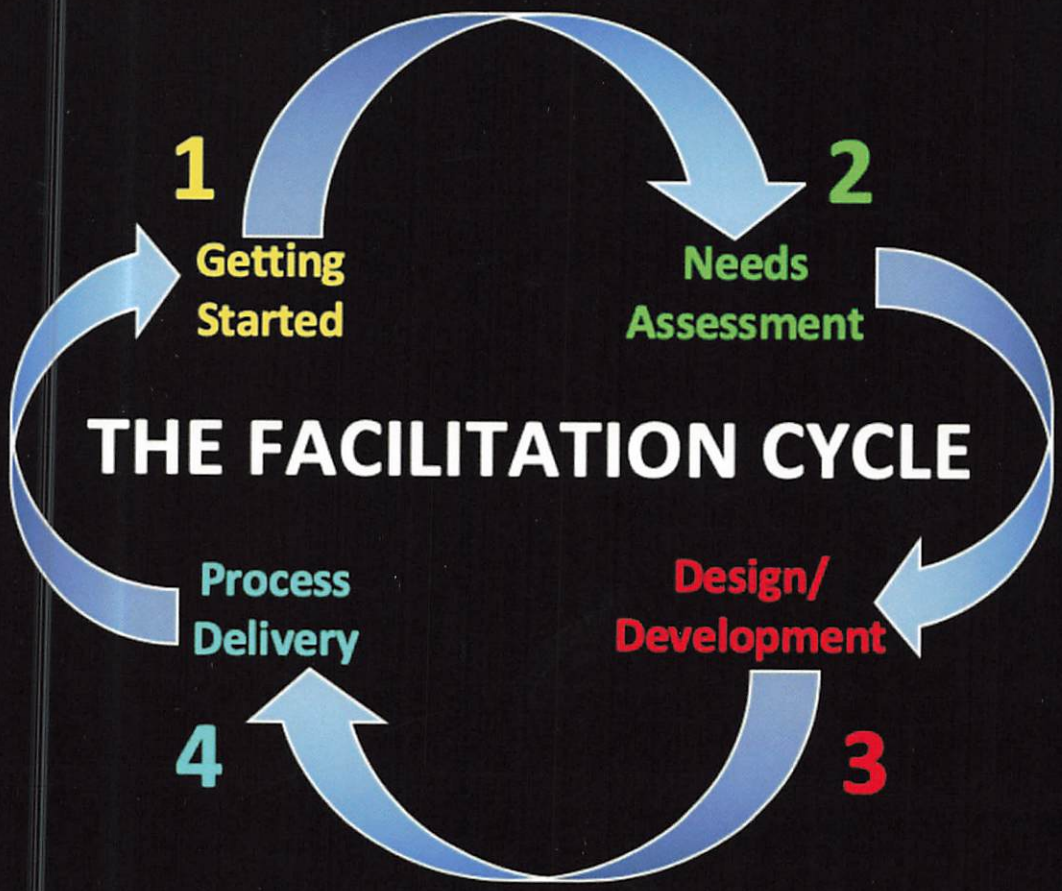
facilitating authentic participation



Transformative Steps to Empower Groups

James M. Campbell

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facilitating authentic participation

transformative steps to empower groups

James M. Campbell

Dedication

There are many people and groups who have made it possible for me to do what I have done as a facilitator. I learned the basics of facilitation working with my colleagues in The Ecumenical Institute (EI) and the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA). Every group I ever worked with taught me more about being a facilitator, always challenging me and keeping me searching for how I could do better with the next group. The hundreds of people who trusted me in training sessions asked probing questions and pushed me to understand more deeply and more clearly the task of being a facilitator. Strangers on trains and airplanes asked me what I did and then: *What does a facilitator do?* While checking my passport, a U.S.A. Immigration officer asked me what I did, and when I told him I was a Group Process Consultant asked me what that involved, resulting in a ten-minute conversation. This book is dedicated to all of them, for they all shaped me and enabled me to learn and grow as a facilitator.

Acknowledgement

At the suggestion of Jack Gillis I asked Wayne Marshall Jones to edit this book and prepare it for publication. I am eternally indebted to Marshall for the huge amount of work he has put into it. This book has become a reality because of the amazing work and creativity that Marshall has expended in the last two years.

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Facilitating Authentic Participation: An Introduction

This book grew out of a course that was originally created in the late 1990s. It began as a 15-day course divided into five 3-day modules. My idea was that facilitation was much more than simply a group process. From relating to a client through designing a process to effective disengagement, the facilitator's responsibility is diverse and always demanding. The course evolved over the years as it was adapted for various circumstances, and as my understanding of facilitation continued to evolve.

A Facilitator's Relationship Journey with His Client

My image of the Facilitation Cycle emerged early in the new century when I read a book about client-centered consulting in which the authors talked about a consulting cycle. It presented a framework for the journey of a consultant/client consulting relationship from first contact to disengagement. This got me thinking about the journey in the relationship of a facilitator and a client.

I started working to develop my understanding of the Facilitation Cycle that eventually became the central focus of the course that I called **Training for Advanced Facilitation Skills**. When I was asked to teach facilitation courses at All Hallows College in Dublin, we agreed to offer two courses. One was a course covering the group processes that form the **Technology of Participation (ToP)©**, and the other was the Advanced Facilitation Skills course.

After a number of years the College decided to offer a new degree program for adult students and to develop a facilitation stream as part of the program. I was asked to prepare the documentation for my courses so that they could be accredited. In this process we decided to modify the advanced course: it became ten days consisting of two 2-day modules and two 3-day modules. This course is the basis of this book.

The four modules were:

- **The Inclusive Responsibility of the Facilitator**: This module presented an overview of facilitation and the responsible role of a facilitator. The material in Section 1 covers the material from this module.
- **The Facilitation Cycle**: The second and third modules dealt with the facilitation cycle from beginning to end. These modules are covered in Section 2.

