



Facilitation for Trainers

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PARTICIPANTS HAND-OUT

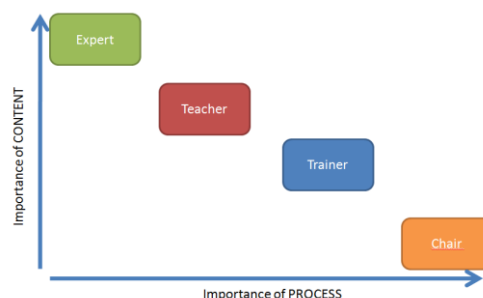
0 Introduction

Facilitation is the condition of **“make something easier”**. But what is ‘Facilitation’, ‘Facilitate’ or ‘Facilitator’? The International Association of Facilitators defines the following:

The facilitative approach is to promote the involvement of all the group members at all the different levels, supporting discussions, collaboration and decision making. This is not only a very important skill for team work and leadership to have; it is also one of the most challenging concepts which need thorough understanding and a lot of practice.

Different facilitator styles can be adopted serving various purposes. Take for instance the Expert, the Teacher, the Trainer and the Chair. All four of them are working in a different environment, but all four of them are facilitating.

- Chair** The chair ‘chairs’ (facilitates) a meeting like a General Assembly or big plenary meeting in organizations or companies.
- Trainer** A trainer is the facilitator during a training program.
- Teacher** The teacher facilitated the classes at primary or secondary school.
- Expert** The expert has a specific knowledge on one topic and has a lot of input.





If these styles would be put in a diagram with on the X-axis the importance of the PROCESS and on the Y-axis the importance of CONTENT you can see the different influence of content and process on the facilitative styles. A teacher will be more focusing on content adding (teaching) and giving input to the children in the classroom and also facilitates the process. While a chair is not involved with the content of a discussion in a meeting but focusing on the process (e.g. speaker list, everyone having a turn to speak, voting procedure etc.). This is of course a simple black/white comparison, but it will give you a clue on the importance of the different styles and influence of content and process.

We do believe that the main job of a trainer being about facilitating learning for a group of participants, this session has been designed with the focus on how to make use of the dynamics within each group of trainees to facilitate everyone’s learning. This session will focus on the Group Dynamics part and also Process and Space facilitation.

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2 Learning objectives

By the end of the session, participants are expected:

- To understand the importance of space and process facilitation;
- To realise how process develops in a training and how to facilitate it;
- To understand a 2 level relationship management in a training program;
- To analyse relationship development in a training program through a group dynamic model;
- To recognize, practice and implement different facilitation tools.

3 Role of a Facilitator

The facilitator has a twofold task: to understand and clarify the unique meaning each member individually construes from the situation and to guide the process of achieving a shared, or socially constructed, understanding.

The facilitator not only encourages cooperative problem solving (Maier, 1967), but also creates a supportive climate that favours open inquiry and the quest for meaning. She would encourage members to express objections and doubts, consider unpopular alternatives, and evaluate each decision with respect to shared objectives. Sibbet (2002) points out that facilitators need to make sense of all the interactions, expectations, emotions, and exchanges of information in order to facilitate the group process. Therefore, they need to manage the complex flow of meanings from individuals and the group, as well as from their own understandings.





3.1 Facilitator Competencies

The International Association of Facilitators (IAF), whose mission is to promote, support, and advance the art and practice of facilitation, has undertaken the task of defining the essential qualities of a professional facilitator to help facilitators perfect their practice, as well as serve prospective clients by clarifying expectations of facilitator's performance. Defining the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable a facilitator to function effectively is essential to anyone who wishes to become a competent facilitator as well as to those seeking the services of one. Within this section we will define the core competencies of a facilitator.

The competency set, involving skills, knowledge and attitudes for a facilitator defined by IAF goes as following:

- A. Create collaborative client relationships.
- B. Plan appropriate group processes.
- C. Create and sustain a participatory environment.
- D. Guide group to appropriate and useful outcomes.
- E. Build and maintain professional knowledge.
- F. Model positive professional attitude.

