1. Get agreement from the members in conflict and from the group to proceed. You may wish to explain that this is a process that can be used whenever conflict arises and the advantage of having a third party guide the conflict resolution process.
2. The two people in conflict sit facing each other. The facilitator is seated so that he or she can see their faces clearly.
3. The facilitator asks one person to explain what the conflict is about and how he or she feels. The second person listens and is then asked to paraphrase what was said. Next, the second person states what he or she thinks the problem is about and his or her feelings. The first person listens, then is asked to paraphrase what was said.
4. In the second round, the first person states the desired outcome. The second person listens, then paraphrases. Then, the second person states the desired outcome. His or her words are then paraphrased by the first person.
5. The process of stating, listening, and paraphrasing is continued. The goal is to clarify the issues, hear the desired outcomes, and find a solution. When consensus is reached and both agree to a solution, the process is complete.
6. The entire group evaluates how the mediation process worked. First, the facilitator asks the two participants how it felt and what steps of the process helped. Then, other group members are asked to state their observations. Finally, the group discusses how the mediated process could be used in the future.

The Affinity Diagram: A technique to organize facts or issues into groups or clusters. This technique is useful if the problem or issue is highly complex and needs the total involvement of the group.

- First, present the problem or issue to the group. Then do *Brainstorming*. Set a time limit like seven minutes. Ask members to silently generate as many ideas as possible. Have them place each idea on a separate self-sticking note. Give members big markers so the word or phrases they write can be read easily.
- When the time is up, place all self-sticking notes on a wall. Ask group members to begin organizing them into groups or clusters that appear to have some sort of relationship. As the groups or clusters are developed, each begins to have a closer relationship with the issues or facts placed with them. Each member is free to change the self-sticking notes. When it appears the group members have reached consensus and are satisfied

with the relationships, the information can then be used to continue work on the issue or problem.

- This technique works very well for a comprehensive agenda item like developing organizational values, as well as for a very specific agenda item like defining all the tasks needed to complete a work activity.
- This technique isn't for problems or issues that require immediate solution.

Fish Bowl: A dramatic and "last resort" technique used to break an impasse in discussion when closure is required. It isn't unusual, when bringing individual group products together, that the groups can't agree. Quite frequently, they end up doubling the number of ideas instead of getting to closure. Don't be surprised when you're trying to bring a group to closure to have a group member develop a new idea and interrupt what's going on to present it because he or she is so enthusiastic about it.

You will probably be using *The Constructive Response* and *Go Around* to combine group ideas. What you may see happening instead is an opening of discussion and more idea creation. When you find yourself feeling out of control and not knowing what to do to bring structure back to this process, you'll know this is the time to yell *Fish Bowl*!

1. Call a 10 minute time out. Tell members of each group to select a representative who is empowered to make decisions for the group.
2. Advise the group that upon their return to the room, they'll find chairs in the middle of the room for each group's representative. There will also be one additional chair. All other group members will sit in the outer circle of chairs. Final directions will be given at that time. Then have all group members leave the room.
3. Configure the room, placing the representatives' chairs and one additional chair within the inner circle. With the rest of the chairs, form a semi-circle around the inner circle, for the rest of the participants.
4. Begin the *Fish Bowl* by stating that representatives will reach a consensus on the issue in twenty minutes. They'll speak with sufficient volume to be heard by the entire group. No communication will be permitted between the inner and outer circles. Anyone wishing to address the representatives in the inner circle will be granted one minute to sit in the extra chair and state his or her position to the representatives.
5. The facilitator steps back as the inner circle of representatives work to consensus.
6. The facilitator must intervene if the guidelines are not followed. Intervention is crucial to ensure that no communication occurs between the circles. *Failure to intervene returns the group to their starting point with everyone talking or arguing.*
7. When consensus is reached, thank the group and move on to the next agenda item.

The first time you do this you'll probably feel afraid. Mask your fear. You must be in complete control. Usually it won't be a problem for you because you'll feel so irritated at what's going on in the group you'll want to take control! That is your clue to yell *Fish Bowl*!

Group Evaluation: There will be times when you'll be working with groups who need to evaluate themselves. The information will help you and the group to modify activities, resolve conflicts, make better use of time, or solve problems differently. There are a variety of ways to do this.

One simple way is to decide which areas would benefit from evaluation. The following is a list of commonly used categories:

- Goals
- Commitment
- Procedures and Guidelines
- Roles
- Participation
- Trust
- Conflict
- Hidden Agendas
- Timing
- Level of interest
- Synergy
- Feelings
- Problem solving Methods

- Facilitation (yes, ask how you're doing also!)

Develop a rating scale for each area. We suggest a rating scale of one to five to keep it simple. Have one be the low end and five be the high end. For each end, give an appropriate description so everyone understands what's being asked. The following are examples to help you design your own:

```
                     Facilitation
    1         2         3         4         5
Inappropriate                             Just the right
amount of                                   amount of
direction                                   direction
------------------------------------------------------
                         Trust
    1         2         3         4         5
Low level                                 High level
 of trust                                  of trust
```

The rating scale evaluation can be used for a group that's been working together for awhile.

It can also be used as a diagnostic tool for a facilitated session designed to improve the teamwork of the participants. Before the session, the questionnaire can be given to the participants. Ask them to complete the evaluation anonymously. Explain to them that this information will be used to discuss how to improve the group's working together.

Another evaluation format is a list of questions that allow each person to state their thoughts about each question. This method takes longer to do and will require time to compile the results. However, it provides more in-depth information than the rating scale. The following is an example:

How Well are We Working Together?

