

# WELCOME TO FACILITATION SKILLS



## **FACILITATION SKILLS – AN INTRODUCTION**

### **Welcome**

- Workshop logistics
- HSE, toilets, timings, breaks, lunch, mobile phones, workbooks
- Philosophy of this workshop
- Objectives and content

### **Workshop Objectives**

- Feel confident in your role and with the different levels of authority of a facilitator.
- Learn how to prepare for and conduct an effective facilitative session.
- Creatively assist teams to realise new and better ways of achieving outcomes.

### **Workshop Content**

- An introduction to facilitation skills
  - Your role as a facilitator
  - The skills of an effective facilitator
  - Common meeting problems
- Preparation for meetings
  - Issues to consider when preparing for meetings
  - How to start the meeting
  - Rules of engagement; setting ground rules
- Facilitating meetings
  - Coaching and leadership style options
  - Communicating to achieve good outcomes
  - Emotional intelligence
  - Tools for facilitation
    - Go-round
    - Ideas Generation
    - Check in
    - Mind Maps
    - Affinity Grouping
    - Multi-voting
  - Decision making and problem solving
  - Identifying difficult behaviour
  - Dealing with resistance to change, anger and obstructive behaviour
- Evaluation



## **EXERCISE: FACILITATION**

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What does facilitation mean?

What are the key skills of an effective facilitator?

What are common meeting problems?

## **AN INTRODUCTION TO FACILITATION SKILLS**

### **Your role as a facilitator**

A facilitator may be a member of a group with appropriate knowledge and skills to help groups find successful outcomes. If this is the case and the group is the same always, then rotate the team role.

Or they maybe somebody from outside the group, which is especially useful when a difficult decision must be made, or when a conflict lingers on or if the group doesn't have the means to solve it with its own resources.

Facilitating is helping a group of people work well, in defining a common vision, making decisions, and achieving their goals, and in creating a relational climate where trust prevails and communication is fluid, empathic and honest. It is also useful to solve conflicts when they arise.

Many groups tend to focus their energy on reaching their goals too quickly, not paying enough attention to what is going on beneath the surface. Consequently, they often undermine the long-term success of their endeavours. A good facilitator helps solve these difficulties by balancing the focus across three dimensions: Results, Process and Relationship.

### **The key skills of an effective facilitator**

- Observation Skills
- Communication skills
- Leadership skills
- Assertiveness skills
- Decision making & problem solving skills
- Conflict handling skills

### **Common Meeting Problems**

- No clear purpose or objective
- Lack of planning and preparation
- Over ambitious agenda
- Personal problems between attendees
- Timing and timekeeping
- Lack of decision making
- Lack of creative thinking and problem solving
- Lack of good behaviour and discipline
- Alternative (hidden) agenda's
- Lack of effective leadership
- No results or follow up

## **PREPARATION FOR MEETINGS**

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**“Not all meetings are a waste of time. Some of them are cancelled.”**

**Anonymous cynic**

### **Issues to consider before attending the meeting**

- Why do we need the meeting?
- What are the alternatives?
- When is the best time?
- Who needs to attend?
- Agenda items/sequence of events?
- Availability of people, information and facilities
- How will decisions be made?
- Is there potential for conflict and if so, how will this be managed?

### **What are the roles of delegates in the meeting?**

- Facilitator
- Mediator
- Chair
- Relevant attendees
- Time keeper and record keeper

***Q – What is the difference between a Facilitator and a Mediator?***

## **Agenda**

- Encourages everyone to prepare
- Provides structure for the meeting
- Ensures all issues are covered
- Improves time management
- Puts focus on meeting productivity

## **What should be included in an Agenda?**

- Purpose of meeting
- Date, start and end times
- Location
- Participants
- Pre-reading and preparation material
- Other paperwork; minutes of previous meetings, action planning, next meeting

## **EXERCISE: RULES OF ENGAGEMENT**

How should you begin a meeting that you are facilitating?

Please discuss and write down the key points you would need to discuss with the group at the outset of the meeting.