A. Create Collaborative Client Relationships

1. Develop working partnerships
2. Design and customize applications to meet client needs
3. Manage multi-session events effectively

B. Plan Appropriate Group Processes

1. Select clear methods and processes that foster open participation, engages participants and achieve results
2. Prepare time and space to support group process

C. Create and Sustain a Participatory Environment

1. Demonstrate effective participatory and interpersonal communication skills
2. Honour and recognize diversity, ensuring inclusiveness
3. Manage group conflict
4. Stimulates group creativity

D. Guide Group to Appropriate and Useful Outcomes

1. Guide the group with clear methods and processes
2. Facilitate group self-awareness about its task
3. Guide the group to consensus and desired outcomes

E. Build and Maintain Professional Knowledge

1. Maintain a base of knowledge
2. Know a range of facilitation methods
3. Maintain professional standing

F. Model Positive Professional Attitude



1. Practice self-assessment and self-awareness
2. Act with integrity
3. Trust group potential and model neutrality

3.2 Key steps for Effective Facilitators

Effective facilitators need to attend to the following key steps...

3.2.1 Build Rapport

Introduce yourself and your role as a facilitator. Assure the group of your strict adherence to the cardinal rule of neutrality.

3.2.2 Explain the Facilitation Process

Explain the decision-making process and procedure of finding a solution to make sure that everyone knows exactly how things will be done. This common understanding will ensure that the meeting/training will focus on issues that have been mandated or agreed on and will not allow any party to take over the meeting with its own agenda.

3.2.3 Emphasize That the Process Is Result-Oriented

Explain that to achieve successful outcomes, the process needs to focus on issues and solutions rather than politics or personalities. If the discussion is not regulated and focused, some individuals may wander all over the map, go around in circles, or get bogged down in trivial side issues, and then the process may become unproductive. It may be helpful to focus on one issue at a time, because that allows the facilitator to jot down the various contributions, summarize the best ideas, and reach some consensus before moving to the next issue.

3.2.4 Establish Ground Rules

Keep the meetings on time, and follow the agreed-on agenda and objectives. Emphasize the importance of avoiding accusatory, inflammatory, and injurious statements and the need to express opinions clearly. Ensure that everyone has the right to speak, question, disagree, change one's views, be heard, and treated with respect. No one is allowed to insult others or sabotage the process through nonparticipation or passive aggression.

3.2.5 Clarify the Objectives and Goals

It is important to identify and clarify the objectives and goals of the group. The process cannot move forward unless the parties involved can agree on what they need to accomplish.

3.2.6 Manage Meaning Systems

It is essential that the facilitator, through a variety of skills, such as empathizing, reflecting, and summarizing, help the group create a system of shared meanings by grasping each individual meaning system and their similarities and differences. The rapid exchange of information needs to be synthesized and crystallized to manageable building blocks in order to construct shared meanings.



3.2.7 Manage Group Dynamics

Observe the group dynamics, dominating personalities, and patterns of interactions. Make sense of the emotional undercurrents, and monitor the emotional intensity from moment to moment. The facilitator has the skills to manage potential conflicts and emotional levels to ensure that group dynamics remain positive and constructive.

3.2.8 Teach Some Basic Skills

Depending on the needs of each group, the facilitator may provide instructions on basic skills, such as active and proactive listening, empathy, and dialogue. When the situation involves racial and cultural conflict, it also is helpful to teach some basic cross-cultural counselling skills.

3.2.9 Provide Feedback

After each session, there needs to be some time for feedback and reflection. This exercise serves two important functions: it is a self-corrective process, and it demonstrates a spirit of openness and the desire to improve.

3.2.10 Identify and Celebrate Progress

Identifying and celebrating each small victory along the way helps maintain a positive climate and create the momentum toward success.