- **Facilitation Tools and Techniques**: The fourth module looked at tools and techniques that, while not directly related to a group process, are crucial to effective facilitation. Most of this material has been incorporated into Section 2.

My trainings have always been based on my experience working as a facilitator and what I learned from the diverse situations in which I found myself facilitating. One of the things students always comment on is how much of my experience—both the good and the bad—I am willing to share with them. I have tried to do the same here while protecting my clients' confidentiality.

While Section 1 is heavily footnoted, since I use material and insights from a wide range of sources, Section 2 is essentially based on my facilitating experience. The one footnote for Section 2 would read, "See my life and work since I first led a workshop in about 1967." I hope the stories effectively illustrate the points I am seeking to make and help the reader see both their significance and the way in which they contribute to a facilitator's success.

A World in Desperate Need

As I wrote in "Renewing Social Capital: The Role of Civil Dialogue" (my chapter in the International Association of Facilitators' handbook *Creating a Culture of Collaboration*[1]) our world is in desperate need of the skills that a facilitator can offer a group. Around the world we see divisions splintering societies and people withdrawing into groups that seem to become more hostile by the day. The table of contents summarizes the chapter I wrote thusly:

> This chapter explores the relationship among social capital, social trust, confidence, and civil dialogue. It demonstrates the need for facilitated processes to ensure effective civil dialogue.

Whether it is the staff of an organization or a corporation or the residents of a community meeting together, discussing and reaching decisions seems to grow ever more difficult. Since *Creating a Culture of Collaboration* was published in 2006, the need has only grown more urgent with each passing year.

A Shortcut to Disaster

All too often, asking any group to work together without effective facilitation is a shortcut to disaster. A facilitator's task does not begin when he steps in front of a group, however. It begins with the first phone conversation or meeting over a cup of coffee. I have tried to illustrate this to offer a step-by-step analysis of the journey of the client/facilitator relationship.

I need to comment on a few practical details. I have used the masculine pronouns throughout, since I find the *s/he*, her/his constructs very awkward. I opted for the masculine only because that is who I am. In fact I know that a majority of facilitators around the world are women. Secondly, while I have shared many experiences as illustrations, I have not mentioned the names of any clients. I have carefully avoided revealing any content information about my actual work with them or information that might be used to identify them.

When I first heard the term 'facilitation' in the 1980s, I remember thinking to myself: *So* **this** *is what I have been doing all these years!* Facilitation is a young profession that has emerged because of an urgent need in the communities and organizations where we spend our lives. Facilitation is a combination of both artistic talent and skills. Both can be developed by anyone seeking to be an effective facilitator. I hope this book will prove useful to those seeking to develop their facilitation abilities.

Section 1:

The Facilitator's Inclusive Responsibility

Chapter 1
The Coming Age of Participation

Modernism, which dates from the late 19th century,
is associated with mass production, uniformity and predictability;
post-modernism with flexibility, choice, and personal responsibility.
Michael Prowse, "Post Modern Test for Government." Financial Times, *April 21, 1992.*

Before there was facilitation there was participation. Participation is built into the DNA of human community and human interaction. In 1995 the authors of *The Age of Participation* wrote in the introduction to their book:

> Powerful shock waves are shaking human institutions. The ancient Greeks felt the first tremors. The Renaissance and the Enlightenment felt tremors too. Like tectonic plates, two views of government have been grinding against each other for thousands of years.... Participation is emerging as a powerful alternative form of governance. Of course, the idea is not new. Throughout history, humanity has been moving toward increased participation. Athenian democracy in the fourth century B.C., the Magna Carta in thirteenth century Britain, the Declaration of the Rights of Man in France, the Declaration of Independence in America, the United Nations International Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 were all attempts to spread national and community power, rights and responsibilities.[2]

Understanding Participation

If we are going to understand the responsibility of a facilitator, we have to begin with an understanding of participation. The subtitle of *The Age of Participation* is *New Governance for the Workplace and the World.* Participation is about governance. But what is governance?

Every human group has governance. Whether it is a family, a community, a nation state, or just a group of friends trying to decide what to do on a Friday night, governance is happening. Governance is about how people organize themselves to make decisions and the process used to make those decisions. We organize ourselves because we want our decisions to enable the group's security, to be fair, and to provide for the common good of the community or the nation state. We call this governance the Political Dynamic. Every group, organization, or family has a political dynamic; usually we just do not think of it that way.

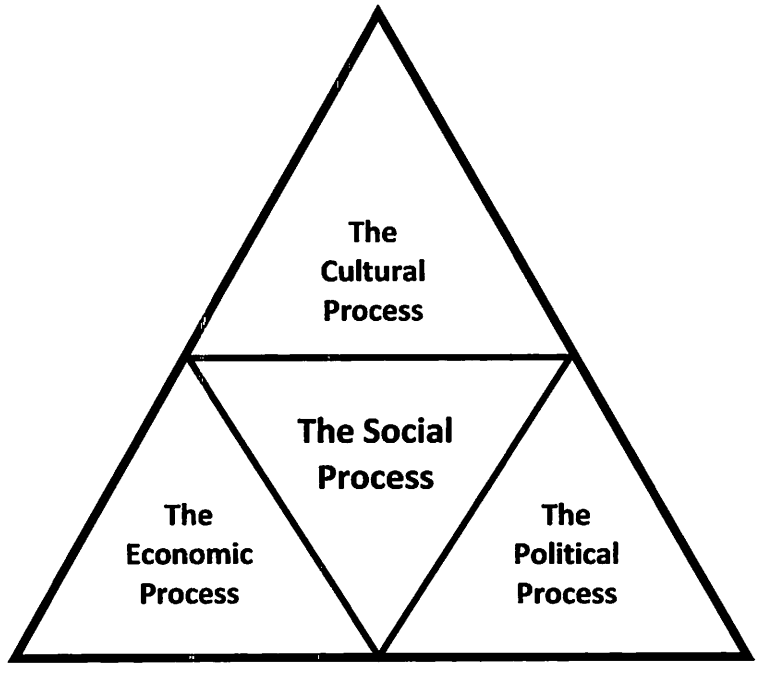
Envisioning the Social Process

Some forty years ago, the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) conducted a research project to enable its concern for effective social change. We asked ourselves,

"What is the social process? What is the process that has to go on in every human community if that community is going to survive and thrive?" We said that this should be a universal and history-long process. That is, it should be true for an Amazon tribe as well as a modern nation state like Germany or the United States. In addition, it should be true for the early civilization in the Nile Valley as well as for modern Egypt. The product of that research we called simply, The Social Process[3].

