AI as the Ultimate Note-Taker: What Could Go Wrong?

Over the course of the past year, I've had more conversations about using artificial intelligence to simplify meetings than I ever thought possible. The question typically comes up in the same manner:

"If AI is able to capture the entirety of the conversation, summarize in real-time and send out automatic notes… do we actually still need an individual recording the discussion? What's the point of capturing the notes?" It's a fair question.

AI tools can now document conversations with such incredible ease. These tools produce transcripts, summarize data, even graphically represent models drawn from scratches on a flip chart. They create a fairly accurate summary of events, identify trends, and recommend

next steps from the action items sometimes before a meeting ends. In some ways, AI may be the most efficient note-taker organizations have ever employed.

But the documentation of a facilitated session has never really been transcription.

The risks of treating AI as the "supreme note-taker" stems from the recognition that meetings are not only words on paper. They are living conversations in which there is meaning, context, commitment and alignment that lie beneath the surface of what is spoken out loud.

AI records language. Facilitators observe and track meaning, and meaning holds the key to commitment and action.

Anyone who's been on the sidelines of a leadership meeting is aware of how much communication takes place indirectly. People hedge their statements. They soften disagreement. Ideas are offered tentatively. Decisions sometimes come slowly, as a series of reactions rather than a clear statement that "This is what we decided."

Occasionally, the single most meaningful moment in the session doesn't come up explicitly. It could be a pause, an adjustment in tone, or silence after a proposal has been made.

Those signals matter. Experienced facilitators can see them and help the group interpret what is actually happening within and around the conversation.

A transcript can't do that.

Then there is the matter of judgment. Not everything said in a meeting deserves equal weight. Some comments are exploratory. Some are real commitments. Some ideas can be no more than an element in the process of thought, while others constitute pivotal moments in the conversation.

Good meeting documents display the discernment that has taken place in the room—when it was decided what was worth talking about vs. what was not.

Another subtle but critical difference occurs because AI notes are made after the meeting rather than within the meeting. One of the quiet virtues of good facilitation is documenting agreements as they happen — on a shared screen, a document or even a flip chart. When participants see their decisions written on paper as they are unfolding, they see progress being made, they can refine the language, clarify ownership, and verify the group's agreement.

If summaries come afterward, written by a system that was not part of the room's dynamics, that moment of collective confirmation can be lost forever.

There is also the human dimension. When those who participate know that their every word is being captured and processed by an AI system, conversations sometimes turn slightly more cautious. There is a case to be made that participants may withhold a controversial thought. They may soften a challenge. After that, the genuine conversation switches to the hallway.

What that means is that the meeting is now less honest.

None of which means that AI should be avoided. In fact, it can be very helpful. There is much AI can do to capture transcripts, structure themes and speed documentation that would have been challenging only a handful of years ago.

But facilitation is also about more than accuracy and speed. Facilitation focuses on the human senses, offering insight into group dynamics and judgment to acknowledge when alignment has, or hasn't, actually taken place.

AI will almost certainly become a powerful tool in the facilitator's toolkit. Used well, it can help us capture insights, track ideas, and reduce the administrative burden that often follows great conversations.

But the heart of facilitation has never been note-taking.

It is helping groups surface what matters, challenge assumptions, and move forward together with clarity.

That work remains deeply—and wonderfully—human.

Warmly,

Diana Mastel Gurwicz
Chair of the Board
INIFAC – Institute for International Facilitation

The Facilitator's Edge: Why Human Presence is Your Best ROI in an AI World

In the age of efficiency, it's tempting to believe that if we can automate the "what" of a meeting—the transcript, the action items, and the summary—we have captured the meeting's value. AI tools are now incredibly adept at documenting conversations, identifying trends, and even recommending next steps before the participants have left the room.

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BEYOND THE AGENDA:
THE FACILITATOR AS ENTERPRISE DIAGNOSTICIAN

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With **Diana Gurwicz**
INIFAC BOARD CHAIR

Beyond the Agenda: The Facilitator as Enterprise Diagnostician

Wednesday, Apr 1 at 7:00 AM PST/ 9:00 AM CST/ 10:00 AM EST

This session challenges the notion that facilitation is a neutral process skill and reframes it as a diagnostic discipline.

Leaders rarely misdiagnose on purpose. They misdiagnose because they are looking through the wrong lens. Facilitators sit at the intersection of power, strategy, and execution. The question is not whether we can run a productive meeting. The question is whether we can see what others cannot — and decide what to do about it.

The meetings you run should change things. Let's make sure they do.

Join us LIVE on April 1st — save your seat now before it fills up!

Reserve a spot

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We're excited to spotlight three incredible professionals who are part of the growing global community at International Institute for Facilitation. Each brings unique expertise, perspective, and passion for advancing the field of facilitation worldwide.

Tham Fun Yuen — known as Fun — is a Certified Competent Facilitator® with over 18 years of experience in facilitation, coaching, and training. Based in Singapore, Fun works with corporations, government agencies, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations across Asia, including Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia,

Thailand, Cambodia, and China.

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As Founder and CEO of the trailblazing facilitation studio Mischief Makers, and the vision behind the non-profit Routes In, Emily's expertise lie in facilitative leadership and experience design for the future of work. Infamous for her infectious energy and collaboration mastery, Emily and her team are the secret sauce for industry giants like, Spotify, Netflix, IDEO and The UN.

Emily Hinks

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Melanie partners with organizations to coach, train and facilitate individuals and teams including leaders, managers and individual contributor experts. Her focus areas are: Increasing ability for self-awareness, motivation, influence/ communication skills, managing and leading change.

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