9 Ways to Enhance Your Soft Skills

1.   Communication is Key

Interpersonal communication is the backbone of all soft skills. Whether it's through emails, phone calls or in person, you need to be a clear communicator. Some ways to improve this skill include:

- Make eye contact and acknowledge everyone's presence in the room
- Be aware of your body language
- Practice both formal and conversational speaking
- Develop your writing skills and ALWAYS proofread before hitting the "send" button

2.   Teamwork

One of the things you'll always hear employers looking for is a team player. Teamwork is a very important skill because not only does it show that you work well with others, but when a team works well together the result is always better. Some ways to improve this skill include:

- Split up work evenly
- Keep an open mind
- Never make assumptions and always praise when possible
- Make everyone feel important

3.   Sharpen Your Creativity

Never check your creativity at the door. Creativity is always an asset in the workplace or in the classroom. It can lead to many exciting and innovating activities, which are essential when working with a team. Some ways to improve this skill include:

- Switch up your work environment
- Make brainstorms a regular occurrence
- Make sure you're well rested
- Surround yourself with creative people

4.   Accept & Learn from ALL Criticism

This tends to be challenging for some, as it can be difficult to accept criticism. You should keep in mind that the person giving you their feedback has the best intentions and will help improve your work. Some ways to improve this skill include:

- Listen carefully
- Hold off on sharing your initial thoughts until you had time to reflect
- Turn a negative into a positive
- Learn from the person sharing their feedback
- Be appreciative of their time, feedback and thinking

5.   Motivate & Keep a Positive Attitude

It's important to remember that nobody wants to work with a "Debbie Downer". You should always keep a positive attitude and try your best to motivate the people around you. If you're excited about something, get others excited about it too. Some ways to improve this skill include:

- Be optimistic
- Be resilient
- Make laughter a part of every day
- Prioritizing will keep you on track
- Don't wait for happiness

6.   Multi-task Effectively

Multi-tasking is an amazing asset that saves time and boosts productivity. Just like with most soft skills, the more you practice multi-tasking, the easier it will be to figure out how to complete your tasks in the most efficient way possible. Some ways to improve this skill include:

- Group together related tasks
- Define each task before starting it
- Keep your to-do list in sight
- Use downtime wisely
- Plan ahead

7. Be Adaptable

Adaptability is very important in the workplace and people who practice it regularly tend to be more understanding, reasonable, tactful and a strong leader. Being adaptable will also increase your ability to communicate with others and build strong relationships, which is something every leader should possess to be successful. Some ways to improve this skill include:

- Welcome ambiguity
- Think creatively
- Be open-minded and non-judgmental
- Don't overdo it
- Be self-aware
- Be flexible

8. Learn to Listen

The importance of public speaking is always spoken about, but it's important to remember that listening is just as imperative. Genuinely listening to someone else helps improve relationships, solve problems, ensure understanding and much more. Some ways to improve this skill include:

- Invest yourself fully in each interaction
- Look at it from their point of view
- Let them finish before you ask a question
- Make eye contact

9. Have a Sense of Humor

While this may seem less important compared to the other critical soft skills listed, it is by far one of the most important skills. Laughing not only reduces stress, but it is essential when working with other colleagues and being overall successful in life. Some ways to improve this skill include:

- Stay positive
- Find the 'funny side' in everything
- Always remember it could always be worse
- Make time for daily laughter
- Learn some simple, business-appropriate jokes

From: Buzz Strayer, 2017 Strayer University

Being an Effective Meeting Leader *

How to Ensure Participation in a Meeting

Two problems limit effective participation:
- Difficulty in getting a chance to speak and-0
- Fear of personal attack.

A good Leader is a fair and friendly "traffic cop" and promotes participation by:
- Giving every group member an equal opportunity to be heard.
- Starting the meeting on a positive note.
- Encouraging the group and letting them know when they are doing a good job.
- Establishing a positive, nonthreatening atmosphere that encourages people to express themselves, especially those that are shy and naturally quiet.

Accept incomplete ideas:
- People don't always speak in well-formed thoughts.
- If an idea is impossible for you to decipher, ask the person to help you rephrase it.
- If it sounds like the "tip of an iceberg" you can always come back to it or ask the group to help "flesh" out the idea.

Lying Doesn't Help

It is important to compliment the group, but don't exaggerate:
- Be sincere. The group will know if you are insincere and you will lose credibility.
- When things go wrong say so – but state it as to encourage the group to recognize that the situation can be changed.

How to Puncture a Filibuster

Move quickly to handle a situation where someone tries to filibuster your meeting:
- Move towards the person who does all the talking.
- When the person stops or pauses to take a breath, step in and turn to someone else.
- If you do this a few times and the person still doesn't get the hint, you may have to be blunt.
- Be gentle but firm!
- Protect the group from anyone's domination, as a Leader take the focus and the floor away from an individual by saying *"Thanks, Bob. Now, what do you think, Ruth?"*

How to Avoid Repetition

Nothing drains a group's energy like being bored by people who constantly repeat themselves or by long-winded discussions:
- Remind people when they have already said something and ask if they have anything new to add.
- If people get off the subject, say *"I'm not sure that's the problem we're addressing right now, we can write that down and discuss it later."*

Hold Your Fire!

When destructive arguments start, try to get the combatants to focus their energy on solving problems rather than on attacking each other:
- Keep it positive and constructive.
- Whenever possible, try to get participants to deal with their interpersonal conflicts outside the meeting room.
- To ensure a positive environment, ask everyone to say what they like about an idea before stating a negative concern. This often prevents potential solutions from strangulation in their infancy.
- It's the job of the Leader to guard the rights of the not-so-articulate.
- Don't let group members bully others by criticizing or insulting each other.

See Yourself As Others See You

Be aware of nonverbal messages, try to watch yourself on video or practice in front of a mirror. You may think you are projecting a pleasant and positive expression, when in reality you are shaking your head negatively. Always:
- Be aware of how you use your body to exert power or back away from a situation.
- Be aware of your "space Language" – carefully arrange the meeting environment to make it as comfortable and efficient as possible.
- Be careful to project a sense of openness and receptivity, don't put anything (such as a table, podium or desk) between you and the group.

Dealing with Problem People

Dealing with problem people is like walking a tightrope. You must maintain a delicate balance between protecting the group from the dominance of individual members while protecting individuals from being attacked. In dealing with problem people, always begin with the most subtle and least threatening interventions. Some of these steps include:
- **Accept** – When a problem person disrupts a meeting, begin by accepting what the person is doing, rather than simply ignoring the interruption. Acknowledge the individual's actions by describing it without evaluating. Don't rush to assumptions, you may be wrong.
- **Legitimize** – Once you let a problem person know that you have heard them correctly, legitimize the validity of the feelings behind the behavior. You don't have to agree with the problem person, just acknowledge that it is legitimate to feel that way.
- **Defer** – You can either deal with the issue right away or try to get agreement to defer until later. In many situations it's better not to try to resolve an issue in the middle of a meeting, but to address it later. If the problem person agrees to defer, quickly refocus the meeting and continue with what you were doing before the interruption.
- **Graduated Response** – If none of the above works, you may have to escalate, saving direct confrontation as a last resort.   In the case of a loudmouth, begin by looking directly at the person, thanking the individual for his or her contribution and then calling on someone else. If that doesn't work, look the person in the eye and say something like *"What' going on Harry? Why are you dominating this meeting and not letting others have a chance to talk?"* Finally, you may have to confront the person in front of the group by saying *"Hold on, Harry. It's my opinion that you're dominating this meeting and not giving other people a chance to talk. Do others feel the same way?"* This is the most threatening approach and should be reserved as a last resort.

Effective Meetings Part 1 The Fundamentals

"If you had to identify, in one word, the reason why the human race has not achieved its full potential, that word would be *meetings*."

Table of Contents

Introduction

We live in a meeting world. We meet to share information, make decisions, develop plans, solve problems, recognize accomplishments, and achieve many other things. A lot of people spend a lot of time in meetings. One study showed that the average person in our society will sit through 9,000 hours of meetings in a lifetime—over 365 days. And, organizations spend thousands, sometimes millions, of dollars on meetings.

Many of us groan at the thought of going to another meeting. Why? Meetings often don't go well. They're mismanaged. They take too much time, they lack organization, they fail to achieve results, they get off track, they lack clear goals, and they lack effective leadership.

Many of us spend a lot of time preparing for the work we do, but we don't spend much time learning how to conduct or participate in all of the meetings that go along with getting our work done. This training will help you develop your ability to conduct and participate in your work meetings more effectively.

Learning Objectives

The overall goal of this training is to help you understand and appreciate the *WHY,* the *WHAT,* and the *HOW,* of effective meetings:

As a result of attending this workshop, you will be able to:

1. Describe the benefits and costs of meetings.

2. Identify and describe six key elements for effective meetings.

3. Describe behaviors that help meeting leaders and participants make meetings effective.

Meeting Experiences:
The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Think of meetings you have attended, both good and bad. From your experience, what makes an effective meeting, and what makes an ineffective meeting?

<table>
<tr><td align="center">Indicators of an
Effective Meeting</td><td align="center">Indicators of a
Ineffective Meeting</td></tr>
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Common Meeting Mistakes

1. Getting off the subject

2. No goals or agenda

3. Too long

4. Poor or inadequate preparation

5. Disorganized

6. Ineffective leadership / lack of control

7. Irrelevance of information discussed

8. Time wasted during meetings

9. Starting late

10. Interruptions from within and without

11. Some individuals dominate

12. Rambling, redundant discussion

13. Nothing seems to get done or decided

14. No published results or follow-up actions

The Benefits of Meetings

We meet for many reasons. We have meetings for giving and getting information, for solving problems and making decisions, for planning events and activities, for creating policies and procedures, and for many other reasons. In other words, we meet to get work done. In addition to getting work done, meetings provide other benefits for individuals and groups. Some of these benefits include the following:

- Help communication

- Get new ideas

- Learn from each other

- Build relationships by working together

- Gain commitment for ideas and action

- Support ability to identify with results

- Achieve a sense of mutual accomplishment

- Feel a sense of belonging

- Have fun

- _____

- _____

- _____

- _____

The Costs of Meetings

Understand: Meetings are expensive.

Assume:

- Employees, on average, cost about $200 a day ($25 per hour).

- There are 20 people at a meeting.

- It is an all-day meeting (8 hours).

Calculate:

1. What is the overall cost of the meeting? _____

2. What is the hourly cost of the meeting? _____

3. What is the cost per minute of the meeting? _____

Assume:

The meeting was poorly planned and managed. If it was planned and managed effectively, the meeting outcomes could have been achieved in four hours.

Recalculate:

What amount of scarce agency funds were wasted by this meeting?

_____ (OUCH!)

Bottom line question:

Did you get _____ dollars of value out of the meeting?

Overview: How to Do an Effective Meeting

Before the Meeting	During the Meeting			After the Meeting
PLAN	START	CONDUCT (Focus & Facilitate)	CONCLUDE	FOLLOW-UP
Clarify purpose and desired outcome of the meeting	Start with a warm-up	Cover one agenda item at a time	Summarize decisions and accomplishments	Write and distribute meeting minutes promptly
Identify meeting participants	Review the agenda: • Purpose (task) • Outcome • Topics • Methods • Time allocations	Establish and maintain appropriate pace	Agree on action items: • What needs to be done • By whom • By when	File the agenda, minutes, and other key documents
Choose methods to accomplish the meeting's purpose and outcome, for example: • Brainstorming • Reporting • Analyzing data • Decision-making: ranking, voting, consensus	Set or review ground rules for the meeting	Open discussions	Draft agenda for next meeting	Carry out all assignments
Develop the agenda and set the starting and ending times for each item	Clarify participant roles: facilitator, recorder, time-keeper, etc.	Maintain the focus of discussions	Evaluate the meeting: • What went well • Improvements	Set a time for pre-meeting planning
Send agenda to participants early		Manage participation	Thank everyone for their contributions and participation	
Arrange room and equipment		Check decisions		
		Close discussions		

Six Keys for Effective Meetings

1. **Planning**

   All of the things that must be done to prepare for the meeting

2. **Starting**

   How you set the tone and create the climate for the meeting

3. **Focusing**

   Keeping the meeting on track

4. **Facilitating**

   The many things a leader can do to involve participants, be supportive, resolve conflict, and manage differences

5. **Concluding**

   The way in which the leader ends the meeting to assure that participants feel satisfied with the outcome and that follow-up action will be carried out

6. **Following up**

   The things to do after the meeting

The Two Parts of a Meeting

1. **Content**

   Content refers to <u>what</u> is talked about at the meeting: agenda topics, information, opinions, decisions, action, plans, and meeting purpose.

2. **Process**

   Process refers to <u>how</u> the meeting proceeds and how the group works together to accomplish the purpose and build and maintain cohesiveness.

Planning a Meeting

The First Question: Should We Have a Meeting?

Yes

Meetings can be helpful for:

1. Getting immediate reactions to important information

2. Resolving conflicting viewpoints

3. Tapping the thinking and opinions of others

4. Ensuring understanding and acceptance of ideas

5. Accommodating a group's desire or need for a meeting

No

Meetings are not needed for:

1. Simply routing information

2. Doing something an e-mail or a phone call would accomplish

3. Getting others' input when you've already made up your mind

4. Working through an issue when there's not enough information

5. Working through an issue when anger and hostility are too high and people need time to cool off

>>>> Let's not waste people's time! <<<<

Nine Steps to Planning a Meeting

Key Points

- Thorough planning is critical to the success of a meeting.

- Failing to plan is planning to fail.

- It is important to go through all the steps.

The Nine Steps

1. Clarify the **purpose (task) of the meeting.**

2. Define the **desired outcomes.**

3. Design the **sequence of meeting activities.**

4. Determine **attendees**, **roles**, and **ground rules.**

5. Decide **when to meet and when to end.**

6. Determine **logistics, equipment, and administrative matters**, and **notify participants.**

7. Complete the **agenda.**

8. **Communicate the agenda** to participants.

