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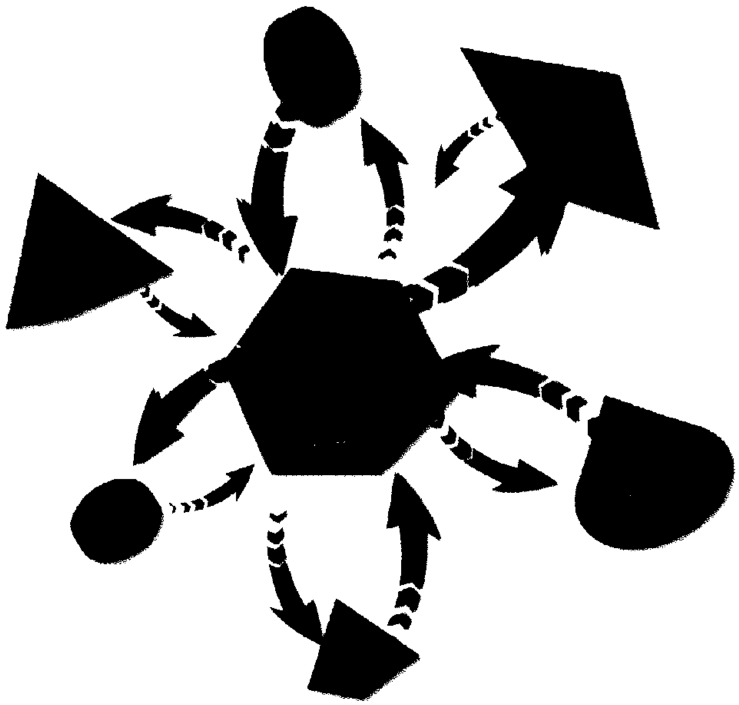
FACILITATION

Handbook for Practitioners



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U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

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Contents

Introduction

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Basic and Advanced Facilitation Courses and this accompanying *Facilitation Handbook* are not intended as tools for modifying behavior. While many individuals may be able to benefit from the principles covered in the course and handbook, the material presented is targeted primarily at practitioners—either those who are called upon to facilitate meetings or those who believe that they would like to be a practicing facilitator. Facilitators should find this handbook a useful tool to which they will add other best practices as they find them.

This handbook attempts to be comprehensive but is by no means exhaustive. It provides some "best practices" that have proved helpful to facilitators in the past. Some of the material is original; most of it is borrowed from other practitioners, who are given attribution.

Unfortunately, while a lot is written about the need for facilitation, there is very little guidance on how to do it. This handbook attempts to fill that void for practitioners within FHWA. The handbook is set out in chapters that more or less follow the sequence of the courses rather than following the steps a facilitator takes in preparing for and conducting a facilitated meeting.

Chapters 1, *Facilitation, An Overview,* and 2, *Teams and Groups,* cover background material you will need to put facilitation in a proper context and to be a successful facilitator. Chapter 2 uses terminology for the stages of team and group activity that ought to be very familiar. Experience has shown that they are, in fact, the stages most groups and teams go through, so that retaining these conventional terms seemed best.

Chapter 3, *Getting Started,* deals with the "softer" issues. It recognizes that positive team dynamics start with the individuals in the team or group, recommends understanding the differing belief systems of each member, and stresses that communication styles and conflict management are important considerations for people working together.

Chapter 4, *What Do I Do? My Team Is Storming!* covers team and group guidelines. In order for a facilitator to intervene effectively, he/she must know the agreed-upon guidelines for appropriate group behavior. In addition, the chapter provides guidance on what to look for to gauge individual and collective behavior and on how to test inferences.

Chapter 5, *Facilitation Skills,* looks at the four primary "soft" skills you will need to be a successful facilitator: attending, observing, listening, questioning.

Chapter 6, *Problem-Solving Techniques,* presents some of the basic problem-solving tools all facilitators must master.

Chapter 7, *Meeting Matters (Agendas and Others),* includes the housekeeping chores that every facilitator is expected to perform, including flipchart techniques and building a meeting agenda.

Chapter 8, *Writing The Report,* provides a methodology for assisting the team or group in writing a report of its activities, recommendations, and/or decisions.

As with any skill, proficiency comes with use. You won't get better as a facilitator unless you practice. Getting up in front of a group of people or a team can be a daunting experience for some. What you should know is that all facilitators are nervous, and there will never be a meeting that you could not facilitate better the second time. The chapters in this handbook will be of some help to practitioners, but they will not substitute for actual experience. A visitor to New York once asked a cab driver how to get to Carnegie Hall. The answer was "practice, practice, practice!" We hope that this training course and handbook will give you the confidence to be a practicing facilitator, and that as you practice you will become more competent.

Finally, Jerry Greenfield of Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream has said: "If it's not fun, why do it?" You can have fun as a facilitator—AND provide an invaluable service to the organization.

CHAPTER 1

Facilitation, An Overview

What Is Facilitation?

Facilitation is an art. Until the middle of the 1980s, however, the art of facilitation was not mentioned often. Sure, facilitators led training sessions and sometimes helped at meetings, and everyone was expected to facilitate something at one time or another. Facilitation was a little like quality: people had a hard time defining it, but they sure knew it when they saw it. Sometime in that decade, our traditional view of managing organizations began to change. Faced with a number of external challenges, the business of America suddenly became survival. Survival meant finding new ways to do business, to tap the practically limitless potential of the greatest resource of the organization: its people. We began to see teams rather than branches and divisions; empowerment was at the lowest level rather than top-down direction; meetings became more democratic; and much time was wasted while groups of people (whether formally designated a team or not) floundered about trying to make sense of this brave new world.

About this time someone noticed that the verb "to facilitate" means "to make easy." That was just the ticket: someone to make this whole thing easier—a facilitator. Sad to say, in the early days, facilitators were much misused, mostly from a misunderstanding about how one goes about making things easier for groups and/or teams to operate. Organizations were in trouble, trouble meant that the organization had problems, and problems needed to be solved. Therefore, facilitators ought to make it easier for employees collectively to solve problems. Fortunately, facilitators had a tool kit for problem-solving techniques that had evolved from sciences such as industrial engineering, statistical control, and behavioral studies. With the successful use of these problem-solving techniques, facilitators began to show their true worth to organizations.

As with any new solution, when teams and groups of employees were formed and asked to do the work formerly done by management, new problems arose. Working collectively for the good of the business may be all well and good in theory, but it requires a new way of working—of looking at work, performing the work, and especially thinking about the work. Many employees accept change reluctantly, and, more important, every individual is a composite of the distinctive experiences that he/she has had since birth. Every person is unique; every person's view of reality is their own and valid for them, whether or not it meets some other's definition of what they ought to believe. This diversity of individual belief, knowledge, skill, and ability is strength. It can be, however, a cause for considerable tension and conflict as individuals are called upon to work in a collegial fashion. Suddenly an individual's behavior that could and would be tolerated in the old paradigm of command and control became a detriment to successful group behavior—and this was true whether the individual'ts behavior was viewed as positive or negative. We all know that the overachiever can be just as troublesome as the underachiever, and that quiet, introspective people have difficulty working with loud, domineering people. As these diverse individuals worked together in teams, facilitators were asked to take on the additional and more demanding role of enabler of successful group behavior. This role has not proved to be easy. Intervening appropriately to promote positive group behavior, to make it easier for individuals to be a team, is a demanding art—one that has few governing principles and no magical techniques.

What Are the Kinds of Facilitation?

For many people that question might seem a little silly. A team or group either has a facilitator or not, and that facilitator may be either good or bad, or you may have something in between. I am indebted to Roger M. Schwarz and his book *The Skilled Facilitator* for revealing the possibilities for at least two kinds of facilitation. This chapter relies on insights from that book.

Schwarz hypothesizes that there are at least two kinds of facilitation. (There may, in fact, be several more kinds. For example, at times teaching and facilitation are as similar as are the roles of team leader and facilitator. However, within the parameters of the definition I am using, to make the operation of teams and groups easier, I will confine our exploration to two types). The first kind, and the one with which most people are familiar, is called *Basic Facilitation,* which occurs when the facilitator helps the team or group to temporarily improve its processes and practices in order to solve a substantive problem.

Several things need to be emphasized about this type of facilitation. When we talk about processes and practices, we are referring to group process, and specifically to how the group works together in a way that is positive, constructive, creative, and resourceful; we are also referring to problem-solving techniques or practices that help the group organize its collective thoughts, prioritize, analyze, and synthesize. The definition states that the objective is to solve a substantive problem. "Sometimes a problem has been clearly identified prior to the team's or group's attempting to solve it, and sometimes it is necessary to define the problem clearly before the team or group can solve it. In either case, we clearly recognize that solving a substantive problem is a process requiring data collection, analysis, and synthesis of diverse information and/or other processes. While the definition of Basic Facilitation concentrates on problems, business opportunities should not be overlooked. I have highlighted problems because that is the area in which teams, groups, and facilitators are called upon most frequently to provide solutions. Substantive problems are those on which the team or group has been chartered to work. Normally, they concern business processes of particular concern to the organization. Finally, note that Basic Facilitation is only temporary. Certainly one would hope that adult learning is going on as the team or group does its work, and that as a result future opportunities for the group or team to work together will benefit from the experience. Future benefit is, frankly, only an incidental goal of Basic Facilitation. What is primary is to solve the problem.

The second kind of facilitation is called *Developmental Facilitation.* This type occurs when the facilitator helps the team or group to permanently improve its processes and practices while solving a substantive problem. Facilitators will use the same knowledge, skills, and techniques in both the Basic and Developmental types; however, with the latter the primary concern is to help improve the way the team (or group) works permanently. Developmental Facilitation is a process that occurs over an extended period of time and through a significant number of team (or group) meetings. Here the facilitator may resort to many more team-building and creative thinking exercises in order to help the team (or group) learn or modify new or more beneficial group behaviors and practices. The primary goal of Developmental Facilitation is to help employees learn how to accomplish their goal in a team (or group) environment.

A third kind of facilitation has evolved in Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Based on experiences at the Xerox Corporation as documented by Thomas Kayser in his book *Mining Group Gold*, FHWA developed a concept called *Informal Facilitation*. A course was developed and deployed with the apt subtitle *911 for Meetings*. The concept is fairly simple. It begins with the premise that we do a lot of our work in meetings. Yet we constantly complain that we have too many bad meetings that frustrate us. The conclusion we drew was that what we all need to do is make meetings more productive. All of us need to facilitate to make it easy for the group or team meeting to be better and more fulfilling. So Informal Facilitation incorporates the idea that even if the meeting has no formal facilitator, everyone at the meeting has the responsibility to intervene where appropriate to make the meeting more effective.

Criteria for Facilitation

Both Basic Facilitation and Developmental Facilitation are based on three criteria or values:

- Valid information
- Free and informed choice
- Internal commitment to the choice

Valid information means that everyone shares all relevant information. The data are related specifically to the substantive question or issue that the team or group is considering. No one on the team knowingly withholds any of what the team believes is relevant information. The facilitator must constantly test to insure that the group or team is considering all of the data it needs in order to solve the problem. To do that the facilitator always asks members to use specific examples and/or numbers when sharing data, and makes sure that everyone understands the information being shared. Finally, all members can determine independently whether the information is true and/or valid. This determination is tricky. As I have stated, every individual's belief system is different, and therefore every individual defines his/her own reality. The truth of some data is universal: gravity, the world is round, your birthday (usually!), and so forth. But other data are open to interpretation as to their veracity and relevance. The challenge for facilitators is to resolve the differences so that everyone has valid information in order to make a free and informed choice.

People on teams or groups are free to define their own outputs, working guidelines (more about guidelines in chapter 4), and outcomes. Certainly team sponsors (more about their role in chapter 2) will provide some guidance concerning the goals and objectives of the team or group, and it is the facilitator's responsibility to see that the group does not neglect those defined goals. In addition, the team or group can define methods for achieving the goals and objectives. Most experts agree that this is one of the primary strengths of teams: the ability to define, devise, and/or create the methodology for producing the desired outputs and outcomes. And because people with free and informed choice tend to feel personally responsible, there is an internal commitment by each individual to the decisions they make.

Rules for the Facilitator

The list of possible behaviors for successful facilitators is quite long. Schwarz has essentially encapsulated this lengthy list into three rules for the facilitator:

1. The facilitator must be **accepted** by the team or group.
2. The facilitator must remain substantively **neutral**.
3. The facilitator has **no decision-making authority** within the team or group.

What does it mean to be accepted by the team or group? To begin with, the facilitator must remain positive—even as the environment turns negative, the facilitator must demonstrate a self-awareness that includes behaving confidently and honestly. The facilitator openly admits mistakes, shows enthusiasm and personal spirit, and keeps his/her personal ego out of the way of the group. In addition, in order to be accepted the facilitator demonstrates some or all of the following behaviors:

- Actively builds support and relationships by encouraging participation by everyone—is sensitive to emotions, watches and responds to nonverbal signals, stays in tune with the group by using the group's own words and symbols, and protects ideas and individuals.

- Educates the members on how they could work better together by openly sharing observations of them.

- Keeps the team or group focused on the outcome/task. Many facilitators lose their acceptance by the group or team when the members realize that they are drifting from the desired outcome and that the facilitator is doing nothing to bring them back to the task at hand.

- Manages conflict and negative emotions constructively by providing techniques and guidance to help the team or group deal with conflict and gain agreement while venting negative emotions constructively.

Part of keeping the acceptance by the group or team involves remaining substantively neutral. Neutrality is such an important element in successful facilitation that we make it a rule unto itself. Why? The facilitator is there to make things easier for the team or group. The members at some point in time usually bring their emotions to the table concerning the substantive issue at hand. The role of the facilitator is to help the members handle these emotions, an impossible job if the facilitator has an interest in the substantive issue. Some facilitation courses suggest that it is possible to put the facilitator's role aside in order to give input when he or she has valuable ideas or opinions that are essential to what is being discussed. I do not believe that putting the role aside is possible. If facilitators properly prepare to facilitate the team or group, they will know what the substantive subject matter to be discussed is, should be self-aware enough to know it will not be possible to remain neutral, and therefore should disqualify themselves. Other guidelines to help the facilitator remain neutral include the following:

- Do not evaluate ideas; listen to, clarify, and integrate all information.

- Develop and ask the right question—a skilled facilitator considers how to word and propose the questions that encourage thought and participation. The difficult thing about asking the right question is that the facilitator must do this on the fly (more about questioning skills in chapter 5).

- Help the team or group take responsibility for and ownership of meeting outcomes and results, primarily by not doing their work for them.

- Give clear and explicit instruction, provide written information as appropriate, and make sure that important information is visible to the group or team.

Finally, at some point, the team or group will probably want the facilitator to make a decision for the group. Sometimes the decision will involve a substantive issue, sometimes it has to do with how the outcomes will be presented, sometimes it is about the meeting agenda—the list of possible things the team or group will defer to the facilitator is endless. What is important for the facilitator to remember is that he/she should not accept this responsibility when the pass is attempted. The facilitator does make some kinds of decisions for and with the group, such as the following:

- The facilitator suggests methods for problem solving and helps the team or group select the appropriate tool. Frequently the facilitator is the only one who can match the tool to the task and outcome desired.

