

What are the traits of a successful Facilitator?

As you go over this handout with the students, ask the questions in the fourth column to elicit a discussion. You want to make sure that the students understand each quality and how it impacts on the facilitator's success in a group.

Traits	Explanation	Why it is important	Questions to ask
Confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sure of own abilities • Appears purposeful and in control • Knows own strengths and weaknesses • Knows when to be neutral or assertive • Keeps ego at the door 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Others look to the facilitator for direction and counsel • Minimizes group insecurities • Enhances facilitator's credibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What would happen if the facilitator did not appear confident?</i> • <i>What effect does a confident facilitator have on the group process?</i>
Communicates well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulates and listens well • Expresses self well • Makes specific and concise points • Asks probing questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeps group on task • Helps the group to understand tasks and requirements • Prevents misinformation • Saves time • Streamlines the process • Enhances own credibility • Helps the group members understand their purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What are the effects when a task is poorly communicated to a group?</i> • <i>What happens when a facilitator cannot articulate instructions, thoughts, etc.?</i>
Enthusiastic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows appropriate levels of energy, passion and excitement • Displays a positive attitude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believes in the process • Wants to lead the group • Builds excitement and enthusiasm within the group • Helps foster a positive environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Why does having a positive attitude energize the group?</i> • <i>Can the facilitator's level of energy directly affect the group? How?</i> • <i>What effect would a non-enthusiastic facilitator have?</i>

Traits	Explanation	Why it is important	Questions to ask
Sense of humor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings humor in when climate gets tense • Does not take oneself too seriously 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eases tension within the group • Helps to calm the group • Makes the facilitator more “human” to the group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What happens if the facilitator doesn’t take anything seriously?</i> • <i>What if the facilitator takes everything too seriously?</i>
Neutrality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoids providing answers for the group • Does not engage in discussions • Remains open minded and impartial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps the group feel ownership in the process • Makes the group members the center of attention • Fosters a safe environment • Enhances the facilitator’s credibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Why is it important for the group to feel ownership of the group?</i> • <i>What happens when the facilitator gets defensive?</i> • <i>What happens when the facilitator gets into personality battles?</i> • <i>What happens when the facilitator interjects own thoughts/ideas into discussions?</i>
Empathy Supportive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to see a situation as others see it • Treats everyone’s opinion equally • Has a genuine desire to help people feel good about their contributions and achieve the desired results • Includes everyone in the discussion • Conveys acceptance to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes everyone in the discussion • Remains open minded • Helps foster a safe environment for the group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Why should the facilitator treat everyone equally?</i> • <i>What happens when some of the group is ignored?</i>

Traits	Explanation	Why it is important	Questions to ask
Empathy Supportive <i>(cont'd.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champions ideas from the group even though he/she does not personally agree 		
Integrity Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibits character and honesty • Is fair • Follows through with word and deed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets an example of proper conduct for the group • Prevents partiality • Enhances facilitator's credibility • Gains respect when group trusts the facilitator's judgment • Group has faith and confidence in the facilitator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How does the facilitator's honesty enhance the group process?</i> • <i>How does integrity and trust enhance the facilitator's credibility?</i> • What happens to the group process if the facilitator puts down an individual?
Flexibility Analytical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to switch gears at the last moment • Assumes different group roles: leader, supporter, inquisitor, etc. • Thinks quickly and logically; has the ability to analyze comments, understand how they relate to the topic; and develop appropriate responses • Recognizes undertones in the group and uses the positive ones to the group's advantage while diminishing the negative ones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeps the group on track • Helps the group reach its goal • Permits the group to rely on the facilitator for direction • Knows when to stop discussions, move on, etc. • Enhances the facilitator's credibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What happens when the facilitator is oblivious to what the group thinks or needs?</i> • <i>How is the group's progress affected if the facilitator loses track of what is going on in the group or loses track of ideas that have been shared?</i>

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

What you should <i>NOT</i> do...	Why not?
<p>While recording —</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Change the wording of a participant. ■ Refuse to record an idea (looks tired, got distracted, too many ideas coming at once). ■ Loses track of key ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Group could get defensive.</i> ■ <i>Group could shut down and not give any more answers.</i> ■ <i>Group thinks facilitator is not interested in what they think.</i> ■ <i>Group members could get offended.</i>
<p>While discussing —</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Judge the comments of the group. ■ Show preference to some ideas over others. ■ Become involved in the content of the group's work. ■ Monopolize conversations and become the center of attention. ■ Take sides on issues or people. ■ Attempt to have all the answers. ■ Dismiss any questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Group could shut down and cease to participate.</i> ■ <i>Group thinks the facilitator is not interested in what they think.</i> ■ <i>Creates the impression that the facilitator has his/her own agenda.</i>
<p>Not trusting the process —</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Flip flop the agenda and work processes. ■ Fix the group (even in the most friendly way). ■ Let a few people dominate. ■ Make decisions for the group. ■ Permit the group to get sidetracked. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Facilitator seems unorganized.</i> ■ <i>Group could get bored.</i> ■ <i>Group could shut down.</i> ■ <i>Group could get irritated by those members who take over the discussion when the facilitator permits them.</i>

What you should <i>NOT</i> do...	Why not?
<p>Poor group relationships —</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fix problems for the group. ■ Manipulate people or their behavior through their own feedback. ■ Become closed to group suggestions concerning the process. ■ Become defensive and put down people or their ideas. ■ Ignore the group’s needs. ■ Fail to follow up on concerns or even checking with the group for them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Group won’t own the process.</i> ■ <i>Group would not own the end result.</i> ■ <i>Serious group member issues could be present and not be detected by the facilitator.</i> ■ <i>Group will ignore the facilitator.</i>
<p>Poor communication skills —</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Not listen to what group wants or needs. ■ Not paraphrase to ensure understanding by the group. ■ Use a negative or sarcastic tone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Facilitator will miss what the group is trying to say.</i> ■ <i>Clearly not understanding the group’s ideas.</i>