

Notes from the Chair: The Hidden Traps Behind Every Difficult Conversation



Every facilitator has seen it happen.

A team filled with capable, intelligent people leaves a meeting with less clarity than they had when they walked in.

It isn't because they lack expertise.

It's because they fell into one of the leadership traps that quietly derail productive conversations.

Conviction becomes certainty.

Listening gives way to defending.

The loudest voice receives the most attention.

And before anyone realizes it, the conversation has shifted from solving the problem to protecting perspectives.

These aren't rare occurrences—they're predictable human responses to friction. Left unchecked, they shape decisions, weaken trust, and make alignment far more difficult than it needs to be.

In this month's article, I explore ***four common leadership traps*** highlighted by Harvard Business Review and why skilled facilitators are uniquely positioned to recognize—and interrupt—they before they become part of a team's culture.

Most importantly, I share why what many organizations describe as an "alignment problem" is often something much deeper.

As facilitators, *our work has never been about managing meetings.*

It's about helping groups think better together.

With great respect for all you do for your clients, colleagues, and our profession,

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





A recent Harvard Business Review piece — adapted from **All the Difference: Six Leadership Actions to Bridge Perspectives, Strengthen Teams, and Create Value** — makes a claim every facilitator already knows in their bones: diverse teams don't automatically produce better decisions. Difference only creates value when someone in the room knows how to manage, and ultimately leverage, the friction it produces.

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Event poster for "Succeed In a Skills-Based Hiring World With A CMF® Credential From INIFAC". The poster features a woman, Eileen Dowse, Ph.D., in a green blazer. Text on the poster includes: "Succeed In a Skills-Based Hiring World With A CMF® Credential From INIFAC", "In today's skills-based economy, organizations are redefining how they measure professional value. Learn how the CMF® is a trusted benchmark to validate your competence.", "AUG 19, WED", "11:00 AM CST", "Speaker Eileen Dowse, Ph.D.", "Chief Emerita and current Director of Assessments and Certification Development", and a "Register Now" button.

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AUG 19, WED

11:00 AM CST

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Speaker
Eileen Dowse, Ph.D.
Chief Emerita and current Director of Assessments and Certification Development

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