9. Set up the **meeting room.**

1. <u>Clarify the purpose (task) of the meeting</u>

- <u>Definition</u>: The purpose (task) statement is a one-line statement that describes the reason why the meeting is being held. It starts with a verb. Here are some examples:
  - To decide the best way to approach our communication problem
  - To view the training video
  - To hear the report on the conference

- <u>Examples</u> of verbs to use in stating the purpose (task): to decide, solve, view, hear, inform, negotiate, listen, review

  _____   _____

  _____   _____

2. <u>Define the desired outcome</u>

- <u>Definition</u>: The desired outcome describes the expected results of the meeting—the product the participants will take away with them when the meeting is over. It can be visible (a written plan) or not visible (new knowledge). It is written with nouns and phrases, not verbs.

- <u>Examples</u> of desired outcomes:

  - **Task outcomes**: an action plan, a solution, a decision, an informed group

  _____   _____

  _____   _____

  - **Process outcomes**: a cooperative attitude, commitment, motivated team members

  _____   _____

  _____   _____

3. <u>Design the sequence of meeting activities</u>

- Always plan an introduction and a summary.
- Consider using an icebreaker at the beginning of the meeting to warm up the group or during the meeting to generate energy.
- Sequence meeting topics using the following considerations:
  - High-priority topics before low-priority topics
  - Logical sequence—e.g., (1) building information, (2) discussion toward a conclusion
  - Standardized sequences such as problem solving
  - Alternating high-energy and low-energy topics
  - Important topics when high energy is expected
  - Allowing staff to present first to encourage participation and dialogue
- Allow sufficient time for an ending.

4. <u>Determine attendees, roles, and ground rules</u>

ATTENDEES: Who should attend?

<u>Essential</u>: People who…
- Have relevant information or expertise
- Will make the final decision
- Are affected by or will carry out a decision
- Might significantly prevent or interfere with the implementation of a decision

<u>Optional</u>:
- Individuals with higher functional responsibility
- People with a general interest in the meeting information or outcomes
- Staff or support members who will be indirectly affected by the outcome
- People with similar problems or work situations

ROLES

Group roles or functions are those leadership tasks that can be shared by several people at the meeting. The tasks can be designated ahead of time and announced at the meeting, or the leader can call for volunteers at the beginning of the meeting. Some suggested roles are:

- **Designated leader**: responsible for managing the meeting
- **Timekeeper**: keeps track of time and reminds group of planned start and stop times for agenda items, and assists in maintaining meeting pace
- **Recorder**: keeps a written record of the proceedings
- **Chart person**: writes important discussion points, lists ideas, etc. on a chart to assist with focusing the group's attention
- **Process observer**: observes and makes comments about how the meeting is proceeding, often referring to the group's observance of ground rules, and raises the group's awareness of how it is functioning in relation to accomplishing its objectives
- **Facilitator**: Assists the designated leader in accomplishing tasks and attending to group process, and may simultaneously fill the roles of timekeeper, chart person, and process observer

GROUND RULES

Ground rules are guidelines for desired behaviors that enhance the process of the meeting and assist in accomplishing its purpose (task). They are standards that help clarify expectations regarding participation and can be used to address counterproductive behavior. Some example ground rules are:

- Listen to the person who is talking
- One person talks at a time, without interruption
- Stay on track
- No side conversations
- Be creative
- Communicate directly, honestly, and respectfully
- Hold questions until a person has finished speaking
- Limit contributions to five minutes

It is a good idea to ask a group to suggest changes or additions to add to an initial listing of ground rules.

5. <u>Decide when to meet and when to end</u>

- Hold important decision-making or problem-solving meetings when people have high energy, preferably in the morning; avoid Monday mornings and Friday afternoons as much as possible
- Decide what time the meeting is to begin and what time it is to end
- Set meeting length according to the agenda items, energy needed, and time and logistical constraints (car pools, etc.). Remember, energy usually drops after two hours. Also, try not to exceed six hours, unless it is a meeting retreat with scheduled breaks.
- Set the meeting date for a day when all essential people and information are available. Allow adequate time for attendees to prepare.
- Schedule 10-minute breaks at least every two hours.

6. <u>Determine logistics, equipment, and administrative matters, and notify participants</u>

- **Meeting location**: Choose a meeting room and facility that best supports your meeting purpose (task), desired outcomes, and activities. Favor a larger room for longer meetings, with movable chairs and tables, good ventilation, and lighting.
- **Room layout**: Plan your arrangement of tables and chairs.
- **Equipment and supplies**: Decide what audiovisual and other equipment you will need and supplies such as paper, markers, name tents, tape, etc.
- **Refreshments**: Support participant energy by providing water, and if possible, low-sugar snacks (fresh fruit, cheese, crackers, etc.) and decaffeinated drinks. While it is customary to provide coffee and pastries for a morning meeting and soda and cookies for an afternoon lift, too much caffeine and sugar can cause a subsequent drop in energy.
- **Notification**: Inform participants with a "save the date" e-mail as early as possible so they can put it on their calendars. Let them know more details about the meeting will be forthcoming.

7. Complete the agenda

- Include an introduction at the beginning and a summary at the end, allowing five to 15 minutes for each.
- Include the desired result you want for each agenda topic.
- You may elect to ask participants to add agenda items, if they wish. Be sure to assess the amount of time required for each item and record it.
- Write the agenda on a chart so all participants can see it during the meeting.

8. Communicate the agenda to participants prior to the meeting

As early as possible before the meeting date, send the written agenda to participants. A few days prior to the meeting, follow up with participants to confirm attendance, share expectations, etc.

9. Set up the meeting room

Arrange the meeting room to support accomplishing your desired outcomes and agenda activities. Vary the room layouts depending on the purpose of the meeting. Consider the following options:

- Set up theater-style seating with a podium for one-way information meetings.
- Seat people so they can see each other for information exchange meetings, problem solving, planning, or decision-making.
- Disperse powerful or high-level people around the group.
- Disperse people who have various roles around the group, particularly if the group is fairly large.

Consider equipment and comfort:
- Be sure projectors do not block vision.
- Attend to ventilation, lighting, room temperature, and noise.
- Be sure all needed equipment is in place.

Meeting Planning Worksheet

1. **Purpose (Task) of the meeting**

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. **Desired outcomes for the meeting**

Task outcomes: _____

_____

_____

_____

Process outcomes: _____

_____

_____

3. **Sequence of meeting activities**

Introduction: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Middle: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Summary: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. **Attendees, roles, and ground rules**

Attendees:

_____   _____   _____

_____   _____   _____

_____   _____   _____

_____   _____   _____

_____   _____   _____

Roles: Leader: _____

Timekeeper: _____

Recorder: _____

Chart person: _____

Process observer: _____

Facilitator: _____

Ground rules:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. **When to meet and when to end**

Date of meeting: _____

Starting time: _____

Ending time: _____

6. **Logistics, equipment, administrative matters, participant notification**

Meeting location:

_____

_____

_____

Room layout/arrangement:

_____

_____

_____

Equipment and supplies:

_____

_____

_____

Refreshments:

_____

_____

_____

Participant notification:

_____

_____

_____

7. **Agenda**

Start Time	Agenda Topic	Desired Result	Activity	Person Responsible

8. **Communicate the agenda to attendees**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Attendee preparation:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. **Set up meeting room**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Sample Meeting Agenda

April 1st Meeting

XYZ Project Team

AGENDA

1. Welcome

2. Project background

3. Project status report

4. Problems/issues/concerns

5. Other ideas

6. Close

Why is this sample agenda a good example of a poor agenda?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Sample Meeting Agenda

April 1st Meeting

XYZ Project Team

AGENDA

1. Welcome

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3. Project status report

4. Problems/issues/concerns

5. Other ideas

6. Close

Why is this sample agenda a good example of a poor agenda?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Sample Meeting Agenda Format

Meeting called by: _____   Date: _____

Participants: _____   _____   _____   _____

_____   _____   _____   _____

Meeting place: _____

Start time: _____   End time: _____

Please bring: _____

Meeting purpose (task): _____

_____

_____

Desired outcome(s): _____

_____

_____

Start Time	Agenda Topics	Desired Results	Person Responsible
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Estimating Agenda Time Frames

Review of meeting purpose (task), agenda & ground rules	5 to 10 minutes
Development of new ground rules	5 to 15 minutes
Information reports	
For Report	5 to 10 minutes
For Questions	5 to 10 minutes
Problems that surface from reports	5 to 10 minutes
(If deferred to another meeting)	
Problem solving sessions	
Describe and agree on the problem	15 to 30 minutes
List possible causes	20 to 30 minutes
List possible solutions	30 to 60 minutes
Develop an action plan	15 to 45 minutes
Planning sessions	
Define the scope of the task	10 to 30 minutes
List activities and develop a plan	30 to 90 minutes
Review plan for omissions and obstacles	30 to 60 minutes
Decision-making sessions	
Describe the decision to be made	5 to 10 minutes
Determine criteria for the decision	15 to 60 minutes
Evaluate options	10 to 60 minutes
Plan action steps and follow-up activities	10 to 30 minutes

Starting a Meeting

1. Welcome

2. Introductions

3. Icebreaker or warm-up activity

4. Statement of meeting purpose (task)*

5. Statement of desired outcomes*

6. Background discussion*

7. Review or development of agenda*

8. Clarification of expectations

9. Review or development of ground rules*

10. Assignment of roles

*Note

Asterisked items should be displayed in writing on chart paper or on a handout.

Focusing a Meeting

Focusing on the Purpose (Task)

One of the major challenges in leading a meeting is keeping the meeting focused on the purpose (task). Irrelevancies, tangents, interruptions, and other things can throw a meeting off track. There are many ways to make sure the meeting adheres to the agenda:

1. Lead the meeting through the agenda. Take charge. It is your meeting. You are the leader. Use a style of leadership appropriate to the purpose (task), the situation, and the willingness and ability of the participants. Share leadership roles with others and delegate some focusing activities to them.

2. Introduce each agenda item, and state the time available and the desired result.

3. Keep the discussion on track by referring to the following structures:

   - Purpose (task)
   - Desired outcomes
   - Agenda items
   - Ground rules
   - Roles
   - Time limits
   - Set process for each agenda item, e.g., problem solving steps, etc.

4. Use a chart pad and an easel or another visual aid to focus attention.

5. Start and maintain a "parking lot" list of important items not relevant to the present discussion.

6. At the end of each agenda item, briefly:

   - Summarize what was accomplished or decided
   - Identify unfinished business and what to do about it
   - Check for clarity and agreement

Facilitating a Meeting

Mining Group Gold:
Facilitating Collaborative Meetings

1. Prepare for a productive group session

   Five important planning questions:

   1) What is the **purpose** of the session?

   2) What are the **desired outcomes** of the session?

   3) Who will be the **facilitator**, **scribe**, and **time-keeper**?

   4) What is the **agenda**?

   5) How much **time** will be **allocated** for each agenda item?

   > If you can't or won't take the time to do the simple preparatory work, you haven't earned the right to convene a group session.
   >
   > --Thomas A. Kayser,

2. Determine the roles of facilitator, scribe, and time-keeper

   Whoever carries the **primary facilitator** role is not alone. Everyone else in attendance is expected to be a **secondary facilitator** to help the primary facilitator with the process of moving the meeting along productively.

3. Initiate and maintain an open and collaborative climate

    - Present issues so the focus is on the situation, not on behaviors.

    - Present issues so that they encompass common interests.

    - Share your knowledge of the relevant facts regarding topics or issues.

    - Resist the temptation to immediately influence the thinking of the group.

    - Encourage contributions by asking questions and by inviting, reinforcing, and safeguarding participation.

4. Deal with emotions

    - **Feelings**: Accept, acknowledge, and process feelings in an organized way so the group can move on to facts.

    - **Facts**: Objectively generate and develop facts so the group can use them to identify and analyze problems.

    - **Solutions**: Have the group generate potential solutions, select one of them, and make decisions about implementing and evaluating it.

5. Use key meeting tools for facilitating collaborative participation.

Gate opening	Inviting a group member to contribute ideas or thoughts on the subject being discussed.
Restating opinions	Making sure that everyone understands the opinions that have been expressed.
Safeguarding an idea	Protecting an idea from being prematurely killed.
Role splitting	When a primary facilitator moves back and forth between functioning as a facilitator and as a contributing member of the group.

Source: *Mining Group Gold* (25-minute training video), CRM Films.

Facilitating and Managing
Participation, Pace, Behavior, and Differences

A meeting leader must facilitate participant involvement, deal with conflict, manage differences, make sure that everyone is heard, keep communication open, and carry out many other tasks that help participants make a contribution to the meeting and make the meeting worthwhile.

<u>Promoting Participation</u>

1. Specify *how* you want people to participate, indicating whether you want them to be active, giving ideas and feedback, asking questions, and offering support, or whether you just want them to listen.

2. Encourage participation and clarity in any one or more of the following ways:

   - Get input from frontline staff first.
   - Ask open-ended questions.
   - Use active listening to draw people out; paraphrase; be attentive.
   - Acknowledge and reinforce positive participation both verbally and nonverbally.
   - Ask for concrete examples.
   - Draw out people who have relevant expertise or who are less involved.
   - Be supportive of new ideas, partial ideas, and minority views.
   - Distinguish assumptions from facts.
   - Use a structured activity:
     (1) Ask one speaker to call on the next speaker.
     (2) Specify that no person may talk a second time until all have talked at least once.
     (3) Use a nerf ball and roll or throw it gently to people who have not yet spoken.
     (4) Break the group into subgroups (of no more than four) for assigned tasks.
     (5) Create your own structured activity, e.g., round robin participation.

3. *Feel* supportive to the group, and you will act that way.