## **EXERCISE: FACILITATING MEETING SITUATIONS**

Working as a group, indicate your choices for each of the following situations. Place a 1 next to the solution you most favour, and a 4 by the one you favour the least.

1. You are due to be facilitating a meeting at 10h00 on Monday morning. You've been very busy and its 09h00 on Monday morning and you haven't done any research or preparation. Attendees will be arriving very soon.
  - a) Postpone the meeting until next Monday
  - b) Develop an agenda for the meeting but keep it short
  - c) Develop an agenda for the meeting and include a discussion of why and when to hold meetings in future
  - d) Hold the meeting and ask the attendees what they want to discuss
  
2. You arrive early and find the meeting room is arranged differently from what you would like although you feel you could just about manage with the present arrangement.
  - a) Phone the people responsible for the room and have it rearranged
  - b) Rearrange the room yourself
  - c) Wait until participants begin to arrive and have someone help to rearrange things
  - d) Leave the room as it is and complain later to the people responsible.
  
3. You expect ten participants at a 09h00 meeting which you are facilitating. It is 09h08 and only seven participants are present. No one advised you of plans to arrive late.
  - a) Begin the meeting with those present
  - b) Phone the three absentees to see if they are coming
  - c) Wait another five minutes and then begin
  - d) Ask those present to vote on whether to begin now or later
  
4. Some participants are not contributing to the meeting although they appear to be attentive.
  - a) Monitor the situation to see if it continues
  - b) Ask a non-contributing participant for an opinion or reaction
  - c) Ask the non-contributing participants why they are not involved
  - d) Do nothing – they'll speak up if they want to
  
5. You want discussion on a topic but no one is talking
  - a) Ask a general question of the group
  - b) Ask a specific question to one individual
  - c) Ask for feedback on why no one is talking
  - d) Adjourn the discussion and move onto the next topic

6. Two people, sitting together, keep whispering to each other. It has been going on for some time and you find it distracting.
  - a) Ask them to share their discussion with the group
  - b) Ask them a content-related question to see if they've been listening
  - c) Stop talking and look at them
  - d) Ignore it and hope they finish soon
  
7. A participant is taking too much time talking about an item that is not on the planned agenda.
  - a) Interrupt and point out the need to get back to the agenda
  - b) Do nothing and hope the meeting makes some progress
  - c) Ask participants if they want to discuss the subject
  - d) Tell the participant the topic will be taken up at the end of the meeting if there is enough time
  
8. The group is getting away from the objectives of the meeting
  - a) Let things go as long as everyone seems interested
  - b) Interrupt and bring the group back to the agenda
  - c) Interrupt and vote on whether or not to continue the discussion in their own time and reconvene when it is over
  - d) Take a break so participants can continue the discussion in their own time and reconvene when it is over
  
9. John works in Engineering and Tom in Finance. They constantly argue about equipment costs. John thinks the company should provide more funding but Tom thinks the engineers should do more with what they have. Today they started a bitter argument about the costs of a new project. How will you handle their argument?
  - a) Tell them to calm down and remind them that they always disagree
  - b) Remind them of the agenda and the objectives of the meeting, and then move on
  - c) Tell them that you think the company should provide more funding
  - d) Suggest that they continue their discussion after the meeting
  
10. Ken and Peter are very upset about the new organisational structure. Ken says that Peter's section consists of incompetents and Peter says that he hasn't heard a good word said about Ken's section. How will you handle this?
  - a) Tell them that personal attacks aren't beneficial to the meeting
  - b) Ask them to sit on opposite sides of the room
  - c) Ask them what the problem is and to explain it further
  - d) Remind them of the purpose of the meeting and the agenda

## **FACILITATING MEETINGS**

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### Facilitating meetings

- Coaching and leadership style options
- Communicating to achieve good outcomes
- Emotional intelligence
- Tools for facilitation
  - Go-round
  - Ideas Generation
  - Check in
  - Mind Maps
  - Affinity Grouping
  - Multi-voting
- Decision making and problem solving
- Identifying challenging behaviour

## **COACHING AND LEADERSHIP STYLES**

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It is important to note that every facilitator has a natural style. This is the style that they unconsciously use if acting normally in most situations. What a facilitator should realise is that they must be able to be fluid with their use of these styles. They should use the appropriate style to suit both the situation and the attendees before, during and after the meeting.