1. How did you feel when you first formed this group (or team)?
2. How do you feel now?
3. Which of the group's (or team's) goals do you think you've achieved?
4. What unresolved conflicts do you think this group (or team) needs to address?
5. What prevents you from being more committed, interested or participate more?
6. How can the facilitator help your group (or team) move forward?
7. Does your group (or team) need any additional ground rules or procedures?
8. What isn't happening that, if it did happen, would make your group (or team) more successful?
9. What are the three best things about your group (or team)?
10. What is the one thing you'd like to see happen that you think is impossible for your group (or team)?

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Chapter 8: People and Everything We Love About Them

I never met a man I didn't like.

Will Rogers

If you don't believe that groups working together are really smarter than individuals working alone, the *2 + 2 = 5* synergistic equation, we recommend you either change your beliefs or don't facilitate.

In order to tap into the creative potential of each and every group member, you must create *synergy* in the group.

This can't be done without believing in the synergistic principle governing groups. The techniques you use and the style you choose will either help create synergy or block it.

When people come together to do group work without a facilitator, their behavior can be very different than the behavior they assume under the leadership of a skilled facilitator. A skilled facilitator will assist them to be *the best they can be together*.

In making that very positive statement, we suggest you prepare yourself for human behavior in all of its forms. That's why we named this chapter *People and Everything We Love About Them*. Learn to love everything about people, even those things you never thought you could. When you do that, you'll be able to help anyone you're working with to have the space they need to share their ideas.

Psychologically, the statement *I change the world around me by changing myself*, is the key to increasing your own awareness of individual and group potential. If you drop judgement about anyone or anything, that change alone alters what you see in your world.

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Group Behaviors

Let's begin talking about people by talking about the roles people need to play in groups. We generally call this group dynamics. Your awareness of the roles people need to play in groups can assist you in helping the group achieve success.

When you become familiar with these roles, you'll be able to see who's playing what role and if all the roles are being played. If they aren't, you, as facilitator, can identify the gaps and work with the group to encourage someone to step forward and assume the missing role. At times you may find yourself taking on missing roles. It's to the group's advantage to be made aware of what's missing and learn how to check themselves for any missing roles when the session seems to be dragging. This will allow the group to not only produce the outcomes and products, but to maintain their effectiveness in working as a group as well.

The roles fall into two categories:

- Task Roles -- necessary for task completion.
- Maintenance Roles -- necessary for the health or well-being of the team.

Some roles are required for both task completion and team well-being. For the purposes of facilitator awareness, we're going to briefly list and explain these roles. We recommend you read, watch subject matter videotapes, and attend training to increase your understanding about group process, human behavior and team building.

Role -- Description of the Behavior

- Encourager -- Friendly and responsive to others, offers praise,accepts other's points of view.
- Mediator -- Mediates differences, relieves tension in conflict situations, gets people to explore their differences.
- Compromiser -- When his or her own idea is involved in a conflict, offers compromise and tries to maintain group cohesion.
- Expresses Group Feelings -- Senses the feeling or mood of the group, others, and self; and shares with the group.
- Gatekeeper -- Keeps communication open, suggests ways to share information with others.
- Initiator -- Proposes tasks or goals, suggests ways to solve problems.
- Information or Opinion Giver -- Offers facts, states beliefs or opinions.
- Information or Opinion Seeker -- Asks for facts, ideas, opinions or suggestions.
- Elaborator -- Interprets ideas or suggestions, clears up confusion, gives examples.

- Coordinator -- Pulls together related suggestions, offers conclusions for the group to accept or reject.
- Diagnostician -- Helps the group to identify where problems are occurring.
- Standard Setter -- Helps the group define standards, what's expected, what's acceptable.
- Follower -- Goes along with whatever is being proposed, agreeable to what the group wants.

Please think about these roles and their importance. Imagine a group meeting where all the roles have been played except for the role of *coordinator*.

- How would that affect the meeting?
- What would you, as the facilitator, do?

Imagine a group meeting where all the roles have been played except for the role of *diagnostician.*

- How would that affect the meeting?
- What would you, as the facilitator, do?

Imagine a group meeting where no roles were being played except for the role of *following.*

- How would that affect the meeting?
- What would you, as the facilitator, do?

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Individual Behaviors

The most challenging problems in our lives generally involve our relationships to other individuals. When interacting with challenging or difficult people, a tactful approach that maintains individual self esteem wins greater respect and results.

To maintain the self esteem of each individual (and yourself), don't allow an attack on any individual or yourself. Emotional conflict shifts a person's concern from problem solving to defending their position. As the facilitator, you shift the focus back to the issue the group is working. Emphasize that the session's purpose is to produce the best group solution. This reflects what's acceptable, workable, and meets the needs of the group, not the needs of a single individual.

When you're faced with dysfunctional behavior in a session, it may be handled by you in two ways: direct confrontation in the meeting or off-line with the individual. The *I technique* and the *F technique* allow feelings to be stated. No one can attack another for his or her feelings.

The *I technique* is very simple. Here is what you say:

When you.......

I feel.......

I would like ....

Because....

The *3F technique* is very similar and just as simple. Here is what you say:

I understand how you *f*eel,

I have *f*elt that way before,

Here's what I've *f*ound.......

You'll discover that the group can also be a source of help to you and to each other. We generally refer to this behavior as *peer pressure*. When one person's behavior begins to become disruptive, often someone in the group will take on the role of mediator, diagnostician or another role that's appropriate and attempt to solve the disrupter's problem or identify the cause of the behavior.