Attending to Pace

1. It is normal for energy to wax and wane during a meeting, causing the pace to speed up or slow down. As a leader, you can balance the pace so people's energy and interest remain relatively high throughout the meeting.

2. When the pace is too fast or too slow:

   - Make an observation about how you see the pace and ask the group if it agrees with you.

   - Test for completion of the agenda items.

   - Vary your own pace.

   - Break the group into small subgroups (if appropriate to the agenda) and assign a task to each group.

   - Poll the participants as to how they feel about the pace.

   - Take a break.

   - Take a stretch break in place.

Dealing with Counterproductive Behavior

1. Keep calm and feel assertive.

2. Use active listening techniques; paraphrase; summarize.

3. Look for the value of the input and acknowledge it.

4. Refer to ground rules, agenda, meeting purpose (task), or desired outcomes and indicate that the behavior appears to be taking the group away from its task or is counter to the ground rules. Or, ask the person to describe how the behavior relates to the task at hand.

5. Use a "parking lot" list to record tangential or irrelevant topics.

6. Use an "I" statement to describe the behavior and how it is disruptive. For example:

   When you *(keep interrupting),* I feel *(frustrated),* because *(we're trying to finish our task today).*

7. Ask for cooperation and state what you want.

8. Interrupt the meeting to ask for process observations from the group. For example:

"How could this meeting be more effective?"

or

"How does *(the counterproductive behavior)* hinder or help the meeting?

9. As a last resort, discuss the behavior privately.

Managing Differences and Resolving Conflict

1. Encourage diverse views to improve quality and creativity.

2. Make sure minority views are heard.

3. Focus on the idea rather than the person.

4. Suggest that each speaker paraphrase the previous speaker before presenting his or her own viewpoint.

5. Set aside a separate meeting to deal directly with the conflict.

6. Use these steps for resolving conflict:

   - Define common ground, areas of agreement, or common goals.

   - Isolate points of disagreement, asking each side to make clear statements and paraphrase everything that is said.

   - Brainstorm or research alternatives to reach agreed-on goals or common ground and diminish differences. Allow sufficient time for alternatives to be generated and discussed.

   - Decide by accommodation, compromise, or consensus on suitable solutions and actions.

   - Plan for evaluation of ideas and solutions.

   - Refocus the meeting.

Concluding a Meeting

1. **Summarize** decisions and accomplishments.

2. **Compare** results with the desired outcomes.

3. **Identify unfinished business** and suggest ways to address these issues.

4. **Complete an action plan** that specifies *who* will do *what* by *when*.

5. **Ask for feedback**, verbal or written, on the *content* and *process*, using the following or similar questions:

    - To what extent did we accomplish our **desired outcomes**?

    - To what extent did we follow the **ground rules**?

    - To what extent did this meeting **meet your expectations**?

    - What did you **like** about the meeting?

    - What did you **not like** about the meeting?

    - What **helped** us in accomplishing our task?

    - What **hindered** us in accomplishing our task?

    - What can we **do better** at future meetings?

    - What do we want to **start doing** at future meetings?

    - What do we want to **stop doing** at future meetings?

    - What do we want to **continue doing** at future meetings?

    - What are we **learning** about the way we operate as a team?

6. **Thank** people for their time and participation and adjourn the meeting.

Improving a Meeting

Identify evaluation questions for improving your meetings. You can ask these questions at the end of the meeting or after the meeting. Sample questions are provided below.

1. Were the meeting purpose (task) and desired outcome(s) clearly stated?

2. Was the agenda specific?

3. Was someone assigned responsibility for each agenda topic?

4. Were time limits set for each agenda topic?

5. Were ground rules identified, agreed to, and monitored?

6. Was the discussion focused on the desired outcome(s)?

7. Was an appropriate pace maintained?

8. Were diverse points of view encouraged?

9. Were the desired outcome(s) accomplished?

10. Were action items assigned?

11. Did the meeting end at the projected time?

12. Additional comments:

_____

_____

_____

Following Up on a Meeting

Important meeting follow-up activities include the following:

1. Write and distribute meeting minutes.

2. File the agenda, minutes, and other key documents.

3. Monitor the carrying out of action items or assignments.

4. Review meeting evaluation information to improve future meetings.

5. Set a time for pre-meeting planning for the next meeting.

Meeting Behaviors for Leaders and Participants

How to Contribute Effectively in Meeting Discussions

<u>Organize Your Contributions</u>
Just as a well-organized speech makes a better presentation, well-organized contributions make better meetings. Rambling, disorganized, disjointed ideas increase the likelihood that the meeting will get sidetracked.

<u>Speak When Your Contribution is Relevant</u>
Before you make a comment, listen to the person who is speaking. Is your comment useful and helpful? Groups are easily distracted by irrelevant comments.

<u>Make One Point at a Time</u>
Even though you may be bursting with good ideas and suggestions, your fellow participants will be more likely to listen to your ideas if you present them one at a time rather than as a string of unrelated points.

<u>Speak Clearly and Assertively</u>
You don't want to aggressively try to dominate the conversation, but you don't want to mumble unassertively either. If you do, your contributions may get lost in the shuffle.

<u>Support Your Ideas with Evidence</u>
One of the key determinants of good decisions and effective solutions is the use of evidence to support ideas and opinions. Opinions are ubiquitous: Everyone has one. Facts, statistics, and well-selected examples strengthen a point and help keep the group focused on the task.

<u>Listen Actively to All Aspects of the Discussion</u>
Group meetings provide one of the most challenging listening situations. Several people attempting to make points and counter arguments means that you will have to throttle up your powers of concentration and listening. Checking your understanding by summarizing or paraphrasing can dramatically improve communication and decrease misunderstanding.

Ten Effective Facilitation Behaviors for Meetings

1. **Paraphrase** what a person has said so that he or she feels understood and so that the other members of the group can hear a concise summary of what has been said. For example:

    So, if I understand you right, you feel we should have a high degree of confidence in our plan before we move forward with it. Otherwise, we could end up wasting a lot of time if it doesn't work and we have to start over.

2. **Check** your understanding against the words of a participant or ask a participant to clarify what he or she is saying. For example:

    Are you saying this plan is not realistic? I'm not sure I understand what you meant. Could you please run it by us again?

3. **Compliment** an interesting or insightful comment. For example:

    That's a good point. I'm glad you brought that to our attention.

4. **Elaborate** on a participant's contribution to the discussion with examples or suggest a new way to view the problem. For example:

    Your comments provide an interesting point from the customer's perspective. We could also consider how a manager would view the situation.

5. **Energize** a discussion by quickening the pace, using humor, or, if necessary, prodding the group for more contributions. For example:

    Oh, my, we have lots of humble people in this group! Here's a challenge for all of us: For the next two minutes, let's see how many ways we can think of to increase cooperation in our section.

6. **Disagree** (gently) with a participant's comments to stimulate further discussion. For example:

   I can see where you're coming from, but I'm not sure what you're describing is always the case. Has anyone else had an experience different from Terry's?

7. **Mediate** differences of opinion between participants and relieve any tensions that may be brewing. For example:

   I think Chris and Adrian are not really disagreeing with each other but are just bringing out two different sides of the issue.

8. **Connect** ideas, showing their relationships to one another. For example:

   As we can see from Gene's and Danielle's comments, personal goal setting is very much a part of time management. People need to be able to establish goals on a daily basis in order to more effectively manage their time.

9. **Change** the group process by altering how information is being gathered or by moving the group to a stage of evaluating ideas that have been placed before it. For example:

   Let's break into smaller groups and see if we can come up with some typical customer objections to the plan that was presented this morning.

10. **Summarize** (and record, if desired) the major views of the group. For example:

    I have noted four major reasons that have come from the group's discussion as to why people don't like attending meetings: (1) they're not needed, (2) they're not planned, (3) they're not managed well, and (4) they don't achieve anything.

Reminders for All Meeting Members

1. <u>Participants do not ignore others' contributions</u>

   As participants make comments or ask questions, others show an active interest. Members recognize and respond to the needs of other members. They measure the effect of their remarks in order to continue making valuable contributions and improve their effectiveness as group participants. Silence is not golden.

2. <u>Clarification precedes evaluation</u>

   In most meetings these two are reversed—judgments are usually made before members fully know what they're discussing. If understanding comes first, potentially good ideas are not prematurely killed. Nor is a member likely to feel rejected as a person. If potential conflict seems imminent because of possible misunderstanding, offer to paraphrase or summarize the issues to be sure that real understanding has taken place.

3. <u>Members speak for themselves</u>

   Participants accept sole responsibility for their own remarks. They do not mislead themselves by offering opinions that are not their own, or by referring to a vague "most people," etc. If you speak for someone who's not present there's little opportunity for a meaningful give-and-take discussion. State your own ideas as your own.

4. <u>Ideas are separated from the person presenting them</u>

   Once an idea is expressed, or a proposal made, try to identify the topic as group property. It's not "Mary's idea on …" but "The proposal on …" People should feel free to present an idea, and then join in the discussion and evaluation of the idea without having to defend themselves personally.

5. <u>All members participate</u>

   While group members do not participate in the same way, they stay actively involved in helping the group move along on its task. For example, when one person presents an idea, others help make sure that it's understood and organized. Members attempt to fulfill whatever function is appropriate to keep things working.

6. <u>The group stays conscious of the process</u>

   Occasionally, groups take time out to discuss how they're working together. Processes are surfaced, evaluated, and worked on. Some symptoms of process trouble are excessive hair-splitting, suggestions that plop, private conversations, two or more people dominating, members taking sides, unwillingness to compromise, and apathy.

7. <u>Decisions by default are avoided</u>

   An effective work group will make its decisions openly and state what it has decided, rather than to allow decisions to be made by default. Sometimes a group may make a decision and not carry it out. When this happens, the *real* decision was to *not* act.

8. <u>Conflict is viewed as necessary and helpful</u>

   Effective groups bring conflict into the open and deal with it. Conflict either will be open, and subject to group control, or disguised, and out of control. Sometime it leaves the room and hides in the hallway.

Personal Action Plan

List a few ideas of value that you learned or rediscovered in this training that will help you effectively lead or participate in meetings.
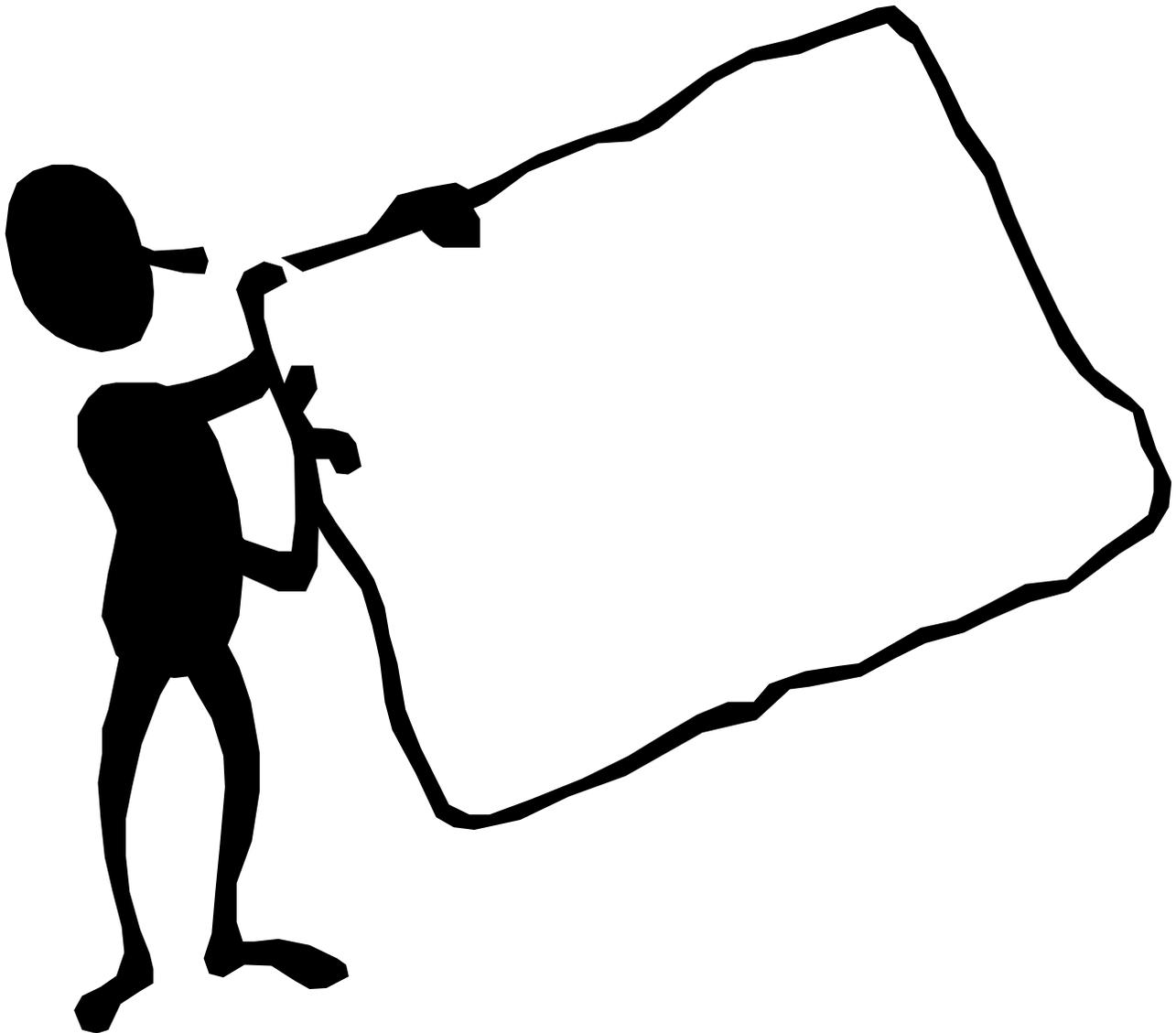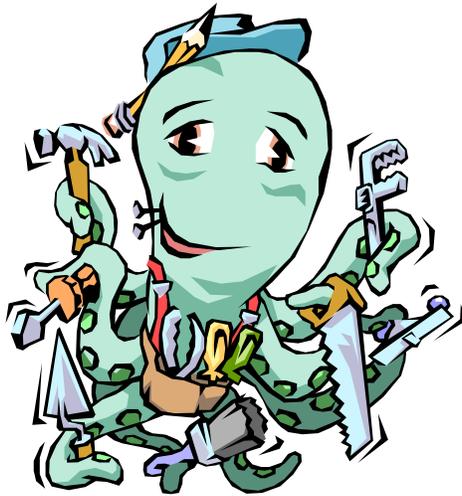
Successful meetings don't just happen; they're planned and managed.