### **The Autocratic Style**

The autocratic style is a very directive style. A facilitator who uses this style promotes the notion that he or she has the authority to make all decisions and does not feel the need to explain the decisions' rationale to team members.

Although this style is extremely unusual it can be used by facilitator's in some extreme circumstances (HSE issues, Legal issues etc.).

### **The Benevolent Autocratic Style**

The benevolent autocratic style is a "parental" style of facilitation: the facilitator acts on the assumption that they know what is best for the team and individuals involved. The degree of direction used in this style is essentially the same as in the autocratic style, but the style is more benign.

Again, this is an unusual style, but can be used in certain instances such as mentioned above.

### **The Consultative Style**

The third style is qualitatively different, at least to some degree, from the first two. A facilitator adopting this style reserves the right to make the final decision but actively seeks the opinions of others concerned first.

This is a more common style used when the facilitator is also the team manager.

*Please bear in mind that even if you are the manager and facilitator, you do not have to use this style as it is less productive than some of the others below.*

### **The Consensus Style**

The consensus style represents another qualitative shift along the continuum of styles. The facilitator's vote is virtually equal to the others. This can be used when the facilitator is part of a team and the role is rotated on a regular basis.

## **The Laissez-Faire Style**

The most non-directive style of facilitation, laissez-faire, places the responsibility or task accomplishment completely upon the team. A facilitator utilising this style essentially is the tool that the team use to help themselves achieve their tasks. This is the most highly recommended and successful style of communication and leadership as a facilitator.





## **COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

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### 1. What is your role in communication as the facilitator of the meeting?

It is your responsibility to ensure that not only are your communication skills excellent, but also that those in the group are communicating effectively with each other.

Remember the way the message is delivered affects the way it is received. The real communication is the message received, not intended. Be friendly and kind.

- Look at clusters of behaviour and timing
- Look for incongruence
- Cultural issues? Make sure you do your homework
- Be logical
- To the point, with sensitivity
- Be visual & colourful when necessary
- Ask questions; how, what, when, what if, why not etc.
- Acknowledge emotions
- Be people orientated
- Summarise regularly & write up information
- Keep you communication friendly, but distant also
- Give time to others to think

### 2. How do we communicate and where lies the impact of our communication?

- Words 7%
- Tone 26%
- Body Language 67%

Develop your observation skills and learn to be extremely self-aware when facilitating meetings.

### 3. What are the key aspects of listening effectively in a meeting?

- Show empathy / understanding / interest
- Maintain eye contact
- Don't interrupt
- Don't form barriers
- Listen for the theme of the message
- Consider what is and isn't being said
- Watch out for diversionary tactics

4. What are the key questioning skills you should develop as a facilitator?
  - Know your questions. Learn to ask a question and allow silence for the group to absorb and consider before answering.
  - Types of questions: Open, Closed, Leading, Hypothetical, Repetitive, Reflective
  
5. What are some of the “no no’s” when communicating in your role as a facilitator?
  - Being too blunt
  - Disorganised
  - Don’t complete other’s sentences
  - Don’t exaggerate
  - No obvious body language except controlled information

## **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

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Emotional Intelligence will help you to motivate the team as you facilitate their meeting.

Emotional Intelligence (EQ) involves not only understanding and managing your own emotions, but also recognising emotions in other people so that you can handle relationships. You need to have empathy with other people and also to be self-aware so that you are able to be sensitive to others.

The four characteristics of EQ are;

- Self-awareness – to assess your abilities and your feelings because they guide your decisions and possible what and how you say things.
- Self-regulation – to make your emotions a spur, not a distraction. Self-regulations will also help you to hold out for better results.
- Motivation – to provide the fuel that drives the team in the pursuit of their goals. To do this, you must have goals and believe that you can achieve them.
- Empathy – to win support from others because you have tried to understand how they feel.