There are a variety of problem behaviors that can be detrimental to the group members and their work. We will describe some common types, by their behavior, and follow them with strategies to deal with that behavior.

The Know It All - This person appears as the expert, wants constant attention and often argues with people.

Strategies include:

- Be well prepared for the topic under discussion.
- Listen and paraphrase what they say.
- Don't challenge -- ask questions to lead them to see their errors.
- Praise their ability.
- Focus on solutions.
- Ask other group members to comment on what they heard, redirecting focus away from the Know-It-All.
- Have them summarize their thoughts and record them.

The Sniper - This person attacks and criticizes, usually indirectly, masking their aggression by using humor or saying things under their breath.

Strategies include:

- Address the behavior openly, asking them why they said that.
- Ask others if they agree with the criticism.
- Don't let them hide behind humor.
- *Address sniping each time it occurs, until it stops*.

The Talker - This person distracts by holding side conversations.

Strategies include:

- Say, "There are little meetings going on. May we have just one meeting?"
- Ask the person directly to share their thoughts with everyone (use tact and diplomacy).

The Quiet Type - This person is quiet or timid. Their silence is often mistaken for agreement.

Strategies include:

- Address them by name and ask them to share their thoughts. Focus your attention directly on them to create the time and space they need to answer.
- Commend their participation when it occurs.
- Talk to them before the session, casually, to help them become comfortable.
- Ask them some *safe* things early in the session to get them involved.

The Complainer/Whiner - This person tries to put you on the spot to *fix it.* He or she blames others and never self.

Strategies include:

- Don't be defensive.
- Listen and acknowledge, don't argue.
- Ask questions.
- Solicit solutions from them.
- Encourage them to act.

The Bulldozer - This person will try to run over you and everyone else too! It's their method of stopping progress, because progress scares them. If they can't change, they may leave. At a facilitated session, bulldozers may leave the room a lot and will have a host of legitimate reasons for doing so!

Strategies include:

- Stand up to them in a non-combative way.
- Don't argue with them. Present the facts.
- Get them into problem solving mode.
- Protect the space of those they bulldoze, by asking the *bulldozed* to repeat their thought or by asking others in the group how they feel.

Hair-Splitting - This person wants absolute answers and definitions.

Strategies include:

- Acknowledge their need for absolute answers and definitions.
- State what you're prepared to give.
- Ask them to honor your work or style preferences just as you accept theirs.

The Interrupter - This person interrupts the person speaking.

Strategies include:

- Say, "You interrupted me. Please let me finish my thoughts."
- Whenever they do it, repeat the preceding statement.

The Staller - This person tells irrelevant stories or experiences. They don't focus and instead give off base types of examples.

Strategies include:

- Ask them how what they said relates?
- Help them to be honest.
- Try to find out their hidden concerns.
- Record their idea on *The Hangar*.

The Inarticulate Person - This person has ideas but has problems putting the ideas into words.

Strategies include:

- Encourage them to speak.
- Exhibit patience when they speak.
- Ask them for permission to help them phrase or rephrase.

Now you have some knowledge about challenging people and strategies to deal with them. What do you do with the ideal person?

The Ideal Person - This person has good ideas and expresses them freely at appropriate times. They're congenial. They work well with others. They smile and laugh easily, even at themselves.

Strategies include:

- Acknowledge them frequently
- Always learn from them

Facilitating Typical Meeting Situations

Please think about the following situations. You're the facilitator. How would you handle each situation?

1. Latecomers.
2. Inappropriate comments directed at you or at other group members.
3. Participants not talking.
4. People who derail the subject being discussed.
5. People talking to each other instead of the group.
6. People monopolizing discussion.
7. Sexist comments.
8. The client changing an agenda item on the spot.
9. An uncomfortable room (too hot/cold/noisy/etc.)
10. A person vying with you for control.
11. The Devil's Advocate type.
12. The Doom and Gloom type.
13. The Show Off type.
14. The Nonstop-Talker.

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Chapter 9: Traits of Excellent Facilitators

Anyone who has participated in more than one facilitated session can tell you, *all facilitators are not alike!*

What distinguishes one facilitator from another: the bright from the dreary, the energetic from the weary, those who have it from those who don't?

Sometimes a facilitator can be very effective with one group and "bat zero" with another. *Is it chemistry? Personal style? A matter of trust, background, knowledge, credentials?*

All of these come into play between a facilitator and the group they're working with. Even though these elements are subtle and hard to define, they're still powerful contributors to the success or failure of a session. We can't measure them and we can't make definitive rules about them, but since they will affect you, let's at least examine them.

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Internal Conditions

It is internally that the real traits of excellence lie.

In addition to specialized skills, successful facilitators generally have the following traits:

- Confidence

- Flexibility
- Objectivity
- Patience
- Ability to think on one's feet
- Active listening
- Ability to confront
- Flexible ego
- Active intuition
- Responsiveness
- Sense of humor
- Articulate
- Ability to summarize
- Ability to read a group and individuals

These traits may be inborn, and a person who didn't receive many of them probably won't pursue the art of facilitation, but we believe that all of these traits lie dormant in each of us and that they can be enlivened. We also believe that these traits can be expanded in any of us whose natural level is already high. Because these are traits of successful facilitators, let's play with the ideas of what might be below them and how they might be brought to an even greater power.