- The facilitator demonstrates flexibility by adapting the agenda or meeting activities on the spot as needed. The facilitator must be willing to do something different from what was originally planned.

- The facilitator plans the meeting ahead of time with the team or group leader and includes other meeting participants in the planning.

- The facilitator directs and manages the meeting by using tools and processes to effectively manage the group or team—to make it easier for them to achieve their goal.

CHAPTER 2

Teams and Groups

Definitions of Teams and Groups

Throughout chapter 1, I used the words *team* and *group* together. Using them that way implies, on the one hand, that there is a distinction between the two terms and, on the other hand, that the two are synonymous. I believe that there is a distinction between teams and groups and that these differences have implications for the facilitator.

Groups

The dictionary is a good place to start in order to understand the differences between the two terms. The *Random House College Dictionary* provides the following guidance on the word *group*:

> A number of individuals bound together by a community of interest, purpose, or function; a social unit comprising individuals in continuous contact through intercommunication and shared participation in activities toward some commonly accepted end; a relatively small number of persons associated formally or informally for a common end or drawn together through an affinity of views or interests.

With this definition as background, we can say that for our purposes groups share the following common characteristics:

- Groups are comprised of individual persons located in close proximity.
- Groups are simple social units or communities that are recognizable.
- Groups are comprised of no set number of individuals, but the number is relatively small.
- Groups have a common interest, purpose, function, end, or view.

- Group members continually communicate.
- Groups require shared participation by members in activities of the group.
- Groups may be established formally or may come about informally.

Groups are made up of people who are brought together, or who come together, because there is commonality of interest leading to an end that is beneficial to the whole. A group is usually a relatively small number of people when compared to the total number that could be included. For example, a million-man march is a large number yet relatively small when compared to all men in the population. A meeting of 50 stakeholders of a highway construction project may be a large group for meeting purposes but is a relatively small group when compared to the constituents of all of the stakeholders. Individuals may come together in groups because they have been chosen formally as representatives of the larger unit, or they may come together informally out of the individual members' concerns or interests. Members of a group talk to one another and usually participate with everyone in the group's activities. Finally, the duration of the group's existence may be very short (for example, one meeting) or quite long (for example, a homeowner's association that exists as long as the community exists).

Groups sometimes are described unflatteringly as herds—indefinite numbers of individuals, milling about because of simple interests, frequently communicating all at once, generally wild and undisciplined except when driven to a common purpose. Unfortunately, this picture is sometimes all too true, especially for the facilitator.

Teams

Many believe that groups are the precursors of teams. It is fair to say that most teams at some time in their existence exhibit all of the characteristics of a group. In addition, some of these characteristics carry on into the team's life, such as commonality of purpose, social unit, high level of communication. The characteristics of a team include the following:

- Teams have an agreed-upon goal, mission, vision, or purpose.

- Team members work together to achieve this goal.
- Teams have some structure that defines roles, responsibilities, procedures, and guidelines for group behavior.
- Teams usually have a leader formally designated either by the team or by the team sponsor.
- Team members learn how to solve problems, achieve goals, and work together in a cooperative manner.
- Team members develop close interpersonal relations in which, when a high level of communication exists, "we" and "ours" replace "me" and "mine," resulting in a high level of trust.
- Teams are complex social units or communities that are recognizable.

Team Dynamics

Sometimes, individuals identify synergy as a characteristic of teams. Synergy means combined actions. In *The 7 Traits of Highly Successful People,* Stephen Covey defines the term as "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts." He takes the idea a step further by linking synergy with creativity: "the creation of something . . . through two respectful minds communicating, producing solutions." While this concept of synergy certainly may be a characteristic of teams, I view it as a part of a wider concept involving team dynamics.

Team dynamics are the motivating or driving forces that affect the motion and the equilibrium of the team. Groups also have dynamics. It is the dynamics of teams and groups that are of most concern and interest to facilitators. To the extent that the identifying characteristics distinguish the forces that affect the motion and equilibrium of the team or group, they become essential for facilitators to understand and appreciate.

The remaining sections of this chapter deal with some of the dynamics and characteristics of teams. Where a correlation exists between teams and groups, it is made in the text.

Team Stages

All of the research and literature suggests that teams evolve through four stages: *Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing*. Some argue that these stages should be called "phases" because teams may cycle through them several times. Others argue that they are stages that groups must successfully deal with on the way to becoming a fully performing team. Sometimes a fifth stage is added, that of *Closure*, or *Termination*.

It has been my experience that at some points in time most groups and teams experience one or more of these stages. Sometimes groups cycle through the stages, but mature teams, those who are learning about group behavior and dynamics, rarely cycle back through Forming and Storming stages. Sometimes, performing teams may clarify terms, meanings, and so forth, in order to arrive at valid information to reach a free choice; this clarification could be construed as Norming. On the whole, I am comfortable with the idea that these are stages that teams, as well as groups, at some time experience.

Facilitators need to understand what is happening at each stage and what to look for in terms of the feelings and behaviors of members. What follows is taken from *The Team Handbook* by Peter R. Scholtes et al., one of the best sources for how to build teams:

Forming

> *What happens?* Forming is the stage in which individuals transition to teammates. There may be testing of the team leader both formally and informally. Since there is so much going on to distract the members' attention, the team accomplishes little during this stage that concerns its project goals. This lack of accomplishment is perfectly normal.
>
> *Feelings:* Members may feel excitement, anticipation, and optimism, pride in being chosen, initial tentative attachment to the team, and suspicion, fear, and anxiety about the job ahead.
>
> *Behaviors:* Members may attempt to define the task and decide how it will be accomplished; attempt to determine acceptable group

behavior; decide on what information needs to be gathered; engage in lofty, abstract discussions of concepts and issues. Or, for some members, there may be impatience with these discussions; discussions of symptoms or problems not relevant to the task or difficulty in identifying relevant problems; and complaints about the organization and barriers to the task.

Storming

What happens? Storming is the most difficult stage for the team. They begin to realize that the task is different and more difficult than they imagined; they may become testy, blameful, or overzealous. Members try to rely solely on their personal and professional experience, resisting any need for collaborating with teammates.

Feelings: Members may develop a resistance to the task; display sharp fluctuations in attitudes toward teammates; not want to be on the team but were assigned to it anyway; resent the time spent on team meetings away from their real work.

Behaviors: Members may argue among themselves; become defensive and competitive; develop factions and start choosing sides; question the wisdom of those who selected the project and the team members; establish unrealistic goals; express concern about excessive work; develop a perceived pecking order; and display disunity, increased tension, and jealousy.

Norming

What happens? During the Norming stage, members reconcile competing loyalties and responsibilities. They accept the team, team guidelines (or norms), their roles on the team, and the individuality of teammates. Emotional conflict is reduced as previously competitive relationships become more cooperative. Members start helping each other.

Feelings: Members develop an ability to express criticism constructively, an acceptance of membership on the team, and relief that it seems to be working out.

Behaviors: Members attempt to achieve harmony by handling conflict constructively, becoming more friendly, confiding in each other, and sharing personal problems. They discuss team dynamics; express a sense of team cohesion, common spirit, and goals; and establish and maintain team guidelines (or norms).

Performing

What happens? The team has settled its relationships and expectations, and begins to diagnose and solve problems, as well as to choose and implement changes. The members have discovered and accepted each other's strengths and weaknesses, and learned what their roles are.

Feelings: Members have insights into personal and group process, and better understanding of each other's strengths and weaknesses. They have satisfaction at the team's progress.

Behaviors: Members display constructive self-change, the ability to prevent or work through group problems, and a close attachment to the team.

Roles People Play on Teams

During our lives, whether we are aware of it or not, we play many roles. The parts we play are varied: wife, mother, husband, father, supervisor, leader, and professional (for example, an engineer, doctor, lawyer, clergy). Some roles are mundane, like cutting the grass, paying the bills, and cleaning the house. Others are fun, like coaching little league, playing golf or tennis, or reading. We all have roles that we like to play and roles we do not like to play. And in our hearts there are some roles we truly aspire to, like being a good mother or father. On every sports team there are role players, and our teams in business are no exception. Descriptions of some of these roles follow.

Team Sponsor

The team sponsor is the individual who forms the team. The team sponsor:

- Chooses a team leader.
- Helps the team leader choose a facilitator.
- Helps the team leader choose team members.
- Clearly defines the problem, issue, or opportunity for the team.
- Meets, as needed, with the team leader to discuss progress and problems of the team.
- Provides timely and accurate guidance to the team and team leader concerning the definition of the problem, issue, or opportunity.
- Ensures that the team is rewarded and recognized.
- Serves as team enabler, removing barriers that keep the team from succeeding.

Team Leader

The team leader is typically someone who works directly for the team sponsor. The leader should have good communication and leadership skills. The team leader:

- Chooses a team facilitator.
- Chooses team members.
- Plans and finalizes all pre- and post-meeting agendas with the facilitator.
- Participates as an active voting member of the team.
- Works with the team to establish ground rules.
- Sets an example by following those rules; models appropriate behavior.
- Keeps the team focused on tasks.

Facilitator

The facilitator may or may not work for the team sponsor. The facilitator should have had training as a facilitator and should be proficient in handling group dynamics, conflict resolution, and various problem-solving techniques.

The facilitator must have excellent communication skills. The facilitator:

- Ensures that all team members share all relevant information.
- Ensures that decisions made by the team are based on free and informed choice.
- Helps team members to make an internal commitment to the choice.
- Helps establish a climate of trust, openness, and cooperation.
- Uses the ground rules to monitor group behavior.
- Identifies problematic behaviors and intervenes appropriately.
- Encourages all team members to participate in team activities.
- Focuses the team on the common task.
- Helps the team identify and solve problems.
- Instructs the members in team dynamics and problem-solving techniques.
- Works with the team leader to develop the pre- and post-meeting agendas.
- Helps the team evaluate itself; conducts team critiques.
- Provides feedback to the team and team leader to enable team growth.
- Is not a team member; does not vote or perform team activities.

Team Members

Typically, team members are chosen or volunteer for membership on the team. Team members bring four important attributes or attitudes to team activities: *commitment, cooperation, communication,* and *contribution.* Team members:

- Are **committed** to the team mission and goals; they show their commitment through full participation in team activities.

- Are **cooperative**; they share a sense of purpose and performance.

- Are willing to **communicate** fully with team members; they are willing to engage honestly, openly, and with respect for opposing views, even those that are controversial or divisive.

- Consider **contribution** their reason for being on the team; there are no free rides, and they don't want one.
- Attend all meetings and activities.
- Come prepared to all meetings or other activities.
- Help establish and abide by the ground rules.
- Respect fellow team members and treat all members equally.
- Listen and respond appropriately.
- Ensure that all meeting comments and decisions are recorded accurately.
- Serve as a role model for other team members.
- Promote and participate in the decision-making process agreed to by the team.
- Participate in presentation activities.
- Share responsibility for logistics, recording, minute taking, and other administrative tasks.

Team Recorder and Team Minute Taker

The team recorder and team minute taker have duties that may be performed by one or two team members, depending on how structured the team needs to be. These duties can be rotated among team members. The role of team recorder is not necessarily the duty of the facilitator or team leader. In fact, the team leader should not assume this responsibility so that she/he can devote full attention to team discussions. The role of team minute taker is also not recommended for the facilitator or team leader. The facilitator or team leader should encourage team members to assume the roles of team recorder and team minute taker because these duties encourage commitment and accountability to team actions.

Team Recorder

- Records ideas on flip chart, overhead projector, or chalkboard; ensures that the information is retained in some form for later activities.

- Writes legibly for all to see.

- Captures ideas, comments, and decisions as presented; paraphrasing and editing should be done only with the speaker's approval.

- Seeks clarification of ideas, acronyms, and words to ensure a common understanding by the team.

- Recognizes that the power of the pen can be abused.

Team Minute Taker

- Prepares minutes of team meetings, agreements, decisions, and so forth.

- Ensures that minutes are reviewed and distributed in accordance with team operating procedures.

- Ensures the accuracy of the minutes.

A question sometimes arises concerning who should run the meetings of the group or team, the team leader or the facilitator. The answer to the question is, it depends! Because of a misunderstanding about the true role of facilitation, it is usually expected that the facilitator will run the meetings, but that does not necessarily have to be the case. In fact, facilitators can be most effective when they observe group or team process and interaction, and intervene only when it is appropriate to do so. The facilitator and team leader should work together and discuss in advance how they will handle their respective roles. From a practical standpoint, however, if a facilitator has been assigned to the group or team, he/she will be expected to be in charge of the meeting(s).

CHAPTER 3

Getting Started

Introductions

How do you begin the first meeting of the team or group? In small groups or teams everyone may know everyone else. In larger groups or teams many people may be strangers. In either event, the facilitator and team leader should introduce themselves and lead an exercise that helps others introduce themselves, even if they know everyone. Here is why: Many introduction exercises consist of the individual's giving their name, position, organization, and/or location—name, rank, and serial number. In some cases this type of introduction may be sufficient. However, people really are more than their name, position, and grade level. These labels certainly identify people and make them recognizable, but they hardly begin to tell anyone who they are or how they react to stress, what they like and dislike, what are their hot buttons, and the myriad other beliefs, emotions, and behaviors that make up any individual personality. How people interact and react is a function of their belief systems, which are the result of the knowledge and experience they have gained since birth and that are different for every person.

In order to understand how individuals will work together in groups or teams, we need to begin to develop some understanding of what they believe—in essence, who they really are. As a facilitator you will find this information invaluable if and when you must intervene, especially when you observe problematic behaviors. The introduction exercise should begin a process of discovery, which the team members use to find out the true identity of their teammates. There are a number of exercises you can use to begin this discovery process, and some of them follow.

Name Tag Exercise

The purpose of the Name Tag exercise is for the members of the group or team, including the facilitator, to become better acquainted. You can adapt the activity to the members and the group or team goal.

Step 1: Ask the members to draw a large square on a blank piece of paper and put a cross through the center, creating four smaller squares or boxes. This will be the name tag. As an alternative, prepare the name tag diagram in advance as a handout and pass it out to the members. Draw a facsimile on a flip chart, blackboard, or white board so that all of the members can see it.

Step 2: Ask the members to put their name in large block letters at the top of their name tag. Explain that they will be given topics to put into each of the four boxes and that you will be listing the topics on the flip chart.

Step 3: Introduce each of the following four topics one at a time and list on the flip chart. The facilitator should provide as many personal examples as possible for each of the four topics:

> *Box 1:* Write one role you enjoy; one role that you don't enjoy; and one role that you aspire to have someday (introduce each of these roles one at a time).
>
> *Box 2:* Write the initials of two people who have served as mentors, models, or leaders for you in your life.
>
> *Box 3:* Write down two characteristics of the most effective teams that you have been a part of or have seen.
>
> *Box 4:* Write down a motto you live by.

Step 4: Ask the members to stand, holding their name tags in front of them. They should then mill around and share their information on each topic with everyone. They should ask questions about one another's name tags. Encourage them to keep milling.

