



Why Facilitation Matters

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What is Facilitation?

Think about the biggest dilemma you're currently facing in your organization, the burning questions, the wicked problems, the frustrating issues that you just can't seem to get any traction around....

Now imagine what would it be like to involve your team and work together on the problem in such a way that new ideas emerge? What would it be like to gain new insight from your team's collective wisdom and have the issue you've been stressing over evolve into a collaboratively built vision, the foundation of a solution, supported by your team who will be eager to begin the journey to success?

This is what facilitation does.

And yet, facilitation is an often misunderstood and confusing practice. As professional certified facilitators, we are experts in harnessing the power of participants, empowering individuals, teams, groups, organizations, and communities to create a future of their own making through engaging in intentional conversations. We serve as the guide to solve those wicked problems, resolve deep-seated conflicts, innovate, improve, and thrive.

Professional facilitation involves a process and design methodology. It is the practice of thoughtfully structuring and guiding conversations, dialogues, meetings, events, decision-making processes, and other activities using intentional strategies that help groups converse and collaborate more respectfully and productively. ("Facilitation Principle – Organizing Engagement") Great facilitation is grounded in the practice of inclusivity, fairness, mutual respect, and shared decision-making. Participants have the opportunity to listen to, debate and understand the differing perspectives in the room in a structured method that allows respectful consideration and strong consensus.

Facilitation is a skill set: professional certified facilitators have the experience, background, and training to help individuals with different values, beliefs, or cultural backgrounds listen to one another in constructive ways—rather than defaulting to argumentation or stereotyping—which can improve mutual understanding and appreciation for different points of view.



What is the Role of a Facilitator?

While our role as professional facilitators changes for each client and adapts in order to achieve the outcomes and work with the unique participants, here are some of the core roles:

Before the Meeting

- To understand the purpose and intent of the meeting
- To understand the deliverables and outcomes
- To involve the right people and understand who those people are
- To customize the meeting design to the participants and the outcomes
- To understand how to structure a meeting to get results
- To have social and emotional intelligence

During the Meeting

- To recognize the value of the group's time and use it to achieve the desired result
- To stay on time
- To keep the group focused and on target
- To have fun
- To remain unbiased and neutral
- To ask the right questions at the right time
- To be positive and encouraging
- To achieve understanding
- To reach consensus
- To develop next steps
- To listen to understand and listen to learn
- To document what each participant says
- To encourage full and inclusive input from every participant
- To create and maintain a safe and respectful environment
- To manage group dynamics including dysfunctional behavior
- To adapt to the needs of the group and be flexible

After the Meeting

- To provide documentation of issues, decisions, and actions
- To get feedback from the group on improvements and challenges
- To follow up on any next steps



The Benefits of Facilitation

The conversations that happen *in* meetings, not the meetings themselves, should be productive, meaningful, and effective. When we create the space for real, collaborative engagement, people do more than just show up for a meeting. And the results and outcomes are much more than an agreement or a document. Facilitation has amazing impacts in areas such as

- Excitement for the meeting
- Members who are ready to participate and contribute.
- Support and buy in for the outcomes and decisions
- Understanding the process of how the decision was made.
- Improved team morale
- Hearing diverse voices
- Positive working relationships
- Stronger communication
- Higher levels of trust and respect
- Problem solving skills
- Accountability for the execution and follow through
- Inspiration and innovation
- The "Aha!" moment: Helping participants see things they have never noticed or understood before

The result is a process that participants feel is **inclusive, welcoming, fair, respectful, effective, engaging, fun and well worth their time**. Our facilitation experience has allowed us the honor to see immense change within teams, organization, and communities even in the most challenging of times and passionate of topics. We believe in the power of facilitation to change the current status and change the future in a lasting and positive way.

An additional benefit of working with a professional facilitator is that having someone NOT associated or employed by the organization will allow equity of input and draw out more candid conversations. With established teams, roles are already defined either formally or informally, which creates situations where comments from leaders are deferred to, and conversations can be stilted according to the professional relationships established. With a neutral third party facilitator, everyone can participate in meetings and outcomes without having to stay within the confines of previously established roles and responsibilities.

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