Flexible Ego

If you don't want a bruised ego, leave it on the doorstep when you enter the session. Egos tell you what to do, so they're great for keeping you safe crossing the street to get to the facilitation, but once there, ask your ego to please be quiet and be your partner because you want to be open to new truths so the two of you can get smarter together. *You are not your ego.* Your ego is that voice in your head that says, *This is how I'm going to do it because I know best.* That's your ego talking; not you.

All of the traits have their roots in a flexible ego, that is, the ability to *put oneself on hold* in order to accomplish a higher good.

Confidence

To be confident you must know what you are doing. Do you have the training and experience you need?

To be confident you must be supported. Do you have the tools, information and help you require?

To be confident you must believe in what you are doing. Do you love facilitation? Do you believe it contributes to others? Do you really believe in the intelligence and capability of the groups you work with?

To be confident you must recognize your successes. Do you give yourself credit for what is good about you? Do you take time to recognize things when you accomplish them? Is your inner critic working overtime?

Patience

"You really have to be patient to be a facilitator, don't you?" one of our clients asked recently as we were recovering from a particularly long drawn out rehash of a simmering problem in the group. The immediate answer was, "Boy and how!"

Later, thinking about it, we decided that patience is very misunderstood. It's thought of as something you either have or you don't have -- you're either a patient person or you aren't. But if this is so, how can facilitators be patient in session and then become impatient in a traffic jam later that day?

Patience seems related to your ability to allow things to be as they are and impatience arises when you are concerned with *how* something is being done; how fast, how well, how neatly, *how much like you would do it.*

Patience can be learned and improved. You may choose when to wear patience by recognizing and controlling what creates it. What you do to control it is to release *your need to control everything, all the time*. Your daily life is your classroom if you choose to improve your ability to release this aspect of yourself. Open yourself up to becoming aware of impatience as it arises and then practice releasing the need to control the situation you find yourself in. A simple way to release control is to just say in your mind *I release the need to control this situation. I allow this situation to be what it is all by itself*. We guarantee that you will begin to see changes in yourself, and the outside world, a few weeks after you begin doing this.

As a facilitator, patience arises from:

- Seeing the long-term value beyond the current situation or product.
- Seeing the value of *what* is being said beyond *who* is saying it.
- Knowing that the fact that *the group is making the decision* is more important than speed.
- Knowing that the fact that *the group is making the decision* is more important than the actual quality of the decision.
- Not needing to be right all of the time.
- Trusting the *process*, knowing that *working through* is necessary.
- Believing in the capability of the group.

Objectivity

> ***Objectivity: Uninfluenced by emotion, surmise, or personal opinion.***
>
> **--- Webster's II**

Objectivity is one of the main things you owe the group you're working with. That's the reason facilitators need to come from outside of the group. It's impossible to remain objective if you care about the *content* of the group's result.

Even if you're from outside the group, you can still get embroiled in their content if you aren't careful. You must maintain a unique balance of being in the content enough to understand the work, yet not so much that you identify with it. As soon as you identify with the content, or personalize it, you are subject to influence by emotion and personal opinion.

A good way to maintain your objectivity is to stay focused on your role and responsibility to the group, which is to protect the process. Remember that your measure of success for the session is different from anyone else's in the room. Be on the look out for:

- Needing too much *personal* approval from the group.
- Answering content questions.
- Caring which way issues are decided.

Ability to Think on One's Feet

You can't think on your feet if you don't know what you're talking about, so for starters, be sure that you're qualified in the subject matter you find yourself facilitating.

You can also enhance this skill by seeking opportunities to teach, give presentations (the more controversial the better), or join groups that will give you the opportunity to do public speaking. You might ask friends or co-workers to role-play with you. Ask them to interrupt, question your statements and exhibit other disruptive behaviors. Role-playing is a safe and non-threatening way to practice thinking on your feet.

Active Listener

We voted and we decided that we've never met anyone who was born with this ability. Listening is definitely a learned skill. It's also a skill that can rust if you don't use it. It's a *must learn* for a facilitator. There are a number of books and courses that include instructions on becoming an active listener.

Ability to Confront

Yes, you can learn this one. We think the secret is to change your view of what it means. Many of us were raised to believe that if you confront you are being rude, aggressive, and negative. Confrontation can be an act of kindness if you use it at the right time. In facilitation, you would only confront someone if their behavior was hurting the group. That's your job. It can be done in a reasonable and gentle way.

Active Intuition

We know this one can be learned and improved because we've both done it. The key to activating your intuition to the level of being able to rely on it is very simple. All you have to do is trust it.

You are already receiving intuitive information of the highest quality. Everyone is. We know from cognitive science that some people rely heavily on their intuitive side and they are just as effective and *right* as those who rely on their logic. For some reason, some people's circuitry picks up the intuitive current more readily.

The way to make your intuitive circuitry more receptive is to exercise it. You exercise it by listening to and acting on the signals you are getting. Practice allowing these signals the same validity that you do logical facts, even if you have to kid yourself at first! Intuition doesn't care, she's there anyway!

Start small. The next time you get a flash of insight, don't talk yourself out of it's validity. Accept the possibility that it's true and see what happens. The next time you get a gut reaction, follow it instead of rejecting it. If you know who's calling when the phone rings, pick it up and say "Hello, (name of person)." What's the worst thing that could happen? Intuition is like electricity, the current is always there, but you have to plug in if you want to use it.