Using the wisdom of modern anthropology and sociology, we found that every human community has three dimensions. The first is foundational—that without which the community will not survive: the **economic** dimension. The second is relational—how we organize ourselves and all our relationships: the **political** dimension. And the third has to do with meaning—what is significant, what are our values and how do we communicate these: the **cultural** dimension.

We pictured these three dimensions in the following image:



Obviously, when thinking about participation we are focusing on the political process; however, the last three centuries have seen each of these areas undergo a revolutionary transformation that is significant for our understanding of the place of participation and facilitation in the twenty-first century.

Political Revolutions

The first of these transformations occurred in the eighteenth century and was a product of the Age of Enlightenment. It emerged from the Renaissance's focus on

this world rather than the heavenly realm and on **the human** in this world, and was accompanied by the Reformation's declaration that every human being is made in the image of God and its concern for the individual's relation to the divine, emphasizing the equality of each person in his relation to God. The philosophers of the Age of Enlightenment articulated an understanding of the human community that placed sovereignty not in the hands of a sovereign but in the hands of the governed.

Starting in Philadelphia in 1776 and in Paris in 1789, the political revolutions that overtook *les anciens régimes* have continued to this day. These revolutions inculcated the principle that *every human being has the right to participate in the decision-making processes that are determining the destiny of his community.* While we are still working out the practical implications of this principle, what is important is that now it is recognized globally as intrinsic to humanness.

Economic Revolutions

The second transformation was in the economic process and occurred in the nineteenth century. What we now call economics was invented in the middle of the nineteenth century by men such as Marx, Engels, and others who analyzed the economic dynamics in human society in response to the transformation occasioned by the Industrial Revolution. The principle that was established is *that every human being has the right to participate in and secure the wellbeing of himself and his family.* Again, we are still a long way from achieving this, but the principle is there and is universally recognized.

The Cultural Revolution

Finally, the twentieth century saw the **Cultural Revolution**. In hindsight we have called the first years of the twentieth century *la belle époque.* But beginning in 1912 with the sinking of the unsinkable Titanic, it came to a crashing end. Then in August 1914 Europe sank into what came to be called The Great War—the war to end all wars—eventually dragging the rest of the world into it. By November 1918 regimes had fallen, long-established dynasties and symbols of power had collapsed, and with millions of lives lost in what seemed to be a senseless struggle, people's confidence in the established order was profoundly shaken.

The peace that followed set the stage for the second great struggle of the twentieth century. Only twenty years after the end of The Great War, the world again sank into conflict as the Nazis emerged, setting about using modern industrial processes

to attempt to eliminate a whole people and all those who did not conform to their ideology.

In 1945 the United States initiated the Atomic Age in the skies over Japan. For the first time in human history we possessed the ability to annihilate a whole city with a single blast, and we quickly built enough of these weapons to destroy the planet. By mid-century our faith in progress and the meaning of it all had been profoundly shaken. People looked around them and saw glaring injustices that were built into the structures of our society and the cultural norms that informed those structures.

Around the world people rose up to demand control of their destiny and to participate fully in the community of which they were a part. The civil rights struggle in the United States transformed that nation's culture. Colonial empires fell around the world. A whole generation rose up against what they understood as an unjust war in Vietnam that denied a people the right to determine their destiny. Simone de Beauvoir published *The Second Sex* in 1949 and Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, launching modern feminism. The world I was born into in 1940 is a world gone forever.

The last half of the twentieth century saw a **Cultural Revolution** sweep the world. Much of what has happened and is happening in the world today is the working out of this Cultural Revolution. I do not think we are yet sure what is the fundamental principle of this revolution. I would want to suggest, however, that it is something close to this assertion:

> *Every human being has the right to freely participate in and practice the cultural gifts and wisdom of all the world's communities.*

Participation Is Intrinsic to Humanness

Each of these revolutions was **a paradigm shift in human consciousness**, and together they have delivered us into the twenty-first century with a worldview and understanding that **participation is of inordinate importance**. It was the Cultural Revolution, however, that allowed us to see that participation is not simply a political or legal right. Through the paradigm shift that occurred in the twentieth century, we have become conscious that participating in the decision-making processes that are determining our destiny, and the destiny of our organizations and communities, is an aspect of **what it means to be a human being**. We have come to see that if you are not free to determine your own destiny, then your humanity is lessened. I have written elsewhere:

> This is a universal principle that is fundamental to what it is to be a human being. When this right is being denied to people, their humanity is diminished. It matters not if it was in Philadelphia in 1776, the streets of Paris in 1789, India in the 1930s, South Africa in the 1980s, Tiananmen Square in 1989, the Soviet Empire of the early 1990s, Myanmar in the 2000s, or the Middle East in 2011; people know that participating in creating their destiny is an essential part of their humanity.[4]

Perhaps it is clearer to us today than it has been to past generations, but people have always sensed that participating in determining their destiny was an intrinsic part of their humanity. Plato's *Republic* describes a form of government that involves a degree of participation by members of the community concerned with the wellbeing of their community. I do not believe that it was an accident that a form of participatory government was conceived as an ideal by one of the world's first philosophers.

