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# FACILITATION AND THE FACILITATOR

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## EXERCISE MATERIALS, HANDOUTS AND SLIDES

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# What is a Facilitator? What does a Facilitator do?

## **Content (the task at hand)**

- Organizes the work of a group.
- Provides structure for a group.
- Ensures that goals are met.
- Uses processes, tools and techniques that can get work accomplished quickly and effectively in a group environment.

## **Process (how to keep group focused on the task)**

- Keeps a group on track.
- Brings out the full potential of working groups.
- Elicits participation from everyone.
- Focuses the energy of a group on a common task.
- Helps resolve conflict.
- Suggests alternative methods and procedures.
- Changes the pace when necessary.
- Protects individuals and their ideas from attack.
- Serves as a neutral steward for the group.
- Uses consensus to help the group make decisions which include all viewpoints.
- Creates a positive environment.

## Instructor vs. Facilitator

<b>Instructor</b>	<b>Facilitator</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Acts as the trainer.</li><li>■ Conveys relevant knowledge.</li><li>■ Takes control of the classroom.</li><li>■ Is the subject matter expert.</li><li>■ Helps students acquire new skills and knowledge about the class subject.</li><li>■ Acts as a coach who has the game plan, knows what plays need to be taught and what the players need to do to win.</li><li>■ Facilitates the learning process while teaching the class.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Does not teach any subject.</li><li>■ Moves the group along.</li><li>■ Provides leadership without taking control.</li><li>■ Gets others to assume responsibility and to take the lead.</li><li>■ Acts as a referee – watches the action without participating in it, keeps the players on track, but does not lead the team to victory.</li></ul>

## What are the traits of a successful Facilitator?

Traits	Explanation	Why it is important
<b>Confidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sure of own abilities</li> <li>• Appears purposeful and in control</li> <li>• Knows own strengths and weaknesses</li> <li>• Knows when to be neutral or assertive</li> <li>• Keeps ego at the door</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Others look to the facilitator for direction and counsel</li> <li>• Minimizes group insecurities</li> <li>• Enhances facilitator's credibility</li> </ul>
<b>Communicates effectively</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulates and listens well</li> <li>• Expresses self well</li> <li>• Makes specific and concise points</li> <li>• Asks probing questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeps group on task</li> <li>• Helps the group to understand tasks and requirements</li> <li>• Prevents misinformation</li> <li>• Saves time</li> <li>• Streamlines the process</li> <li>• Enhances own credibility</li> <li>• Helps the group members understand their purpose</li> </ul>
<b>Enthusiastic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows appropriate levels of energy, passion and excitement</li> <li>• Displays a positive attitude</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Believes in the process</li> <li>• Wants to lead the group</li> <li>• Builds excitement and enthusiasm within the group</li> <li>• Helps foster a positive environment</li> </ul>
<b>Sense of humor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brings humor in when climate gets tense</li> <li>• Does not take oneself too seriously</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eases tension within the group</li> <li>• Helps to calm the group</li> <li>• Makes the facilitator more "human" to the group</li> </ul>
<b>Neutrality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoids providing answers for the group</li> <li>• Does not engage in discussions</li> <li>• Remains open minded and impartial</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps the group feel ownership in the process</li> <li>• Makes the group members the center of attention</li> <li>• Fosters a safe environment</li> <li>• Enhances the facilitator's credibility</li> </ul>

<b>Quality</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Why it is important</b>
<b>Empathy</b> <b>Supportive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to see a situation as others see it</li> <li>• Treats everyone’s opinion equally</li> <li>• Has a genuine desire to help people feel good about their contributions and achieve the desired results</li> <li>• Includes everyone in the discussion</li> <li>• Conveys acceptance to others</li> <li>• Champions ideas from the group even though he/she does not personally agree</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes everyone in the discussion</li> <li>• Remains open minded</li> <li>• Helps foster a safe environment for the group</li> </ul>
<b>Integrity</b> <b>Trust</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exhibits character and honesty</li> <li>• Is fair</li> <li>• Follows through with word and deed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sets an example of proper conduct for the group</li> <li>• Prevents partiality</li> <li>• Enhances facilitator’s credibility</li> <li>• Gains respect when group trusts the facilitator’s judgment</li> <li>• Group has faith and confidence in the facilitator</li> </ul>
<b>Flexibility</b> <b>Analytical</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to switch gears at the last moment</li> <li>• Assumes different group roles: leader, supporter, inquisitor, etc.</li> <li>• Thinks quickly and logically; has the ability to analyze comments, understand how they relate to the topic; and develop appropriate responses</li> <li>• Recognizes undertones in the group and uses the positive ones to the group's advantage while diminishing the negative ones</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeps the group on track</li> <li>• Helps the group reach its goal</li> <li>• Permits the group to rely on the facilitator for direction</li> <li>• Knows when to stop discussions, move on, etc.</li> <li>• Enhances the facilitator’s credibility</li> </ul>

