

# FACILITATION SKILLS



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Name

## Overview

Facilitation Skills provides you with the essential information and skills needed for you to excel as a facilitator.

This program will assist you in stimulating and guiding discussions by using key facilitator behaviors. You will learn to focus on the structure of sessions and not on the content. Client contracts, agendas, and meeting structure and process, are all reviewed to achieve maximum participation and results. Facilitator empowerment is explored along with the listening and questioning skills needed to deal with negative meeting behaviors and to keep the process moving in a positive direction.

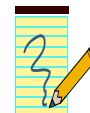
Facilitation Skills is designed for you to actively participate with your peers in the training workshop. This training program encourages you to improve your knowledge and skills by integrating your work-related situations into the workshop.

## Course Objectives

Our goal is to build greater personal skill and confidence in your ability to facilitate group discussions or meetings by focusing on the areas listed below.

- *Identifying Desirable Facilitating Behaviors*
- *Managing Structure, Not Content*
- *Developing Client Contracts*
- *Developing the Structure and Process for Your Meeting*
- *Clarifying the Facilitator's Level of Empowerment*
- *Encouraging Participation Through Questions and Listening Skills*
- *Closing a Meeting Confidently*
- *Dealing With Negative Meeting Behaviors*
- *Understanding and Applying Specific Client Follow-Up Activities*

## Personal Objectives



In this section of your workbook, write out one or two personal objectives you would like to accomplish by the end of Facilitation Skills. Use these objectives as your measuring tools to help you determine where to focus your energies during the workshop. Try to limit your initial objective to about 10 to 15 words and maybe one or two bullets. As you get into the exercises and talk to other participants, you can modify your objectives.

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## Desirable Facilitating Behaviors Exercise



In a small group of three people, discuss each behavior, activity, or skill, and provide work-related examples for each one listed. It's important to be able to give specific work-related examples. Don't limit your thinking to the obvious situations. This understanding of how the behavior, activity, or skill works in facilitation increases the likelihood of it being applied again in a facilitating role when you leave the training. You can use the spaces provided to write the examples you discuss in your groups.

1. Planned for a team meeting.

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2. Used questions to gain further information in a group setting.

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3. Used listening skills to clarify for the group, and to prove respect for someone else's point of view.

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4. Used a flip chart to capture information.

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*Desirable Facilitating Behaviors Exercise - Continued*



5. Remained neutral on content issues.

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6. Encouraged open communication.

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7. Encouraged team problem-solving.

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8. Applied group problem-solving tools.

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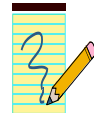
9. Encourage team decision-making.

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*Desirable Facilitating Behaviors Exercise - Continued*



10. Clarified, shared, and disseminated information.

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11. Maintained team focus.

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12. Gave verbal and/or written feedback.

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13. Communicated thoughts and feelings clearly.

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14. Developed a culture of teamwork.

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*Desirable Facilitating Behaviors Exercise - Continued*



15. Obtained resources for others.

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16. Obtained technical expertise for others.

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17. Strived for consensus decision-making.

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18. Tolerated and managed conflict.

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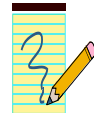
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19. Maintained composure with difficult people.

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*Desirable Facilitating Behaviors Exercise - Continued*

20. Fostered creativity in a group setting.

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21. Explained how the organization works to a group.

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22. Provided access to key personnel and information.

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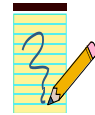
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The examples you provided in this exercise are indicators for you in determining whether you already have many of the necessary skills to be an effective facilitator. Most, if not all of the skills and activities in this exercise can be performed in a non-facilitating role.

If you're comfortable with many of these activities and skills, and you perform them in a confident, poised manner, then being a facilitator will come more naturally to you.

When you leave the workshop, make a note of the activities and skills that you need to improve, and the ones you do well. This will help you in establishing personal goals for yourself as a facilitator.

## Managing Structure, Not Content



The role of the facilitator is to manage the meeting structure while remaining neutral regarding the meeting content. The meeting content is the responsibility of the group. The position of neutrality must be understood and practiced by the facilitator if the group's potential is to be fully reached. The facilitator who personally moves into heavy involvement of the group's content issues runs the risk of reducing group involvement, trust, and openness.

**Structure** - Fulfills the "how" questions. How the meeting's issues and subjects are dealt with; how the meeting proceeds in terms of agenda and team tools; how discussions take place; how decision tools are used; how formats, flip charts, and involvement take place; how the meeting's physical environment will be arranged.

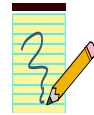
**Content** - Answers the "what" questions. What are the meeting's subjects, issues, problems, analysis, recommendations, and supporting data? What issues will be dealt with and in what sequence?

### Exercise

In your small group, talk out-loud and determine whether the activity that is described below is part of content or structure. Provide reasons for your selection.

|                                                                                     | <u>Content</u> | <u>Structure</u> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1. Development and distribution of team meeting agenda and preparation of the room. | _____          | _____            |
| 2. Statement of meeting objectives.                                                 | _____          | _____            |
| 3. Moving into subgroups to discuss possible improvement solutions.                 | _____          | _____            |
| 4. Discussion involving clarification of group objective.                           | _____          | _____            |
| 5. A brainstorming session to develop improvement ideas.                            | _____          | _____            |
| 6. Cost information on purchase of equipment and supplies.                          | _____          | _____            |
| 7. A free-flowing discussion resulting from the facilitator's questions.            | _____          | _____            |
| 8. Progress report on a group project.                                              | _____          | _____            |
| 9. Summarizing and clarifying a group decision.                                     | _____          | _____            |
| 10. A presentation of existing policies by a group member.                          | _____          | _____            |

## Client Contracts



Client Contracts can provide you with clear expectations and objectives if they are properly executed. Many times, contracts or agreements don't even exist, or if they do exist, it's only in a verbal format. Prior to actually facilitating a session, establish clear and concise expectations and measuring tools. Otherwise, you leave the door open to group member and client interpretation, which sometimes can be very risky. If you are facilitating with existing team members, and objectives have already been established, then developing a contract or agreement isn't as critical.

1) In your small group, talk out-loud and determine what you believe are reasonable and unreasonable expectations for a facilitator. Look at it from the client's and facilitator's perspective. Try to use actual work-related situations.

### Reasonable Expectations

### Unreasonable Expectations

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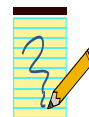
2) In your small group, talk out-loud and determine what you believe are ingredients to well-designed contracts, and vague, poorly written contracts. Again, look at it from the client and facilitator's perspective. Try to use actual work-related situations.

### Well-Designed Contracts

### Vague Contracts

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## Four Key Criteria to Client Contracts



There are four key criteria that need to be clarified when setting expectations and measuring tools from both the client and facilitator's perspective. Outlined below are brief questions you can ask yourself to determine if the contract or agreement is workable. In your small group, talk out-loud and add some additional questions to each category.

### 1) Quality

- How would the client define quality?
- Why is this quality so important?
- What are the client provided examples of what they do mean by the quality and what they don't mean by the quality?
- How is the quality going to be measured?

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### 2) Resources

- What resources are available?
- What materials and supplies are available?
- Who else can I talk to for assistance?

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### 3) Time Frame

- What is the agreed upon time frame for facilitating?
- How long is the session?
- Am I able to go longer, if necessary?

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### 4) Quantity

- How many team members will be present?
- How many sessions are needed?

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