Step 5: Bring the group or team's attention to you and summarize this activity. Use these questions: *What was the most interesting fact you learned about someone? What were some of the mottos? What do these mottos have to do with working in groups or teams? Who has been a part of an effective team? Why was it effective?*

Human Network Exercise

The purpose of the Human Network exercise is to learn more relevant information about teammates and to let the entire group or team see the various links within the group or team.

Step 1: Give each person a piece of flip-chart paper. Ask each of them to write out their professional histories on the paper. This history should be a very sketchy affair, merely hitting the highlights, for example schooling, accomplishments, membership in professional associations, certifications, and awards.

Step 2: Ask them to tape the flip-chart paper to their bodies and mill about the room talking with each other about their backgrounds.

Step 3: Ask them to begin forming human networks by standing with those people with whom they had some connection.

Step 4: While they remain in these human networks, ask each member to make introductory comments to the entire group and explain the connection with his/her network.

Step 5: Summarize this activity. Use these questions: *What was the most interesting fact you learned about someone? How useful are the connections you identified?*

Core Principles Exercise

Principles are those tenets, creeds, or doctrines that an individual has accepted as real and true for his/her life. Principles, unlike values, are objective and external, for example fairness, equity, justice, integrity, honesty, and trust. Values are subjective and internal.

Step 1: Ask each person to take a piece of paper and write at the top, "What do I believe in strongly?" They may take as much time as they need to write out each of their principles. Ask them to provide an example of how they have acted on each one. They should think of examples from both their public and private lives.

Step 2: Ask them to put a star next to those principles that they think other people would confirm that they possess.

Step 3: Start a list on a flip chart of the core beliefs held by the individual members. Let members elaborate with examples, because examples will add understanding of the individual's beliefs. Add tally marks when particular principles are mentioned more than once.

Step 4: Look for principles that are held in common by all of the group or team members.

Step 5: Discuss and agree on the core principles that all members would agree could be on the team or group's list of core principles.

This exercise could also be done using the individual's values. Values often reflect the beliefs of the individual's cultural background. They are those beliefs that an individual holds so strongly that they dictate one's words and behaviors, that one is totally comfortable telling anyone else about, and that are held so strongly that one would defend them. Values often revolve around work (a full day's work for a full day's pay), money (show me the money!), time (make productive use of every waking moment), health (a sound mind in a sound body), relationships (a loving, caring mother or father), and politics (all politics are local).

Expectations

Even when the members of a team or group know the agenda, or the reason for meeting, or the goal of the group or team, they often have different expectations about what the group or team should accomplish. Identifying expectations helps the facilitator and members address conflicting expectations and identify those that cannot be met. The facilitator might ask the group or team one of the following:

- In thinking about this meeting (or team project), what did you expect or what are your expectations?
- What are your desired outcomes?
- What would success look like to you?

- Assume that each of you came to this meeting expecting the group or team to accomplish certain things. Rather than guess what each of you expects, it would help to know what has to happen in order for each of you to leave feeling it was a success.

Make sure that each person has an opportunity to express their expectations for the meeting, even if they have no expectations. Write the members' comments on the flip chart. Indicate the items that are on the agenda or that are included in the goal. Recognize that you will try to meet the other expectations if time allows. Point out the expectations that you believe will not be met. This will help focus the group or team on the task(s) and alleviate concern among members who otherwise might have waited through the whole meeting for a specific point to be discussed. Review the list periodically during the meeting and at the end of the meeting. Effective facilitators need to tell the group or team where they are going, take them there, and then tell them where they have been.

In addition to expectations, members may have concerns about things that might happen that would prevent the group or team from being successful. Whatever the concerns, identifying them at the outset enables the facilitator and the members to pay special attention to the problems and intervene on them as soon as they arise. If there is high conflict and low trust among the members initially, they may not be willing to share their concerns immediately. In this case, the facilitator may want to break the team or group into smaller units to discuss the question and then share their responses with the entire group or team.

Differences in People

Apart from the belief systems that every individual has that affect their behavior patterns, there are other key differences in people with which facilitators should be familiar.

Brain Dominance

Much research has been done, most notably by the late Ned Hermann, on the differences in the four processing modes in the human brain, and on the tendency of one or more of these quadrants to dominate in thinking, creativity, and innovation. The quadrants are four interconnected clusters of specialized mental processing modes that function together situationally and repetitively, making up a whole brain in which one or more parts becomes naturally dominant.

For purposes of facilitation, it is unnecessary to understand in depth the thinking and processing modes in each of the quadrants. It is perhaps enough to know that

- Those who are naturally left-brain dominant are problem solvers, mathematical, technical, analytical, logical, planners, controlled, conservative, organizational, and administrative in their thinking.

- Those who are naturally right-brain dominant are conceptual, synthesizers, imaginative, holistic, artistic, talkers, musical, spiritual, emotional, and interpersonal in their thinking.

It is important to note that there is no correct way of thinking—neither left-brain nor right-brain dominance is the better way; they are just different. In any given group or team there is a statistical probability that there will be a certain number who are left-brain and a certain number who are right-brain dominant. Our groups and teams tend to be heterogeneous when it comes to thinking and creativity. However, there are considerable data to support the conclusion that the engineering profession is dominated by those who are left-brain dominant.

Thinking and creativity come from the brain and are mental in nature. Applied thinking takes advantage of all of the brain's specialized modes and is whole-brained. Heterogeneous groups and teams are capable of higher and more effective creative output, but they need a positive climate and behaviors in order to optimize their creative output. The Hermann Brain Dominance Instrument (HDBI), available from The Ned Hermann Group, 2075 Buffalo Creek Road, Lake Lure, NC 28746, is a tool facilitators may want to consider using, especially if they are performing developmental facilitation with a team.

Communication Styles

Every individual has a favored communication style. Drake Beam Morin, Inc, a company specializing in the language people use in groups and teams, has identified four different styles:

- INTUITOR: Intuitors are good with concepts and often are able to relate diverse thoughts and ideas into meaningful wholes. Most intuitors display good innovative ability and skill in looking at the big picture. Their time orientation is toward the future.

- THINKER: Thinkers focus on being precise and systematic in their approach to problems. Since facts and data are the tools with which one thinks, thinkers develop analytical skills to deal with these facts. They want to know about a broad spectrum of information related to a decision. Their time orientation is toward the past, present, and future.

- FEELER: Feelers prefer to deal with situations according to gut reactions. They are highly sociable and use empathy and understanding in their solutions to problems. Most are perceptive of others' needs and are able to discern what lies beneath the surface. Their time orientation is toward the past.

- SENSOR: Sensors respond to things they can touch, see, and feel—things of an immediate nature. They tend to be action-oriented and are often valued for their ability to get things done. Their time orientation is toward the present.

Each of these styles has a specific way of communicating that is governed by how the person perceives reality. This complexity of response explains why facilitators are constantly testing assumptions and perceptions of the team or group members in order to arrive at valid information. A *Communication Styles Survey* is available from Drake Beam Morin, Inc., 100 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10017.

Mental Habits

The most common instrument that deals with the mental habits of individuals is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), which has been widely used and tested for reliability. The MBTI identifies eight mental habits of individuals that in combination are highly predictive of behavior. Facilitators should be aware of these mental habits and the implications of each for effective work in groups and teams. The eight mental habits are as follows:

- EXTROVERTED: Likes action and variety. Likes to do mental work by talking to people. Acts quickly, sometimes without much reflection. Likes to see how other people do a job and to see results. Wants to know what other people expect of him or her.

- INTROVERTED: Likes quiet and time to consider things. Likes to do mental work privately before talking. May be slow to try something without understanding it first. Likes to understand the idea of a job and to work alone or with a few others. Wants to set his or her own standard.

- SENSING: Accepts experience as it is. Uses physical senses. Dislikes new problems unless there are standard solutions. Enjoys using skills already learned. Patient with details, until the details get complicated.

- INTUITIVE: Interested in the meanings of facts and how they fit together. Likes to use imagination to come up with new possibilities. Likes solving new problems rather than the same old thing. Enjoys using new skills more than practicing old ones. Is impatient with details, but deals well with complicated situations.

- THINKING: Uses logical analysis to reach conclusions. May hurt people's feelings without knowing it. Wants pros and cons of each alternative to be listed. Can be intellectually critical and objective. Convinced by cool, impersonal reasoning. Presents goals and objectives first.

- FEELING: Uses values to reach conclusions. Enjoys pleasing people, even in unimportant things. Wants to know why an alternative is valuable and how it affects people. Can be interpersonally appreciative. Convinced by personal information, enthusiastically delivered. Presents points of agreement first.

- JUDGING: Makes things come out the way they ought to be. Discusses schedules and timetables with tight deadlines. Expects others to follow through, and counts on it. States their positions and decisions clearly. Communicates results and achievements. Talks of purpose and direction.

- PERCEIVING: Deals easily with the unplanned and unexpected. Uncomfortable with tight deadlines. Expects others to adapt to situational requirements. Presents views as tentative and modifiable. Communicates options and opportunities. Talks of autonomy and flexibility.

CHAPTER 4

What Do I Do? My Team Is Storming!

Conflict

Chapter 2 outlined the Storming stage of group and team development. This stage is characterized by conflict. According to the *Random House College Dictionary,* conflict means "to come into collision or disagreement; to be at variance or in opposition; clash; contend; controversy; antagonism; incompatibility of events or activities."

Facilitators know that conflict is inevitable in most groups and teams. Most people do not like conflict and will avoid the uncomfortable feelings associated with it. However, unresolved conflict will negatively affect the productivity of the team or group and will affect the members' interpersonal relationships.

In order to resolve conflict effectively, members need to begin by recognizing the causes of their conflict, the better to work on them and thereby prevent future conflict from arising. Lois Hart has listed the primary causes of conflict in *Faultless Facilitation*:

- *Unmet Needs:* People have basic needs for physical wellness, recognition, affection, and affiliation. When these are not met in the group or team environment, there can be conflict.

- *Values:* Those beliefs that individuals hold dear and that drive their behaviors. When there is a difference in group or team members' values, there can be conflict.

- *Perceptions:* Individuals filter what they see and hear and select what has meaning for them. Each person's perception is valid for them, but because perceptions are different they can cause conflict.

- *Knowledge:* Withholding knowledge, especially in an environment where valid information is essential to free choice, can be a source of conflict. Also, the perception that one or more members of the team or group lacks sufficient technical knowledge to meet the goals of the team or group can cause conflict.

- *Assumptions:* As with perceptions, we make assumptions by filtering what we see and hear through what we already know. Assumptions need to be tested for accuracy or they can cause conflict.

- *Expectations:* Expectations can cause conflict when members do not know each other's expectations, when expectations are not clarified initially, or when they change.

- *Diversity:* Every member has a different background; they have grown up in differing racial, ethnic, religious, educational, cultural, family, and gender environments. Each of these gives the member specific messages about how to deal with others, and these differences can cause conflict.

- *Conflict Management Style:* Every individual resolves conflicts differently. Four styles have been identified—confrontational, persuasive, observant, and avoidant—and each can cause additional conflict.

Once the facilitator has identified the cause of the conflict, he/she can intervene in several ways. Rob Reindl, in the *Facilitator Guidebook*, lists five conflict intervention techniques and identifies when they are effective and ineffective:

1. *Avoiding:* Postponing or ignoring the conflict. Effective when the issue is trivial, the situation will take care of itself, or time is limited. Ineffective when the issue is important, or the problem will not go away if neglected.

2. *Accommodating:* Conceding the resolution of the issue in order to accommodate the wishes of either member. Effective when the relationship is more important than the task, the issue is trivial to

the members, or small concessions will mean future gains. Ineffective when the facilitator's actions could be interpreted as patronizing or indecisive, or when accommodating any member would set an unwise precedent.

3. *Compromising:* Attempting to satisfy partially the concerns of all members, usually involving concessions on everyone's part. Effective when there is no simple solution, members have a strong interest in different facets of the conflict, there is enough time for a truly collaborative solution, what is being conceded by anyone is not very important, or the situation is not critical and an adequate solution is good enough. Ineffective when a dangerous precedent would be set by not holding ground, an optimal solution is possible, or it is important to avoid concessions of any kind.

4. *Forcing:* Using assertiveness to resolve a conflict in favor of some members' concerns and at the expense of other members' concerns. Effective when a competitive interaction would result in a better solution, the concern outweighs the relationship, encouraging competition among members will clarify the issue or expose the weaknesses, or it is important to avoid a public defeat. Ineffective when long-term relationships are important, or when conflict is likely to become personal rather than remain issue-oriented.

5. *Collaborating:* Attempting to fully satisfy the concerns of all parties. Collaborating is effective when the task and relationship are both very important, members have the time and information to collaborate, the outcome is of critical importance, or sufficient trust exists between the parties. Ineffective when time, trust, and resources are not available.

The facilitator may use any of these conflict intervention techniques depending on the situation. In addition, other interventions that a facilitator can make may also help in conflict resolution:

1. *Say/ask what is going on:* State the problem the team or group is experiencing, or ask a question that helps them to see the problem, so that they can openly deal with it. Use statements such as:

- "Please tell us more about what the problem is."
- "What do you want to accomplish?"
- "Would you say more about that?" (The issue, problem, etc.)

2. *Seek specifics:* Effective group and team process depends on valid information, which needs to be made specific by using examples. The facilitator can explore to get the basic facts, understand how a series of events unfolded, or find out how the group members think or feel. Facilitators should seek specifics because people talk in abstract terms that need to be clarified by stating exactly what is meant. Use statements such as:

- "What exactly did you say to him?"
- "Can you give us some examples of what you mean?"
- "Who are they?"
- "Tell us what happened, step by step."

3. *Diagnose:* Explore the members' interests, identifying causes, symptoms, and consequences of problems, pointing out similarities and differences among member's comments.
Use statements such as:

- "What do you think are the causes of the problem?"
- "What leads you to believe?" (That whatever will happen will happen?)

4. *Give feedback:* Facilitators must accurately observe and draw inferences from the members' behavior. The facilitator may have to point out inconsistencies between what the members say and what they do. Confronting and other feedback can help the group reflect on some aspects of its behavior that are diagnosed as dysfunctional, identifying behaviors that are not consistent with the guidelines. There are some rules for giving feedback:

- Be clear as to your reason for giving the feedback.
- Give feedback immediately after the behavior is observed.
- Plan what you will say.

- Limit negative feedback to behaviors the receiver will be willing and able to change. Give feedback directly, but consider whether to do it in front of the others or privately.
- Describe behaviors rather than make judgments.
- Give examples or specifics so that the receiver can comprehend the information more completely.

5. *Manage the process:* The facilitator's intervention may include setting agenda, switching topics, recognizing people to speak, reducing interruptions, and monitoring time. Emphasizing process helps the group to understand the process that underlies the problems the group is having. Use statements such as:

   "How about using the problem-solving model to discuss this problem."

   "You set aside 20 minutes to discuss this problem, and 20 minutes have passed. Do you want to continue or to move on?"

6. *Accept and legitimize:* Accept and legitimize the member's concern and come to agreement on how to move forward. Use statements such as:

   "I appreciate your concern that we may not accomplish all of our objectives for this meeting. Can we see how far we get in the time remaining and decide on next steps? Is that acceptable?"