# What makes a successful Facilitator?

## Skills of a Successful Facilitator

(adapted from *Facilitating with Ease!* By Ingrid Bens)

Core Practice	Reason for Success
<b>Stay neutral on content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• focuses on the process role</li> <li>• never imposes personal opinions on the group</li> </ul>
<b>Listen actively</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• makes eye contact when others are speaking; allows others to speak; encourages participation</li> <li>• uses attentive body language</li> <li>• paraphrases what others say</li> </ul>
<b>Ask questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• most important tool</li> <li>• tests assumptions, invites participation, gathers information and probes for hidden points</li> <li>• delves past the symptoms to get at root causes</li> </ul>
<b>Paraphrase to clarify</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• repeats what people say to make sure they know they are being heard</li> <li>• lets others hear their points a second time</li> <li>• clarifies key ideas</li> <li>• confirms speakers intention</li> <li>• (i.e., <i>"Are you saying...? Am I understanding you to mean...?"</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Synthesize ideas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understands and reinforces the individual ideas of the participants</li> <li>• gets the group to comment and build on each other's thoughts</li> <li>• ensures that the ideas recorded on the flip chart represent collective thinking</li> <li>• (i.e., <i>"Alice, what would you add to Jeff's comments?"</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Stay on track</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sets time guidelines for each discussion</li> <li>• appoints a time keeper inside the group to use a timer and call out milestones</li> <li>• points out a digression if the discussion has veered off the topic</li> </ul>
<b>Give and receive feedback</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• periodically "holds up a mirror" to help the group "see" itself so it can make corrections</li> <li>• asks for and accepts feedback about the facilitation</li> <li>• (i.e., <i>"Are we making progress? How's the pace? What can I do to be more effective?"</i>)</li> </ul>

<b>Core Practice</b>	<b>Reason for Success</b>
<b>Test assumptions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• brings assumptions people are operating under out into the open and clarifies them</li> <li>• makes sure assumptions are clearly understood by everyone</li> <li>• challenges the group so it can explore new ground</li> <li>• (i.e., <i>"John, on what basis are you making the comment that 'Bob's idea is too narrow in focus'?"</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Collect ideas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• keeps track of emerging ideas and final decisions</li> <li>• makes clear and accurate summaries on a flipchart or electronic board so everyone can see the notes</li> <li>• takes brief and concise notes</li> <li>• records what was actually said</li> </ul>
<b>Summarize clearly</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• listens attentively to everything that is said</li> <li>• offers concise and timely summaries</li> <li>• summarizes to revive a discussion or to end one</li> </ul>
<b>Label sidetracks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lets the group members know when they're off track</li> <li>• lets the group decide whether to pursue current sidetracked discussion or get back to the agenda</li> <li>• (i.e., <i>"We are now discussing something that isn't on our agenda. What does the group want to do?"</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Create a safe environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• encourages group members to share their opinions and feelings</li> <li>• sets the stage for non-attribution</li> </ul>
<b>Apply group problem solving techniques</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• grasps a problem; determines cause of problem; leads group to consider all alternatives; and select other possibilities</li> <li>• lets group implement the solution and evaluate the results</li> </ul>
<b>Resolve conflict</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knows not to suppress conflict within the group</li> <li>• realizes conflict should be expected and dealt with constructively</li> <li>• prevents personal attacks</li> </ul>

