

What is Facilitation?

Facilitation...

- literally means “making things easier.”
- helps people make decisions and achieve results in meetings and groups, etc.
- draws on the ideas of all participants.
- prevents the conversation from being dominated by a few individuals.
- ensures that event outputs are captured and shared in an easily understandable form.

6 steps for good facilitation

1. **Clarity.** Clearly state meeting objectives, desired outcomes and time available.
2. **Behavior.** Set ground rules for behavior – e.g., 1) Participate! 2) It is okay to disagree, but discuss the issue (don't be personal). 3) Allow others to speak. 4) Keep on time 5) Keep on topic
3. **Focus.** Develop **discussion** questions to help meet objectives and produce the type of output desired (e.g., “What is the problem with...?”). Distinguish essential and non-essential contributions. Use meeting objectives to keep people focused.
4. **Manage the process/Use Interactive skills**
 - Engage people to maintain interest
 - Make participants feel valued – be positive. Do not argue or embarrass people
 - Collect the participants' ideas – do not push your own agenda. Clarify ideas, but do not interpret ideas your way. Allow silence when appropriate. Do not let individuals dominate.
 - Question (i.e., ask open questions and avoid Yes/No questions)
 - Listen (and process key points or concerns from the speaker)
 - Give constructive feedback
 - Build consensus and keep the group engaged.
 - Manage conflict. Allow disagreement but keep it positive; capture people's concerns for *win-win* outcomes.
 - Teach as appropriate

Reference: Townsend, J. and Donovan, P. 1999. *The Facilitator's Pocketbook*. Management Pocketbooks. Hampshire, UK.

4. Manage the process (Continued)

Collect information

- Use flipcharts and whiteboards to capture input.
- Use cards to collect, sort and categorize information
- Conduct debates (people take turns to debate different sides of an issue)
- Develop future scenarios (i.e., describe a future date (e.g., 2020) and the success desired – now work backwards with the group to see how success was achieved.)
- Be flexible and open to change either in topics discussed or meeting structure
- Orient the group to action. Ask what people would do.



Good facilitators capture the wealth of knowledge from groups.

5. **Summarize.** Assess the group's understanding throughout the meeting; use group output to support points
 - Look for commonalities, themes and trends.
 - Identify the “critical mass” required to move on (i.e., not everyone has to be convinced of a course of action; only the key people forming the “critical mass”).
6. **Next steps.** Capture major output and action points

Facilitation can vary

Facilitation has differing forms of involvement and interaction:

	Process monitoring	Discussion facilitation	Presenting
Interaction	Low	Medium-High	Low
Contribution	Low	Medium	High