

Tips for Innovative Meetings and Events (T. I. M. E.)

Topic: Facilitation

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WELCOME

Welcome to our old and new subscribers. This issue of T.I.M.E. talks about creating an “easiness” in meetings. We address the topic of facilitators and facilitation skills. The word "facilitate" is derived from the Latin word "facilitas" which means easiness.

There are many types of meetings that can benefit from a good facilitator. So if you are involved in the following:

- * Strategy setting sessions
- * Management retreats
- * Association meetings
- * Industry roundtables
- * Negotiations
- * Conflict resolution

READ ON....

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1. PART ART AND PART SCIENCE

Facilitation is helping people successfully work together. Its part art and part science.

A facilitator helps groups work together to make decisions, develop plans, and then implement those plans. The facilitator simply makes it easy for the group to carry out its mission.

2. FACILITATION DOES NOT EQUAL LEADERSHIP

Implicit in the above description is the fact that the group is responsible for decision-making, planning and implementation. This is why during a meeting, facilitation is not the same thing as leadership (nor is the facilitator necessarily the same person as the leader).

Organizations have come to realize these "truths"

- * Participation is important
- * Teams generally perform better than individuals
- * Process (how something is done) affects outcome (what is accomplished)

Facilitation involves managing group processes and dynamics -- influencing how members work together -- and the nature of that responsibility calls for a high degree of neutrality about content issues and a focus on group needs.

Participation and leadership require quite the opposite: an active engagement in content issues - expressing opinions, presenting arguments and a focus on the matters of the moment

An effective facilitator must differentiate between content and process.

Process is the way the group works together. Process is the HOW.

Content is the actual ideas, suggestions and decisions that come out of group discussion. Content is the WHAT.

3. THE FACILITATOR AS THE TRAFFIC COP

An analogy for an effective facilitator is the traffic cop. The police officer in this position stands in the middle of the street telling cars when to go, stop or turn. The officer directs traffic just as a facilitator directs the flow of discussion. The officer doesn't actually drive anyone's car.

(However, IMPORTANTLY, while an officer can show his/her displeasure with a scowl or frown, a facilitator should remain neutral using words and body language.)

What's involved in effectively directing the conversation flow?

KEEP THE GROUP AWARE of desired outcome, topics of discussion, time constraints, group decisions, group accomplishments or progress, staying on track

SEEK EQUAL INVOLVEMENT without putting anyone on the spot

EXHIBIT ACTIVE LISTENING - nonverbal acknowledgment, rephrasing and empathetic response

USE QUESTIONS EFFECTIVELY - employ open-ended questions

MONITOR GROUP BEHAVIOR

BUILD GROUP CONSENSUS - consensus is 100% support, not necessarily 100% agreement

BE FLEXIBLE - make changes based upon the group's need or request

BE SENSITIVE by protecting the self esteem of individuals

BE TACTFUL

4. WHEN TO CALL IN THE TRAFFIC COP

Your meeting will benefit from a facilitator when:

- * No one in the group is objective
- * You are facing a difficult issue
- * You're stuck - the group is not moving
- * You need to jump-start a series of meetings
- * Conflict exists - either process conflict where the group can't decide how to go about it's meeting OR content conflict where the group can't decide on the what OR submerged conflict exists OR communication style conflict exists
- * New team is formed

Sample Meetings:

- * Cross-functional teams
- * Management retreats
- * Negotiations
- * Focus Groups

5. QUICKIE: HELP! I AM THE FACILITATOR

Often you will be the facilitator - when negotiating between a client and yourself, trying to resolve a difference of opinion in a group, trying to keep the group focused on the meeting agenda

When you are the Facilitator, here are some important skills to draw upon:

1. Identify and model good behavior (or norms) for group interaction.
2. Be empathic -- showing you understand their situation, needs, and feelings.
3. Listen, paraphrase, clarify, and reflect participant comments.
4. Initiate a structure for group work and keep the group moving.
5. Be yourself -- without defensiveness or having a hidden agenda.
6. Encourage group interaction.
7. Confront and challenge -- but only after empathy and respect have been established (this makes it less likely that people will be defensive).

Have you encountered a problem personality that you are trying to deal with in a meeting? For hints on handling Susie-Smart-Pants or Ray-the-Rambler, email us (click here stinnish@ameritech.net) for our Freebie this month titled Problem Personalities in Meetings.