**Please write any thoughts you may have below:**

## **TOOLS FOR FACILITATION**

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### **1. Go-round**

In a go-around everyone gets to speak for a short, equal time, taking turns, often going round a circle of people. In meetings the facilitator can offer topics or headings to guide contributions, such as “What do you think of when I say ‘we may need to change our location?’” and “How do you feel about this thought process?”

### **2. Ideas Generation (IG\*) or Brainstorming**

One of the easiest and most enjoyable ways to quickly generate a lot of ideas is to go through an ideas generation exercise. A successful IG\* helps:

- Encourage creativity
- Involve everyone
- Generate excitement and energy
- Separate people from the ideas they suggest. What becomes important is the idea itself, not the person who suggests it.

Guidelines:

- Start by reviewing the topic; make sure everyone understands the issues.
- Give people a minute or two of silent thinking time.
- When ideas start to flow, let them come. Freewheel or round robin – don’t hold back.
- No discussion of the ideas during the brainstorm. That will come later.
- No criticism of ideas – not even a groan or grimace.
- Hitchhike – build on ideas generated by others in the group.
- Write all ideas on a flipchart so everyone can see them.

*Tip: Always take a flipchart to a meeting that you are facilitating.*

### **3. Check in**

A facilitator will need to know how the participants at a meeting are doing. Is their energy level alright? Do people need a break? Can people keep going for another 10 min so tasks can be finished? Are people warm / cool enough? Is fresh air needed?

*Tip: A skilled facilitator should be able to spot the non-verbal signs of fatigue or discomfort long before they are verbalised by the group. Action must be taken immediately to resolve these issues in order for the session to continue to be productive.*

#### 4. Mind Maps

Mind maps are freehand diagrams that start from a circle in the middle and have 'arms' or 'branches' radiating out at all angles. Mind maps give a visual representation of the whole of a subject and allow the main points to be easily identified. They are a flexible way of presenting information that allows for alteration and making connections between topics much more easily than linear text.

*Tip: The space below is for you to practice creating a mind map.*

## 5. Affinity Grouping

### Step 1

Write a sentence or question describing a situation and post it on a wall or flipchart where everyone can see it.

### Step 2

Brainstorm all the ideas or issues related to the situation or answering the question and write each idea on a sticky note. Depending on the size of the group, this can be done as a full group, in small groups, or silently as individuals. If the topic is sensitive, working individually provides anonymity and allows controversial or emotional issues come to light.

### Step 3

All group participants work simultaneously to sort the idea into (5-10) clusters. The sorting is done without speaking and it is only after it is finished that the logic of the group will emerge. If the group is large, the original sort can be done in small groups and the merged into a large group.

### Step 4

A group consensus is used to create a label to summarise or give a title to each cluster.

## 6. Multivoting

### Step 1

Brainstorm the list of issues, problems, or solutions to be prioritised and write the statements on a flipchart.

### Step 2

As a group, discuss the list to eliminate duplicate ideas and to clarify the meanings of any of the statements.

### Step 3

Rewrite the final list of statements on a flipchart, leaving room for votes. For easy reference, you can label each idea with a number or letter.

### Step 4

As a group, decide what criteria to use in evaluating and rating the ideas.

### Step 5

Voting by one of various methods

- Each person silently ranks the ideas and writes the rankings on the flipchart. The ideas with the highest totals are the ones to consider for implementation.
- Each person ranks only what he/she consider the 4-5 best ideas.
- Use dot labels or stickers for voting. Each person has a certain number of dots (3-5) to “spend” on ranking, and can disperse them on several ideas or use all on one great idea.
- Two colours of dots can be used. Everyone gets 3-5 dots of one colour and one “super dot” of another colour which is worth more points.

### Step 6

Discuss the results as a group.

# FACILITATION TOOLS EXERCISE



## **FACILITATION TOOLS**

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**Name:**

**Facilitator 1 – Go-round**

Please ask the group to consider the impact of showing violence to young children on television before the watershed.

Prepare how you will ask the group and facilitate their answers using the Go-round technique.