7. *Teaching concepts and methods:* At times, the most appropriate intervention is to teach the team or group something it can use to solve its problem. For example, a general problem-solving model, how to identify root causes of problems, and how to analyze forces for and against a proposal. But making content suggestions must be limited to those that are closely related to group or organizational process.

8. *Re-frame:* Providing an issue or problem with a new framework is an intervention that helps members change the meanings they ascribe to events. As the meaning of events change, people's behaviors also change.

9. *Seek first to understand, then to be understood:* Understanding requires that you listen with the intention to comprehend, support, and assist the other person.

Guidelines or Ground Rules

Every authority on teams or groups agrees that they need guidelines ("ground rules" and "norms" are other terms used) concerning how meetings will be run, how members will interact, and what kind of behavior is acceptable. Agreement on guidelines is a signal that everyone is committed to the team or group effort and integrates the members into the process. Written guidelines keep some conflicts from ever developing and help to resolve problems that do emerge, because the facilitator can refer to these guidelines when intervening on problematic behaviors.

The members of teams and groups may not, at first, agree that guidelines are necessary. After all, they are all adults, professionals, highly paid, know what is expected—"just tell us what you want and we will do it!" In this case, whether the members know it or not, guidelines develop either by default or implicitly. They develop by default when members bring similar expectations to the group or meeting based on common social background or the influence of their membership in the same organization. They develop implicitly because members have their expectations in their minds where they are very hard to observe. Unfortunately, when guidelines develop in either of these ways, members may learn about them only by violating them. Developing guidelines explicitly ensures that members are aware of the norms and enables the group or team to determine how much individual members support them personally.

Facilitators should have a suggested set of guidelines that members can use to discuss and agree upon. Guidelines can be very simple, as in the following two examples.

Example 1

1. We will use our time wisely.
2. We will share information openly.
3. We will respect differences of opinion.
4. We will speak succinctly.
5. We are each responsible for what we get from this experience.

Example 2

1. We will focus on the topic and avoid side conversations.
2. We will allow one person to talk at a time.
3. We will honor the established time limits for breaks.
4. We will participate in discussions and contribute ideas, experiences, and opinions.
5. We will provide feedback to members in a constructive manner.

Or guidelines can be more comprehensive, as in the following example:

Example 3

1. *Attendance:* We will place a high priority on meetings.
2. *Promptness:* We will start and end meetings on time.
3. *Meeting place and time:* We will specify a regular meeting time and place.
4. *Monthly meetings with the team sponsor:* We will discuss the purpose of such meetings in the team.
5. *Participation:* We will speak freely and listen attentively because everyone's viewpoint is valuable.
6. *Basic conversational courtesies:* We will not interrupt; we will have only one conversation at a time and engage in no side conversations.
7. *Assignments:* We will complete our assigned responsibilities and tasks on time.
8. *Smoking and breaks:* We will decide whether and under what circumstances to have either.
9. *Interruptions:* We will decide when interruptions (for example, telephone calls) will be tolerated.
10. *Rotation of routine chores:* We will decide who will be responsible for setting up the room and other housekeeping chores.

11. *Agenda, minutes, and records:* We will decide who is going to do what.

In addition, the outline of the team members' role in chapter 2 gives yet another list of possible ground rules.

Handling Problem Behavior

Everyone perceives reality from a different perspective. Our own individual perspective has been developed over the course of years and is based on experiences that have allowed each of us to inculcate our own unique belief system. Our belief systems are manifested within us in the form of thoughts (that is, mental activity) and feelings (that is, emotional activity). These thoughts and feelings translate into behaviors—the observable responses of a person to internal and external stimuli—that show others who the person really is. Everyone makes certain accommodations to differing situations, but they largely behave as their individual belief systems dictate. Within this context, certain behaviors are right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable, helpful and problematical. Society deals with these behavioral issues in varying ways. Normally, in groups or teams the positive dynamics of individuals working together cooperatively on a specific goal can be adversely affected by behavior that is problematic. Members who display problem behavior usually do not do it consciously, although some may have a conscious hidden agenda. They behave the way they do because that is who they are. The challenge for the facilitator is to channel all group or team behavior to make it easier for the group or team to accomplish its goal.

Lois Hart (*Faultless Facilitation*) has identified three criteria to keep in mind when dealing with these problematic behaviors:

1. *Eliminate or minimize the behavior.* From a practical standpoint, a facilitator is usually not engaged in individual behavioral modification (in developmental facilitation the facilitator is interested in modifying group behavior, however), and therefore it is highly unlikely that the facilitator will eliminate the behavior. The objective is to minimize the behavior so the problem does not inhibit the team or group from realizing its goal.

2. *Maintain the self-esteem of the member causing the problem.* Self-esteem, the respect for or favorable impression one has of oneself, is fragile in most individuals. The facilitator needs to take care of the problem behavior in a way that does the least amount of damage to the individual's self-esteem.

3. *Avoid further disruption of the team's process.* The facilitator needs to induce or preserve a climate that is relaxed, comfortable, and conducive to positive group or team process. That usually means that he/she needs to be vigilant that the behavior continues to be minimized.

Of the three criteria, maintaining a person's self-esteem is the most important and hardest to achieve. These are five things to help you maintain a person's self-esteem:

1. Make them feel uniquely valuable by praising their achievements and abilities.

2. Make them feel competent by recognizing positive results and giving constructive feedback on efforts to improve.

3. Make them feel secure by communicating plans and expectations clearly and explicitly.

4. Make them feel empowered by expecting them to make decisions, shape outcomes, and assume genuine ownership.

5. Make people feel connected to the group by encouraging and modeling acceptance of all group members.

Over the years, participants in the Facilitator's Training Course have identified a number of behaviors that have proven to be problematic in the past. The following list represents 18 behaviors that have been identified most often. For each, they have identified the behavior, and interventions.

Arguer

Behaviors of the argumentative person:

- Tries to dominate the conversation.
- Tries to stifle conversation.
- Interrupts others; challenges others.
- Discounts differing opinions.
- Is aggressive; uses intimidation and verbal battering.
- Prevents closure (action).
- Self-centered, focused on what meets their personal needs.
- Is unwilling to compromise; pushes own views.
- Drains the energy of the group or team.
- Frustrates the group or team; is stubborn.
- Likes to hear herself/himself talk.
- May be perceived as negative.
- Is passionate about what they believe.

Interventions the facilitator might consider:

- Look for a pause and then propose, for example, "Sounds like a good thought; how about continuing for two minutes and then open it up for group discussion?"
- Create a pause; use silence as a tool to let everyone breathe.
- Impose the ground rules politely to maintain self-respect.
- Interrupt the speaker by asking for clarification.
- Process check; remind the group of the time and ask how they want to proceed.
- Try changing the subject as a tool to test the aggressor; that is, are they doing it for kicks?
- Bring balance back to the group; open up questions to the rest of the group.
- Paraphrase the individual's position.
- Get clarification of the individual's concerns.
- Find out if there are any hidden interests and determine if additional information is needed for the group to act.
- Make them aware of their behavior; separate the emotions from the behavior.
- Talk to the individual during a break.

Avoider

Behaviors of the avoiding person:

- Acting quiet; withdrawn.
- Constantly talking, changing the subject.
- Being noncommittal; declines to participate.
- Always too busy to take a task.
- May not show up for the meeting.
- Appears disinterested, especially with nonverbal communication, for example, looking the other way, constantly leaving the group, sleeping, reading newspapers or something not related to the task, fidgeting, daydreaming.
- May physically sit away from the group
- Is reluctant to provide input or respond to questions.
- Doesn't follow through on commitments.
- Agrees with everything; is not focused on topic or goals.

Interventions the facilitator might consider:

- Ask direct questions for input or opinions.
- Ask the avoider why he/she is not participating.
- Ask them to paraphrase.
- Assign them a task(s), for example, recorder or note taker, based on the individual's strengths, skills, or interests.
- Draw them in by referring to the guidelines—if the guidelines encourage full participation.
- Determine the individual's expectations and interests.
- Remind the group and team of the goal and the guidelines, encouraging full involvement on the issues.
- Let the person know their value to the group; emphasize the importance of everyone.
- Talk to the individual during the break.

Cynic

Behaviors of the cynical person:

- Resists change, is close-minded.
- Has an "It's been tried before" attitude.
- Talks in a distrustful, disbelieving, sneering, contemptuous, or derisive manner.
- Has "Why me?" facial expressions.
- May be withdrawn.
- Exhibits a "Won't work" attitude.
- Is insecure, wisecracks, or jokes.

Interventions the facilitator might consider:

- Try to engage the person in the process.
- Draw them out; ask them why or what?
- Stand near them.
- Call their bluff; ask them what success would look like to them.
- Give them a job; empower them to do something.
- Try to identify the root problem of the individual; say that you have inferred that they are cynical and you would like to know why because maybe the group or team could help.
- Educate or sell the individual on the team or group.
- Talk to the individual during the break.

Degrader

Behaviors of the degrading person:

- Downplays the opinions of others.
- Acts negative—both verbally and in body language.
- Puts down people and the organization.
- May jest at others' comments.
- Is hard to get along with.
- May laugh inappropriately, interrupt, engage in private conversations; engage in personal attacks.

- May be sarcastic, rude, inconsiderate, insulting, hostile, critical, and egotistical.
- Is disruptive because they are constantly degrading something or someone.

Interventions the facilitator might consider:

- Tell the group or team that everyone's contribution is valued.
- Refer to the guidelines.
- Ask for constructive feedback.
- Ask for a better suggestion or to expand on his/her comments.
- Ask for input from the group.
- Refocus on the purpose of the group or team.
- Let the individual talk, vent; then ask them to let others have a turn to express their opinions.
- Ask them to wait until others have finished speaking.
- Ask them to reconsider if they want to remain in the group.
- Talk to the individual during the break.

Diverter

Behaviors of the diverting person:

- Changes the subject; may solicit others to change the subject or issue.
- Asks inappropriate and irrelevant questions.
- Talks constantly; will talk an issue to death.
- Provides inappropriate examples.
- Diverts attention and actions.
- Is not interested in others.
- Indulges in "blue sky" conversation.
- Engages in side-conversations.
- Interrupts the conversation
- Appears to be unfocused.
- May provide new ideas at an inappropriate time.

Interventions the facilitator might consider:

- Ignore—at first.
- Ask them how their comments or opinions help the group or team reach the goal.
- Tell the individual that he/she doesn't seem to be on board, and ask them what the group can do to help them.
- Ask others how they feel/think about this individual's issues; seek out all opinions.
- Steer back to the topic; remind the group of the goal.
- Refer to the guidelines.
- Ask the individual to hold that thought until we get to that part of the discussion (the *parking lot technique*).
- Acknowledge the point and ask the team for comment.
- Talk to the individual during the break.

Dominator

Behavior of the dominating person:

- Talks too much, interrupts.
- Tries to control the meeting; likes to lead the conversation.
- Acts aggressive, intimidating, assertive, argumentative, confrontational.
- Is opinionated and not afraid to express himself/herself; discounts others' opinions.
- Doesn't listen.
- Knows they are right, and in fact they may be very knowledgeable.
- May also be an overachiever.
- Is controlling.
- Talks loudly, uses strong body language, moves physically close.
- Tries to get his/her way; likes to force acceptance of ideas.
- May pout if things don't go their way.
- May be insecure.
- May be a saboteur.

Interventions the facilitator might consider:

- Solicit others' input.
- Emphasize group or team process.
- Ask the individual to summarize; ask others to paraphrase.
- Ask the individual to hold that thought or put it in the parking lot.
- Compliment their valid views.
- Eye contact implies permission to speak, so don't make eye contact, thus refusing permission to talk.
- Test assumptions; get specifics and validate information.
- Take control of the discussion by asking questions and allowing time for opposing views.
- Refer to the guidelines; remind the group of the ground rules at the beginning of each meeting.
- Define an appropriate role for the individual.
- Remind the group that they need to respond one at a time and that everyone needs to contribute.
- Ask others in the group for their opinions/feelings and concerns about the process.
- Talk to the individual during the break.

Jokester or Comedian

Behaviors of the joking person:

- Seems to take nothing seriously.
- Interrupts the workflow.
- Has a joke for everything, or a pun for everything; puts a comic spin on everything; is opportunistic.
- Uses inappropriate humor.
- Laughs at own jokes and at others' expense.
- After awhile, annoys others; doesn't know when to stop.
- Disregards the feelings of others; may humiliate, may cause embarrassment.
- Seeks attention; needs an audience.
- Diverts attention; changes the subject by his/her actions.

- Indulges in side-conversations.
- May do something at someone else's expense.

Interventions the facilitator might consider:

- Ignore the behavior.
- Ask the individual how what they have said relates to the issue; need to focus on the behavior, not the individual.
- Direct relevant questions to the individual to ensure participation.
- Give them a job to do; ask the individual to develop a humorous activity for the group.
- Paraphrase their comments; ask the individual to share the side-conversation.
- Compliment the individual, as appropriate, on a job well done.
- Extract others' opinions; do a reality check, as it may not be a problem to others.
- Restore the goal and persuade them to stay on track; explain how the behavior is affecting the group's production.
- Readdress the guidelines, especially those on respect.
- Use the behavior constructively to ease the tension, but move back to the issue.
- Talk to the individual during the break.

Manipulator

Behaviors of the manipulating person:

- Assume information is power.
- Are talkers; they run the topic into the ground.
- May be adamantly opposed to whatever is being proposed.
- Subvert the group from the outside.
- Withhold information.
- May have a hidden agenda.
- May be aggressive, imposing, and decisive.
- May indulge in side-conversations.

Interventions the facilitator might consider:

- Initially, don't acknowledge the manipulation; let them talk, but be prepared to intervene to limit discussion.
- Ask them if they have any questions and engage them in a team approach.
- Keep on focus by reviewing the team's goals.
- Ask them to share/explain to the group or team.
- Review the guidelines.
- Use the "parking lot" technique.
- Identify expectations at the beginning.
- Talk to the individual during the break.

Opposer

Behaviors of the opposing person:

- Takes the opposite viewpoint of whatever is said.
- Does not listen to other members, shows no interest in others' ideas, interrupts.
- May indulge in side-conversations.
- Opposition may sound like whining.
- They are negative, opinionated, disruptive, dogmatic, argumentative, angry, closed-minded, set in their ways, uncooperative, opinionated, and have a bad attitude.
- Won't offer positive alternatives; shoots down what others say.
- Plays devil's advocate in the extreme; questions everything.
- Could be manipulative; may have a hidden agenda.
- A non-participant initially, they may say nothing at all, but will then become vocal and indulge in a monologue.
- May work against the team or group behind the scenes.
- Dislikes change; may be set in his/her ways.
- May be very knowledgeable, knows it all; may be objective.

Interventions the facilitator might consider:

- Ask for the individual to hold that thought; use the "parking lot" technique.
- Ask for his/her view or a solution; ask for specific examples; ask for clear alternatives.
- Ask for input from others.
- Ask for specific reasons why they are opposed.
- Refocus on the objective.
- Ask the individual how their position furthers the team goal/objective.
- Acknowledge the opposing opinion, find the positive aspects of their position, and move on.
- Review team guidelines.
- Give them a role that allows less disruption.
- In the group setting, ask the individual what is necessary to reach consensus.
- Talk to the individual during the break.