6. MAKE IT EASIER FOR ME!

There are a myriad of book that address the skills involved in facilitation and the best ways to work effectively with a facilitator. Here are some suggestions:

[The Facilitator's Fieldbook](#) by Thomas Justice, David Jamieson includes suggestions for contracting with a facilitator, room layouts, and guidelines for group recorders

Facilitation Skills for [Team Leaders](#) by Donald Hackett and Charles Martin

[Helping Groups Make Decisions](#): Simple Steps to Help Groups & Teams Focus on the Issue and Build Agreement on Solutions by Gregory Putz

[Masterful Facilitation](#): Becoming a Catalyst for Meaningful Change by Glenn Kiser

[Zen of Groups](#): A Handbook for People Meeting with a Purpose by Dale Hunter, Anne Bailey, and Bill Taylor

[The Art of Facilitation](#): How to Create Group Synergy by Dale Hunter, Anne Bailey, and Bill Taylor

7. T. I. M. E. GONE BY

Past issues of T. I. M. E. can be downloaded as a MS Word document. Here is an index of topics and "freebies" offered in the past:

May 2000: Teambuilding and (freebie) New York Times reprint and summary on why teambuilding programs miss the mark. [May](#)

June 2000: Green Meetings and (freebie) list of books that have 20-30 minute exercises for meetings and events. [June](#)

July 2000: American (Values) and (freebie) Meeting Analysis, a 1-page document that will outline the scope and needs analysis for your next meeting. [July](#)

August 2000: Minimum/Minimal Meetings and (freebie) Web Winners (web resources to make you and your meetings more productive). [August](#)

October 2000: Evaluations and (freebie) sample evaluation questions. [October](#)

November 2000: Politics and (freebie) on-line experiences. [November](#)

December 2000: Toys and (freebie) brainstorming ideas. [December](#)

January 2001: Sales, Award Presentations and (freebie) sales tips. [January](#)

February 2001: Change, Change Management and Communicating change and (freebie) Change Bombs (reasons change management fails). [February](#)

March 2001: Open Space Technology. [March](#)

April 2001: Adult Learning Styles and (freebie) Trade Show Timeline [April 2001](#)

May 2001: Trade Shows and (freebie) Trade Show timeline [May 2001](#)

June 2001: Emotional Intelligence and (freebie) EI quiz [June 2001](#)

July 2001: Presentation Skills and (freebie) Speaker Introductions [July 2001](#)

August 2001: Ice Breakers and (freebie) Resource List [August 2001](#)

8. FUTURE T.I.M.E.

The concept of our future remains clouded with uncertainty since the horrific events in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. Although it has been 2 weeks, I feel I must briefly add that my thoughts continue to dwell on the many people affected by this tragedy.

So amidst my ongoing concern, I, like many others, have returned to the safety and comfort of the routine. I write this issue knowing that conflict in a meeting should not be avoided, but wishing that people the world over could avoid conflict. I write about facilitating conflict, knowing that words are often not chosen as a means to deal with conflict. I focus on the world and I return to focusing on my world.

Back in my "business" world, I am interested in reaching out through this monthly contact to more people. Please help us facilitate that growth. We would appreciate your consideration as to whether any of your clients, associates or colleagues would enjoy T. I. M. E. Referring our newsletter onto a client shows them that YOU were thinking about them. A nice way to add value to your relationship. Please be assured that we will never sell our subscriber list.

Forward our newsletter or anyone can subscribe by sending an email to stinnish@ameritech.net. Our next issue will deal with humor. We have some great issues in store for you in the next several months with ideas on Slack, Creativity, and Adventure as teambuilding and how they can fit into your meeting or event.

For more information contact Sue directly at SEAL Inc., 1415 N. Salem Blvd., Arlington Heights, Illinois 60004-4545 or at 847.394.9857.

Also mark you calendar for the following dates when Sue will be speaking

ITME Motivation Show at McCormick Place in Chicago, Illinois

100 Ways to Transform Your Meetings
Wednesday, October 10, 2001, from 9:30 - 10:30 a.m.

Looking into the Role of Emotional Intelligence
Thursday, October 11, 2001, from 12:30 - 1:30 p.m.

Lights, Color, Sound & Action: Reaching a Jaded Audience
Thursday, October 11, 2001, from 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Beyond the Trade Show Booth
American Society of Travel Agents World Congress
Seville Spain
Tuesday, November 6 from 10:00 - 11:30 am

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