Sense of Humor

We don't know if a person can learn to be a stand up comedian, but we do know that a person can learn to laugh at themselves. Like the rest of these soft arts, the first step in learning them is to open yourself up to the experience. Put some focus on the matter. Say something like, "Today I'm going to take one opportunity where I would normally get mad and instead I'm just going to laugh." Then do it.

Do what you'd do if you wanted to learn how to drop a transmission. Find someone who knows how and ask them how they do it. Come to think of it, if you can find someone who has dropped a transmission or two, they can probably teach you something about laughing at yourself.

Articulate

Yes, you can learn to be more articulate. Public speaking classes are one good tool. It's also important to be well-read in areas you facilitate.

Ability to Summarize

Classes in technical writing or journalism can add to your ability get to the point. So can working with someone who has these skills.

Ability to *Read* the Group Through Non-Verbal Clues and Energy-Sensing

Active intuition is critical here. We don't think you can substitute intuition with facts, but you can add facts to increase your skills. Books or classes in body language and psychology can increase your ability to *sense* what is going on.

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Outward Conditions

For every facilitator there are conditions or groups with whom their effectiveness will be limited. This isn't an indication that you aren't qualified to facilitate, it just means that you should consider some things before agreeing to step into *any situation*. Here are some considerations we use.

An outside facilitator is usually best. Because a facilitator must remain objective, neutral and fair, it can be very difficult to facilitate a formal session within your organization. There are simply too many pre-conceived notions about who people are, how they're going to act, and what they're up to -- in both directions. For small, simple sessions your gift will be appreciated, even on your home turf, but think carefully about accepting a large internal assignment.

Have you earned the right to be there? Most groups are parochial to an extent. For some groups, trust is only extended to those from their own ranks. This could mean a certain background, rank, age, or set of credentials. Both the group and the facilitator are better off with a match (even though we know you'd love to help get rid of *that* kind of behavior!). Could you be stepping into a condition like this?

Do you have the knowledge and experience? Some sessions require highly specialized knowledge and extensive experience to do justice to the task. Are you the right person for the job?

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SECTION FOUR

Beyond the Basics

Chapter 10: Applying Facilitation to Business Processes

Anytime it takes more than one person to make a decision is a time to consider the benefits of facilitator services.

Here is a partial listing of different types of sessions which benefit from facilitation services:

- Visioning
- Problem Solving
- Structured Methods
- Open Discussion
- Conflict Resolution
- Subject Matter Expert Brainstorming
- Focus Groups
- Instruction
- Transitions (Reinventing The Organization)
- Team Building
- Strategic Planning
- Process Improvement
- Data Modeling
- Process Modeling
- Product Review

Basic facilitation steps apply to the design and conduct of these business meetings. However, the techniques you'll use will vary according to the session type.

An organization that is changing to an entirely new way of operating will require multiple facilitated sessions which will include strategic planning, team building, instruction, open discussion, and problem solving. Facilitating an undertaking of this nature will require you to have knowledge and skills for these areas.

A client may require one session designed for instructional purposes. To facilitate this session you must have instructional skills. Another client may request you to facilitate data modeling sessions. You would have to be familiar with data modeling methodologies and products to accomplish this.

Our point is this: As the demand for facilitation services has grown, there are now recognized specialties within the field. It's likely you'll be skilled in certain process areas rather than in all business processes.

Next we will show, in a specific way, how to facilitate two different kinds of business processes to illustrate the differences in application of facilitation techniques.

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A Visioning Session

Creating a vision for an organization is highly creative. While it requires participants to have experience and knowledge about their organization and business trends, visioning itself requires imagination. Visioning is asking participants to see the future, to see the invisible. Visioning requires people to suspend reliance on logic and rational thinking and to imagine and then create a desired future state for their organization.

For you to facilitate a visioning session, you must have a thorough understanding of strategic planning, what a vision is, why a vision is important for an organization, how to get a group to develop a vision, and specific examples of organizations that have already developed a vision.

Facilitating a visioning session requires emphasis on techniques that can move the participants into right brain activity (creativity and images), rather than left brain activity (logic and words). To vision, they need to be taken to a space where the rules of reality change long enough to allow new patterns to form. It's very important to design a playful, relaxed and comfortable environment for a visioning session. This will reduce the amount of time it will take you to engage their right brains.

You begin a visioning session the same way you begin other sessions. This means you'll begin in *left brain mode* as you get acquainted, develop group norms, etc. You then need to establish a *right brain connection* for the creative work of visioning.

You'll want to spend some time educating the group members about a vision. Most people don't know the advantages of having an organizational vision. To discuss available knowledge about what a vision is and how to create a vision, your choice of words is very important. Use words like *see* and *feel* and *imagine* to create images which will connect them to their creative side. You'll be giving them words, which engage the left brain, but at the same time, the words carry images to open and engage the right brain.

You may chose to use an inspiring videotape on visioning. You may also chose to take the group on a guided visualization which allows them to do breathing techniques to quiet their thoughts and move them into their right brain, creative space.

If you decide to do a guided visualization, you must prepare it in advance and practice doing it. Timing and the words you use to help them create images in their minds must be carefully chosen. We often write down our words, because as you're *taking them out*, you may go too! The words on paper help keep you anchored to the ground. The facilitator needs a little more left brain centering to keep the group on track than the participants do for visioning.

Guided visualization is a technique that works very well to set the stage for visioning. It suspends "mind chatter" and gives the participants quiet time in their minds to imagine their organization in the future. After the visualization is finished, you'll notice a distinct change in how some of the participants act and how the group relates to each other. It has a very calming effect.