Participation in the Twenty-first Century

In a certain sense the whole history of humanity can be viewed as a journey toward greater and broader participation. The three great paradigm shifts in the last three centuries, however, have brought us to **a unique time in the human journey**. As we move into the twenty-first century, all three dimensions of the Social Process are faced with an emerging paradigm that is putting participation at the center of the human enterprise.

Investing Authority in Leaders

As communities developed across the globe, innumerable ways were invented to determine who was in authority. In some communities leadership and authority was invested in the strongest person, and authority was transferred when someone could defeat the leader. In many communities authority was given to someone who could demonstrate a special relationship with the gods.

As communities became larger and more complex, there developed the need for a more stable mode of transferring authority, and so the concept of passing authority from one generation to the next in the same familial line was instituted: sons (and the occasional daughter) inherited authority. But to ensure that this was both accepted and respected, the holder of the office of leader was invested with divine authority.

Eventually this authority was invested in the office itself, so that when a person ascended to the throne, he (or she) was identified as a god. It was only in 1945 at

the end of World War II that the Japanese Emperor was officially divested of his divine status.

The Divine Right of Kings

In the West, with the arrival of the Christian era, the idea of actually being divine had to be modified, and a sovereignty associated with the divine that eventually came to be called the Divine Right of Kings was established. These rulers were anointed by God and invested with their authority by God. Their power was absolute, and they were accountable only to God. They were sovereign on this earth.

In the movie *Kingdom of Heaven* a leader of the Muslim army announces the arrival of the Christian army by saying, "Jerusalem has come!" Not *the Christians are here!* but *Jerusalem has come!*—meaning the sovereign King of Jerusalem, who *was* the state, has arrived. In another scene when the King is confronting a rebellious nobleman, he says, "I am Jerusalem." And, of course, Louis XIV is infamous for reportedly saying "Je suis France."

It was understood that to oppose the King was to disrupt the natural order of the universe: it was to rebel against God and God's established order. When the English beheaded a King in the seventeenth century and the French did the same in the eighteenth century, it shook the very foundations of the established universe.

In Shakespeare's *King Richard II* the King, faced with a rebellion, articulates his belief that he who is anointed by God will be protected by God:

> Not all the water in the rough rude sea
> Can wash the balm off from an anointed king;
> The breath of worldly men cannot depose
> The deputy elected by the Lord:
> For every man that Bolingbroke hath press'd
> To lift shrewd steel against our golden crown,
> God for his Richard hath in heavenly pay
> A glorious angel: then, if angels fight,
> Weak men must fall, for heaven still guards the right.

The Sovereignty of the Governed

For the philosophers of the Age of Enlightenment to proclaim that **sovereignty resides in the governed** and not in those who were doing the governing was to undo thousands of years of conventional wisdom and a carefully constructed system of governance. As I said earlier, since the revolutions of the late eighteenth

century we have been working out how *the sovereignty of the governed* could best be implemented and who should participate in the process.

We continue to invest authority in the office, however, so that when a person assumes an office, he or she is invested with the authority that accompanies that office. In addition, we continue to structure our organizations in a hierarchical form.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Dutch and English entrepreneurs had to find a way for various people to invest their money in a common venture. The Dutch East India Company was created in 1600 to trade with India and what became Indonesia, and the English (British) East India Company, created in 1602, actually ruled much of India until its control was ceded to the British government.

Inventing Hierarchical Organization

The organizational form of these companies was founded on what was familiar to the men involved; that is, a hierarchical form of governance similar to that under which they lived. This organizational form became the norm and was codified into our legal system.

If you are establishing an organization, you will be given a set of guidelines for the statutes of the organization. Those guidelines will call for a hierarchical form of organizational governance. The problem with this is that the **paradigm shifts** of the last three hundred years **have undermined the understanding of authority and organizational form** embodied in these statutes.

In *Birth of the Chaordic Age* Dee Hock writes,

> An institution is a manifestation of and inseparable from the social environment from which it emerged and on which its health and existence depend.[5]

A hierarchical organization is a **command and control** organization that invests **all** authority in the person occupying the office at the top of the hierarchy. The hierarchy exists to funnel information upward and decisions downward so that they can be implemented.

I recall reading about a faltering corporation where a plant manager wanting to change working procedures would have to send his requests through something like seventeen layers of bureaucracy in order to get a decision from the top of the hierarchy, and then wait while the same seventeen layers relayed the decision back down to him.

The Collapse of Hierarchical Organization

With the arrival of information technology this system began to collapse for three reasons:

- The first reason was simply the amount of information that was available. It quickly became impossible for one person to deal with all the information that computer systems could generate.
- The second reason was the speed with which information could be made available. Rather than getting information that was dealing with events that took place a month or more ago, computers could give people real time information about what was happening as it happened.
- The third reason was that this information could be made available to the people who were actually responsible for responding to the information. They did not have to wait for the person at the top to review the information and make decisions based on the information.

The Cultural Revolution in Understanding Authority

The greater problem with the hierarchical organization, however, was what had happened regarding authority in the Cultural Revolution. Whereas we used to understand that authority was invested in a position, and the person occupying that position was empowered to wield that authority, **a new image of how authority was invested** emerged as the Cultural Revolution developed.

We no longer believed that because someone had been put into a particular position, he was automatically invested with the authority accompanying that position. We came to understand that it was **our decision** that would determine whether we accepted that person wielding the authority of his position, and the basis of our decision was our assessment of a person's **authenticity**.