You have no more than 10-min to complete this exercise.

**Name:**

**Facilitator 2 – Ideas Generation**

Please ask the group to come up with ideas to improve morale and motivation in Aberdeen City Council

Prepare how you will ask the group and facilitate their answers using the Ideas Generation technique.

You have no more than 10-min to complete this exercise.

**Name:**

**Facilitator 3 – Mind Mapping**

Please ask the group to consider all the issues surrounding the planning of a summer vacation

Prepare how you will ask the group and facilitate their answers using the Mind Mapping technique.

You have no more than 10-min to complete this exercise.

**Name:**

**Facilitator 1 – Affinity Grouping**

Please write down the following statement on a flipchart

“On a Saturday and Sunday morning, Aberdeen City Centre is filthy from the partying the previous night. This is a Council issue.”

Prepare how you will ask the group and facilitate their answers using the Affinity Grouping technique.

You have no more than 20-min to complete this exercise.

**Name:**

**Facilitator 2 – Multi-voting**

Please use the Ideas Generating exercise completed yesterday on Motivation and Morale in ACC and develop this into an action plan using the Multi-voting technique

You have no more than 20-min to complete this exercise.

## **DECISION MAKING**

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### **Decision Making**

Consider who makes decisions and how those decisions are made within the group that you are facilitating:

Considerations:

- Are all decisions equal – in importance, scope etc.?
- Who should decide on what decisions?
- What decision-making methods do we want to use for each type of decision? (vote, consensus etc.)
- When will we need to meet and how long do we want our meetings to be?
- How are we going to ensure a fair and participatory decision-making process?
- How do we handle conflicts arising in the decision-making process?
- How are decisions communicated to the whole group?

*Tip: A successful facilitator will consider these issues both before and at the start of any meeting they are facilitating. As sensitive as these topics may be – they may prove highly valuable at a later stage during the meeting.*

### Different systems to make decisions

Have a look at the table below – consider what are the positive and negatives of using each one of these different styles:

Decision Making System	Positives	Negatives
<b>Autocratic</b> <b>One person decides</b>		
<b>Consultative</b> <b>Autocratic with advice from others</b>		
<b>Minority</b> <b>Experts, or those with vested interest</b>		
<b>Majority</b> <b>Voting</b>		
<b>Consensus</b> <b>Loyal minority agree to support majority</b>		
<b>Unanimity</b> <b>Everyone totally agrees</b>		

## **PROBLEM SOLVING**

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Please solve the following problems

### **Problem 1**

Take a piece of paper and put on it a pattern of nine dots, like this:

Now connect up the dots by four straight consecutive lines (that is, without taking your pen or pencil off the paper). You should be able to complete this task within three minutes.

### **Problem 2**

Place six matchsticks on a flat surface. Now arrange the matchsticks in a pattern of four equilateral (i.e. equal-sided) triangles. You may not break the matchsticks – that is the only rule. Again, you should be able to do it within three minutes. There are at least two solutions, but I want the best one.

### Problem 3

We come now to something a little more demanding. The world record for solving both parts of this problem is 10 minutes. So, I will give you 20 minutes which, I am sure you will agree, is overgenerous of me.

1. There are five houses, each with a front door of a different colour, and inhabited by people of different nationalities, with different pets and drinks. Each person eats a different kind of food.
2. The Australian lives in the house with the red door.
3. The Italian owns the dog.
4. Coffee is drunk in the house with the green door.
5. The Ukrainian drinks tea.
6. The house with the green door is immediately to the right (your right) of the house with the ivory door.
7. The mushroom-eater owns snails.
8. Apples are eaten in the house with the yellow door.
9. Milk is drunk in the middle house.
10. The Norwegian lives in the first house on the left.
11. The person who eats onions lives in the house next to the person with the fox.
12. Apples are eaten in the house next to the house where the horse is kept.
13. The cake-eater drinks orange juice.
14. The Japanese eats bananas.
15. The Norwegian lives next to the house with the blue door.

Now, who drinks water and who owns the zebra?