In vision development, participants are broken out into smaller groups to create their proposed vision. This allows small groups of people to become highly creative together. The individual groups are brought back together and the process of creating one shared vision begins.

The *Constructive Response* and the *Go Around* techniques work very well for examining each vision. List what people like and what concerns them about each proposed vision. Once that's done, you have a list of the things the group likes and usually they are able to take these things and develop the vision from them.

To end your portion of the visioning session, congratulate the group on their new vision. Turn the session over to your client as he or she will wish to talk further to the participants about the vision.

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Systems Development Sessions

Systems developers and the business managers they support have discovered that using facilitated sessions instead of iterative, one-on-one analysis techniques can speed up steps in the development process from thirty to seventy-five percent. The *quality* of the products increases also because the users become active partners in development.

In the systems development world these sessions are often called Joint Application Design, or JAD, Sessions. They're a key element of a modern development style called Rapid Application Development, or RAD. RAD is exactly what it sounds like, Rapid Development. The theory behind RAD is that new systems should be fielded in modules, no working module taking more than 3 months to deliver. This keeps the requesting user engaged and interested because they see results.

To achieve RAD, much of the communication between the technical developers and the user community takes place in a facilitated session environment. These sessions are conducted for

- Identifying systems requirements
- Process modeling
- Data modeling
- Planning
- System design activities
- Prototyping
- Testing
- Reviews

To facilitate such sessions you must have technical knowledge of the methodology being used, development software tools and systems development terminology. A member of the development staff often serves in this role. To design these sessions, sketch out the steps that need to be taken to produce the session product and then use normal facilitation techniques to derive them.

Following are some lessons learned from our experience in facilitated data modeling.

A Data Modeling Session

Never facilitate a data modeling session without an Electronic Meeting System!

We've facilitated data modeling sessions both manually and in an electronic meeting environment and will turn down any future projects where such a facility isn't available!

To construct a data model, especially at a corporate level, you must pull vast amounts of information from a variety of people in your organization. The information and the interviewees' perspectives range from the highest level visions to the most minute detail. You absolutely must have the power of a electronic meeting facility to collect, organize, filter, edit, and to keep the participant's attention.

For data modeling, we use the following three questions to gather information:

1. Who do you do business with?
2. What information or physical objects pass between each of these people and you?
3. What pieces of information are contained on or about these things that pass between you?

The facilitator works through a few examples with the entire group and then each participant works at their own pace. As they complete various steps, the data modeler gathers their input and edits it. She posts any questions she has and then the facilitator guides the group through a review with the modeler. All of this is accomplished with electronic meeting software. Besides the direct benefits during the session, you are able to load previous work into the tool to start with and to transfer the session products directly into data modeling software afterwards.

We initially tried it with the data modeler facilitating, but found it better to have the roles played by two people because of the amount of concentration each activity requires. The facilitator needs to be familiar with the data modeling process and products, but doesn't need to be a modeler themselves.

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Question Lists

A facilitator seldom can have too many questions. We recommend keeping a variety of question lists to use either with your client or with your group. As you design your session, you may find it advisable to work from these lists, particularly when neither of you has clarity on products or outcomes. You usually find one of your question lists is perfect for use by the group when you're in session. Once you have a variety of lists, it's easy to tailor lists of questions appropriate for your current facilitation.

General Question List

1. What opportunities are possible in our situation?
2. How can we adapt to this change?
3. How can we improve the way we do business?
4. What else can we produce with the skills and resources we already have?
5. How can we make this system, procedure, product, service better?
6. What are some other uses for this?
7. If we do this, what could go wrong?
8. How can we resolve this difficult, complex, or unusual problem?
9. How can we gain support for this initiative?
10. How can we turn this negative situation to our advantage?
11. What impact will this idea, program, or system have on our employees or customers?

Process Improvement Question List

1. Who are our supplies and customers in this process?
2. Which features of our products and/or services are most important to them?
3. What characteristics of our products or services could be improved?
4. What operations have the greatest effect on our products or services?
5. How does performance of our operations need to change?

6. How will it impact our existing systems?
7. Have we gotten any complaints from our customers in the last three months?
8. Has anyone talked to our customers in the last three months about our products or services?
9. What's going wrong that we can fix right now?
10. How much will it cost?

Strategic Planning Question List

1. What do we do best?
2. Who are our customers?
3. Who will our customers be in the future?
4. Will our products or services be the same?
5. Does our organizational culture support the critical areas of our business?
6. Where's our organization headed?
7. Are we controlling our organization's direction? If not, why not? What might we do about it?
8. What are the key factors in our success so far? Are we supporting these factors? If so, how? If not, why not? What, if anything must we change in order to have everyone in the organization focus on them?

Organization Self Analysis Question List

1. Why are we in business?
2. What are our basic products or services?
3. Who are our primary customers of these products or services?
4. What major activities are involved in providing each product or service?
5. Who provides us with information, material, services to help us do our job or provide our products or services?
6. What are the two things they do well? How does that help us do our job?
7. What's one thing we would change if we could? How would the change help us do our job better?
8. What things do we do that aren't directly related to the products or services we're in business to provide? Why do we do them? Should we continue doing them? What do we need to do to stop doing them?
9. How do we evaluate success? Does it compliment or conflict with what our customers want or need? What could we evaluate that might be more meaningful? How can we shift our focus?
10. What changes could we make that would provide higher customer satisfaction? What would *delight* them?
11. What's currently helping us or preventing us from providing the best possible products or services to our customers? How can we reduce or eliminate hinderance and build on the helpers?
12. What's currently helping us become a high performing organization?
13. What's hindering our becoming a high performing organization?
14. How can we reduce or eliminate hinderance and build on the helpers to become a high performing organization?

