

Being Thankful for the Trust Behind the Work



As we move into a season of gratitude, I find myself reflecting on one of the quietest but most powerful gifts of facilitation: **trust**. Not the kind of trust that's spoken about in mission statements or leadership books, but the lived trust our groups place in us every time they walk into a room and allow us to guide their conversation.

When people gather—whether it's a leadership team wrestling with strategy, a community forum tackling complex issues, or a department trying to reset after conflict—they are not just sharing words. They are sharing ownership of ideas, reputations, and sometimes the emotional risk of speaking honestly. And in that moment, they put their confidence in us to hold those things with care.

That trust is sacred.

As facilitators, we know that a well-run meeting can change outcomes, but a well-held space can change relationships. It's easy to forget, amid the logistics of agendas, markers,

and timekeeping, that our clients and participants are inviting us into something deeply personal. They trust us to listen without judgment, to see the possibility in disagreement, and to help them translate chaos into clarity. They trust that we will treat their words with neutrality and respect—and that we'll do our part to turn conversation into progress.

This is no small thing. Every time a group opens up and begins to explore their collective thinking, they are taking a leap of faith that our process will help them find answers they can stand behind. And that leap, again and again, reminds me how important our professionalism truly is.

Being thankful for that trust also means **being worthy of it**. It shows up in the preparation we do before we ever enter the room—the quiet hours spent understanding context, surfacing potential conflict, designing the flow of a session. It shows up in our presence, in the steadiness we bring when emotions rise or when silence stretches. And it shows up afterward, in how we capture insights accurately and help translate decisions into action.

This year, I've had the privilege of hearing many INIFAC Certified Master Facilitators® and Certified Competent/Skilled Facilitators® describe moments when their groups reached genuine alignment—sometimes after months of tension. What I hear in those stories isn't pride; it's humility. It's the awe that comes from realizing, once again, that people can do hard things together when they feel seen and safe.

That humility is at the heart of our profession. We are thankful not because our clients “hire us” to lead their sessions, but because they **entrust us** with something more fragile and valuable: their hopes that they can work better together.

As you move through the final weeks of the year, I encourage you to pause and notice that trust in action. Notice the small signs: a quiet voice choosing to speak up; a team member who starts to listen more than defend; a leader who asks, “What do you all think?” instead of giving the answer. These are reminders that facilitation, done well, builds not only consensus—but confidence.

At INIFAC, we continue to be thankful for each of you who embody that trust daily. Whether you are mentoring new facilitators, holding space for difficult conversations, or advancing professional standards, your work is the foundation of what this institute represents. The credibility of our field depends on how we honor the faith our clients place in us—and how we extend that same faith to one another.

May this season be one of reflection and renewal. Let's continue to cultivate gratitude not just for the opportunities to facilitate, but for the **privilege of being trusted** to help people find their way forward—together.

With appreciation,

Diana Mastel Gurwicz

Chair of the Board

INIFAC – Institute for International Facilitation



When a group walks into a facilitated session, they are making a significant investment: their time, their ideas, and sometimes their emotional risk. They are putting their **trust** in you to guide their conversation, ensure neutrality, and help them achieve a meaningful outcome.

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