Overachiever

Behaviors of the overachieving person:

- Wants to reach conclusion too quickly.
- Wants to do everything; always volunteers.
- Is hardworking; has good ideas.
- Acts as a know-it-all; may want to correct other people.
- Dominates the conversation, participates frequently, and asks questions.
- Interrupts; may be rude and disparaging.
- Believes that they have the only correct opinion; is judgmental.
- May have a hidden agenda.
- Can be very useful to the group or team.

Interventions the facilitator might consider:

- Suggest that the group probe more deeply into the subject before drawing conclusions.
- Appreciate their contributions but suggest that everyone must contribute; praise their input and springboard to group validation.
- Seek input from other members; avoid eye contact with the overachiever.
- Don't let them do all the work, but assign them a task or role.
- Assure that the work load is distributed; other people need ownership.
- If possible, break into smaller groups to limit the input and influence.
- Cut them off with a diplomatic verbal break by asking the others a question directly.
- Talk to the individual during the break.

Side-Conversationalist

Behaviors of the side-conversationalist:

- Talks to one member who is seated close while another member is talking.
- Is inattentive to the group or team; talks too much.
- Misses what the group says or decides.
- May not want to be present; already knows the answer and is bored; stops participating.
- May be too loud; whispers annoyingly or giggles; seemingly makes snide remarks.
- May be disruptive, confrontational; has own agenda; is dominating and contradictory.
- May be introverted and try out ideas before they offer to the whole group or team, testing the waters.

Interventions the facilitator might consider:

- Ask them to share their ideas with the whole group or team; ask them if they have something to add because we value their input; pull them into the conversation.
- Ask them for their expectations, or ask them for a suggested course of action, or ask them if they have a problem that they could share with the whole group.
- Pause, allowing silence to do the job; listen and then refocus.
- Ask them to please be quiet.
- Look at them; use physical presence.
- Ignore the side-conversation.
- Ask the individual a direct question.
- Ask them to share or hold off the side-conversation until the break.
- Refer to the guidelines and point out that they may be in conflict.
- Ask them to be a recorder or observer.
- Talk to the individual during the break.

Squirmer

Behaviors of the squirming person:

- Shuffles papers.
- Plays with keys, paper clips, clicking pens, pencil tapping, fidgeting, and so forth.
- Eats during the meeting.
- Moves around in the chair and/or room, can't sit still. Rocks in the chair.
- Stands—but may have a back problem, so check; leaves the room.
- Cracks knuckles; constantly moves legs.
- Is in ceaseless, unproductive motion.
- Does not pay attention, wants to go back to previous subjects.

Interventions the facilitator might consider:

- Assess the impact on the group; if not negative, ignore the behavior.
- Find out what's bothering the individual, if anything, and fix it.
- Sit the individual somewhere where her/his behavior is not disrupting, if possible.
- Check their physical condition.
- Bring snacks for all.
- Keep them actively involved by asking questions, ask for their participation, use eye contact.
- Give them a responsibility, for example, recorder.
- Talk to the individual during the break.

Taker

Behaviors of the taking person:

- Lets others do the work; does not participate, is nonproductive.
- Is not a team player; adds little or nothing to the team.
- Is usually quiet and nonproductive.
- Does not pay attention to other members.
- Always asks for assistance.
- Constantly leaves the group or team, or may not show up for meetings at all.
- Willingly accepts credit for the work of the team or group.

Interventions the facilitator might consider:

- Ask for their participation; guidelines need to address importance of participation and attendance.
- Stress that the effort needs to be a group effort where all make a contribution.
- Assign an important task to them; address progress directly.
- Ask if there is a problem and ask how the group or team can help.
- Talk to the individual during the break.

Talker

Behaviors of the talking person:

- Likes to hear his/her own talk.
- Is repetitious and irritating.
- Acts like a know-it-all.
- Can't or won't come to closure.
- Interrupts other group or team members.
- Carries on side-conversations.
- May like to dominate or is opinionated.
- Usually does not pay attention to others.

Interventions the facilitator might consider:

- Acknowledge the individual's point and participation, but move on.
- Ask them to summarize their points; they may have knowledge that is important to the group.
- Ask them to save questions and comments until the appropriate point in the discussion.
- Ask for others' opinions; ask people to take turns.
- Review the guidelines.
- Use the "parking lot" technique.
- Give them a job to do.
- Talk to the individual during the break.

Uncooperative Person

Behaviors of the uncooperative person:

- Acts indifferent; may be belligerent and/or argumentative.
- May be negative, sarcastic, critical, and disruptive.
- Is sometimes quiet, with negative body language: arms crossed, rolling eyes, looking elsewhere; may sit alone.
- Makes sarcastic, snide comments; may be a know-it-all.
- Diverts from the topic; is inattentive.
- Does not offer solutions.

- Does not follow the guidelines
- Brings more important work to the meeting.
- Does not participate, refuses to volunteer; procrastinates.
- Does not accept members and their ideas.
- Constantly tests the team and/or leader; plays devil's advocate; is inappropriately argumentative.

Interventions the facilitator might consider:

- Ask them to express their interests, be respectful and ask them how their behavior relates to the goal.
- Ask them for input and to suggest alternatives.
- Focus on where there is agreement and work from there.
- Ask questions to engage; recognize a skill/attribute that they can contribute.
- Make sure that everyone is clear on the goals and/or tasks.
- Restate the guidelines; revise the ground rules as needed.
- Give them opportunities to be successful; assign them a task.
- Give them a forum, but only for a short time.
- Discuss their concerns.
- Talk to the individual during the break. Ask what can be done to make the event work for them.

Underachiever

Behaviors of the underachieving person:

- May be quiet, possibly intimidated, detached, withdrawn; may have low self-esteem.
- May be a loner and/or defensive.
- Does not participate; does not contribute; has no reaction, no ownership.
- May be lazy, makes no effort.
- Is disinterested, a fence sitter.
- Body language displays a closed posture, or distracted and nonattentive.
- Never volunteers; has a "tell me what you want me to do and I will do it" attitude.

- Is always too busy with something else.
- Cannot be relied upon to follow through.
- Is indecisive.

Interventions the facilitator might consider:

- Invite their input; ask questions directly.
- Restate the expectations of the group.
- Divide assignments so that there is individual responsibility for the task(s).
- Review the guidelines.
- Ask the individual to define his or her own stewardship, objectives, and performance measures.
- Try to create a less intimidating environment; engage the person in nonthreatening ways.
- Poll everyone continuously for ideas.
- Hold them accountable for deliverables.
- Use self-directed changes to put these persons in a position to interact; pair them with someone to whom they relate.
- Show appreciation for what they do; bring out the good; assure them that their knowledge and skills are valuable.
- Talk to the individual during the break.

Whiner

Behaviors of the whining person:

- Complains, with a focus on the physical environment: too hot, too cold, can't see the charts, can't hear; too far away from the subway stop.
- Finds fault: nothing is good enough.
- Complains about management and the team; is vocal; discredits the purpose of the group.
- Exhibits body language that includes rolling eyes, pushing away, crossing arms; may not show up for the meeting.
- Does not want to be there, wants to do something else.
- Lacks positive focus; says "We always did it this way."
- Nothing meets their expectations.

- Is unfocused, may talk a lot, has side-conversations.
- Is irritating, annoying; interrupts frequently.
- Seeks attention.
- Is negative, dissatisfied, disruptive, and/or stubborn.

Interventions the facilitator might consider:

- Identify the individual's need and fix it if possible—they may have valid concerns.
- Redirect the negative to a positive.
- Ask the person to share their comment/view with the group.
- Ask them for recommendations; provide options.
- Test the validity of the issues.
- Ask them to resolve the issues they are complaining about.
- Focus on the goal; get them more involved.
- Review the guidelines, address the issues in the ground rules.
- Talk to the individual during the break.

Withdrawn Person

Behaviors of the withdrawn person:

- Is quiet, possibly shy and introverted, passive.
- Has nonverbal reactions that include silence, staring into space, frowning, sighing; avoids eye contact; sits away from other members; may leave the group or not show up.
- Exhibits no activity or movement; is nonreactive, appears to be self-focused.
- Does other work, does not pay attention.
- Does not participate; may not want to be there.
- Does not socialize during breaks and lunch; is nonsociable, a loner.
- Is not confident, avoids feedback.
- Is intimidated by the subject, process, or people.
- Acts distracted, indifferent, distant.

Interventions the facilitator might consider:

- Don't single them out, but ask for participation.
- Watch the behavior and interaction with group members to determine motivation for behavior.
- Do another activity such as an icebreaker or energizer.
- Ask for their opinion or comment on someone else's idea.
- Ask questions of the individual; do a round robin of the group.
- Find out their interests or expectations.
- Determine and address the root cause.
- Acknowledge their input, give positive reinforcement, assign a more active role.
- Express the recognition that all must participate.
- Talk to the individual during the break.

In dealing with problem behaviors, the facilitator should diagnose the behavior, identify possible alternatives using the above list for suggestions (but do not limit your list of alternatives), apply the three criteria, and select the best alternative to use in handling the situation. Remember, the facilitator generally has not caused the problematic behavior, so do not take it personally. Try to remain emotionally neutral.

CHAPTER 5

Facilitation Skills

Facilitators need a variety of skills and abilities to fulfill their role, including:

- Accurately listening to, observing, and remembering behavior and conversation.
- Speaking clearly.
- Identifying similarities and differences among statements.
- Understanding multiple perspectives.
- Analyzing and synthesizing issues.
- Identifying assumptions.
- Diagnosing and intervening on effective and ineffective behavior.
- Being a model of effective behavior.
- Providing feedback without creating defensive reactions.
- Accepting feedback without reacting defensively.
- Monitoring and changing one's own behavior while working with a team.
- Developing the trust of clients.
- Empathizing with clients.
- Providing support and encouragement.
- Paticncc.

This list is not exhaustive, but no list can capture the complexity of the facilitator's role. In this chapter, I concentrate on four attributes of communicating clearly that are essential abilities for a practicing facilitator: *Attending, Observing, Listening, Questioning*.

A word about the difference between an ability and a skill: *ability* is a general word for mental or physical capacity, natural or acquired, that enables one to do something. *Skill* is the ability to do something well, arising from talent (natural ability), training, and/or practice (acquired ability). Anyone who aspires to be a facilitator must assess his or her own abilities. Training will heighten the awareness of certain capabilities, but it is only through practice, practice, practice and reflection that a facilitator builds the skill level necessary.

Attending

The first step in communicating is attending to the other person. When we are paying attention, we establish a connection with the speaker; we show that we value the team or group members as individuals and that we are interested in their success. There are two aspects to paying attention: the external manifestations of our attending and our internal mental activity.

How does anyone know whether someone else is paying attention or not? Merely saying that you are paying attention is usually not enough—you must show the group or team that you are interested. Here are some things you can do to show the group or team that you are attending to them:

- Position yourself so that you face all of the members. They will be sitting and you will be standing, the superior position; their eyes will be on you and their remarks will be addressed to the whole group through you. So the members must be able to see you. The main reason a facilitator should not be the team recorder is that it is usually impossible to write on a flip chart while facing the group or team.

- Move toward the speaker and/or the group or team to send a message of urgency and interest. Don't distance yourself or stand in a fixed position.

- Smile at individuals. Practically speaking, most of us don't walk around with a smile on our face. Moreover, based on the content of the message, a smile is not always the most appropriate facial expression. On the other hand, in a majority of cases a smile is preferable to a frown.

- Nod affirmatively to give positive feedback to the speaker. There is, however, a possible downside to nodding: while your affirmative nod means "I hear you," the speaker may be internalizing it as "I agree with what you are saying." The facilitator should be careful with any action that sends a message that he or she may not be neutral on the substantive issue. Don't look judgmental.

- Use natural facial expressions. The facilitator should avoid making faces of any kind that would give an impression of other than thoughtful attentiveness. However, don't remain impassive.

While he/she is attending nonverbally, internally the facilitator will have to mentally focus his/her attention. Individuals can think much faster than the other person can speak, and therefore the mind can wander if the listener does not concentrate. Here are some things facilitators should do to focus their attention:

- Ask themselves: "How would I summarize what is being said?"

- Don't rehearse. If the facilitator begins to mentally rehearse the next thing he/she is going to say, he/she will not be paying attention to what is being said.

- Write down key words. Don't take notes and don't stop scanning the group or team, but picking out and writing down key words will help you concentrate.

Observing

Observing means just what the word implies: watching the members' behaviors for clues about how well they are working together and how well they are sharing information. After the facilitator observes the behaviors of the individual members, he/she develops inferences about how the members feel and what they think about the group or team process. The facilitator then can test the inferences and intervene as appropriate.

At least 50 percent of all of the communication between individuals inside or outside of groups and teams is nonverbal. Here are some ways people communicate nonverbally:

- The way they dress
- Their facial expressions and gestures
- Their body language

- The feel and frequency of their eye contact
- Their articulation and tone of voice
- Their muscular development
- Their muscular tension or lack of it
- Their physiological signs, such as sweating
- Their handwriting
- Their actions: how they treat others
- Their sense of humor
- The "vibes" they send
- The externals: the car they drive, the friends they have, their job, their hobbies
- And many other means

There are three steps to using observation skills as a facilitator:

Step 1: Look at the individual and observe anything that serves to guide or direct you in identifying what they are thinking or feeling, especially about the group or team process. For example, is the member smiling, frowning, nodding, yawning, looking at you or away, leaning forward or back in the chair, tapping a pencil or other article, shuffling his/her feet?

Step 2: Formulate an inference of the individual's feeling or thinking based on what you have observed.

Step 3: Take an appropriate action based on your inference. This action usually takes the form of testing the inferences you have observed. For example, "from the look on your face, Jim, I'm inferring that you dislike this train of thought. Am I correct?" Then, if yes, "Perhaps you would share your concerns with us."

Whether you decide to take action or not depends on the situation as you observe it, and whether other members are experiencing the same feelings or thoughts.

Listening

There is a difference between hearing and listening. *Hearing* is the faculty by which noises and tones are received as stimuli by the ear. Hearing is a sensory experience that gathers sound waves indiscriminately. *Listening* includes more than just sound being received by the ear and transmitted to the brain. Listening includes interpreting or processing that sound. Little is known about how this process works: sound goes into the ear, and thoughts are produced in the brain. But we can hear something without choosing to listen. Some speech communication specialists have found that when you are listening, your heart speeds up, your blood circulates faster, and your temperature goes up. Did you ever wonder why you were so physically tired after a day of merely listening to speakers at a conference or meeting? It takes energy to listen.

There are two basic listening styles: *Thinking* and *Feeling*.

> **Thinking:** If you are a thinker, you listen for logic, analysis, concepts, facts, figures, and references. You listen in outline form. Speakers who bring irrelevant data, unrelated details, and sentiment drive you crazy. You must remember that life involves feelings as well as facts.
>
> **Feeling:** If you are a feeler, you like humane words, impassioned pleas, and charisma. You read between the lines, sometimes writing your own scenarios and falsely concluding the speaker's point. You may assume that a person is right because he/she is articulate. You tend to discount the brilliant in a dry, boring delivery. You must learn to listen critically and objectively.