3.2.11 Debrief

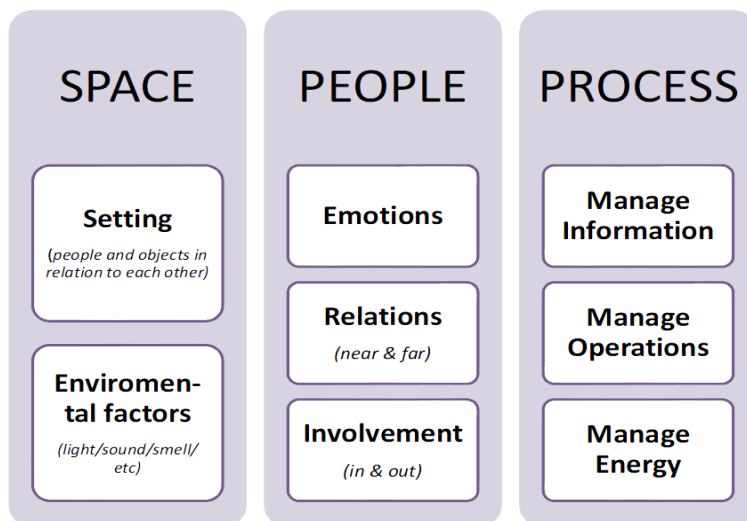
At the conclusion of the process, debriefing will help evaluate what has been accomplished and create a sense of closure. It will also be a time for healing, repairing, and consolidating.





4 Facilitation Anchor Grid

When it comes to facilitation of groups, three different dimensions can be distinguished. Facilitators need not only to take care of the actual process to facilitate, but also space and people facilitation are relevant aspects. These three dimensions together make the Facilitation Anchor Grid.



4.1 Space

The facilitator is responsible for creating the environment that evokes participation. Long before the session begins, decisions about the physical setting, the emotional climate, and purposeful agenda design are made to achieve the targeted outcomes of the meeting. Space arrangements, together with appropriate group processes and facilitator style, can bring a vibrant energy, wholeness, and balance into group deliberations and dialogue by honouring all participants, making it easy for them to hear and see everything, and not letting one position adversely dominate the discussion. The physical setting becomes a comfortable and safe container in which the facilitated discussions, consensus decision making, and win-win solutions occur that engender ownership and commitment and move a group into action. Its importance is such that effective facilitators should always take the time needed to pay detailed attention to it.

Setting: Facilitating the setting means caring about the format, mapping and division of the room or space. Relevant here is the size of the room, the position of the group members towards each other and the facilitator, and the position of tables and visuals.

Environmental Factors: Factors as light, sounds and smell can influence a meeting or training. As facilitator you need to take into account that a noisy area (e.g. loud music, or a building site next to your meeting room) can be disruptive. Facilitators should make sure in advance that there will be no major disturbances and react when facing such during a process – breaks, moving to another setting or changing the setting accordingly are measures here.





Some practical elements:

- **Room:** The room you choose should be fitting to the purpose; make sure that it is big enough (e.g. for work in smaller groups, interactive parts) and that you have all the furniture you need (enough tables, chairs, space at the wall). Important is to have a closed room without any distractions (noise, smell, people walking by).
- **Equipment:** Make sure you have all the equipment at hand you need – this could be flipcharts, beamer, technical devices, internet, markers, post-its. Allow only necessary technical devices for the group.
- **Visuals:** Good visualisation makes it easier for the group to follow the discussion: Take notes on flipcharts, provide a schedule and nametags, visualise the outcomes and put it to the walls.
- **Atmosphere:** The atmosphere is very important; you need to prepare differently if you aim at an informal meeting where people feel very comfortable, or if you aim at a focused work atmosphere. The atmosphere is influenced by light (bright/dimmed), the room itself, the furniture (comfortable armchairs and sofas/working chairs and desks).
- **Illumination:** Daylight and bright illumination is making people more focused and keeps them in a better mood.
- **Acoustics:** Make sure that the acoustics of the room are good, i.e. no distracting noises, everyone can understand everyone, microphone for big groups.
- **Breaks:** Change the environment for the breaks, provide enough snacks and drinks, make some energisers.
- **General:** This is often forgotten, but mind the room temperature and open the windows, fresh air is important to concentrate!
- **Seating patterns:** Next to the room, the seating patterns can have influence on the interaction levels of the participants of a meeting. Let's see some advantages and disadvantages here bellow:



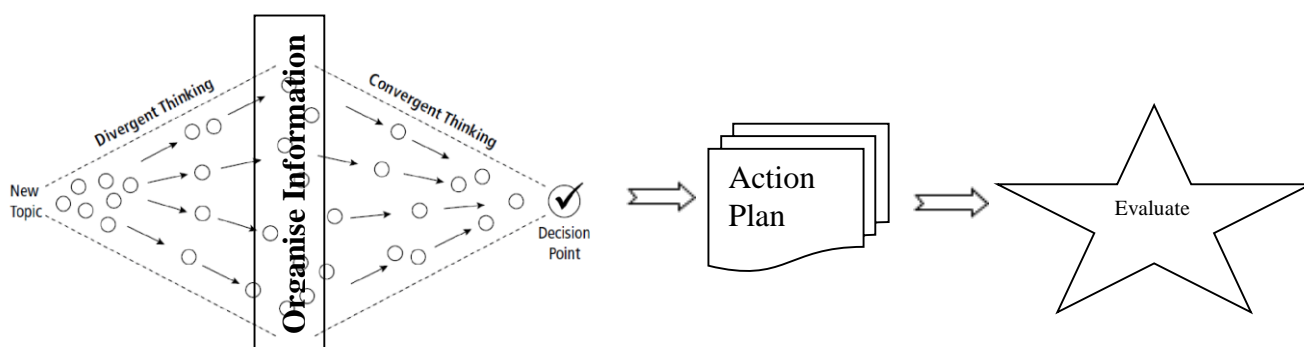
4.2 Process

Information: Managing information and providing the means for people to convert information to real knowledge is another task of facilitators. He/she should pay attention to language, examples and outcomes.

Operations: Managing operations includes the facilitator's decision on logistics to use, activities to undertake and tools to apply in order form the process and produce the results aimed at.

Energy: Managing energy incorporates cognitive as well as affective issues related to group dynamics. Creating safety in a group, attending to pace, managing conflicts, overcoming resistance, encouraging participation and practicing non-attachment are among the principles related to managing energy.

An illustration of a Group Facilitation Process:



4.2.1 Generate ideas

Once the main challenge, topic, is presented, the Facilitator should use techniques which foster divergent thinking. For participants to generate ideas, when possible in free-for-all open discussion(s), gather diverse opinions, and other techniques in order to unpack the logic of a problem.

The main goal is to generate as many ideas and options as possible.

4.2.2 Organise information

The Facilitator should propose techniques which will organise the information, without judging it.

The main goal is to organise the information in a clear way before starting to evaluate their pertinence.

4.2.3 Prioritise and decide

The convergent thinking phase aims at evaluating the alternatives, summarising the key points, sorting ideas into categories, *reaching a conclusion.*

**4.2.4 Plan future action**

A decision has been taken by the group; the Facilitator should ensure that *an action plan is designed* regarding the application of the decision.

4.2.5 Evaluate

Before closing the process, the Facilitator should make sure that the *evaluation of the group outcomes* will take place and that the Facilitation process itself will be evaluated.

4.2.6 Process Facilitation Toolbox

There are many tools a facilitator can use in a training setting to help navigate the discussion and make the experience to go from point A to point B as efficient as possible. Some are verbal; some are non-verbal or para-verbal tools. All of them are useful in the correct setting and when used with moderation – also bear in mind that different people learn best through different styles so a good mix of different tools should be on your back pocket! The following table shows an example of a list of facilitation tools, most used in training setting.