Effective Meetings
Part 2
Facilitation Skills

Tool Kit

Table of Contents

Creating and Managing Participation

Barriers to Participation

A first step in getting people to participate actively is to understand why they don't. Common barriers to participation include the following:

- Members may be confused about the topic being discussed.

- There may be a lack of commitment to the topic under discussion.

- They may feel unsure about the quality of their personal contribution.

- They may be insecure about speaking in front of others.

- They might be afraid of the reaction of their peers.

- Talkative members may "shut down" quieter people.

- Some may be reluctant to speak up in front of "superiors."

- There may be a low level of trust and openness in the group.

- Members feel withdrawn due to a recent traumatic event.

- The organization may have a history of not listening to or supporting employee suggestions.

Pre-Meeting Participation Assessment Checklist

When planning any meeting, it's helpful to assess how participative the members are likely to be. If possible, find out the following information before the meeting:

___ Whether or not the participants are used to meeting and discussing ideas.

___ How the members feel about speaking up in front of their leader and each other.

___ Whether relations between participants are good or strained.

___ Whether there has been a recent incident that might distract participants, e.g., a layoff, a personal tragedy, etc.

___ If members have group skills such as listening, clarifying, encouraging, etc.

___ How the group has managed past meetings.

___ Whether the leader or organization is likely to support the ideas of the group.

Conditions for Full Participation

In general, people will participate fully if they:

- Feel relaxed with the other participants.

- Understand the topic under discussion.

- Have had some say in the planning process.

- Feel committed to the topic.

- Have the information and knowledge needed for a fruitful discussion.

- Feel "safe" in expressing their opinions.

- Trust and have confidence in the facilitator.

- Are comfortable and at ease in the meeting room.

- Feel that the organization will support their ideas.

Managing Participation

Meetings are most effective when members are actively involved and participating in the process. Basic facilitation skills will serve to encourage member participation. Frequently, however, problem situations occur because of the level of participation of individuals.

Some differences in levels of participation are a natural reflection of variations in peoples' personalities and their preferred ways of interacting. A problem situation occurs when people participate too much or too little.

If an individual is too vocal, then other people may not be able to fully participate in the meeting. You may also run out of time to achieve the meeting purpose and desired outcomes.
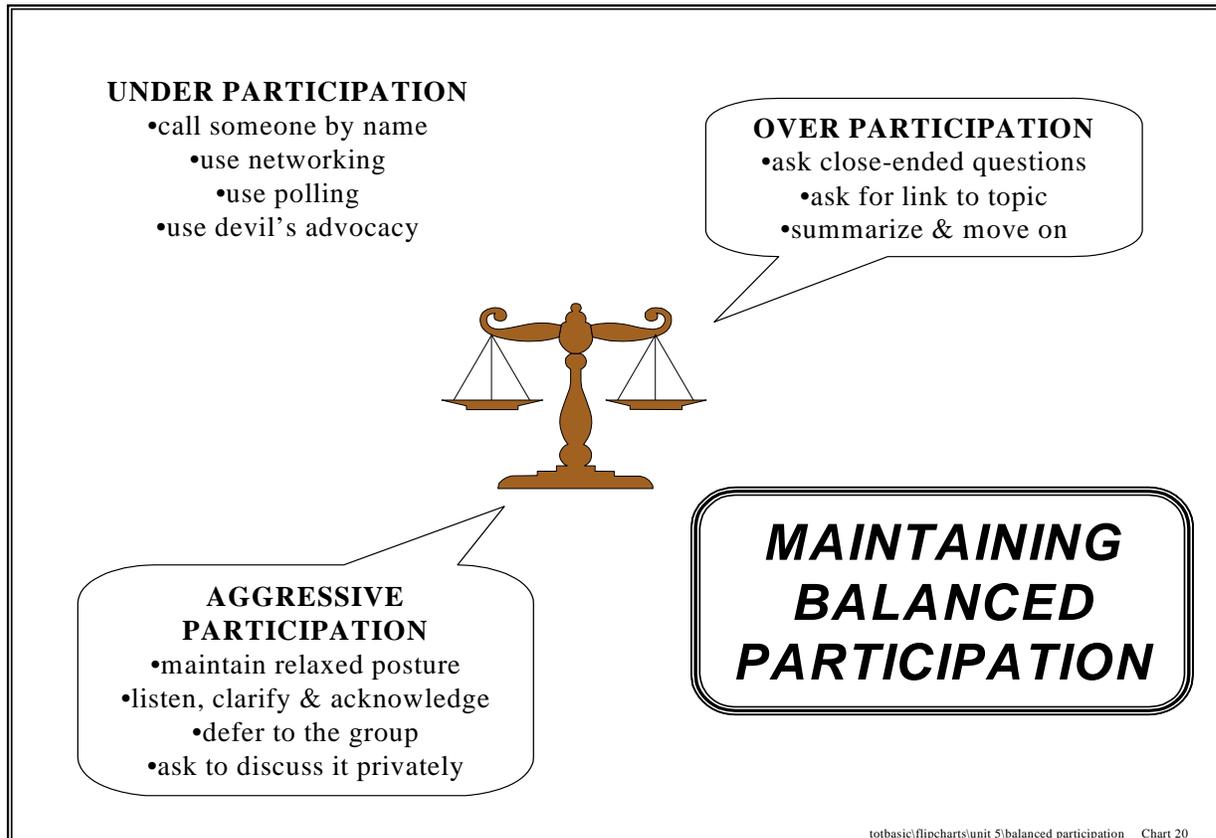
If individuals are too silent, their valuable input is lost from the group. Silent participants pose another problem for you, as you may have difficulty assessing whether they are engaged in the meeting.

Don't assume that too much or too little participation is a reflection of hostility toward you or the meeting. Overly vocal participants may simply be very enthusiastic and excited about the issues, and silent participants may just be nervous about expressing themselves in front of the group.

When participation levels become a problem, you must take action. By ensuring balanced participation, you enlist all of the group's resources in achieving the meeting's purpose and desired outcomes.

Managing Participation (cont.)

UNDER PARTICIPATION
•call someone by name
•use networking
•use polling
•use devil's advocacy

OVER PARTICIPATION
•ask close-ended questions
•ask for link to topic
•summarize & move on

AGGRESSIVE PARTICIPATION
•maintain relaxed posture
•listen, clarify & acknowledge
•defer to the group
•ask to discuss it privately

MAINTAINING BALANCED PARTICIPATION

totbasic\flipcharts\unit 5\balanced participation   Chart 20

Effective Meetings – Part 2 – Facilitation Skills.doc

Does Not Talk?

It's hard to say who presents a tougher challenge to the facilitator: the participant who talks too much or the one who talks too little. It's easier to ignore the silent ones. Remember, however, that silence does not always mean understanding or agreement. It may mean that the uncommunicative participant is confused or plotting to sabotage.

Encouraging the silent types to talk will help ensure a much more inclusive solution and speed up the implementation. Also, it will set a model for equal participation from everyone.

Here are some suggestions for dealing with participants who don't participate:

- Reduce the anxiety level by using an alternative format. For example, break the large group into dyads for preliminary sharing of ideas. Then ask each pair to give a summary report of their discussion.

- Ask the participants to write their concerns, comments, suggestions, or whatever on index cards. Then ask the team to cluster these cards and organize them into themes.

- Direct questions to the silent participant. Ask questions related to the silent participant's areas of expertise and interest.

- Ask the silent participant to react to someone else's statement.

- Ask everyone to take turns to make a one-minute presentation.

- Reinforce comments from the silent participant, without being patronizing.

- Talk to silent participants before the meeting or during a break. Emphasize the importance of their contribution and collaboratively work out strategies to increase their level of participation.

- Before the meeting or during a break, assign the role of drawing out the reluctant participant to one or two group members.

- Call on the silent participant by name. Frequently use the name of this participant.

Talks Too Much?

When someone dominates a discussion, the other participants hold back their ideas. Group members get bored. Instead of coming up with lots of different and potentially valuable ideas, the group ends up with just a few.

Here are some suggestions for dealing with participants who talk too much:

- Avoid discouraging the excessive talker. Instead, encourage the others to participate more.

- Go around the group, giving each participant a turn to talk.

- Divide the group into pairs for preliminary sharing of ideas. Then ask each pair to give a summary report of their discussion.

- Impose "air time" limits on participants. Give the participants an equal number of poker chips, each worth 30 seconds of talking time.

- Interrupt the talkative person with a question directed to someone else.

- Acknowledge the comment and involve others, e.g., "Al, that was an interesting insight. Barbara, what are your views on this issue?"

- Before the meeting or during a break, enlist the help of the excessive talker in encouraging the silent participants to open up.

- At the start of the meeting, establish equal participation by all members as a group agreement or ground rule.

- Encourage group members to help monitor participation and ensure balance.

Facilitation skills

<u>Definition and Purpose</u>

Meetings are most effective when members participate. When you use facilitation skills, you encourage involvement by showing interest in the members and making them feel free to comment and ask questions. Facilitation skills also help you to obtain feedback from the members about how the meeting is going. This enables you to respond to their needs most appropriately.

Facilitation skills help you bridge the gap between the meeting content and the participants.

Meeting Content	Facilitation Skills	Participants

<u>Types of Facilitation Skills</u>

The four basic facilitation skills you will use in conducting your training are:

1. Attending

2. Observing

3. Listening

4. Questioning

<u>Source</u>: Adapted from *Train the Trainer*, Amherst, MA: HRD Press.

Attending Skills

Attending means presenting yourself physically in a manner that shows you are paying attention to participants. When you use attending skills, you are building rapport with them. You are communicating that you value them as individuals and are interested in their needs as a group.

Attending helps you gather information from the participants. Your physical positioning enables you to observe their behaviors, which are important sources of information for you in assessing how the meeting is going. Attending also encourages participants to interact verbally with you.

There are four attending behaviors that show you are interested in group members.

1. Facing participants.
2. Maintaining appropriate eye contact.
3. Moving toward participants.
4. Avoiding distracting behaviors.

Guidelines for Using Attending Skills

DO	DON'T
• Position your body so you face all the participants	• Talk to visual aids
• Continually scan the group with your eyes	• Avoid eye contact or scan the group too frequently or too rapidly
• Walk toward participants	• Turn your back to part of the group
• Smile at individuals	• Stare at individuals
• Nod affirmatively	• Distance yourself from the participants
• Circle the room during individual or small group activities to show interest	• Stand in fixed positions
• Use natural facial expressions when talking with participants	• Shuffle papers, look at your watch, etc. while participants are talking

Observing Skills

Observing skills help you assess how the meeting is going. Based on your observations over time, you can make decisions to continue the meeting process as planned, or to modify it to respond to the group's needs.

There are three steps in using observing skills.

Step 1: Look at the person's face, body position, and body movements.

Is the person smiling? Frowning? Nodding? Yawning? Looking at you? Looking away?

Is the person leaning forward? Leaning back in a chair? Tapping a pencil? Shuffling his or her feet?

Step 2: Formulate an inference of the person's feelings based on what you have observed.

Step 3: Take appropriate action based on the inference made.

Below is a list of non-verbal behaviors and some inferences you might make about participants' feelings.

Non-Verbal Behaviors & Possible Feelings

BEHAVIORS	POSSIBLE FEELINGS
Smiling Nodding affirmatively Leaning forward Eye contact	Enthusiasm/Understanding
Yawning Vacant stare Shuffling feet Leaning back in chair Looking at clock	Boredom
Frowning Pursing lips Vacant stare Avoiding eye contact	Confusion

Observing Skills (cont.)

Although a single behavior can serve as an indicator of a feeling, your inferences will be based on the total data you collect from your continuing observations. Whether you decide to take action or not will depend on the situation as you view it. For example, how many members are experiencing the feeling, what is the depth and duration of the feeling, what affect is the feeling having on the group's participation, etc. If in your judgment the situation warrants action, consider the following possibilities.

Responding to Participants' Behaviors

If the inference you have drawn is:	And…	Then…
Enthusiasm/ Understanding	• Several participants display the behavior	• Continue, and make a mental note that the meeting is going well.
	• One participant displays the behavior	• Continue, and make a mental note to check again later.
Boredom	• Several participants display the behavior	• Take a break, speed up the meeting, or check your process to be sure the participants are involved in it.
	• One participant displays the behavior	• Continue, but make a mental note to reassess later.
Confusion	• Several participants display the behavior	• Ask participants about areas of concern or confusion, and ask them what could be done to help the situation.
	• One participant displays the behavior	• Ask the participant about areas of concern or confusion and address them. Or if time is limited, talk with the participant at next break.

Listening Skills

Listening is obtaining verbal information and verifying that you understand it. Listening skills enable you to demonstrate your understanding of participants' perceptions. They also provide you with feedback about how the meeting is going. You can use this feedback as you consider how to proceed with the meeting.

Listening involves two key steps:

1. **Listening to the words being expressed.**
   This involves maintaining concentration on what the participant is saying.

2. **Paraphrasing what was said to demonstrate understanding.**
   This involves interacting with the participant to ensure accurate understanding of what he or she said.

Step 1: Listening to the words being expressed.