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Chapter 11: Electronic Meeting Systems

Scented markers were great, the *Wack Pack* added a lot of fun, and Smart Boards made our socks roll up and down, but the most exciting addition to the facilitator's tool kit this century has been the development of Electronic Meeting Systems (EMS). Electronic Meeting Systems are technology-based environments that support group meetings. The *system* may include facilities, hardware, software, video and audio, facilitation, and group work methods.

The good news is that it makes some of the hardest parts of facilitating easy and has completely redefined the opportunities for groups working together.

How does it work?

Electronic Meeting Systems include software that runs on a computer network. Each participant in a session has a workstation through which they communicate. The input of the participants is combined and can be sent to other participants, the facilitator and projection devices.

EMS software contains tools that automate all standard facilitation techniques. Some of the current capabilities are:

- Brainstorming
- Comment on topics
- Organize ideas
- Group writing
- Group Voting
- Check the mood meter
- Upload and download information

Information can be uploaded into the EMS software or you can start from scratch. The *briefcase* stores reference material and pre-session products for easy access during the session. With Windows versions, you can access other software tools, like spreadsheets, calculators and wordprocessors, from within the EMS.

The information gathered in any of the tools can be ported easily into any other tool. For instance, you may produce a list in *brainstormer* and then pull it into the *editor* to clean it up, removing redundancies and clarifying terms. You can then put it into *group vote* for the group to prioritize. A variety of voting methods are pre-programmed and standard statistical summaries are available. You may then move the newly ordered list into *group editor* for work, or, split it up and have people comment on selected items in *topic commentor*.

This ability to transfer information across tools, almost instantly, enables you to lead groups through processes that you may not currently think possible. You and the group no longer need to be victims of information overload!

At the end of the session, you can download or print any of the session products.

Electronic Meeting Systems are most commonly used for same-time/same-place meetings, with all participants in an EMS facility. The meetings are led by a facilitator and the software and session recording is managed by a technographer. Complete knowledge of the tool set is required of both. Special facilitator training, or extensive experience, is necessary for a facilitator to take advantage of Electronic Meeting System capabilities and to manage the group dynamics that appear in that setting.

In addition to same-time/same-place meetings, meetings can be held at distributed locations and can take place over extended periods of time. As an example, a manager might post a number of issues for discussion on EMS software and gather input for days or weeks or even all year! These variations are called same-time/different-place and different-time/different-place meetings.

Changes in Group Dynamics

In our first experience with Electronic Meeting Systems we were shocked to see a radical change in the dynamics and processes of the group. Some dynamics actually *reverse* in the EMS setting.

Probably the most radical change to the group process is caused by the fact that participants contribute anonymously. A manager must be prepared to hear the truth if they chose to have a session with electronic meeting software. This is a wonderful way to get to the real heart of issues, but both the client and the facilitator must be prepared for it.

Remember the introverts? Those people who can have trouble in a group setting because they think *before* they speak? Their day has come with electronic meetings, especially if they learned to type while the extroverts were talking. The introverts now have the time and quiet to think and they don't have to fight for the talking stick. They just think things through and enter them on their workstation.

We noticed extreme extroverts, those who *really need to interact externally to think,* had some trouble getting started and sticking with the task and needed special help from the facilitator.

The speed at which the group can work is another big change in the electronic environment. To be effective, it's more important than ever for the facilitator to know exactly what they're going to do with the output of each step in the process they designed. With Electronic Meeting Systems, a new breed of facilitator has been spawned.

The number of people who can participate, even in highly creative steps, has multiplied. The *Ten to Twelve Rule* flies out the window in facilitated electronic meetings. EMS facilitators report success with forty to fifty participants where the limit used to be a dozen. Again, the facilitator must be adept at knowing what to do with all of that information as it begins flowing.

Participants are more active and prolific. If you're participating in a manually facilitated session with nine other people and the session lasts four hours, the average amount of *air time* you're going to get is eighteen minutes. In an electronic meeting you may get an hour or two.

Those who can't type are at a distinct disadvantage. This may intimidate some of your participants, and it may reverse the power chain in the session, so be prepared!

What's Good About It?

- It speeds things up! Immeasurably.
- It manages one of the hardest things about manual facilitation, that is, trying to organize and refine the information you're gathering without losing the interest of the participants.
- It allows anonymity and the real facts come out.
- It removes the ability of an individual to dominate a session.
- It eliminates group size restrictions.
- It allows introverts time to think.

Why do I need to know about it?

- Because it's the meeting environment of the future.
- Because electronic meetings still require *master* facilitators.
- Because it'll make your job easier.
- Because your customers are going to start demanding it.

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Chapter 12: Enhancing Creativity Through the Environment

> ***The more connections that can be made in the brain, the more integrated the experience is within memory.***

Don Campbell

As you gain experience facilitating, you'll begin to expand your awareness of what's possible working with groups. Your mastery of basic skills will give you the confidence you need to begin trying new things. This chapter is about increasing creativity in the facilitated session by enhancing the environment. It's based on accelerated or enhanced learning principles.

We anticipate your questions so we will use the structured question and answer format to explain these principles to you.

Q: What is accelerated learning?