Name	Purpose	Setting to use/example
Asking questions	Gather information from the group	Trainer asks about previous experiences on a topic
Probing	Determine the mood/general opinion of the group towards a certain topic	Thumbs up/down (in agree/disagree)
Paraphrasing	Summarize what's been said	Trainer repeat opinions in order to summarise a point
Verbalizing	Point out the emotion within the message	Trainer clarifies e.g. "When you said you were confused and lost during the exercise, was frustration what you were feeling?"
Develop	Address wishes behind the message	Trainer asks "If you're all tired, should we have a 10 min break?"
Redirect Questions and comments	Facilitator is not in charge of the content	Trainer says "For that question, I see many direct fingers – could you please...?"
Referencing back	Follow the discussion and link ideas	"This is exactly connected with what we were discussing before"



Include quieter members	Ask directly, give the word	"There are some voices I haven't heard yet today – do you want to add your opinion?"
Shifting perspective	Look at the problem from another angle	"Ok, so imagine you have a magic wand that would allow you to..."
Summarizing	Helps to understand where we are now, clarify ideas, etc.	"Up until now we talked about X, Y, Z, and now we stand here"
Bridging	Link different ideas and get to conclusions	Useful to connect points of different parts of the training that seems not to have any bridge.
Voice	Make it clear, use different tones/silence/pace	Useful to highlight some points
Eye contact	Include everyone	Look everyone in the group in the eyes
Attentiveness	Show interest in the discussion – take special attention to comments from quieter members	"That's a very good point, thank you for mentioning it!"
Facial expressions	Use instead of voice (e.g. to shut up, continue, yes, no)	Nod, shake, etc
Silence	Use after asking questions	Remain quiet after asking questions to maximize impact
Position/movement in the room	Seat in a place you can see everyone	"Please seat in a circle so everyone can see each other's eyes"
Distracting habits	Avoid	Scratch your nose, curl your hair, touch your lips



4.2.7 Preparation

Robert Pike offered “six P’s of an effective presentation”: “Proper Preparation and Practice Prevent Poor Performance”. Based on that Jeff Bracken developed his 8Ps for effective facilitation planning and preparation.

Facilitators work is rather challenging, and encounters emergencies, last-minute changes, unpredictable shifts in group dynamics, and other surprises, and to these situations he/she is expected to react in a fluid, flexible way. A systematic approach to facilitation planning and preparation can help facilitator to deal with these realities, continuously improve performance, and increase the value provided to clients.

The Eight Ps and the dozens of practical tips and techniques that they include will help make the task of facilitation planning and preparation easier and increase personal effectiveness as a facilitator.

Following is an overview of the approach:

- **Perspective**—developing an understanding of the client’s organization and operating situation to provide a context for your facilitation project
- **Purpose**—clarifying the needs and expectations of the client and their stakeholders
- **People**—considering stakeholder demographics and dynamics
- **Product**—defining the specific work product, content, and format to meet client requirements
- **Place**—anticipating and managing the details and logistics of the physical meeting space
- **Process**—customizing the facilitation process design, materials, and evaluation to the client’s perspective, purpose, people, product, and place
- **Practice**—reviewing process documentation and materials and rehearsing your delivery
- **Personal preparation**—being mentally, emotionally, and physically ready to perform and paying attention to your long-term personal and professional development



4.3 People

Emotions: A facilitator needs to have a sense of emotions of the people to facilitate. To understand and consider the emotions of the individuals and the group can help the facilitator to facilitate the meeting as best as possible. Anticipation and intervention is especially required when an individual or the group endangers the meeting effectiveness.

Relations: The relations (professional and private ones) between the different people in the meeting – but also the relation towards the topic – influence the facilitated process. If possible, those relations should be assessed before the meeting to ensure a good flow and to avoid complications during the process.

Involvement: The facilitator needs to pay attention to the involvement of all group members. The level of activity depends on the energy level, personality and the relevance of the topic for individuals.



5 Further readings

If you want to develop your knowledge from this document, here are some references that were used when designing this training session:

5.1 Books

- Facilitation Toolbox, **Angela Scaueru & Herve Tunga**
- Basic Facilitation skills, **The American Society for Quality**
- The IAF Handbook of Group Facilitation, **Sandy Schuman**
- Facilitation Basics, **Donald V. McCain & Deborah D. Tobey**
- The Facilitator's Pocketbook, **John Townsend & Paul Donovan**
- The Trainer's Pocketbook, **John Townsend**