As you listen to the words being expressed, try to grasp both the content and the meaning of the words from the participant's perceptive. While this may sound simple, you will find that both internal and external distractions create roadblocks to effective listening.

Internal distractions are the competing thoughts that develop in your head while the participant is talking. Sometimes they are related to what the participant is saying; sometimes they are mental excursions to unrelated topics. It is important to eliminate these internal distractions so you can focus on what the participant is saying.

External distractions are things that happen in the meeting that compete with your attention to the participant. They can be sights or sounds. Exclude them, or at the least, defer giving attention to them, until the participant has finished speaking.
Once you have focused on the participant's message, you can then go to the next step--demonstrating your understanding of what the participant said.

Listening Skills (cont.)

Step 2: Paraphrasing what was said to demonstrate understanding.

Paraphrasing to demonstrate understanding requires you to verbally interact with the participant. The interaction is either to:
- Get additional information to fill in your understanding gaps, or to
- Verify with the participant what you think was said.

Use a phrase such as, "You're saying …", or "As I understand it…" before paraphrasing what the participant said. If you then paraphrase the information accurately, the participant can confirm that you understand. If you paraphrase inaccurately or miss important details, the participant can add the information needed for you to understand.

Questioning Skills

Questions play a major role in facilitating meetings. Questions help get group members to participate and get involved in the meeting. They also tap participants' knowledge and experiences in achieving meeting outcomes.

Two skills associated with questions in meetings are:

1. Asking questions.
2. Responding to participants' questions.

Asking Questions

Asking questions effectively in meetings is one of the most important skills you can develop. Asking questions effectively means selecting the right *type* of question, *phrasing* it so it encourages a response, and then *directing* it appropriately.

Types of Questions

There are two basic types of questions from which to choose, *open* questions and *closed* questions.

Types of Questions

Type of Question	Description	Example
Open	• Requires more than a "yes" or "no" answer. • Stimulates thinking. • Usually begins with "what," "how," "why," "when"	"What ideas do you have for possible solutions to the problem?"
Closed	• Requires a one-word answer. • Closes off discussion. • Usually begins with "is," "can," "how many," "does"	"Does everyone support the change being proposed?"

Questioning Skills (cont.)

Phrasing Questions

Once you've decided on the type of question you will use, you need to determine how you will phrase it. Consider the following "Do's" and "Don'ts" for phrasing questions.

Guidelines for Phrasing Questions

DO	DON'T
Ask clear, concise questions covering a single issue.	Ask rambling, ambiguous questions covering multiple issues.
Ask challenging questions which stimulate thinking.	Ask questions which are too easy and provide no opportunity for thinking.
Ask honest, relevant questions.	Ask "trick" questions.

Directing Questions

The final consideration in asking effective questions is how to direct the question. There are two ways to direct questions:

1. To the group.
2. To a specific individual.

Choosing How to Direct Questions

IF YOU WANT TO...	THEN...
• Stimulate thinking of all participants • Allow participants to respond voluntarily • Avoid putting an individual on the spot	Direct the question to the group. **Example:** "What experiences have you had in this kind of situation?"
• Stimulate *one* member to think and respond • Tap the experience of an expert in the group	Direct the question to an individual. **Example:** "Mary, you have had a lot of experience with this type of situation. What do you recommend?"

More Questions

If you want:	Consider using:
♦ The entire group to think about an issue ♦ To begin a group discussion ♦ To invite any willing person to respond	An **overhead** question, one that is open to anyone to answer. Example: What can be done about this problem?
♦ To expand involvement in a discussion ♦ To capitalize on group resources ♦ The questioner to clarify own position on the matter	A **redirected** question back to the questioner or to the group. Example: You're raising an important issue. What do the rest of you think about it?
♦ To introduce a specific point of view ♦ To have the group explore another side of the issue ♦ To stimulate creativity	A **hypothetical** question. Example: What if the situation was reversed and you were the project leader?

Responding to Participants' Questions

The second skill associated with questions involves responding to questions from the group. Participants' questions provide an opportunity to clarify issues and information for the group as well as for the individual asking the question. The way in which you respond to questions also affects participants' comfort and willingness to ask other questions and participate in other ways in the meeting.

Three acceptable ways to respond to participants' questions are:
1. Provide the answer yourself.
2. Redirect the question back to the questioner.
3. Redirect the question to the group.

Responding to Participants' Questions

Choose the Following Response	When...
Provide the answer yourself.	• You feel you have a helpful answer. • You feel a response from you will benefit the group process.
Redirect the question back to the questioner.	• You want to encourage the questioner to think it through. • You want to get the questioner's thinking.
Redirect the question to the group.	• You want to involve the group. • When you want to get the group's thinking. • You want time to consider your response.

Pacing

"Pacing" refers to how fast or slow you move through the meeting agenda. It includes the following considerations:

- Speaking

- Repeating key points

- Using questions

- Pausing (for thinking time)

- Listening

- Sharing information

An effective facilitator learns how to sense when to continue a discussion and when to move on.

If in doubt, consider the following:

- **What are the needs of the <u>total</u> group in terms of moving forward**

- Do the majority seem to be struggling?
- Do the majority seem to be bored or irritated?
- Is there a particular individual who just isn't getting it?
- Ask the group what they need.

- **How much time is available and what's left on the agenda?**

- Is it more important to complete the full agenda or continue the current discussion?
- How flexible can you be and still accomplish your objectives?
- Outline remaining items to be covered and let group members decide what's most important to them.

Using Pauses

- When making a key point, state it then pause while maintaining eye contact. This gives participants time to reflect and mull over what was said and allows them to make their own connections.

- Silence is your friend! Though sometimes uncomfortable, silence (especially after asking a question) is often a sign of deep thought, not a lack of understanding or knowledge of the answer. Give adequate time for silent thought before restating the question or asking another one.

Facilitator's Toolbox

IF YOU NEED TO…	THEN TRY THIS TOOL
Use an icebreaker to **learn** more **about each other**	Uncommon Commonalities
Do quick and thorough **brainstorming**	Mind Mapping
Set mutually agreed-upon **team expectations**	Moral Agreement
Turn **negatives into positives**	Double Reversal Ground Rules
Establish **group behavior** and norms	Stop-Start-Continue
Structure a **focused conversation**	ORID Discussion Method
Organize **group thinking** no matter the group size	Open Space Technology
Identify **driving forces** and restraining forces	Force Field Analysis
Do the **first step** in problem solving	Problem Focus Statement
Discover the **root cause**(s) of a problem	Five Why's
Weigh the **pro's and con's** of an issue	PMI (Plus-Minus-Interesting)
Help a group **prioritize** ideas, solutions, etc.	Dot Voting
Select the **best decision** or solution	Decision Matrix
Gain a pulse of **consensus** among a group	Five Finger Consensus
Brainstorm and organize random information into a **plan**	Affinity Clustering

Uncommon Commonalities

An Icebreaker and an Energizer

What: A great way to get people to become more familiar with each other, build some trust, and get ready to work together.

When: With large or small groups; highly interactive and energizing.

Why: Builds quick trust and camaraderie within groups.

Process:

1. Groups should be sized between four and six people. More or less becomes either too hard or too easy. Make sure everyone has introduced themselves, i.e., agency, job etc.

2. Explain the goal of the activity: The members of each table group are to find some unusual or uncommon things they share in common. An example would be that you have all bungee jumped. It would not be "uncommon" for everyone to have been to Disneyland, to love chocolate, to go camping, or to have a high stress job. All the groups are competing to come up with the most unusual thing their members have in common. There may be prizes for the winning team.

3. Ask each group to select a note taker to record their work. Give them 10 minutes to do their best.

4. Have them prioritize and select their most unusual commonality. Have the table groups share with the whole group their entry in the most unusual commonality sweepstakes.

5. List each entry on a flip chart as it is reported out. Then have the whole group vote by raised hands on which one they think is the most unusual.

6. Option. Use the entries to create a team name for each table. For example: The Cactus-eaters, The Skydivers, etc.

Mind mapping

Quick and Thorough Brainstorming

What: A flexible and effective creativity and problem solving technique. Mind mapping is a whole-brain approach to outlining, note taking, and generating and organizing ideas.

When: For any process or topic requiring quick gathering of information and organization.

Why: To gather and sort information fast.

Process:

- Write the central focus idea or image in the center of the page.
- Draw "spokes" from the center outward and write a main idea or major thought on each spoke. Use as many spokes as needed.
- Use key words, images or symbols to represent ideas. Be creative. Use colors. Go fast with high energy and write whatever comes to mind. Turn off your idea censor. All ideas are good and get captured.
- Use as few words as possible for each idea (one or two words is best).
- Draw branches off the main spokes to represent connected ideas.
- When all ideas are exhausted and on your mind map, move to organizing the spokes and branches in a linear, logical fashion.

Mind mapping can be used for:

- Writing: Prevent writer's block and get all of your ideas into play.
- Project Management and Strategic Planning: Lay out all of the pieces of the project or plan and then organize them.
- Brainstorming: Great for brainstorming individually or in small groups.
- Meetings: List and develop topics or activities for successful meetings.
- Time Management: Lay out your day, week, month or year.
- Note Taking: Organize your class or book notes in an easy-to-remember format.

Source: Adapted from work by Tony Buzan and Joyce Wycoff.

Moral Agreement

Establish Mutually Agreed-Upon Team Expectations

What: A technique to help establish mutually agreed-upon expectations for a work team.

When: To gain commitment from all team members to abide by and be held accountable for the established expectations.

Why: To improve team performance and behaviors.

Process:

1. **Set up a meeting.** Set aside some uncluttered time to have an in-depth dialogue with your team members. Include this process at a group meeting with flipcharts available.

2. **List manager expectations.** Ask your team: "What should you expect of me as the manager of this team?" Write down **all** their ideas. Remember, this is a brainstorm and all ideas get acknowledged and written down. You'll have the chance to clarify and respond to their ideas in a moment.

3. **Clarify.** Then clarify or respond to their expectations. You must feel comfortable and be willing to consider all the expectations they offered. If some of their ideas are too far "out there" for you, then explain why you can't abide by them and change or remove them from the list.

4. **List team (employee) expectations.** Next, ask them: "Now that we have a list of expectations for me as the manager, what should I expect from you as team members?" Again, acknowledge and write down **all** their brainstorm ideas.

5. **Clarify.** Then clarify or respond to their expectations for themselves. If some expectations or behaviors that you feel strongly about are missing, add them to the list. Modify or delete those ideas that all members cannot agree on.

6. **Gain commitment.** Now give them the punch line: "Okay, I'll make an agreement with you all today. I'm willing to work to meet all the expectations you've listed for me, and you can hold me accountable to them, **IF** you'll commit to working to meet all the expectations you've listed for yourselves, and I can hold you accountable to them." Ask if anyone is **NOT** willing to agree to these expectations and have them voice their concerns now. LISTEN and discuss until all are willing to agree to the expectations.

7. **Sign it.** You sign and date the list of manager expectations on the flipchart. Have all the team members sign the employee expectations list.

8. **Implement accountability.** You now have a "moral agreement" for the team. You can use it to begin to hold team members accountable for performance or behaviors that are outside the now-established expectations. CAUTION: Team members can also hold you accountable to follow-through on what you've agreed to. Role modeling the expected performance and behaviors on your part is critical to success.

Double Reversal Ground Rules

Turning Negatives into Positives

This is a facilitation technique which starts in reverse. You will be using it to generate a sound list of ground rules to guide your team, but it could be used in many other ways.

You start by asking the group to brainstorm a list of ideas that are opposite to what you are really trying to do. For example, you could ask your group members to brainstorm a list of ways they could behave that would make team meetings a disaster.

The question to ask is this: What ordinary things could we do or how could we behave in a way that would make our meetings fail? Make sure they give you realistic stuff. This will surprise the group, and they may have a little fun with it. Expect answers like this: have side conversations, not listen, not participate etc. Write the ideas on a flip chart as they are offered, and it's okay to make this fun. After they offer seven or eight ideas, you can stop. Have them take a good look at the list, and ask these questions: If we acted like this, would our meetings flounder and fail? Is this the kind of stuff that would mess up our meetings and make them fail? The answer should be a resounding yes.

Now we're going to go through each of the ideas the group generated and reverse them into a positive behavior to create our ground rules. It is important that ground rules be written in a positive way whenever possible. For example:

- "Don't participate" becomes "Participate with enthusiasm."
- "Don't listen" becomes "Give others your full attention."

As a group leader you may want to suggest additional ground rules on issues such as cell phones and beepers, side conversations, starting on time, participation, ending on time, and so on. Offering these suggestions falls under the title of "facilitator's prerogative".

After you finish reversing polarities on the original list, ask the group these questions: If we followed this set of ground rules, would we stand a much greater chance of having successful meetings? Would our meeting environment be more productive? They should answer yes.

Now ask for their commitment to follow all of the ground rules. You will see general consensus, heads nodding, etc. This is not enough. Now pose a commitment question in reverse: Is there anyone who cannot commit to following the ground rules? (This is another reversal technique.) It is not very likely that anyone will raise an objection. This commitment process is important. That's why the group leader needs to be explicit about it.

Now summarize the group decision: "Okay, we have developed a focused set of ground rules to guide our meeting behavior, and everyone has committed to following them. Furthermore, we are all deputized to diplomatically help each other follow them."

How does this process get you a better set of ground rules that are focused on real issues that may come up? They are focused on the most likely problems that may cause failure.   Most of the time when we brainstorm ground rules we get the same ideas, they are rarely relevant to the problems the group may face, and they end up being ignored.

Post the ground rules during meetings, and review at the end of meetings. This regular review provides an ongoing way to address problem behaviors and turn them around, as well as reinforce desired behaviors. Taking the last five minutes of every meeting to review the ground rules will increase the likelihood that team members follow them, which will in turn dramatically improve the effectiveness of team meetings.