A few years ago a book entitled *Why Should Anyone Want to be Led by You? What it Takes to be an Authentic Leader* was published. The authors' assessment was that the basic factor in getting people to follow you as a leader was **authenticity**, and **not** that you had taken a position at the top of the hierarchical pyramid:

> ... the contemporary focus on authenticity ... is a reaction to the turbulence and change of modern life. Work and family institutions seem under threat. Recent geopolitical events have dramatically and tragically reinforced this sense of turbulence. As rates of change increase, individuals are ever more motivated to

> search for constancy and meaning. We've become increasingly suspicious of a world dominated by the mere role player.[6]

Whether in the economic, political, or cultural sphere, we no longer automatically cede control of our future to someone sitting at the top of an organizational pyramid, and so those structures of our society that are hierarchically organized continue to malfunction. In 2002 *The Financial Times* published the following:

> The acceleration of organizational change is captured in a recent study at the University of Oxford of top 50 UK companies from early 1991 to 2000. In the early 1990s, about 20 per cent of these companies were undergoing major reorganizations every year, yet by the end of the period the rate of reorganization was well over 30 per cent. The average big business today can expect major reorganization every three years. Microsoft has gone through the process four times in the past five years....[7]

Hierarchy Is Dehumanizing

Of course, the problem is not going to be solved by repeated reorganizations. The problem is what Dee Hock points to in the previous quote. The hierarchical command and control organization was invented in a social environment that **no longer exists** in our world. Without that environment it will increasingly malfunction, and people will increasingly find it a dehumanizing place to spend their lives. We live in a time where survey after survey indicates that people have lost faith in both public and private institutions.

The quote from the beginning of this chapter points to the contradiction inherent in our time:

> Modernism, which dates from the late 19th century, is associated with mass production, uniformity and predictability; post-modernism with **flexibility, choice** and **personal responsibility**. [emphasis added]
> Michael Prowse, "Post Modern Test for Government." *Financial Times*, April 21, 1992.

The Challenge of Flexibility

In the twenty-first century, organizations and institutions in all dimensions of society will have to be **flexible** in responding to the ever-changing economic and social environment in which we live. Whether they are public, private, or a non-governmental organization, only the quick-footed will survive. In her Foreword to *Winning Through Participation* Rosabeth Moss Kanter wrote:

> In today's fast-paced world of constant change and pressure for responsiveness, all organizations must dance to new rhythms. And so the Giants are finally

> waking up and learning to dance... One of the most important dance steps they are learning is to involve their people in problem-solving and planning.[8]

Freedom of Choice

Part of today's reality is that people have **choices**. A dimension of the Cultural Revolution is that we all live in **an urban world** no matter where we physically live. A fundamental factor in this urban world is that we are faced with a multitude of choices about every dimension of our lives. People growing up in today's world expect to be able to choose and decide for themselves what they will do, how they will do it, and when they will do it. When they show up in an organization or institution, they expect to have the same freedom of choice, or at least to be consulted before decisions are made.

Determining the Future in the Age of Participation

Finally, we come to **personal responsibility**. In today's social environment people expect to be consulted about things. In the traditional hierarchical organization **responsibility meant being willing to do what you were told** to do. Today, however, people want to be involved in **determining the future** of the organization or community they are part of. They are no longer willing to blindly follow or accept dictates from on high.

In a recording I have of a Bruce Springsteen concert he introduces the song, *Born in the USA,* by saying, "...blind faith in a leader will get you killed." About a hundred and twenty thousand people responded to that with a roar of applause.

Flexibility, choice, and personal responsibility all involve participation. The post-modern world of the twenty-first century is truly **the age of participation**. I believe that before the end of this century we will have invented a new form of organization in all dimensions of society, and that fundamental to this new organizational form will be a structure that enables the full and effective participation of all its members.

Chapter 2
What Authentic Participation Is, Why it Works, What it Creates

Change is disturbing when it is done to us,
but exhilarating when it is done by us.
—Rosabeth Moss Kanter

In 1974 I was living and working in Nairobi Kenya together with ICA staff. We were preparing to launch a Human Development Project, one of twenty-four projects the Institute was initiating around the world during 1974 and 1975.

As we were preparing for the launch, I had an appointment with a development funding agency in a large Embassy. I began by explaining that we would be initiating the project with what we called a Consult. This involved bringing in outside experts to advise the community residents during a week-long planning process.

I emphasized that the experts were there to answer the residents' questions and, while they could make suggestions, the final decision was always with the residents. The result of the Consult would be a four-year development plan which the residents had created themselves and which, with our support, they would implement. Our role in the Consult was to provide a planning process and facilitate the community's participation.

Local Participation in Human Development Projects

I could see a look of disbelief grow on the face of the man I was speaking to. He finally interrupted me and proceeded to explain to me why what we were proposing would never work.

He said that first of all, the people in the community would not come to such an event and, even if they did, they were unprepared to identify their development needs and would have no idea about how to address any needs they did come up with. He assured me that development was best left to the experts in the field who had studied development and knew what was possible and what would work. He was just articulating the accepted common wisdom of 1974 regarding development and how it should be done.

Now, forty years later, the accepted common wisdom is just the opposite. No development agency in the world would fund a development project that did not have a local participation component. The word **participation**, however, can be and is used to point to a variety of activities, some of which should more correctly be

called **manipulation**. Therefore, I believe it is important to talk about **the nature of participation** and what it looks like when it is happening.

Four Characteristics of Authentic Participation

Describing **authentic participation** is a *Je ne sais quoi* situation. I cannot define it, but I know it when I see it happening. For me the easiest way to describe it is to talk about what it does to and for the people participating. When you see the following occurring in a group, you know that participation is happening:

- The participants have a **sense of belonging** to the group. They participate with enthusiasm and are fully engaged in the work of the group. There is a very real and obvious *esprit de corps* and camaraderie present in the room where they are working. They all know they are *'all in this together'* and if asked would talk about their situation that way.
- The participants know that every member of the group has a **significant role** to play in accomplishing the group's goals, and that just as their contributions are valued and respected, they value and respect the contributions of others. This happens when you see people listening intently to one another and building on each other's contributions. There are no disparaging retorts or cynical responses to people's comments. There is a sense that *'we all have an important piece of the puzzle'* and that accomplishing our goal will require input from all of us.
- The participants understand that any one of them can play a **leadership role.** My image is that the power is in the center of the table and that anyone in the group can pick it up as long as he is willing to take the responsibility that goes with being in charge. This generates a sense in the group that *'we are all leaders in accomplishing our goals.'* No one feels that his contribution is less important than someone else's. This is manifested when people feel free to speak freely and to question and push each other.
- The participants are **confident** that the group will accomplish its goals. There is a sense of **no limits**: *'we can deal with any challenge or difficulty that presents itself.'* You see this when the group's conversations remain focused and have a positive tone to them. As one group I worked with told me, "We have adapted the Nike motto: ***Just do it.***" Such a group is out to accomplish and does not give in to despair or waste time talking about what should have happened or what they wished had happened.