**Please write down your key points when helping a team to solve their problems?**

## **EXERCISE: DEALING WITH DIFFICULT BEHAVIOUR**

What constitutes difficult behaviour?

## DEALING WITH CONFLICT

*Tip: It is helpful for both the facilitator and the meeting delegates to understand conflict. Read the passage below and consider discussing it with the group if you feel there may be a conflicting situation.*

Conflict is inseparable from life and diversity. Where there is homogeneity, there is no conflict, there is no tension, but there is no movement, and no life either. Our challenge as human beings is to support and appreciate diversity.

The most important lesson is to change our attitude from avoiding conflicts to looking at them with interest and openness. This means stepping out of a “winner-loser” attitude and moving towards a “win-win” perspective. Win-win solutions become possible after all involved parties of a conflict have been heard and understood.

Often, when we regard a situation as “conflictual”, this means that we have lost our sense of connectedness, of belonging, or of being understood. Before agreeing or disagreeing with anyone’s opinions, try to tune in to what the person is feeling and needing. Instead of saying “No”, say what need of yours prevents you from saying “yes”. If you are feeling upset or angry, become aware of the deeper need that is not being met and of what you could do to fulfil it, instead of thinking about what’s wrong with others or yourself.

### Your attitude towards conflict management

The following table shows the most common attitudes toward conflict. A person may show different attitudes depending on the role they play in the conflict.

	Interests are important		
Relationship is not very important	COMPETITION	COLLABORATION	Relationship is very important
	COMPROMISE		
	AVOIDANCE	ACCOMODATION	
	Interests are not very important		

Although we might be inclined to think of the collaborative model as the most desirable, none of them should be idealised. The attitude or strategy we adopt in a conflict will depend on many factors that will likely condition our true response.

### **9 steps to address conflict positively**

1. Create an appropriate atmosphere, based on trust and safety.
2. Clarify perceptions and misunderstandings.
3. Move from positions to interests and needs.
  - a. Positions and interests are negotiable. Needs are not negotiable.
  - b. A difficulty: In some conflicts, you cannot always meet every person's needs.
  - c. A problem: Most people don't know what their needs are.
4. Learn to manage your emotions and the response you give to somebody else's emotions.
5. Promote the connecting elements – the 'we' instead of the 'you against me'. Instil the idea of a 'power towards' where we all participate, instead of a 'power over', that keep out some people.
6. Project to the future, towards what we want to do together, acknowledging and learning from the past at the same time.
7. Encourage people to speak of their responsibility and not of their guilt. Facilitate reconciliation
8. Identify and develop gradually workable solutions.
9. When possible, develop verbal or written agreements that everybody can accept.

## **EVALUATION SKILLS**

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At the end of the meeting please ensure you do the following:

- Finish on time (or re-negotiate with the team)
- Check summary, decisions and action planning against the original agenda
- Clear room of confidential material
- Evaluate how the meeting went

How should we evaluate meetings?

## **PROBLEM SOLVING**

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## **Facilitation Tools Exercise**

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**Time to prepare: 15-min**

**Time to conduct: 15-min**

Gather, Organise & Prioritise (using any tools you wish)

1. The Government is considering removing “The Watershed” from TV completely. Each Council has been asked to internally evaluate: The impact of removing the Watershed from TV on their communities. Please use your focus group to identify a list of priorities to work on when the watershed is removed to ensure communities are not disadvantaged. The list will be handled by the Education, Social Work and HR Departments.
2. The HR Department has asked focus groups to consider “How to improve Morale and Motivation within ACC”. There is little or no funding to do this but a list of priorities needs to be created for the HR Department to implement and start working through as soon as possible. Please use your focus group to create this new set of Priorities.
3. ACC is looking at strategies to deal with the mess in the city after major events take place such as the Santa Parade, or the Christmas Village or simply after a Saturday night. Residents are complaining that the city is very ugly in the mornings and who and how the city needs to be cleaned needs to be re-addressed as current systems aren’t working well enough. Please create a list of priorities through your focus group to hand over to the Waste Department to work through.