Stop-Start-Continue

Establishing Group Behavior and Norms

What: This tool is useful for helping individuals give and receive feedback related to team effectiveness.

When: Beneficial in dealing with conflict, interpersonal issues, and performance problems. This can be used for a team or between two individuals.

Why: To guide the team in new directions for acceptable behavior and norms.

Process:

1. Review guidelines for giving and receiving feedback. Being able to give and receive helpful feedback is an important part of this tool.

Feedback Guidelines

GIVING FEEDBACK

1. <u>Be specific</u>: Describe what you saw and how you were impacted as a group member.

2. <u>Be constructive</u>: Suggest ways to improve or other ideas to consider.

3. <u>Be sensitive</u>: Focus your discussion on helping the receiver, and be attentive to his or her needs.

RECEIVING FEEDBACK

1. <u>Listen openly</u>: Don't discount or block the information as you receive it.

2. <u>Check for understanding</u>: Ask for clarification if you're not sure what people mean.

3. <u>Analyze the information</u>: Take time to decide for yourself what you want to change or not change based on the discussion.

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2. Complete the stop-start-continue sheets. Each individual should complete a stop-start-continue sheet for the team answering the following three questions:

   (1) What does this team currently do that I would like to see stopped?

   (2) What would I like this team to start doing in the future?

   (3) What is this team currently doing that I would like to see continued?

3. Share the stop-start-continue sheets. This can be done by having people first work in pairs, then in small groups, and then as a whole group. Capture the best ideas from the small groups on a flipchart.

Example:

Stop	Start	Continue
Checking up on each other so much	Feeling comfortable sharing problems and issues you're facing--let's start sharing more with each other	Being supportive of each other and helping bring issues before the group
Interrupting each other during discussions	Trying to delegate more responsibilities	Honest, caring feedback
		Providing challenging work assignments

ORID Discussion Method

A Structure for Focused Conversations

THE **OBJECTIVE** LEVEL IN A NUTSHELL

Focus of the questions:	Data, the "facts" about the topic, external reality.
What it does for the group:	Ensures that everyone deals with the same body of data and all the aspects.
Questions are in relation to:	The senses: what is seen, heard, and touched, etc.
Key questions:	What objects do you see? What words or phrases stand out? What happened?
Traps and pitfalls:	Asking closed questions, questions not specific enough, no clear focus, ignoring objective questions because "they are too trivial."
If this level is omitted:	There will be no shared image of what the group is discussing. The various comments will seem unrelated.

THE **REFLECTIVE** LEVEL IN A NUTSHELL

Focus of the questions:	Internal relationship to the data.
What it does for the group:	Reveals its initial responses.
Questions are in relation to:	Feelings, moods, emotional tones, memories, or associations.
Key questions:	What does it remind you of? How does it make you feel? Where were you surprised? Where delighted? Where did you struggle?
Traps and pitfalls:	Limiting the discussion to an either - or survey of likes and dislikes.
If this level is omitted:	The world of intuition, memory, emotion, and imagination is ignored.

THE **INTERPRETIVE** LEVEL IN A NUTSHELL

Focus of the questions:	The meaning or value of the topic.
What it does for the group:	Draws out the significance of the data for the group.
Questions are in relation to:	Layers of meaning, purpose, significance, implications, "story," and values, and consideration of alternatives and options.
Key questions:	What is happening here? What is this all about? What does all this mean for us? How will this affect our work? What are we learning from this? What is the insight?
Traps and pitfalls:	Abusing the data by inserting precooked meaning, intellectualizing, abstracting, judging responses as right or wrong.
If this level is omitted:	Group gets no chance to make sense out of the first two levels. No higher-order thinking goes into decision making.

THE **DECISIONAL** LEVEL IN A NUTSHELL

Focus of the questions:	Resolution, implications, new directions.
What it does for the group:	Makes the conversation relevant for the future.
Questions are in relation to:	Consensus, implementation, action.
Key questions:	What is our response? What decision is called for? What are the next steps?
Traps and pitfalls:	Forcing a decision when group is not ready, or avoiding pushing group for a decision.
If this level is omitted:	The responses from the first three levels are not applied or tested in real life.

Open Space Technology

A Participatory and Free-Spirited Technique

"Open Space" is a simple and elegant method of organizing group thinking. To the stakeholders it offers the opportunity to work on the issues that they care about instead of being forced to work on issues decided by someone else, which is usually the case at planning events. It can be used with small or very large groups.

What: A technique used to organize group thinking and focus it on action. It has very simple rules and does not require elaborate facilitation.

When: When you want to do a less structured planning process with people who are comfortable working in that kind of environment.

Why: People work best and hardest when they can work on the subjects they care about and have passion for. At most planning events, you frequently end up assigned to work on issues that would not be your first choice, if you were allowed to have one.

Process: Open Space is based on four principles and one law.

1st Principle: Whoever comes are the right people. Open space works with those who are interested and ready to commit themselves. Only those that are present can contribute. Attendance is open as much as possible.

2nd Principle: Whatever happens is the only thing that could have. This principle gives the base for sustainable involvement of stakeholders. Those issues for which people have a passion and in which they would engage themselves are discussed, nothing more, nothing less. In Open Space, everything that happens has meaning.

3rd Principle: Whenever it starts is the right time.

4th Principle: When it's over, it's over. (When it's not over, it's not over)

These principles describe an obvious and well-known fact: It is not possible to force processes. If people are committed to making a change, they will take the process in their hands. Although time and space are predefined in an Open Space event, clocks play a minor role in setting the pace.

The Law of Two Feet
The only law that guides Open Space is this: Whenever people feel they are not contributing or learning, they are encouraged to move to another place of interest. Thus, the "Law of Two Feet" creates a process of cross fertilization between different focus groups.

Force Field Analysis

Identifying Promoting and Restraining forces

What: A technique that helps identify and show the relationships between the significant forces that influence a problem or goal.

When: To identify improvement opportunities.

Why: To identify key factors (forces) that promote or hinder the solution to a problem or the achievement of a goal.

Process:

1. **Define the objective**. Identify the problem or goal to be analyzed.

2. **List the forces**. List the factors that promote or hinder achievement of your goal. Use two lists, one for promoting forces and one for inhibiting forces.

3. **Prioritize**. Prioritize the forces on each list according to their relative impact on the problem or goal.

4. **Implement**. Minimize or weaken the inhibiting forces and maximize or strengthen the promoting ones.

Example:

Goal: Quit Smoking	
PROMOTING FORCES	INHIBITING FORCES
Better health	Habitual behavior
Save money	Addiction
Food tastes better	Gain weight
Cleaner teeth	Don't like the dentist anyway

Problem Focus Statement

The First Step in Problem-Solving

"A problem well stated is a problem half solved."
--Charles F. Kettering

What: A technique to focus in on the problem to be solved.

When: To help get a clear picture of the current state, impact, and desired state.

Why: To clarify a problem before tackling it.

Process:

1. Write out a "**Current State**" which answers the question: "*What's the problem?*" This should be a statement of what it looks like now. It should include facts only. Avoid judgments and opinions, and avoid moving to solutions.

2. Write out an "**Impact Statement**" which answers the question: *"So what?"* This statement should describe the impacts the problem is creating. It includes identifying who is impacted and how.

3. Write out a "**Preferred State**" which answers the question: "*What does the desired state look like when this problem is fixed?*" The preferred state describes the "nirvana" solution to the problem.

Five Why's

Discovering the Root Cause

"If you don't ask the right questions, you don't get the right answers. A question asked in the right way often points to its own answer. Asking questions is the ABC of diagnosis. Only inquiring minds solve problems."
--Edward Hodnett

What: A technique used to peel away layers of problem symptoms and discover the root cause of a problem. This is one of the simplest tools to use and it is easy to complete without statistical analysis.

When: To determine the relationship between different root causes of a problem.

Why: This is a favorite technique of a three year old child, i.e., repeating "why" over and over. The child may drive you CRAZY, but the technique helps him or her understand things.

Process:

1.   Write down the specific problem. Putting it in writing helps you formalize the problem and describe it completely. It also helps a team focus on the same problem.

2.   Ask why the problem happens and write the answer below the problem.

3.   If the answer you just provided doesn't identify the root cause of the problem that you wrote down in Step 1, ask why again and write that answer down.

4.   Loop back to Step 3 until the team is in agreement that the problem's root cause has been identified. This may take fewer or more than five times of asking why.

PMI (Plus-Minus-Interesting)

Weighing Pro's and Con's

What: A perception scanning and mapping tool that allows you to take a broad look at a proposed course of action.

When: To get a full view of the benefits and consequences of a decision.

Why: Gives the full picture; leaves no gaps.

Process:

1. Start by listing all of the PLUS (or positive) points you can think of.
2. Next list all the MINUS (or negative) points.
3. Finally, list all the INTERESTING points or thoughts that don't fit into either of the first two categories.
4. Now take a highlighter and mark the three to five points you feel are most important. Congratulations, you have now made a decision map.

Sample Decision: Should all cars be painted yellow?

PLUS

- Easier to see on the roads and this will make people safer.
- No problem in deciding which color you want when you buy a car.
- No waiting to get the color you want.
- In collisions the paint rubbed off on your car is the same.

MINUS

- Difficult to recognize your car.
- The abundance of yellow might tire the eyes.
- Accident witnesses would have a harder time.
- Some paint companies might go out of business.
- Car sales would decline and people would lose jobs.

INTERESTING

- Interesting to see if different shades of yellow arise.
- Interesting to see if people appreciate the safety factor.
- Interesting to see whether attitudes towards cars change.
- Interesting to see if this were enforceable.
- Interesting to see who would support the suggestion.

Source: Adapted from Edward deBono's *Thinking Course,* 1994.

Dot Voting

Determining Group Priorities

What: A technique that allows a group to identify priority items from a list of items.

When: Useful when you wish to narrow a list to a few, high priority items.

Why: Colored dots give a quick and highly visual picture of where group and individual priorities lie.

Process:

1. Before you vote, check with members to clarify items and combine those that are the same. Don't take too long for this process, however, and don't let the group over-combine items or dilute the meaning of items.

2. The more dots you give each person, the longer the sorting process. To do a one-time sort, give everyone three or four dots. You can refine the list by having everyone vote a second time with a different color dot on the priorities identified in the first sort.

Decision Matrix

Choosing the Best Decision

What: A technique for evaluating a list of ideas against a number of criteria by using a rating scale.

When: If a group is divided and needs factual information to reach agreement.

Why: To help a group weigh possible options against specific criteria, such as time and cost.

Process:

1. Determine the criteria that options must meet. Time and cost are the most common ones, but different situations can have different criteria. Brainstorm a list of the key criteria for each situation, e.g., cost, time, ease of use, customer acceptability, accuracy, etc.

2. List the three to five most important criteria across the top of a chart. Assign a numerical rating scale to each guideline. Use the same scale (e.g. 1-10) for each guideline and ensure that all scales run the same way.

Sample: How to get the word out on a new marketing plan?

OPTIONS	KEY CRITERIA			TOTAL
	Cost 1=high cost 5=low cost	Time to Implement 1= long time required 5=short time required	Customer Acceptability 1= low acceptability 5= high acceptability	
Memo	5	5	1	11
Poster	3	3	2	8
Radio Ad	2	2	3	7
Video	1	1	4	6

* Newsletter is best choice because it has the highest score.

Other options: Instead of ranking on a numerical scale, you could rank each option against the others. Or, if one criterion is more important than the others, it could be weighted, e.g., a factor of two for the cost item.

Five Finger Consensus

Collaborative Consensus Building

What: A technique that allows members of a group to quickly indicate how they feel about a proposal by holding up one to five fingers.

When: To see if your group has reached consensus.

Why: Allows a group to know the level of support from all members for a proposal.

Process:

1. When it is time to see if a group is at consensus, ask for a finger count. All group members hold up the number of fingers that indicate their level of agreement or consensus. Here's what the different number of fingers mean:

    Five fingers: I **<u>love</u>** the proposal and enthusiastically support it.

    Four fingers: I **<u>like</u>** the proposal and support it.

    Three fingers: I sufficiently **<u>favor</u>** the proposal and won't become an obstacle to carrying it out.

    Two fingers: I really **<u>don't like</u>** it and likely can't support it.

    One finger: I **<u>hate</u>** the proposal and won't support it.

2. The facilitator then looks around and checks each person's hand.

3. If everyone in the group shows five, four, or three fingers, you have consensus.

4. If any members show only one or two fingers, ask them what they would need to be a five, four or three.

5. All members of the group are responsible to hear what the one's and two's need, and to work to adjust the original proposal in an attempt to gain consensus.

Affinity Clustering

A Creativity Tool

This is a brainstorming tool which allows you think creatively and chaotically and then organize the information. It is great to use for project and strategic planning. It works well in groups and allows everyone a chance to actively participate.

What: A technique used to brainstorm all of the pieces of a project or a plan and then organize the information in a useful way.

When: At the beginning of projects and plans. This technique gets projects and plans off to a robust start.

Why: It really gets everyone's thinking up on the wall and then gives you a way to organize that thinking. You can use this with small groups or large groups (several hundred people!). One of its best features is that no matter the size of the group, everyone can participate and make a meaningful contribution.

Process:

1. Secure an adequately sized room with an accessible large blank wall.

2. Supplies: You will need a generous supply of "half-sheets." These are colored pieces of 8½" by 11" paper cut in half. The color of the paper can be used to liven-up and organize the process. You will also need "repositionable" tape (the blue tape used for masking in painting) and a supply of marker pens.

3. Introduce the activity as a method to brainstorm and organize ideas for the project or plan that you are working on.

4. Hand out the "half-sheets" of paper and marker pens. Explain that each participant will be writing their ideas on the half-sheets, as follows.

The Rules for Writing on the half-sheets are this:
1) Write **BIG**
2) Try to keep to three to five words
3) Write legibly
4) One idea per half-sheet

5. Give participants several minutes to individually brainstorm and write on the half-sheets the ideas that pop into their heads.