Again, these are characteristics of a situation where authentic participation is happening. Any one or two of them might be possible in a group where something else was taking place, but I believe that all four characteristics are possible **only** when authentic participation is happening.

Facilitating Authentic Participation

This raises the question: What are the attitudes or **values** that a group needs to be operating with for these four characteristics to become the **norms** in the group? Here the **role** of the facilitator enters the picture, for it is **the task of the facilitator** to enable full participation.

There are **four essential values** that foster authentic participation in a group:

- **Trust**: People have **confidence** in one another and trust that every person is doing his part and working as hard as they are to meet their common objectives. The facilitator must communicate to the group that he believes the group is **adequate to accomplishing the task** before them. He must model **listening** to and taking seriously every comment. He must encourage people to build on and develop each other's thinking rather than dismissing anyone's contribution.
- **Openness**: People know that they can share all relevant information and that their contributions will be respected. This will not happen if **trust** is not present in the group. It also requires a degree of **transparency**. People need to know that there are **no hidden agendas** and that no one in the group is seeking to **manipulate** the group. The facilitator enables this by ensuring that people are sharing the **assumptions** that are behind their comments and that there is sufficient **time** for every person to participate. It is important that the facilitator is able to **manage disagreements** and keep them from **escalating** into full-blown disputes.
- **Security**: People know that they are in a **'safe zone.'** There will be no **repercussions** if they speak their mind or **challenge** the established leadership. This happens when **trust and openness** are the norms in the group. This is essential for the free flow of ideas and for enabling the group to refine, combine, and build on each other's contributions. The facilitator can enable this by keeping the discussion focused on the ideas and task of the group and not allowing it to become a **personality contest**.
- **Commitment to Participation**: People come to understand that if they want to be dealt with seriously, they must **deal with others** seriously. Participation is a

two-way street. The facilitator can enable this by making sure that the conversation is not **dominated** by one or two people, by finding ways to make sure **everyone** has a chance to make his contribution to the conversation, and by modeling what it means to take all contributions **seriously** and incorporate them into the discussion.

The Facilitator's Responsibility

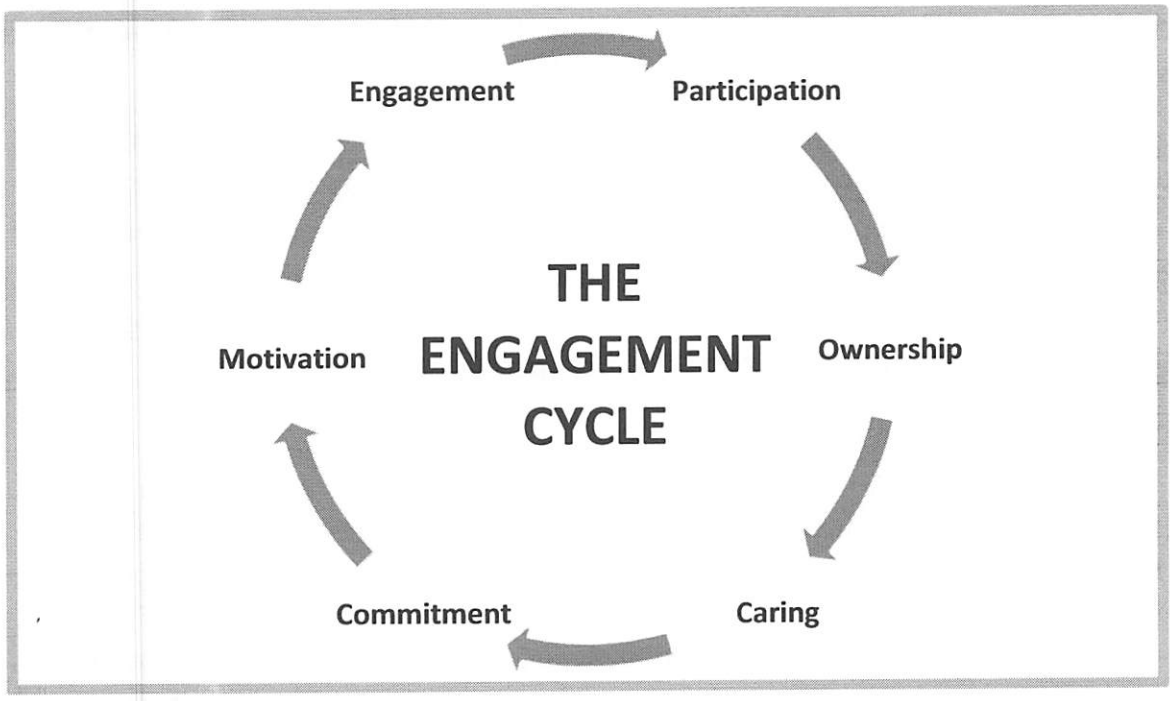
The facilitator has a responsibility to enable a group to operate with these four values and attitudes. I will discuss each of these in more detail in Chapters 12 through 15 about **Facilitating the Event** (Phase 6). This involves the facilitator being prepared to deal with the following:

- **Process**: Appropriate to the group and to the objectives of the group. This is fundamental to a facilitator's task of facilitating participation. The facilitator is taking the group on a journey, and the group process he is using is the tool that will ensure a successful conclusion to the journey.
- **Group Norms**: People know what is expected of them. Every group has group norms; the problem, however, is that they usually are not self-consciously articulated, and very often may be a hindrance to the group getting its task done. There are two types of group norms: those that deal with how people **relate** to each other in the group; and **procedural** norms. An example of a procedural norm would be: "We start on time and end on time." A relational norm would be: "We focus on the issues, not on personalities." Establishing a short **list of group norms** with a group before it begins its work can be a powerful tool helping a facilitator to enable a group to accomplish its agenda. Chapter 14 discusses establishing a set of appropriate norms with a group.
- **Space and Time**: The Facilitator needs to ensure that the **space enables the group to focus** on its task. A clean, well-ordered and arranged space communicates to a group that its work is important and worth the effort it will put into accomplishing it. The facilitator must **manage the time** that the group has to work together. It is his responsibility to design a process that will accomplish the group's task in the time that is allocated for the group's work. In addition, the facilitator must keep the group **focused** on its work and **moving** through the process, ensuring that the work is done when the time comes to finish.
- **Techniques**: The facilitator is equipped with techniques to **deal with any situation** that might arise in the group. Beyond designing and facilitating the process, a facilitator must be ready with techniques to manage such things as

open discussions, a conversation being **dominated** by one or two people; **disagreements**; people making **disparaging** remarks or being **cynical** about someone's contribution, etc.

The Engagement Cycle

Finally, when a group is fully engaged and real participation happens, what are the consequences? The term I use to describe this is what I have come to call **the Engagement Cycle**. When people are engaged and participating in creating something as a group, they develop **a sense of ownership**. They experience themselves as **co-creators** of a plan, a solution to a problem or whatever it is the group has been working on. When people invest their time, energy, creativity, and knowledge into something, they sense that they are co-owners of what they have helped create. When you own something you care about it, and that care is the source of a group's commitment to what they have created. It is this commitment that releases a group's motivation. If you have participated in building a strategic plan, then it is your plan, you care about it, and are committed to seeing it succeed.



In working with groups I have observed that once people are engaged, their motivation grows and they become more engaged. Thus their participation increases so that the cycle becomes self-reinforcing.

I have experienced in myself the power of effective participation in releasing my commitment and motivation to engage in an action plan that I helped to create. I have also seen it in groups I have facilitated.

The Experience of Transformation

A number of years ago I was working with a group to build a three-year strategic plan for their organization. There was an elderly man who came along to the planning. He was a volunteer who showed up at their office every day. When people saw him they took me aside and told me that while he came in every day, he did not really do anything, and that I should just **ignore** him.

But **I don't do that**! And so I made sure that he participated fully in the planning sessions and that his contributions were incorporated into the plan along with everyone else's.

By the time we had gotten to the final stages of the implementation workshop he was volunteering to work on a number of the items in the plan. I heard from the organization's leader several months later that he was still showing up every day, but now he was one of their hardest working volunteers. He did what he had signed up to do, and was also volunteering to help with other parts of the implementation plan. She said that the staff could not believe it, and that his **transformation** had had an impact on the rest of the staff in terms of their own **motivation** and **engagement**.

When effective participation happens, it is a very powerful and **transformative experience**. This is true for individuals in a group, but also for the group as a whole. When a group has a corporate sense of **ownership** and a common **commitment**, then the motivation that is released in the group is **greater** than the sum of the parts. People find the strength and energy to do more than they thought themselves capable of because they are **empowered** by the group.

I have written elsewhere:

> The process whereby people are enabled to experience this combination of the freeing of their humanity and the ownership that generates commitment and motivation is truly transformative. By the force of their own experience people realize that they can participate in creating their future and the future of their organization or community. Thus people experience themselves as responsible for their destiny, and so resignation and despair are transformed into hope and belief-in-self. People's anger and frustration at their disenfranchisement is transformed into energy invested in creating their destiny.[9]

Chapter 3
A Philosophy of Facilitation

Anyone in an organization can become a facilitative leader,
even someone who has no supervisory authority.
Traditionally, the influence of a manager and traditional leader
stems largely from formal authority.
But a facilitative leader's influence stems largely
from the ability to help others accomplish
what they want to accomplish.
—*Roger Schwarz,* The Skilled Facilitator, *1st edition*

The art of facilitation has grown out of three main streams of work with groups and group processes in the field of psychology. All of them emerged in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. There has been much cross-fertilization and interchange between these three streams, such that some facilitation processes have drawn on more than one of these streams. It is important, however, to understand something of the roots of facilitation if we are to understand what is involved in effective facilitation.

Gestalt Psychology

The first stream traces its roots back to **Gestalt psychology** that was developed in Germany beginning late in the nineteenth century. A summary of this psychological approach:

> Gestalt psychology is a school of thought that looks at the human mind and behavior as a whole.
>
> ...
>
> Originating in the work of Max Wertheimer, Gestalt psychology formed partially as a response to the structuralism of Wilhelm Wundt. The development of this area of psychology was influenced by a number of thinkers, including Immanuel Kant, Ernst Mach and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.
>
> ...
>
> "The fundamental 'formula' of Gestalt theory might be expressed in this way," Max Wertheimer wrote. "There are wholes, the behavior of which is not determined by that of their individual elements, but where the part-processes are themselves determined by the intrinsic nature of the whole. It is the hope of Gestalt theory to determine the nature of such wholes" (1924).[10]

Gestalt Psychology came to the United States in the person of Kurt Lewin who was born in Germany in 1890 and studied psychology at the University of Berlin where

he eventually came to work with the leaders in the development of Gestalt psychology. Fleeing the Nazis, he emigrated to the United States in 1933. Considered the father of social psychology, he was one of the first psychologists to study group dynamics and organizational development. His work in a "change experiment" led to the development of what came to be called sensitivity training and then the establishment of the National Training Laboratories that became a center for work in social and group psychology. As Director of the Center for Group Dynamics at MIT in the mid-forties, he agreed to partner with the Tavistock Institute in the UK to publish the journal *Human Relations.* The Tavistock Institute had significant influence on the development of social and group psychology in the UK during the fifties and sixties.[11]

In the early seventies Ron Lippitt and Eva Schindler-Rainman built on this work to develop a group process they called P*referred Future.* Ron Lippitt was a social scientist concerned by what happened to groups when they engaged in planning activities. He observed that most groups began by identifying problems and then worked to set goals based on the problems they had identified. He noticed that **people quickly lost their motivation** when this process was followed, and soon hardly anyone would be participating. He experimented with a process beginning with **creating a vision** of the preferred future that the group desired to bring into being. This was really the first time that a planning process was created that began with the vision.[12]

This line of development gave birth to some of the best-known planning processes in the 1980s and 1990s. Among them were The Search Conference, Future Search, Real time Strategic Change, and the Institute of Cultural Affairs' Participatory Strategic Planning Process.