Listening means to pay attention to sound, to hear with thoughtful awareness, to learn by the ear or by being told. First comes the sound, next attention to the sound, and finally reflection—serious thought upon the subject—which produces learning or knowledge. As a facilitator you need to look at the individual speaking and try to understand both the content (the subject or topic) and the meaning (the intention of the words). This sounds deceptively simple. Listening is, in fact, quite difficult for two reasons. First, the meanings are in the people, not in the words they use; and, second, there are internal and external distractions that bombard our listening.

The language we use is an enormously rich language full of subtleties and nuances. When the *Oxford Dictionary of the English Language* takes over one hundred pages to define a word, the variation becomes almost too much for the mind to process. This richness and variation affords individuals many choices in the use of words, and our understanding of their meanings is largely dependent on our understanding of the individual using the words. The meanings are in the people, not necessarily in the words they use.

The internal and external barriers to effective listening fall into three categories: *physical, emotional,* and *intellectual*. The following are some of these distractions:

External Barriers

Physical: Noises outside the room, or two people whispering in the room. Visual distractions such as the recorder writing on the flip chart. The climate of the workplace: too hot or cold. The speaker's not talking loudly or clearly enough.

Emotional: Being a target for a speaker's emotions or negative incentives for listening. Faulty feedback from the speaker or lack of feedback from the team or group.

Intellectual: Being unfamiliar with the content of the message. Being unfamiliar with the speaker's word usage. Having problems with the diction of the speaker or receiving an incorrect message.

Internal Barriers

Physical: Fatigue, health problems, pain or discomfort, and hearing loss.

Emotional: Being distracted by personal problems. Reacting emotionally. Hearing what you want to hear. Being biased in your listening. Jumping to conclusions or assumptions. Lacking needed motivation.

Intellectual: Having difficulty remembering information. Having trouble applying what you have learned to the situation. Having difficulty processing the message or trying to do two things at once. Thinking about two things at the same time.

Facilitators must practice using their listening skills. This is a two-step process:

Step 1: Concentrate on the speaker, hear the words, and process the possible meanings, perceptions, and assumptions.

Step 2: Test those meanings, perceptions, and assumptions through paraphrasing or rephrasing.

A *paraphrase* is a restatement of the message giving the meaning in another form in order to provide clarity. To *rephrase* is to state differently what was said in order to be clear, concise, tactful, and so forth. Paraphrasing often involves reading between the lines to interpret the full meaning of the speaker's words, then testing our interpretation. Always paraphrase and then ask the speaker if your statement was accurate. Asking about accuracy helps clarify and may provide more information needed to complete understanding. When paraphrasing, facilitators can start with some of the following:

- "What I hear you saying is . . ."
- "As I understand . . ."
- "What you're saying . . ."
- "In other words . . ."
- "It sounds like you're saying . . ."

Questioning

Asking questions effectively is one of the most important skills you will need as a facilitator. Questions invite participation; get members to think about a problem or issue from a different perspective; help clarify meanings, perceptions, and assumptions; and keep the group or team focused. There are two types of questions: *closed* and *open-ended.*

Closed Questions: Usually can be answered with a yes or no and are useful for establishing commitment, affirmation, acceptance, or rejection. Closed questions don't invite discussion. They begin with *is, can, how many*, or *do*. For example:

"Do you think you can get that done by Friday?"

Open-ended Questions: Usually require more than a simple yes or no. They encourage the member to give a fuller answer, allow more information to be communicated, stimulate thinking, elicit discussion, and minimize bias on the part of the listener. They begin with *what, how, when,* and *why*. For example:

- "What ideas do you . . .?"
- "When you say that . . . are you saying . . .?"
- "What do you see as the real problem?"
- "How can we implement the suggestion?"
- "Why are we getting the feedback we are getting?"

Sometimes questions that you intend to be open can be answered with a short answer, for example, "How do you think the project is going?" This question could elicit a "well" or "poorly" answer. The facilitator has to be persistent and patient in asking questions. Questions should be:

- Clear, concise, covering a single issue. Questions that are long, rambling, and unfocused will allow the member to address the issue they want to talk about and not necessarily provide additional or clarifying information.

- Challenging to the members in order to provoke thought. Remember to give members the opportunity to think, so silence after the question is appropriate, unless the nonverbal reaction of the group or team tells you that they don't understand the question.

- Reasonable, relevant, and based on what they ought to know. Asking questions in an irrelevant area of expertise serves no useful purpose and may frustrate the group or team.

- Honest and not trick questions that may indicate that the facilitator is withholding information.

CHAPTER 6

Problem-Solving Techniques

Problem-Solving Models

There are as many problem-solving models as there are experts on the subject. In fact, one model is as good as another. The important thing for a facilitator is to be familiar with some systematic model, method, or process that the team or group can use to make it easier for them to succeed. The following are sometimes called models, plans, methods, and processes—what they are called is less important than that they have some use for the facilitator's particular team or group.

Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA)

Originally proposed by Walter Shewhart and championed by W. Edwards Deming, the PDCA works best for small incremental process changes, but it can be used for major system changes as well.

> **Plan:** Identify the current situation, problem, or opportunity; gather data; describe the current process or problem; imagine what the process should be or describe all of the possible causes of the problem; develop solutions and actions, including targets for improvement.
>
> **Do:** Take action by implementing the solution or process change, oftentimes on a small scale as a pilot or test.
>
> **Check:** Study the effect of the changes or actions, review and evaluate the results, and ascertain whether the change did what you thought it would.
>
> **Act:** Reflect and act on what was learned and plan for more improvements or further actions.

Focus-Analyze-Develop-Execute (FADE)

Proposed in *Making Teams Work,* this model was published by Organizational Dynamics, Inc.

Focus: Generate a list of problems, select one problem, verify/define the problem, write a statement of the problem.

Analyze: Decide what you need to know; collect data, searching for baselines and patterns; determine influential factors.

Develop: Generate promising solutions, select a solution(s), develop a plan for implementation.

Execute: Gain commitment, execute the plan, monitor the impact.

Five-Stage Plan for Process Improvement

Presented in Peter R. Scholtes and colleagues' *The Team Handbook*, this plan is a general framework useful for all kinds of processes.

Stage 1, *Understand the Process:* Describe the process; identify customer needs and concerns, map the standard process.

Stage 2, *Eliminate Errors:* Identify mistakes, identify less error-prone procedures, restructure the work environment.

Stage 3, *Remove Slack:* Examine the value of each process step; reduce the steps that add no value; monitor improvements.

Stage 4, *Reduce Variation:* Bring the measurement process under statistical control; reduce the variations in the process.

Stage 5, *Plan for Continuous Improvement:* See "Plan" in the PDCA cycle discussed above.

Ten-Step Creative Problem-Solving Process

Developed by Ralph Barra in his book *Tips and Techniques for Team Effectiveness,* this model provides alternating "divergent-convergent" thought processes.

Step 1, *Problem Finding:* Define the problem to be solved that occurs when we perceive a difference between the current state and a more desired state.

Step 2, *Fact-finding:* Define the problem by obtaining pertinent information about the fuzzy problem areas or areas selected.

Step 3, *Specific Problem Statement:* Write a clear statement of the problem to be solved.

Step 4, *Cause Identification:* Generate all of the possible causes of the problem statement.

Step 5, *Data Collection and Analysis:* Gather data, analyze the data, and generate information on the potential root causes of the problem.

Step 6, *Pareto Analysis:* Use this specific tool to organize and analyze the raw data to identify and verify the vital few root causes of the problem.

Step 7, *Solution Finding:* Generate as many ideas as possible on how to eliminate the root causes and how to converge on the best solutions.

Step 8, *Force Field Analysis:* Use this specific tool to illustrate the relative pros and cons of the proposed solution and to develop strategies for implementation.

Step 9, *Implementation Plan:* Develop the specific actions for effective implementation of the solution.

Step 10, *Management Presentation:* Sell your ideas and obtain approval to proceed with the implementation.

Problem-Solving Steps

Rob Reindl, in his *Facilitator Guidebook,* sets out a four-step process.

Step 1, *Define the Problem:* Identify the situation to ensure common understanding of the problem context; determine the facts; and analyze the cause.

Step 2, *Generate Alternatives:* Strive for quantity of ideas and defer judgment.

Step 3, *Evaluate Alternatives:* Define criteria for evaluating the ideas; evaluate the ideas and prioritize the ideas.

Step 4, *Develop Action Plan:* Determine next steps; define responsibilities, people to follow through, and time frames.

Problem-Solving Model

Roger M. Schwarz, in his book *The Skilled Facilitator,* sets out a nine-step model.

Step 1, *Define the Problem:* Write a good problem definition that states only the current and desired situation and no more.

Step 2, *Establish Criteria for Evaluating Solutions*: Define the general characteristics that a solution should have, without describing a specific solution.

Step 3, *Identify Root Causes:* Isolate relevant root causes from all of the potential causes rather than symptoms.

Step 4, *Generate Alternative Solutions:* Generate ideas without evaluation, where quantity, not quality, is important.

Step 5, *Evaluate Alternative Solutions:* Weigh the alternative solutions against the previously established criteria.

Step 6, *Select the Best Solution:* Use the group or team's ground rule for making decisions to select the best solution.

Step 7, *Develop an Action Plan.* The action plan increases the likelihood that the solution will be implemented effectively and on time.

Step 8, *Implement the Action Plan.* Because implementation typically takes place outside the facilitated group or team, there needs to be some feedback to the group on progress.

Step 9, *Evaluate Outcomes and the Process.* Evaluation is essential for a group or team that values valid information.

Compact and Comprehensive Problem-Solving Method

Lois Hart, in her book *Faultless Facilitation,* sets out two methods that essentially have the following steps.

Step 1, *Naming the Problem:* Develop a clear, concise statement of the problem.

Step 2, *Analyze the Problem:* Explore the causes and consequences of the problem.

Step 3, *Goal Setting:* Redefine the problem in more specific terms and identify a desirable goal.

Step 4, *Search for Solutions:* Think of alternative solutions and begin the process of selecting the solution that is most plausible.

Step 5, *Plan for Action:* Break down the solutions and then identify tasks for carrying them out.

Step 6, *Evaluate the Plan:* Decide how to evaluate the implementation, who will do it, and when.

Tools for Exploring and Focusing

The tools that follow, and many others, are the instruments facilitators use to help teams and groups reach their goals more easily. This list is not exhaustive, but it contains those tools that are used the most by facilitators. A facilitator should know how to use any of these tools without reference to this manual or any other reference work. A facilitator looks good if he/she can use these instruments effectively.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is divergent thinking for generating a large number of ideas. It is intentionally uninhibited and designed to let creative minds run free without fear or criticism. There are nine rules for brainstorming:

Rule 1: Write out the central brainstorming question and make sure that it is understood and agreed upon.

Rule 2: Evaluation and/or criticism are not allowed, and their avoidance must be enforced by everyone.

Rule 3: Focus on a large quantity of ideas, the more the better.

Rule 4: Record all ideas accurately; don't edit what is said.

Rule 5: No idea is too exaggerated. Team members should be uninhibited so that they come up with wild and outrageous ideas that might end up as the most desirable.

Rule 6: Piggyback, hitchhike, and build on the ideas of others.

Rule 7: Members should give ideas one at a time in turn, but any member can pass at any time.

Rule 8: Keep the process moving and relatively short—5 to 20 minutes works well, depending on the complexity of the topic.

Rule 9: Once the team has exhausted their listing of ideas, review each idea for understanding and clarification, and combine where appropriate.

There are two major methods for brainstorming:

Structured brainstorming: Every member gives an idea as his or her turn arises in the rotation or passes until the next round. Members are usually given a few minutes to silently generate ideas before the rotation part begins. The recorder should write each idea in large, visible letters on a flip chart or other writing surface, and should use the same words as the speaker. The facilitator should always ask if the idea has been worded accurately. This process should continue until everyone has run out of ideas. But in any case the facilitator should set a time limit.

Unstructured brainstorming: Members give their idea as they come to mind. This tends to create a more relaxed atmosphere but also risks domination by the most vocal members. The process is the same as in the structured method. One suggestion: because ideas come fast and furiously, it is difficult for one recorder to keep up with the ideas. Therefore, if unstructured brainstorming is used, the facilitator should consider using at least two recorders, depending on the size of the group or team and the complexity of the subject matter.

The brainstorming process has numerous variations:

5-3-5 Method: Each member has five minutes to write down three ideas. Then the sheet is passed to the next member, who has five minutes to add three more ideas that build on the first three ideas. Repeat the process as many times as there are team or group members.

Visual Brainstorming: Members (or the team) produce a picture of how they see the situation or problem.

Analogies: Stimulate the imagination by providing detailed background information on some analogous situation and then invite the team or group to make specific creative associations. The members can identify analogies through thoughtful preselection (direct analogies), on-the-spot selection (forced analogies), imagining other places (excursions), or imagining other people (be someone else).

Free-Word Association: Select a random noun and use the image it conjures up in the mind as a starting point for mental movement. The more distant-sounding the word seems to the group or team at first, the better for creative stimulation.

Brain Writing Pool: Members generate ideas silently, then put their ideas into a pile in the center of a table, where someone else will later read them aloud to the group or team. Brain Writing Pool may also be similar to the 5-3-5 method, in which members write a few ideas on a piece of paper and place the sheet in the center of the table; each member then randomly picks one of the sheets and adds an idea of their own, repeating the process until all ideas are out or time runs out.

Idea Generation: Allows for discussion of each idea as it is proposed, with a goal of creating quality ideas, not necessarily quantity.

Imagining the Future: Members visualize how things would be if everything were perfect—no problems, no complexities, no errors, no troubles of any kind. No one expects perfection, so asking what perfection would look like is a nonthreatening way of opening people's minds to the possibilities of improvement.

Is/Is Not: Members describe the issue; then on one flip chart they list the facts that are part of the issue; on another chart, they list the facts that are not part of the issue.

Mind Mapping: An unstructured brainstorming technique in which all of the members are simultaneously recorders. State the issue, problem, or situation in a box in the center of the map; each member should use a marker to add their ideas as they get them without waiting for the recorder or their turn.

The Six Thinking Hats

Complexity leading to confusion is the biggest enemy of good thinking; we try to do too many things at the same time. *The Six Thinking Hats* is a systematic way to do one thing at a time. There are six imaginary thinking hats, each hat having a different color and each representing a different type of thinking. When a member puts on one of the hats, he or she operates exclusively in that mode of thinking. When they change from one hat to another, they change from the thinking mode indicated by the first hat to the thinking mode indicated by the second hat. It is very important to understand that the hats do not represent descriptions of thinkers; they indicate only the types or modes of thinking. The Six Thinking Hats are as follows:

> ***The White Hat*** is concerned directly with data and information. What information do we have on this matter? What information do we need? What information would we like to have? What information is missing?
>
> ***The Red Hat*** is concerned with feelings, emotions, intuitions, and hunches. There is no need to seek to explain or to justify these feelings or emotions.
>
> ***The Black Hat*** is the caution hat that points out the dangers, difficulties, and problems. It is the logical negative: there must be a reason for what is claimed.
>
> ***The Yellow Hat*** is concerned with benefits, value; how something can be done. It is optimistic but realistic. It is the logical positive: there must be a reason for what is claimed.
>
> ***The Green Hat*** is concerned with possibilities, even if remote. It does not need to have a logical base: it is the creativity hat.
>
> ***The Blue Hat*** is concerned with managing the thinking process by asking for conclusions and summaries. It sets the agenda for the next step. In meetings, the facilitator wears the blue hat most of the time.