A: Accelerated or enhanced learning (AL) is a multi-sensory, holistic approach to learning that describes the conditions for learning and the presentation of material. It uses the whole brain approach to learning, that is, AL techniques engage both the left and right brain. AL develops skills and knowledge through the physical, emotional, social and psychological aspects of being. The learner is viewed as an interactive player. Techniques are used to deliberately *stimulate* the senses. Materials are presented in creative ways that are compatible with our senses and engages them.

Q: Why would we want to apply accelerated learning to facilitation?

A: Researchers have found that people work and learn more effectively in a positive, emotionally supportive environment. AL techniques take anxiety and competition out of the environment and replaces them with positive energy, positive speaking and collaboration. Using AL techniques means we manage the conditions that enhance learning and reduce barriers that impede learning.

As the name implies, using these techniques accomplishes the task or learning in a much shorter time than by using conventional methods. Facilitated sessions are very intense for short periods of time (one-half to three days), and often require numerous products. Techniques that can accelerate the group's working together in the easiest way and producing the highest quality products are beneficial to everyone.

Q: How do we apply it?

A: Simple -- you bring the environment with you. Once you get the hang of it, you'll probably need a steamer trunk! Remember, this is a multi-sensory approach, you engage all the senses -- hearing, seeing, touching, tasting and smelling. AL focuses on engagement of the unconscious mind to accelerate and enhance learning. Everything from the room to the materials to your own attitude becomes part of the AL environment.

We suggest you read in detail about AL. There are excellent articles and books available as well as training sessions and conferences.

Specifically, we recommend you discuss your approach with your client so there will be no surprises when you begin your session. Even if the client only agrees to limited AL techniques, your facilitation will be enhanced. Research has demonstrated that people work and learn faster and easier in a relaxed, playful environment. However, not everyone yet understands the enhancement process and its application to the business world. Success breeds success and as you gain expertise, AL can further enhance your service to others.

Here are some of the basic AL concepts with specific *how to's* for facilitating.

Provide a natural, comfortable and colorful setting. Coordinate the various colors you use for your materials so the overall effect is pleasing:

- Secure the most comfortable and attractive facilities available.
- Place plants and flowers around the environment.
- Provide a refreshment table with light snacks such as fruits and cheeses

  and have a variety of beverages available, including water.

- Use colored pens (scented if possible), papers and folders. Buy clear

  crystal plastic cups to hold the colored pens.

- Personally greet participants and learn their names.

Reduce or eliminate fears, anxieties or barriers:

- Do a guided relaxation.
- Use imagery.
- Play background music.
- Project a relaxed, fun, caring attitude.
- Use a simmering pot with a pleasing fragrance such as vanilla or essential oils like orange or geranium.
- Use a simple physical game to energize everyone.

Make what you do fun rather than serious and overbearing:

- Use "props" such as stuffed toys, crazy games, balloons or weird gadgets that can be played with during a break.
- Use poster board instead of flip chart paper. Decorate it.
- Create "doodle mats" for participants to color, using pictures and words from the session theme.

Be positive and accepting:

- Eliminate negative words while you speak. Say *It is easy to* not *This is hard work.* Say *We have an ambitious agenda*, not *We have a lot to do today*, *I hope we can get it all done*.

Exalt rather than criticize participants:

- Bring inexpensive gifts, wrapped in paper decorated with the facilitation theme, and give them out for something special. What's special? Don't worry -- you'll know. Here is an example. For a *Connections* theme, we used metal paper clips strung together and taped one end to the bottom of a small jewelry sized box and the other end to the lid. When the box was opened it produced a fun effect. We purchased plastic multi-colored paper clips and stick pins for gifts. Everybody loved the gifts as a play on the theme *Connections*.
- Keep a bowl of candy and use it at appropriate times. Here is an example. For a *Connections* two day off-site facilitation, participants, after receiving our *Connections* introduction letter, asked our client if they would have to hug each other at the facilitation. When our client told us that, we purchased *Hugs* candy and at appropriate times gave it out. They immediately made the connection of the candy to the theme and had lots of fun, even after the facilitation was over, joking about hugs.

Present material pictorially as well as verbally.

- For a team building session, print out quotes or sayings about teamwork and mount them on colored paper and hang them on the walls or doors.
- Use theme pictures on any view graphs or handouts.
- Use inexpensive posters, plastic mats, colorful calendars, etc. that capture session, products or theme ideas.

Suggested supply and equipment list:

- Transparencies and transparency markers
- Masking tape
- Clear tape
- 3x5 self-sticking notes
- Overhead projector
- TV and VCR
- Plain paper
- Regular ink pens
- Pastel pens and markers, preferably scented
- Big markers for easels, various colors
- Colored file folders

- Colored paper
- Plants
- Flowers
- Simmering pot
- Relaxation tapes
- Tape player
- Sayings mounted on colored 16x20" construction paper
- Clear plastic cups to hold pens
- Place mats with words and pictures designed from agenda items
- Candy
- Crystal ball
- Magic cards (playing cards) made from poster board
- Light bulb visual on poster board for *Brainstorming*
- Visual theme for agenda, wrapping paper, etc
- Gifts that tie into the theme
- Creative Wack Pack and basket to hold them in
- Hats -- great props for participants and you
- Stuffed toys
- Silly, crazy gadgets to play with over breaks
- Camera and film

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Conclusion

We believe

that groups of people working together

create more than individuals working alone.

We empower each other.

Everyone, in their heart,

desires to work in harmony with each other.

We hope our beliefs have come alive for you through this book. Once people start to open to the possibility that groups of people, working together, can accomplish more than they ever dreamed possible, dramatic breakthroughs are made.

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