



Facilitation

To facilitate means to “make easier or help bring about”. The role of a facilitator is to encourage a group to develop and grow by creating opportunities for them to learn from each other through common experiences. Facilitating is *not* the same as presenting, as it is not intended to be a means to simply give information to the group you are working with. The connection between a facilitator and his/her/hir group should be a reciprocal relationship where information, questions, and dialogue are continually shared back and forth. This balance is achieved as the facilitator shapes, guides, and encourages a group in the intended direction. Read on for tips to enhance your facilitation skills and your knowledge of yourself as a facilitator.

My Facilitation Style

Take a few minutes to think about what your responses would be to these statements. As a facilitator, it is crucial to know *how you respond to others, what triggers you, how you prepare, how you evaluate and decompress, how your mood going into a meeting might affect your facilitation, and how you might get yourself and the group out of a sticky situation.* Being prepared will only make you a better and more successful facilitator and will benefit not only you, but the group you are working with.

When starting a group, I usually...

When someone gets upset, I usually...

When someone comes late, I usually...

When someone talks too much, I usually...

When the group is silent I...

At the end of a meeting of this type, I usually...

When there is conflict in the group, I usually...

Questions to Ponder....

Guiding conversation is a very important skill for a facilitator to possess. Open ended questions are a perfect way to initiate, continue, or change the path of any group conversation. The following are some easy examples.

- What is your reaction to that?
- How can this be improved?
- What alternatives do we have?
- What suggestions do you have for...?
- Why do you think this has happened?
- How does this relate to our goal of...?
- What do others in the group think?
- What is another way to look at this situation?
- How else can we summarize what has been said so far?
- How is everyone feeling up to this point?

The basic building block of good communication is the feeling that every human being is unique and of value.

—Secrets of Effective Leadership



Quick Tips

For Successful Facilitation...

- Be alert to signs of confusion (puzzled or frustrated looks, people asking neighbors questions, resistance, etc.)
- Don't do the group's work. Learning is more effective and lasting if the individuals and small groups discover on their own (learning by doing).
- When small group work occurs, circulate without becoming a permanent part of any one group. You may too easily influence the group you become a part of.
- Spend sufficient time with each group during small group work to be certain they have grasped the tasks and concepts supporting it.
- Review portions of the small group tasks which are causing confusion if several individuals or groups are having difficulty.
- Ask frequently if there are questions. Sometimes the training activity specifically suggests asking if there are questions, but you should ask even if the activity does not specify doing so.
- When you DO ask a question, allow group members time to think before answering. Slowly count to 10. This may seem like a long time and silence may feel uncomfortable, but allowing participants time to think is essential if you want thoughtful answers.
- Don't feel that you must be an expert. Remind the group and yourself that you are a facilitator. Remind them (and perhaps yourself) of THEIR expertise and experience. Ask other participants for their ideas on a question. Don't feel you should answer everything -- you shouldn't!
- Be flexible. Keep the times of your sessions and depth and breadth of content somewhat flexible. Changing something doesn't mean you planned poorly, but probably means you are listening, watching, and adjusting your plans to fit the situation.
- Finally, RELAX!

Pieces of Leadership brochures are available on the following topics:

Budgeting
Communication
Conflict Resolution
Creating a New Organization
Delegation
Facilitation
Goal Setting
Group Dynamics
Ice Breakers/Team Builders
Mission Statements
Motivation
Officer Transition
Peer Supervision
Program Planning
Qualities of a Good Leader
Running a Good Meeting
Stress Management
Time Management
Wellness

*The information provided in this brochure
was adapted from:*

1. Merriam- Webster On-Line
2. <http://www.socialimpact.com/TNFacSkl.html>
3. Rees, Fran (ed.), *The Facilitator Excellence Handbook, 2nd Edition.* 2005.

For more information on the topics
listed above or to access the
resources in our
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Tips for the Wesleyan Leader

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*Building your Leadership
one piece at a time...*