Each hat can be used any sequence and any number of times in real-life situations. There are at least three general ways to set up a sequence:

Fixed Sequence: The facilitator presets the sequence in advance as an action plan, with each hat considered in turn. This is the most common procedure.

Contingent and Flexible Sequence: The facilitator presets the sequence but has some possible change points.

Evolving Sequence: The facilitator has no preset plan. Typically the facilitator, wearing the blue hat, chooses the sequence as the thinking session proceeds.

Consensus

After generating ideas for some period of time, the group or team will have generated a lot of ideas that could possibly solve the problem or improve the process. What the members will need to do now is to decide on the best idea(s) or alternative(s). A wide variety of techniques can be used to help a group or team decide on which are the best ideas. As the members make decisions, it's always good to review the team guidelines to remind members about how they agreed to make decisions. The most common decision-making process we have today is *consensus*.

The idea of consensus comes from the Quakers: it involves the right of people to speak and be heard, the responsibility of people to speak and listen.

Consensus is a process for group decisionmaking with the objective that the entire group can come to and accept an agreement. It requires all members to talk, to voice their opinions, concerns, beliefs, and understandings. It means that the ideas and inputs of all participants will be gathered and synthesized. Consensus does not require total agreement, only that the final decision is acceptable to all. This type of decisionmaking requires time. The members must continue to talk until each individual can acknowledge that he or she is willing to support the decision. There are two ways to reach consensus.

Unstructured consensus is a group process that requires all members to talk, to voice their opinions, concerns, beliefs, and understandings. Therefore, this type of consensus requires time. Voting, or deciding by means of a majority, or going along so that the group or team can move on are not consensus.

The members must continue to talk until each individual can make the internal commitment to the choice by saying, "I can live with this decision."

Structured Consensus is like the Nominal Group Technique, Multi-voting, and the Affinity Diagram (see page 79).

Principles of Consensus

Every facilitator should keep in mind the following principles and personal rules when he/she is leading a group or team in consensus decisionmaking.

- Those affected by the decision must accept the decision. Everyone must find the decision acceptable and acknowledge that they are willing to support it.

- Decisionmaking is as much about conflict as it is about agreement: encouraging diversity of thought and getting to the best decisions.

- Consensus takes more time, more resources, and more skill, and is often less friendly.

- If the group does not get acceptance and acknowledgment, they must have a back-up mode for decisionmaking that is declared in advance. The most common is the Nominal Group Technique discussed on page 76.

- The process must be proportional to the impact.

- The process must be applied toward the good of the organization, not just the individual.

- The process should invite and reinforce diverse thinking and creative solutions.

- The process should mold the decision by developing a culture of openness and greater buy-in and satisfaction. The group should define its own ground rules for consensus decisionmaking. For example, be brief, be honest, speak from the heart, add to the web of conversation, listen, and suspend judgment.

- The process is the best, sometimes the only, decision-making process to use with complex or contentious issues.

Rules for the Facilitator in Consensus Decisionmaking

1. Remain neutral; maintain the group's trust.
2. Have the group define its own ground rules for consensus decisionmaking.
3. Have the group agree on the scope of the decision.
4. Have the group agree on and declare in advance a back-up mode.
5. Make sure that all affected parties are involved.
6. Start the process with a clear proposal.
7. Summarize frequently.
8. Use words as positive statements; turn negatives into positives.
9. Be available; pay attention; listen.
10. Care, but not too much.

Nominal Group Technique

Nominal Group Technique (NGT) is a divergent-convergent thinking technique for the generation of ideas, the group discussion of and clarification of ideas, and the independent voting on ideas. Many writers believe that it is the quickest way for a team or group to reach consensus. The NGT builds internal commitment to the choice through equal participation. Here are the steps:

Step 1: Generate ideas silently.

Step 2: List ideas on a flip chart, using the structured brainstorming method described above.

Step 3: Clarify and combine the ideas. First, make sure that everyone understands the idea, then combine if appropriate. A word of caution: only combine when the ideas are identical not when they are similar.

Always ask for the group or team's guidance when changing or combining ideas.

Step 4: Choose and rank the ideas. This is a two-step process and it is usually where mistakes in the process are made.

> *First choose.* Distribute a number of 3" x 5" cards or Post-It notes that equal the number of choices the team or group wants to make. For example, they might want the top three ideas, or five ideas. Ask the members to select and write out on each card what they consider the most important idea from the list you are left with after the group has clarified and combined. They should put one idea on each card. At this point each member should have a certain number of cards spread out in front of him or her with a different idea on each card.
>
> *Then rank.* Considering only those cards and ideas in front of them, they should rank the ideas as follows: of the ideas the member chose, the least important gets a 1 and the most important gets a number based on the number of choices the team wants to make, for example, 3, 5, or some other number; the remaining numbers are distributed to the remaining ideas.

Step 5: Collect and tally the numbers from all of the cards. The ideas with the highest numerical totals are the ones the group or team believes are the most important. If there are ties, look for any inconsistencies and vote on the tied items only.

NOTE: Step 4 is the most important step to understand and remember. The process outlined in Step 4 can be used in other tools when the group or team is faced with a large number of items and needs to choose the best but does not have the time for extensive discussion.

Multi-Voting

Multi-voting is a technique used to reduce a large list of items to a manageable few. It allows all members to have input on deciding which issues or solutions are most important to the group or team as a whole. There are numerous variations in multi-voting but the essential steps are as follows:

Step 1: Make the list of items to be reduced visible to everyone, and clarify and combine as appropriate.

Step 2: Give each member a number of votes equal to approximately one-half the number of items on the list (a variation is to give them a number of votes equal to approximately one-third the number of items on the list; a second variation is not to assign numbers of votes at this step but to ask members just to vote for the items they consider most significant).

Step 3: Everyone should cast their votes for the items they consider most significant. Assigning a specific number of votes (for example, half the number of items) discourages block voting in which all of the votes are placed on one item. Voting may be done by raising hands and counting, or by having the members place small colored dots on the flip chart next to each item they choose.

Step 4: Tabulate the numbers of votes and remove from the list those items with the fewest votes. The number removed will usually equal the number of votes each member cast, plus one (to account for odd numbers). For example, a list of 23, if you use one-half the number of votes, would be reduced by one-half plus 1 or 12. (This is sometimes referred to as the one-half plus 1 rule, with the 1 accounting for odd numbers).

Step 5: Continue to reduce the list using steps 3 and 4 until the desired number of items is reached.

Affinity Diagram

Another structured consensus technique is the Affinity Diagram. Sometimes in arriving at consensus some ideas will be lost. In an Affinity Diagram, all of the ideas will be there somewhere. An Affinity Diagram helps a group or team to creatively organize and summarize a large number of ideas into natural groupings, to better understand the essence of the possible solutions and to find breakthrough solutions. The steps in the Affinity Diagram are as follows:

Step 1: Brainstorm and record the ideas on 3" x 5" cards or Post-It Notes, one idea per card. This step works best using large bold print to make ideas visible four to six feet away. Use at a minimum a noun and a verb. Then spread out all of the cards/ideas on a flat surface.

Step 2: *Silently* sort the cards/ideas into groups, looking for relationships. Members should do this simultaneously (avoid pushing and shoving!). Sometimes ideas can belong in more than one relationship grouping, so don't ask; move the card/idea or make a duplicate card. Silence is very important because it encourages free thinking and discourages arguments over placement of the cards/ideas. Sorting will stop when members feel sufficiently comfortable with the relationship groupings. It is okay for some ideas to stand alone.

Step 3: Develop header cards or theme cards for each relationship grouping that captures the relationship or theme everyone saw. Make them clear and concise; noun-verb combinations work best. Outline the header cards with bold lines to distinguish them from the idea cards. Members can talk during this stage. Spend the extra time needed to do carefully thought-out header cards. Strive to capture the essence of all of the ideas in each grouping. Shortcuts here can greatly reduce the effectiveness of the final Affinity Diagram.

Step 4: In order to see additional relationships, place groups that are similar next to each other. If groups are very similar, the members can combine two or more groups to create larger groups under a new header. The group or team should decide what to do next with the idea(s).

Flowcharting

If the group or team you are facilitating is involved in the analysis of a process, it is often useful to get a picture of the process. To do this, we use a tool that is sometimes called *flowcharting* or *mapping*. A flowchart is a graphic representation of a process, showing the sequence of tasks using a modified version of standard flowcharting symbols. Typically, flowcharts use the following symbols:

> *Ovals* are used to describe the beginning and the end of the process. Usually, the beginning of a process is a request or need. The end is usually a product or service.
>
> *Rectangles* are used to show each step, task, or activity of the process.
>
> *Parallelograms* are used to show inputs of the process, and are linked to the step where they are used. They are also used to show interim outputs.
>
> *Diamonds* are used to show decision points in the process.
>
> *Arrows* show the direction of the steps, tasks, or activities.

The steps in producing a flowchart are as follows:

> Step 1: Using some form of brainstorming, the group or team should list all of the activities of the process as they are, not as they should be. Sequence is unimportant at this step.
>
> Step 2: Then sort the activities into those that must occur, those that sometimes occur, those that are in parallel, and the sequence in which the activities occur.
>
> Step 3: Select a format for your flowchart, either horizontal or vertical.
>
> Step 4: Prepare the flowchart by posting the sorted activities on large pieces of paper in the sequence in which they occur, beginning with

what starts the process. Connect the activities with lines and arrows. Activities that must occur and/or are parallel should be posted to the left in vertical format, or top in horizontal format; activities that sometimes occur should be posted correspondingly to the right or the bottom.

Step 5: Then check the flowchart to see where the gaps are in your information. What does your group or team not know about the process? This check will help the members to better understand the data collection they will have to do.

The flowchart the group or team creates will represent the process as it is now, with all its flaws and inefficiencies. It should be a working document, so the members should not have an impressive document as their objective. The group or team will want a document to change, mark up, and revise often.

Force Field Analysis

Force Field Analysis is a technique that can be useful for evaluating the solutions to a problem by analyzing the problem in terms of the forces that work against any change or potential solution. It also identifies those forces that can help to produce the proposed changes or solutions. The following are the steps in a force field analysis:

Step 1: At the top of a piece of flip-chart paper state the problem. This statement is usually put inside a rectangle. Your statement represents the current state of affairs. All of the members need to understand and agree upon this problem statement.

Step 2: Right under the problem statement, in a rectangle connected by an arrow, state your goal. This goal should articulate the desired state of affairs.

Step 3: Under the goal statement, divide the page in half. Label the left side "Driving Forces"; label the right side "Restraining Forces." Think of the current state of affairs and your goal as being held stationary by opposing sets of forces.

Step 4: Brainstorm a list of all the driving forces that would encourage the goal to happen. The list should include psychological, interpersonal, organizational, and societal factors.

Step 5: Brainstorm lists of all the restraining forces that keep you from achieving the goal. If a force seems to be made up of multiple obstacles, list each element separately.

Step 6: Rank the restraining forces based on their difficulty to overcome. The object is to first reduce those restraining forces that have the least resistance or are easiest to solve. Then rank the driving forces based on their relative strength. The object is to capitalize on those that will get the greatest changes into motion first.

Additional Tools

In addition to the tools listed in this manual, a practicing facilitator may want to consult any of the following reference works. Consult the bibliography for further information on sources.

Facilitator Guidebook, by Rob Reindl.

Faultless Facilitation, by Lois Hart.

The Memory Jogger II, by Michael Brassard and Diane Ritter.

The Team Handbook, by Peter R. Scholtes et al.

Tips and Techniques for Team Effectiveness, by Ralph Barra.

Six Thinking Hats, by Edward de Bono.

Waste Chasers, compiled by the staff and published by Conway Quality, Inc.

CHAPTER 7

Meeting Matters (Agendas and Others)

Agenda

An agenda is useful for identifying the things a group or team needs to accomplish during a specified period of time. It is valuable in clarifying which tasks or issues need to be discussed and acted upon; puts the tasks or issues into some order; gives the facilitator and members an idea of how much time might be needed; provides a criterion for measuring what has been accomplished; and can become an outline for developing a status report for the group or team.

Agenda Building

In developing an agenda, the facilitator should first perform a pre-meeting diagnostic. This pre-meeting diagnostic tells the facilitator something about the purpose, people, and process for the meeting or group. Facilitators should use the following questions to guide them in gaining the information they will need to build an agenda and to facilitate the meeting:

Purpose

- What is the primary goal or purpose of this particular group or team?
- What tasks do you hope will be accomplished at this meeting?
- What would success look like to you?
- What specific outcomes do you want to achieve?
- How does this meeting fit into the overall team or group plans and goals?
- What have they been told about this meeting?
- What do you want to have in your hands at the end of the meeting?
- What issues need discussion and resolution? Have they been discussed before?

People

- Who are the participants? How many participants?
- How and why were these people chosen?
- How well do they know each other? Describe the quality of the interpersonal relationships.
- What role does each play in this organization?
- Have they met before on the issue?
- What would these members like to get out of the meeting?
- Is there a hierarchy in the group or team?
- How does this group or team work together now?
- Do they have any previous experience with a facilitator?
- Do you have a charter or mission statement for this group or team?

Process

- Who or what should be on the agenda?
- What constraints or criteria do you have for ideas generated during the meeting?
- What pre-meeting tasks, if any, should members have completed?
- What reading material/information should members bring?
- How would you like the results presented after the meeting?
- Where will the meeting be held? What kind of room/furniture does it have?
- What are the starting and ending times?
- Have arrangements been made for food and beverages?
- Who will handle room set-up and equipment/supply needs?

Once the facilitator has completed a pre-meeting diagnostic, the facilitator and group leader should build an agenda. Building an agenda should be a thoughtful process considering all the facilitator has learned and all of the group process techniques. Generalized, topical, last-minute-generated agendas are less useful and should be avoided.

Principles for Building an Agenda

An agenda may be as comprehensive or skeletal as desired. Generally, the more detailed the greater the use for a facilitator when intervening on group process. The following parts or principles include most of the things that should be considered:

- Prominently display key particulars, for example name of meeting, date of meeting, start and end times, and location.
- Develop and display focused goals and objectives for the meeting.
- Identify and display the participants or members and the key roles they will be expected to play.
- Classify agenda topics as either information-sharing or information-processing.
- Batch information-sharing items and handle early.
- Decide on a block of time for covering all information-sharing items.
- Identify group process for information processing to be used.
- Make sure that each information-processing topic has its own desired output.
- Sequence information-processing topics to enhance information flow.
- Determine the time for each information-processing topic.
- Involve all participants, to the extent possible.

Flip-Chart Agenda

One useful technique for building a working agenda is the flip-chart agenda. These are the steps:

Step 1: Collect materials, including flip-chart paper, a supply of 3" x 3" and 3" x 5" Post-It Notes, colored markers, and the results of the pre-meeting diagnostic.