6. After they have been able to come up with several ideas each, have them share their ideas in small groups. As they share, have them eliminate duplicate ideas and sort for the ideas that represent the group's best thinking.

7. After about 10 minutes, we are ready to move to having the small groups share their best thinking with the whole group. Ask the groups to sort their pile of ideas for different aspects that you give them, for example, "Please pass forward the idea you think has the most promise." On the next round it could be their wildest idea. Each time they look at their ideas in a new way, and this keeps the process creative.

8. After they sort out the idea that best represents what you asked for, have them hand the idea forward. Read the idea out loud to the group and then tape it up randomly on the wall. Eliminate duplicates with the group's permission.

9. Get all of the best ideas up on the wall. There will be a huge conglomeration of ideas. Ask the small groups to donate one of their members to form an organizing team. Take the organizing team aside and explain the goal is to group all the ideas by similarity (**affinity**). They will usually group into somewhere between four and six groups of ideas. They will be able to do this in an amazingly short period of time (under 10 minutes). An additional thing you can do is ask another group to come up and sort the groups by priority, putting the highest priority items at the top and the lower ones at the bottom.

10. At the end of the activity, you will have a large number of good ideas, grouped by affinity and sorted for priority. This is a great start for any plan or project and everybody contributed!

Dealing with Difficult Behaviors and Situations

Every facilitator cringes at the thought of having to deal with a particularly difficult participant or group behavior. While leading a group, it is your responsibility to ensure the group process does not become inhibited. Choosing not to deal with problem situations is not an option. An effective facilitator learns how to prevent, discourage, and eliminate behaviors that hinder effective group functioning. The welfare of the group must be your top priority.

Some typical "difficult" behaviors that participants demonstrate in meetings include:

- Making negative or cynical comments

- Arriving late or returning late from breaks

- Leaving before the meeting is over

- Repeating a point of view or objection over and over

- Doing other work, e.g., texting, e-mailing, or meeting with another participant on another task during the session

- Demonstrating exaggerated, negative nonverbal signals

- Conducting conversations on the side

- Speaking excessively or speechmaking

- Sidetracking discussions or changing topics

- Verbally attacking or challenging the facilitator or other participants

- Acting as a self-appointed expert or "know it all"

- Intentionally misinterpreting the facilitator or other participants' views or positions

- Not participating

- Working hidden agendas

The Leader's Role:
Dealing with Group Problems

General Strategies

- Use preventive strategies whenever possible. Examples:

  Set ground rules in advance
  Use round-robin discussion processes
  Agree on a process to resolve conflicts or make decisions

- Consider every problem a group problem. What does the group do to allow or even encourage the behavior? What could the group do differently to change this? Is there a hidden benefit to the group in this behavior?

- Respond appropriately to the seriousness of the problem. Let small disruptions go, and keep a range of options available if the problem becomes more serious:

  1. **Do nothing.** Sometimes other group members may deal with it, and sometimes ignoring inappropriate behavior is the best response.
  2. **One-on-one conversation outside the group.** Ask the person about their concerns and give constructive feedback.
  3. **General group problem-solving.** Without singling out individuals, discuss process concerns. Talk about how the group can help to assure appropriate behavior.
  4. **Confront outside of group.** After other attempts have failed and the behavior continues to happen, give feedback about the behavior and its consequences. Explore options and ask the person to agree to make a change. Offer your assistance.
  5. **Group confrontation.** This is a high-risk strategy, useful only when everything else has failed. The purpose is to change the behavior, not punish the person. You must be well-prepared to keep the discussion on a positive footing. Make sure that people use constructive feedback guidelines, "I" statements, and behavior descriptions.

Do not expel a member from the group. The bad feelings from "kicking someone out" remain with the group and the individual for a long time. If an individual decides not to attend meetings, see if there is another way for the person to make contribution to the group task.

Understanding and Dealing with Problem Behaviors

If ground rules are clear and followed, problem behavior should be minimized. But the group wants you take care of tough members. Don't let them down.

1. **Silent Members:** Could be an introvert. Did you give him or her enough information during the meeting to allow reflection? Be cautious, but try asking, "Joe, what are your thoughts on this question?"

2. **Challengers:**   Consistently challenges the presenter's ideas and opinions. Acknowledge that the Challenger's ideas or opinion have merit and say, "I will need to think about the effect that has on my thinking," or ask the group what they think about the idea/opinion expressed.

3. **Out in Left Field:** May be confused or misinformed. Be patient. Ask open-ended questions, listen and rephrase. Compliment their asking questions. Get others to help you understand.

4. **Complainers:** Defer to the group. Ask, "How are other people feeling about this?"

5. **Dominators:** Talks often. Ask the rest of the group, "What does anyone else think about this point?" or "Who else has some ideas?" and then redirect your body language in another direction.

6. **Long-Winded Members:** Talks long. Wait a minute for a pause, however brief, and interrupt, saying, "Could you summarize your idea in a few words so I can write it down?" Celebrate diversity.

7. **Side Conversations**. Talks to someone else at length. If possible, you can move to where they are. Try, "What are your thoughts on the point just raised?" or "Are we missing out on something important?"

8. **Side-Trackers:** Brings up issues that appear not to relate. Try, "I'm not clear how that fits in with what we are discussing. Can you help me?" Get others to help you understand. The Side Tracker's issues can be placed in a "Parking Lot."

One-on-One Behavioral Interventions

It is always preferable to take preventive action in groups to establish a positive working environment. Preventive steps include having the group establish ground rules and "round robin" idea-sharing processes which systematically include everyone.

However, at times it is necessary for a facilitator to intervene with a group member who continues to engage in disruptive behavior despite preventive efforts. When you must do so, here are some guidelines:

1.   Seek a private location, not in front of the group.

2.   Use constructive confrontation techniques.

- **Ask permission to give feedback.** *"I'd like to share some perceptions about how you're coming across in our team. Is that OK with you?*

- **Give the person the benefit of the doubt.** *"You are probably not aware of this…"*

- **Describe the specifics of the behavior. Stay away from discussions of attitude or motives. These are always subjective.** *"I have noticed that you have criticized others' ideas when we are brainstorming. For example…"*

- **Describe the problem it creates for the group, again in behavior terms.** *"Criticizing ideas seems to put a barrier up to the groups' creativity. Few ideas were shared after you criticized the first one."*

- **Request a concrete change.** *"I would like you to hold off on any criticisms of others' ideas until we get to the evaluation stage."*

- **Ask for agreement.** *"Is this something that you are willing to do?"*

3.   Follow up on the situation.

   - **Reinforce any positive change.** *"At the last meeting, I noticed you really followed through on not criticizing others. That's great – I think it really had a positive influence on the group."*

   - **If negative behavior persists: Confront again.** *"I'm concerned. We discussed this before and I thought we had an agreement."*

   - **Agree on further steps. If the person seems unaware of the behavior, perhaps there is a signal or cue you could agree on to alert them when the behavior is occurring.**

4.   Consider third party assistance. Sometimes a group that is experiencing difficulties can benefit from a neutral observer or facilitator to provide feedback and suggest changes. When an individual continues to exhibit behaviors that impede progress or stir conflict, ask for help and advice from a manager or specialist in team and organization development.

Probing Questions to Clarify Participants'
(Invisible) Thinking:

What to do:	What to say:
Gently ask about others conclusions.	- What leads you to conclude that? - What causes you to say that?
Use non-aggressive language. Avoid provoking defensiveness.	- What do you mean? - Can you help me understand your thinking here?
Find out as much as you can about why others said what they said.	- What is your reason for thinking that?
Ask for examples.	- How would your idea affect… - Can you give me a typical example?
Test understanding.	- Am I correct that you're saying… - Can I check to make sure we're all understanding this the same way?

Intervention Strategies

BEFORE THE MEETING
If you anticipate difficulties from a particular individual, your best defense is a good offense. Meet with the individual in advance and discuss the meeting. Be clear about your objectives for the meeting and ask about the participant's expectations. Your goals are (1) to build a relationship and try to establish common ground and (2) to "smoke out" any indication of problems on the horizon.

Strategies you can use with an individual before a meeting include the following:

- Request support and cooperation for the meeting.
- Try to find a way to address the individual's concerns and remove any legitimate reason for objection.
- Assign a role that will occupy the individual's attention and focus constructive behavior. For example, ask the person to be the note taker or timekeeper.

DURING THE MEETING
During the meeting, there are basically two broad strategies you can use. One is to confront the individual directly. The other is to use the group to help maintain constructive behavior. Here is a potpourri list of facilitator tactics you can use during a meeting to handle disruptive individuals or difficult behaviors.

- **Start your meeting on time.** If you wait for latecomers, you reward late behavior and establish a norm that it is acceptable to be late.

- **Clarify the length of the meeting at the beginning.** Make sure that everyone knows what time the meeting will end, and then stick to that time. This makes it more difficult for individuals to leave early and allows you and the group to make adjustments up front if there is a legitimate reason to do so.

- **Make sure all views get heard.** If a participant won't let go of a viewpoint, hear the participant out. Record it on the flipchart to validate it, and ask directly if there is anything else the person needs in order to let go of it and move on. Record viewpoints without names so that you can depersonalize differences.

Intervention Strategies (cont.)

- **Call on participants directly, or physically move close to them** if they are doing something else (text messaging, etc.). If this doesn't get them refocused on the meeting, speak to them during a break.

- **Touch base with people who are demonstrating dramatic nonverbal signals,** e.g., shaking their head negatively: "I see you're shaking your head. Do you have some disagreement you want to express?" The participant may not be aware of the behavior and may try to control the body language. If the participant's behavior continues and becomes disruptive, share your observations at the next break: "When you shake your head, I perceive it as disagreement or disapproval. I'm finding it distracting. Please tell me what's bothering you."

- **If a side conversation begins** or there are perpetual whisperers, move close to these individuals and they will usually stop. Ask people to maintain their focus on the group discussion at hand. If necessary, confront the group's or individual's tendency to start side conversations, and directly and constructively, share your frustration.

- **With overly verbal people,** your most subtle technique is to manage your proximity to them. While they are talking, move closer and maintain eye contact until you are standing right in front of them. Then, shift your focus and call on someone else. You may have to deal with verbose people outside the meeting. If nothing else works, you may have to confront them directly.

- **Call a halt to verbal intimidation.** Validate the participants' rights to disagree with you or with each other, but redirect them to negotiate constructively rather than using power or threats. If necessary, call a break and meet with the "intimidator." Ask for this person's support in putting the discussion on hold until it can be dealt with constructively.

- **Interview the "dominant" participant.** Try to discover needs or expectations that you may be missing. You may learn something that can add value to the meeting.

Intervention Strategies (cont.)

- **Reverse viewpoints with the participant.** Or, ask other participants to represent both sides of the issue while you and the difficult participant listen.

- **Call on "non-participants" by name.** Ask for their views or opinions without embarrassing them. Offer positive reinforcement when they participate.

- **Use hand gestures to put "interrupters" or "intentional misinterpreters" on hold** while the speaker finishes a point. Ask them to let the speaker make the point. If necessary, paraphrase the statement so that it's presented as the speaker intended, rather than being misrepresented.

- **Don't get defensive when participants are critical of you.** Defensiveness will prevent you from hearing any constructive potential in their comments. You aren't perfect (and you don't have to be). Listen to criticism and suggestions. Model adaptability and flexibility if appropriate. Rephrase your understanding of the feedback or criticism, and ask for suggestions. Acknowledge the input and promise to respond once you have fully considered it.

- **Ask for help or suggestions from the group.** If you are unsure about what to do to make the meeting more effective, ask participants for their suggestions. You may ask the group to set ground rules for interactions to prevent polarization. This reinforces the idea that everyone, not just the facilitator, is responsible for the success of the meeting. You may also learn something that will help you in this situation, as well as strengthen your meeting skills.

- **Break into sub-groups.** Ask sub-groups to come to consensus on the issues at hand. Participants who have been too intimidated to speak may express their views more readily in smaller groups. Sub-grouping allows you the opportunity to pair people with similar (or different) points of view, and then to have them report to the whole group. This strategy also gives the difficult individual a smaller group or audience to influence.

- **Don't get sucked into "non-questions."** Turn rhetorical questions into statements. This encourages the speaker to "own" comments rather than allowing him or her to dominate the discussion by hiding behind false questions.

- **You may need to ask a disruptive participant to leave.** When a problem remains despite your best efforts, you must protect the meeting environment by asking the participant to leave. You may also need to let the participant know that you will have to tell the boss. This is uncomfortable, and it can be disruptive to the meeting, but it is sometimes necessary.

Keep in mind that your role as a facilitator gives you power in the meeting setting. With legitimate organizational objectives behind your effort, you should not automatically "cave in" to participants who are attempting to dominate or sabotage your meeting. Conversely, be aware that pointed confrontation on your part will make the group uncomfortable. It is not helpful to "win the battle and lose the war". You will want to ensure the group's continued willing participation during the rest of the meeting and in future meetings with you.