## What causes the Facilitator to be unsuccessful? What the Facilitator Should Avoid

What you should <i>NOT</i> do...	Why not?
<p><b>While recording —</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Change the wording of a participant.</li> <li>■ Refuse to record an idea (looks tired, got distracted, too many ideas coming at once).</li> <li>■ Lose track of key ideas.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>While discussing —</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Judge the comments of the group.</li> <li>■ Show preference to some ideas over others.</li> <li>■ Become involved in the content of the group's work.</li> <li>■ Monopolize conversations and become the center of attention.</li> <li>■ Take sides on issues or people.</li> <li>■ Attempt to have all the answers.</li> <li>■ Dismiss any questions.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Not trusting the process —</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Flip flop the agenda and work processes.</li> <li>■ Fix the group (even in the most friendly way).</li> <li>■ Let a few people dominate.</li> <li>■ Make decisions for the group.</li> <li>■ Permit the group to get sidetracked.</li> </ul>	



<b>What you should <i>NOT</i> do...</b>	<b>Why not?</b>
<p><b>Poor group relationships —</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Fix problems for the group.</li> <li>■ Manipulate people or their behavior through their own feedback.</li> <li>■ Become closed to group suggestions concerning the process.</li> <li>■ Become defensive and put down people or their ideas.</li> <li>■ Ignore the group's needs</li> <li>■ Fail to follow up on concerns or even checking with the group for them.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Poor communication skills —</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Not listen to what group wants or needs.</li> <li>■ Not paraphrase to ensure understanding by the group.</li> <li>■ Use a negative or sarcastic tone.</li> </ul>	

# Effective Facilitators Must BE ...

(adapted from *Facilitating with Ease!* By Ingrid Bens, pg. 31)

Facilitators must be...	Why is this important?
<p><b><i>Informed</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Listen to what the group wants or needs.</li> <li>■ Gather extensive data about participants to fully understand their business and personal needs.</li> <li>■ Survey and interview participants when possible.</li> <li>■ Read background reports.</li> <li>■ Use prepared questions to build a complete picture of the group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Permits the group to be pointed in the right direction if it is getting off track.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Permits you to offer some suggestions if group gets stuck.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Knows who knows what.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Positive</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Do not allow disinterest, antagonism, shyness, cynicism or other negative reactions to throw you off.</li> <li>■ Focus on what can be achieved and to draw the best from each participant.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>A positive attitude is contagious.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Believe in everyone equally and allow equal participation by all.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Consensual</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Remember facilitation is fundamentally a consensus-building process.</li> <li>■ Strive to create outcomes that reflect the ideas of all participants equally.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>It is important that everyone can live with the group's decision.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Ownership by all members of the group's decisions.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Flexible</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Always have a process plan for all groups.</li> <li>■ Be prepared to change direction or start over if that's what is needed.</li> <li>■ Bring alternative strategies and possess a good command of the process tools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Things in the group can change frequently.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Appear organized and helpful to the group and prepared to switch gears as needed.</i></li> </ul>

<b>Facilitators must be...</b>	<b>Why is this important?</b>
<p><b><i>Understanding</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Recognize that people are under great pressure at work.</li> <li>■ Understand if members are antagonistic or cynical, it could be the result of high stress levels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Know how to manage the group.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Be sensitive to group members' feelings.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Firm</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Remember facilitation is not a passive activity.</li> <li>■ You may need to be assertive to keep people and activities on track.</li> <li>■ Be ready to step in and direct the process if the situation warrants it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Remind the group of ground rules.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Step in if there is conflict.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Help the group reach a consensus.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Help the group reach an end result.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Alert</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Become an expert people watcher.</li> <li>■ Pay careful attention to group dynamics and notice what is going on at all times.</li> <li>■ Train yourself to be watchful: both of how people interact and how well they are achieving the task.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Keep track of which people are not talking and note those who do all the talking.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Give everyone a fair chance of participating.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Unobtrusive</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Do as little talking as possible.</li> <li>■ Let the participants do all, or most of the talking.</li> <li>■ Say only enough to give instructions, stop arguments, keep things on track or to sum up.</li> <li>■ Do not misuse your position by being the center of attention or making yourself look important.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Let group own the process.</i></li> <li>■ <i>Let group come up with THEIR OWN end result.</i></li> </ul>