Step 2: Divide the flip-chart paper vertically into two equal columns. The two columns should provide enough space to create an agenda for a full-day meeting.

Step 3: Divide each of the columns into three sub-columns as follows: the first to accommodate a 3" x 3" Post-It Note and labeled "Time"; the second to accommodate a 3" x 5" Post-It Note and labeled "Activity"; and the third to accommodate a 3" x 3" Post-It Note and labeled "Who."

Step 4: Now begin to build the agenda by dividing the meeting into discrete times and activities. For example, a meeting scheduled to begin at 8:00 A.M. might start with "8:00–8:15," recorded on a 3" x 3" Post-It Note and posted in the sub-column labeled "Time"; then "Introductions and Guidelines" (introductions would be information-sharing, guidelines might be information-processing) recorded on a 3" x 5" Post-It Note and posted in the sub-column labeled "Activity"; then "Facilitator" and "Leader" recorded on a 3" x 3" Post-It Note and posted in the sub-column labeled "Who." Continue this process for all time slots and anticipated activities for the meeting. The more detail, including breaks and lunch, the more useful the flip-chart agenda becomes.

Step 5: Post the completed flip-chart agenda prominently in the meeting room. It will be a useful visual aid for the facilitator as the meeting progresses. Rearranging and creating new Post-It Notes can also adjust the agenda during the meeting.

Room Set-Up

Every facilitator should check the room before the meeting. The following Meeting Room Checklist indicates some of the things the facilitator should consider.

Meeting Room Checklist

- **Atmosphere:** Is the room cheerful or depressing? Does it have outside windows?
- **Layout:** Is the room large enough or will it be too small? What is the shape of the room? Is it a long rectangle? Is it square? High ceiling or low ceiling? Is there wall space? Can you post flip charts on the walls?
- **Furniture:** Are the chairs comfortable? Are the chairs too comfortable? Are there tables, and what shape are they? Is the furniture movable?
- **Conveniences:** Where are the rest rooms, fire exits, elevators, lunchrooms, food, beverages, telephone, and smoking areas?
- **Lighting:** Is there sufficient lighting? If there are windows, can they be darkened? Where are the light switches?
- **Noise:** Is the room free of excessive noises? What is scheduled in the room next door?
- **Heating and Cooling:** Will the temperature be appropriate and can you control it? If you cannot control it yourself, how can it be controlled?
- **Outlets:** Are there electrical and/or telephone outlets available for your equipment?

Arranging a Room

Most of the time facilitators will have to work with the arrangement of the room, because it may not be as they would necessarily like it to be. Since facilitators may be asked to help groups of all sizes, the room should be set up to accommodate good communication. Some of the configurations the facilitator will be faced with or can choose include the following:

- **Circle:** Arranging chairs in a circle with no tables provides an informal atmosphere by eliminating the barrier of the table. Good for small groups but provides no writing surface. The facilitator may sit as part of the circle or may stand outside of the circle, which is awkward.

- **Semicircle:** Arranging the chairs in a semicircle with no tables. The facilitator works from the open end where the flip chart is stationed.

- **Round Table:** Arranging chairs at a round table facilitates eye contact and informality while providing a place for writing. Facilitators may sit at the table, stand at one spot, or move around the outside.

- **Square Table:** Square tables may be large or small. They are more formal, can make eye contact difficult, and tend to be the norm. Facilitators may sit at the table, stand at one end, or move around the outside. The room size will dictate how much convenient movement you will have.

- **Rectangular Table:** May be large or small and is the norm in many large conference rooms. This table is formal, makes eye contact more difficult, and creates differing degrees of separation of the members. Facilitators usually station themselves at one of the smaller ends, moving outside of the group.

- **U-Shaped Table:** A U-shape with the chairs on the outside of the table. Similar to the square table but with this important difference: it allows the facilitator to enter the U-shape and make more immediate eye contact with the members.

- **Herringbone Shape:** Tables are set at an angle, herringbone shape, with chairs on the outside only. The facilitator can then face all tables. This setup is less helpful to the members in maintaining eye contact and communication, but it is preferable to a table with one of the straight shapes.

- **Closed Square Shape:** This is a shape favored by hotels. The major problem is the distance that this configuration places between the members and the facilitator. When faced with this configuration, the facilitator should always open the square so that he/she can use the space inside the square.

Supply and Equipment Checklist

The following list includes most of the items you should make sure you have for the meeting.

- Flip charts and extra flip-chart pads. The number needed will depend on the information-processing activities you intend to use during the meeting. I always like at least two for variety, depending on what other recording media are available (for example, white boards or acetate and overhead projector). Make sure the easel's legs are firmly positioned and find out what happens if you try to move it. Flip-chart paper that has Post-It capability is very useful but very expensive.

- Markers in at least five colors. Some dry erase markers have a very strong odor that some people find offensive and others find sickening. Some are scented. Be careful of those that bleed through the paper.

- Masking tape. Even it you have flip-chart paper with the Post-It feature, masking tape always comes in handy. Scotch tape is less successful. When taping flip charts to the wall do not tape diagonally across the top corners because using diagonal taping makes the paper difficult to take down after the meeting. Tape at the top corners but run the tape vertically; this makes taking down the paper much easier.

- Post-It Notes of various sizes, especially 3" x 3" and 3" x 5".

- Name tags or tent cards, especially if you have never met the people before and/or the group is very large. Tell the group that the name tags are not for them necessarily but for you.

- Overhead projector and extra bulb. You will also need acetate and pens if you plan to use the overhead to record.

- Extension cord and adapter if necessary.

- Projection screen. If it's an automatic screen find out where the switch is and how it works.

- In-focus machine. If you use a computer, make sure that everything is in working order before the meeting. Do not waste time during the meeting trying to get the electronic gear working.

- VCR if necessary. Make sure you know how it works before the meeting, and cue up what you will be showing.

Recording on Flip Charts

Generally, I do not advocate a facilitator's being the recorder. A recorder of necessity must turn his/her back to the group or team. Because more than 50 percent of all communication is nonverbal, by turning his/her back to the members while recording, a lot of information will be missed and not clarified or verified. However, there are times when a facilitator will have to record also. In that event these are some guidelines to be followed:

- Position the flip chart so that everyone can see it. Check for readability from different parts of the room.

- Position yourself to the side as you write; stand aside as you listen to the next speaker. Write, then talk, or talk, then write. Writing and talking simultaneously may cause you to misspell, transpose, or omit words.

- Check with the members frequently to be sure you are reflecting their ideas accurately. If you are not sure how to spell a word, ask for help. Everyone forgets how to spell a word now and then, and sometimes you may be dealing with unfamiliar jargon.

- Use paper that has faint lines on it so that you can write straighter. When using a flip chart for a teachable moment, you can lightly pencil notes on the sheet; they will be visible to you but not to the members.

- Write in large block letters at least one and one-half inches high. Sometimes cursive is quicker, but try to make it as legible as possible by making it large.

- Leave two inches between lines. Fill up the top two-thirds of the paper, writing a maximum of 10 lines per sheet.

- Use markers in a variety of colors. Use colors to highlight key words. Colors can be used to stimulate, calm, enhance, or distract.

- Use as few words as possible. Abbreviate words and use symbols but make sure everyone understands them.

- As a sheet is filled, tear it off and post it where everyone can see. Practice tearing the pages cleanly before trying it in front of the group. Ask someone from the group or team to help you.

- Cover flip-chart information when not in use. Leave a blank page between sheets to avoid bleed-through and distraction.

Highlight key words with circles, boxes, underlining, arrows. Use pictures when possible.

CHAPTER 8

Writing the Report

The report is the essential document of the business and professional world. It is used to inform and instruct colleagues and customers, furnish data on which people can make decisions, and sell ideas for improving processes. Reports are about facts—what the group or team has observed, investigated, experienced, or read about—not about what people feel, fear, or hope.

Principles of Good Written Communication

In written communication **Seven C's** ought to guide the writer or speaker:

1. *Completeness:* say all that must be said.
2. *Clearness:* say it clearly so there is no mistaking your meaning.
3. *Concreteness:* be specific and choose your words carefully.
4. *Correctness:* know your facts and use proper grammar.
5. *Conciseness:* be brief.
6. *Courtesy:* be polite, treating your reader as you would like to be treated.
7. *Character:* let your personality show in a natural, unstilted style.

The Qualities of Powerful Writing

- There is a sense of the audience that anticipates the reader's needs.
- The writing sets the right tone and is even tempered.
- The content is informative, has substance, and says something.
- The writing has movement; it goes somewhere and has a sense of order.
- There is a helpful format that looks good on the page and is easy to read.
- The level of detail uses concrete, selective, and precise words.

- There is a recognizable voice that reflects the strong, credible imprint of the writer.
- The report has originality; it says something new or something old in a new way.
- The writing has a rhythm that sounds effortless and natural.
- The writer observes the conventions of spelling, punctuation, and usage.

Writing the Report

When it comes to writing the report, the authors must identify the intended audience as precisely as possible. To do this the authors need to decide:

- What does the audience want to get from reading this report?
- What is the level of expertise of the audience?
- How much specialized vocabulary can be used?
- How many will read the report?
- How much influence does the audience have?
- How long will the influence last?
- What actions might be taken on the basis of the report's contents?

Format

The basic format of a written report includes the following:

1. **Title Page** contains the title, for whom the report is prepared, and who prepared the report.

2. **Letter of Transmittal** briefly mentions the purpose of the report and may refer to special features or problems encountered during the study; an expression of appreciation for assistance is sometimes included.

3. **Table of Contents** may come from the basic outline of the report.

4. **List of Illustrations** identifies graphs, charts, and process maps used by the team.

5. **Synopsis**, **Abstract**, or **Executive Summary** is a brief summary of the report that presents all of the major facts, analyses, and conclusions, and is about one-fifth to one-tenth of the length of the entire report.

6. **Introduction** should contain, at a minimum, the purpose of the report and a description of the method used.

7. **Body of the Report** usually contains a detailed description of procedures used, a report of findings, a summary of results, conclusions, and recommendations.

8. **List of References** lists sources of primary and secondary information.

9. **Appendix**, if included, contains supplementary material that supports the findings.

Outline

With the information collected and in preliminary workable order, the group or team is ready to make an outline, a process of dividing, for the report. The outline is simply the plan used in the writing task that follows. Although the outline could be either written or mental, the group or team will want to put it in written form for all except very short reports. In longer reports, in which a table of contents is needed, the outline forms the basis of this table. Also, in most long reports—and even in some short ones—the outline topics can guide the reader by serving as headings to the paragraphs they cover.

As the group or team begins the task of outlining, they will need to decide which writing pattern to use in the report. There are two basic patterns:

- In the *Indirect Pattern,* findings appear in *inductive order*, moving from the known to the unknown. This pattern typically has an introductory section, report body, summary, and conclusions or recommendations section.

- In the *Direct Pattern,* findings appear in *deductive order.* This pattern typically has a summary, a conclusion or recommendation section, and a findings and analysis section.

In the outline of the body of the report, the group or team will be dividing the whole of the information they have gathered and interpreted. They should begin by looking for some logical way of dividing the information into equal and comparable parts. The general basis for these divisions is:

- *Time,* in which the divisions of the whole are periods of time.
- *Place,* in which the divisions are based on similar characteristics occurring in different geographic locations.
- *Quantity,* in which the division is based on quantitative values.
- *Other factors,* in which the divisions are based on varying information areas.
- *Combination,* in which the divisions are based on some combination of the previous divisions.

In writing the outline, the group or team has a choice of two general forms:

1. *Topic captions,* where one or two words do nothing more than identify the topic of discussion. An illustration of a typical topic caption outline is:

    II. Present engineering unit
    A. Description and output
    B. Cost
    C. Deficiencies

2. *Talking captions,* which identify the subject matter covered, also indicate what is said about the subject. An illustration of a typical talking caption outline is:

    II. Operation analysis of engineering unit
    A. Recent lag in overall output
    B. Increase in cost of operation
    C. Inability to deliver necessary design

As a general rule, captions at each level of the outline should be in the same grammatical form. Talking captions should be the shortest possible word arrangement that also meets the talking requirement. In the outline, as in all writing, the team should take care not to overwork any words and expressions.

Graphic Aids

Graphic aids are an essential part of many reports; they supplement the words to communicate the report content. Graphic aids may serve to present minor supporting details not covered in the words, but they must never replace written discussion. They help to give emphasis to the key points being covered. If the group or team is to use graphic aids effectively, they must plan them with care. Plan each graphic aid for a specific communication reason and include it because it is needed.

Graphic aids should be placed within the report and near the text they will illustrate. Fortunately modern computer programs make this placement easier. If the graphic is small and takes up only a portion of the page, it should be placed so that the writing it supplements will surround it. If it requires a full page, place it immediately following the page on which it is discussed. When the discussion covers several pages, the full illustration is best placed on the page following the first reference to its content. Those graphic aids that the group or team wishes to include but that do not tell a specific part of the report's story should be placed in an appendix. Putting all graphic aids in an appendix would certainly not be convenient for the reader, who must then flip through the report each time he/she wishes to see the graphic presentation of a part of the text.

Graphic aids must be labeled concisely and accurately. Introduce them by referring to them and their roles in the text, or by a brief introductory paragraph immediately preceding the illustration. Graphic aids are divided into two groups:

1. Tables, which are any systematic arrangement of quantitative information in rows and columns. Table titles are placed above them and numbered consecutively using arabic numerals.

2. Figures, which can include any illustration type that is not a table, for example pie, line, and bar charts; diagrams; maps; and pictures. Titles of figures are placed below them and are numbered consecutively and consistently with either roman or arabic numbers.

Selling Your Ideas

What can the team do to improve the chances of getting their ideas approved? The best way to gain support for an idea is to show how the idea will help the approver (sponsor) meet some of his or her needs. The first requirement is therefore to know what is important to the approver. An approver usually wants answers to these four questions:

1. Are the results worth achieving?
2. Is there a high probability that this idea will achieve the results?
3. Are the resources available, such as time, money, people?
4. What might go wrong?

The approver will most likely support the plan or idea if:

- It will help solve a problem that he/she cares about.
- It will achieve a goal that he/she is trying to achieve.
- It will help him/her satisfy their personal values, for example an increase in status or in recognition, or an improvement in results.

To help them understand the approver's viewpoint, the group or team should find the answers to the following questions:

- What are the approver's top priorities?
- What are the approver's current projects and work objectives?
- What problems would the approver like solved?
- What are the approver's long-term goals, values, or wants?

Formulating an Idea

Once the group or team has some understanding of what is important to the approver, they should formulate their idea(s) or plan to use the following test as a guideline:

1. What is the idea(s)? Is the idea(s) specific? What is the action? Where? When? How?

2. What are the benefits of this idea(s)? Are there benefits to the approver and /or organization?

3. What concerns or objections might the approver have about this idea(s)? The group or team needs to identify potential problems and find ways to protect the idea(s) from objections the approver may raise. What contingency plans are there for these objections?

4. What is the next step? If the idea(s) is approved, the team should be prepared to finalize the details. They will need to identify and confirm who will do what and when.

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