Difficult Situations and Behaviors:

Possible Causes and Strategies

Situation/ Behavior	Possible Causes	Strategies
Interrupting or talking over you or group members	- Need to be heard - Worried their opinion won't be heard or valued - Doesn't use listening skills well - Could have hearing problem	- Ask the person who was interrupted to continue - Hold hand, palm out, in front of interrupter without looking at them - Directly ask interrupter to wait until first person is finished - Ask interrupter to paraphrase what other person was saying
Won't participate	- Negative attitude toward the meeting - Not feeling well - Personal issues - Fear of rejection - Poor past meeting experiences - Shy	- Use techniques to build participation - Try to determine cause of non-participation - Acknowledge them and encourage them to share their valuable insight
Domination (talks too much)	- Likes to talk; highly extroverted - Hyperactive - Overly excited or enthusiastic - Is already an expert in the topic or has been involved in similar meetings before - Unmet needs to be heard - Personal issues	- Thank them for sharing and ask for others' views - Tell them you want to hear from the rest of the group - Ask them to please give others a turn - Call on specific individuals - Use a "talking stick" or poker chips: - Only person with talking stick can talk then must pass stick on - Give each person same amount of poker chips; when they share they must give up a chip; if no more chips, no more talk

Situation/ Behavior	Possible Causes	Strategies
Arguing	• Resentment about the meeting • Outside work issues • Personal issues • Not feeling well • Unclear about the purpose and goals of the meeting • Not understanding or grasping the issues being discussed	• Acknowledge their opinion and ask if others feel the same • Tell them you appreciate their point of view and ask to "agree to disagree" • Try to determine root cause (are there issues not related to the meeting this person is dealing with?) • Ask participant to explain argument from the opposite point of view • Take a break
Negative/cynical comments or body language	• Resentment about the meeting • Outside work issues • Personal issues • Not feeling well • Unclear about purpose and goals of the meeting • Stress • Fear/anxiety • Not understanding or grasping the issues being discussed	• Ask if others agree or disagree, and why • Use humor, e.g. "wow, that sounds bleak" • Try to determine root cause • Ask participant directly to explain his or her negativity toward the meeting, topic, etc. • Take a break
Side conversations	• Not engaged in the meeting • Outside issues • Social needs • Personal issues • Needing clarification about the meeting • Not understanding or grasping the issues being discussed • Fear of speaking up in a group or asking questions • Not able to hear discussion	• Pause and wait while looking at the participants • Ask one of the participants a question • Ask participants directly if the conversation is related to the topic, and if not, to please wait until a break • Break participants up into sub-groups, separating the talkers

Situation/ Behavior	Possible Causes	Strategies
Arriving late to the meeting, or being late after breaks or lunch	- Busy/deadlines - Outside issues - Traffic/weather issues - Lack of time management skills - Not interested or engaged in the meeting - If held in building of work, getting tied up with work issues	- Begin on time without late participant - Greet participant and ask him or her to get caught up on a break or during lunch - Remind participants of starting times - Ask participant directly to please make an effort to be on time - Ask if there is something you can do to help him or her be on time
Doing other work	- Busy/deadlines - Not interested or engaged in the meeting - Doesn't see the value of the meeting - Stress	- Ask group to remove all items from table top - Provide a table in back of room for "baggage" - Ask the participant to assist you, g. pass out materials, write on flip chart, facilitate a discussion, etc. - Put participants into small groups - If participant continues, ask participant directly if he or she needs to be somewhere else
Attacking or putting down you or group members	- Lack of self-esteem - Personal issues - Interpersonal conflicts - Lack of communication skills - Frustration with the meeting - Not understanding or grasping the issues being discussed	- Tell the participant directly that the behavior is not appropriate - Ask the participant to identify at least three positive things about the topic or other person - Ask the participant to rephrase his or her point of view by focusing on the situation or behavior, not the person - Take a break

Situation/ Behavior	Possible Causes	Strategies
Excessive storytelling	• Personal issues • Unmet social needs • Not clear on the purpose or goals of the meeting • Not interested or engaged in the meeting	• Ask participant how the story relates to the discussion topic • Ask participant to summarize the story with two main points • Ask participant to stay focused on current discussion
Bringing up unrelated topics	• Unclear about purpose or goals of the meeting • Outside issues • Not interested or engaged in the meeting • The persons needs don't match the meeting's purpose	• Ask participant how it relates to current discussion • Review the point or goal of the current discussion • Ask group if there are things needing to be discussed or issues to be aired before moving forward • Ask group if there is a need to discuss the unrelated topic
Sleeping or constant yawning	• Not feeling well • Room too warm • Not interested or engaged in the meeting • Personal issues • Lack of energy	• Take a break • Do an energizer or ask group to take a walk • Do a temperature check • Move behind the participant and raise your voice • Ask participant a question • Use humor if appropriate • Provide refreshments
Repeating a point of view or an opinion over and over	• Feeling unheard or misunderstood • Not understanding or grasping the issue being discussed • Personal issues	• Paraphrase the participant's view or opinion • Ask another participant to paraphrase the participant's view or opinion • Ask permission to move forward • Ask the participant to discuss the issue further during a break or after the meeting • Take a break and refocus on a new topic upon return

Situation/ Behavior	Possible Causes	Strategies
Clicking or tapping pen or pencil, or drumming fingers	• Kinesthetic participant • Hyperactive • Nervous or experiencing stress • Impatient, needing to move forward	• Provide quiet toys, markers & scrap paper on tables • Provide non-clicking pens or pencils on the tables • Talk louder and ask if participants can hear you

Handling Unusually Disruptive Behavior

Disruptive behavior in meetings, particularly if it derails the meeting or makes people feel uncomfortable, must be addressed. It is wise to start with a low-key but firm reminder about the agreed-on ground rules and to escalate your responses if the situation continues. The following steps illustrate that escalation process:

1. If something is said that is disruptive, inflammatory, or inappropriate, ask the person to rephrase the comment without the invectives.

2. If repeated, tell the person the outburst or behavior is inappropriate and it must stop.

3. Call for a break and talk to the person privately. Ask the person to get it under control or he or she will be asked to leave the meeting.

4. If the person doesn't stop after the break, ask him or her to leave the meeting.

5. If the person won't leave and won't stop disrupting, adjourn the meeting. Plan to reschedule with or without the person, but only after the issue has been resolved.

Clearly there is also a disciplinary issue in this situation that would need to be addressed, but that is outside the scope of this course. Be aware of your body language when confronting disruptive behavior. Be direct and look the person in the eye. Also, move closer to the person to talk further, but not in a confrontational way. Make certain you are being clear in your expectations and that your voice is steady.

Source: *Planning and Leading Productive Meetings,* Jeffrey H. Davis, 2001.

The Team Development Model
Bruce Jackman

Stage Issues	Role of Leader/Participant
Stage One Issues: Testing/Forming/Orientation • Direction and clarification sought by team members. • Polite impersonal, watchful behavior • Team members evaluate the nature of their involvement. • Will I be accepted / capable? Will the leader value me? • ***Focus is on relationship to team and leader: Who am I in this group?***	• Provide direction, structure, and expectations. • Provide safety and respect for all. • Chart mission, goals and contract.
Stage Two Issues: Controlling/Storming/Conflict • Who controls the team? How much autonomy/influence will I have? • Testing of leadership: How is control exercised? • What happens to the "delinquents"? • ***Focus is on interactions. How will we solve interpersonal problems on this team?***	• Listen to and address challenges to leadership. • Protect minorities. • Gain agreement on dealing with conflict.
Stage Three Issues: Getting Organized/Norming • Developing team skill and norms for meeting behavior: How honest will we be? How will we communicate? • Focus on establishing group procedures: How do we want to do things? • Leader gives more responsibility to group, but confronts issues when necessary. • ***Agree on guidelines for giving and receiving feedback.***	• Get input, participation, and ownership. • Give more control to the group. • Clarify and agree on norms. • Clarify roles, expectations and standards. • Surface and agree on communication honesty
Stage Four Issues: Mature Closeness/Performing • Mature closeness; open discussion and respect for differences in background, style, and mode of operation. • Challenging one another leads to creative problem-solving. • Clear roles with each person's contribution being seen as distinctive. • Joint setting of goals. • Mechanisms developed for ongoing self-assessment of group. • Resourceful and distinctive contribution to the organization. • ***Focus on task completion.***	• Get out of the team's way. • Resource provider / organization advocate. • Turn over leadership to members. • Reward new behaviors.
Stage Five Issues: Adjournment/Dissolution • Leaving, endings. • Task completion. • ***Focus on celebration.***	• Thank team. • Provide recognition.

Exercise: Facilitation Challenges

At your tables, discuss the situations assigned to your group (using your experience and information on the previous pages). Decide the best course of action and prepare to report back to the large group.

1. You have good participation, except for one person. You notice he hasn't joined in the lively discussion.

   Intervention:

2. Several people are talking at once during your meeting. It's getting confusing and a little chaotic.

   Intervention:

3. One member is so negative during your meeting (both verbally and body language), that it's beginning to impact the "mood" of the meeting. You don't want to embarrass the person, but you have to do something.

   Intervention:

4. One member gives a very complex answer to a question you ask. You're just not clear on what this person is talking about.

   Intervention:

5. One member rambles on and on and never seems to get to the point. You don't want to abruptly cut the person off, but you're concerned about others' reaction to this person's comments.

   Intervention:

6. You find that one member is dominating the discussion, and you want to ensure that everyone gets an opportunity to be heard.

   Intervention:

7. It's clear to you that the members have something else on their minds besides the meeting at hand. Their undertone conversations and body language indicate they are upset about something. You need to address this before moving on.

   Intervention:

8. During your meeting you (and others) are distracted by constant side conversations of between two members of the group.

   Intervention:

Keep It Civil!:

Conflict Resolution Techniques

Determine what type of conflict it is:

- **Fake Conflict:** One not worth having.

- **Ego Conflict:** Winning is the most important thing to that person.

- **Fact Conflict:** So, get the data.

- **Operational Conflict:** Policy/Procedural data- the one worth having.

Avoiding Negative ways of dealing with conflict:

- Pseudo-accommodator

- Belt-line

- Blamer

- Distracter

- Avoider

- Sand Bagger

- Joker

- Guilt Maker

MEETING A DIAGNOSTIC SHEET AND CHECKLIST

	Facilitator:	
	Did the facilitator clearly explain his or her role and the social contract with the group?	
	Did the facilitator allow the participants to revise the agenda?	
	Was the facilitator effective in getting the group to focus on a common task?	
	Was the facilitator effective in getting the group to use one method or procedure at a time?	
	Was the facilitator able to keep the meeting moving along smoothly?	
	Did the facilitator talk too much?	
	Did everyone have a chance to participate?	
	Did the facilitator keep the manager or chairperson from dominating the meeting?	
	How well did the facilitator handle disruptive behavior of participants (if any)?	
	Was the facilitator able to remain neutral and not get involved?	
	Did the facilitator become defensive when criticized?	
	Was the facilitator effective in bringing the group to closure and agreeing on specific action items?	

	Recorder:	
	Did the recorder define his or her role and the function of the group memory at the beginning of the meeting?	
	Was the group memory legible?	
	Did the recorder capture the basic ideas of the meeting?	
	Did the recorder make corrections without getting defensive?	
	Did the recorder slow down or inhibit the progress of the meeting in any way?	
	Did the recorder enliven the group memory by changing colors, underlining, diagramming, etc.?	
	Did the recorder support the facilitator?	
	Did the recorder assist the group in organizing the data that was generated?	

MEETING A DIAGNOSTIC SHEET AND CHECKLIST

	Did the recorder prepare a group memo and send it out to the members of the group?	
	Was the group memo accurate and understandable to people who did not attend the meeting?	

	Meeting Type:	
	Was the type of meeting appropriate to the task and the	
	If it was a decision-making meeting, was the final decision-maker involved?	
	Did everyone accept the method of decision-making and understood who had the authority to make the final	

	Group Composition:	
	Were the "right" kinds of people involved (people who had relevant expertise, were affected by the program, who had to make the final decision, etc.)?	
	Was the group heterogeneous enough (fresh ideas, different opinions, constructive conflict, etc.)?	
	Were any of the twelve signs of "groupthink" present in the meeting?	

	Numbers of Participants:	
	Was the size of the group appropriate for the type meeting being held?	
	Given the type of meeting and number of people involved, was there adequate structure and differentiation of roles to insure participation,	

	Meeting Space:	
	Was the meeting room of appropriate size and shape for the number of participants involved?	
	Were the chairs arranged and oriented effectively for this type of meeting?	
	Did the participants sit in a pattern that focused the energy of the group on the task (or did disruptive cliques form)?	
	Was the atmosphere of the meeting appropriate for the occasion (too formal or too relaxed)?	
	Were the levels of light, heat, and noise adequate?	

	Were the required materials and equipment available and functioning properly?	

	Agenda:	
	Was there a content and process agenda prepared and sent out to all the participants in advance of the	
	Were there too many agenda items for the time available?	
	Were the agenda items appropriate for this group at this type of meeting?	
	Were the objectives of the meeting clearly stated in the agenda so that participants came with similar	

	Problem-Solving and Decision-Making:	
	Was the problem clearly defined?	
	Was it a problem that this group could and/or should try to solve?	
	Did the group have enough information of expertise to analyze and solve the problem?	
	Did the group examine enough alternatives?	
	Did the group rush prematurely to a decision?	
	Was the decision already made before the meeting (a rubber stamp)?	
	Did the group try to reach consensus on a win/win solution before resorting to a win/lose method of	

	Presentations:	
	Were the presenters adequately prepared?	
	Did the presenters make the purpose of their presentations clear in the beginning?	
	Were the presentations well organized and delivered?	
	Were the presentations visual as well as verbal?	

How to Build Your Self Confidence!

Self-confidence can be learned.

Observe someone you consider to be self-confident and mimic his/her actions and the way he/she speaks; then put your own personality into the behaviors.

Confident Behavior	Behavior Associated With low Self-Confidence
Doing what you believe to be right, even if others mock or criticize you for it.	Governing your behavior based on what other people think.
Being willing to take risks and go the extra mile to achieve better things (even if you fail the first time, or the second; just keep going).	Staying in your comfort zone, fearing failure, and so avoid taking risks.
Admitting your mistakes, and learning from them.	Working hard to cover up mistakes and hoping that you can fix the problem before anyone notices.
Waiting for others to congratulate you on your accomplishments.	Extolling your own virtues as often as possible to as many people as possible.
Accepting compliments graciously. "Thanks, I really worked hard on that prospectus. I'm pleased you recognize my efforts."	Dismissing compliments offhandedly. "Oh that prospectus was nothing really, anyone could have done it."