Systems Theory

The second stream out of which facilitation emerged was **Systems Theory**. This was based on the work of biologist Ludwig von Bertallanaffy who developed what he called a General Systems Theory (GST). Béla H. Bánáthy defines "the systems view" as follows:

> The systems view is a world-view that is based on the discipline of SYSTEM INQUIRY. Central to systems inquiry is the concept of SYSTEM. In the most general sense, system means a configuration of parts connected and joined together by a web of relationships. The Primer group defines system as a family of relationships among the members acting as a whole. Bertalanffy defined system as "elements in standing relationship."

> The joining and integrating of the web of relationships creates EMERGENT PROPERTIES of the whole. These properties of the whole may not be found in any analysis the parts. This is the VALUE of systems theory: the WHOLENESS that can't be seen in the parts.[13]

This approach to understanding organizations and groups had a significant impact across the board in the development of facilitation. The fifties and sixties saw the development of numerous applications in the work with groups and organizations. Among them were Open System Planning, Power and Systems Labs, and The Confrontation Meetings. In the seventies the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland developed an Organization & Systems Development Program, and the National Training Laboratories developed the Complex Systems Change Program. Later in the eighties and into the nineties such processes as Getting the Whole System in the Room, Fast Cycle Full Participation Work Design, Real Time Work Design, and Participative Design were created and employed to enable groups to work more effectively.

Psychoanalytic Psychology

The third stream is **psychoanalytic psychology**. The key figure here is Wilfred Bion, a British medical doctor who spent seven years in psychotherapeutic training at the Tavistock Institute in London. During World War II he was involved in treating patients and developing group therapy techniques that the staff of the Tavistock Institute was also developing. In 1960 he published an influential work entitled *Experiences in Groups: and other papers* that "was an important guide for the group psychotherapy and encounter group movements beginning in the 1960s, and quickly became a touchstone work for **applications of group theory** in a wide variety of fields."[14]

Systems theory had a large impact on the development of this stream in terms of facilitation. One of the first applications was in the UK and was called Socio-ethical Systems. A further development here was work done on Large Group Dynamics and Therapy that had significant impact on the development of large group processes. Some of the processes that generally build on work in this stream are The Search Conference, Simu-Real Workout, Open Space Technology, and Large Scale Interchange Events.

Today there are a multitude of group processes being used by facilitators around the world. However, all of them grew out of these three fundamental streams and incorporate the wisdom about groups that they contain.

Defining Facilitation

During the 1980s the term facilitation started coming into use to describe the task of enabling a group through affecting the processes the group was using. The professional organization for facilitators, The International Association of Facilitators (IAF), was started in the United States in 1994. There are numerous definitions of facilitation. I find that the following by Roger Schwarz in the first edition of his book *The Skilled Facilitator* to be inclusive and salient.

> Group facilitation is a process in which a person who is acceptable to all members of the group, substantively neutral, and has no decision-making authority, intervenes to help improve the way it identifies and solves problems and makes decisions, in order to increase the group's effectiveness.[15]

This definition has three parts. The first identifies **who** the facilitator is; the second **what** he does; and the third is the **objective** of the facilitation. Each of these parts is worth exploring in more detail for a fuller understanding of facilitation.

The Facilitator's Qualifications

In the first part Schwarz gives us **three criteria** that a facilitator should meet. Essentially these three criteria all have to do with ensuring that the group trusts and has confidence in the facilitator. They are:

1. **A person who is acceptable to all members of the group**: Members of the group must believe that the person nominated as facilitator knows what he is doing as a facilitator and is capable of leading them in accomplishing their goal(s). If the facilitator has an unfavorable history with the group, then it is going to be very difficult for the group to have confidence in him.
2. **Is substantively neutral**: The group must perceive that the facilitator holds no opinions and has no vested interest in its work or in the outcome of the session. The group must understand that the facilitator is not biased and has no private agenda for the meeting.
3. **Has no decision-making authority**: The group must understand that the facilitator is not manipulating it to confirm an already determined decision. The group must know as well that the facilitator cannot veto its decision if he disapproves of it.

The Facilitator's Task

In the second part of the definition Schwarz says what it is the facilitator **does** when working with the group. He **intervenes to help improve the way it identifies and**

solves problems and makes decisions. A facilitator seeks to enable a group to work more effectively to accomplish its goals. There are two fundamental ways in which a facilitator can do this:

First, a facilitator can use a group **process** that will enable a group to accomplish its goal by the end of the process. When I do Strategic Planning with a group I use the ToP© Participatory Strategic Planning Process. I call this *Group Process Facilitation*.

The **second** way a facilitator can enable a group is to **intervene** in terms of the group dynamics going on in the group. The Skilled Facilitator approach of Roger Schwarz is a system for intervening to improve the group dynamics in a group, thus enabling it to meet its goal effectively. I call this *Group Dynamics Facilitation*.

It needs to be pointed out that a process facilitator must also manage the dynamics in a group; but his **primary focus is on the process**, and he intervenes in the group dynamics only when they are hindering the process. The same is true for the group dynamics facilitator. He would intervene in the process only if it were hindering the appropriate functioning of the group dynamics.

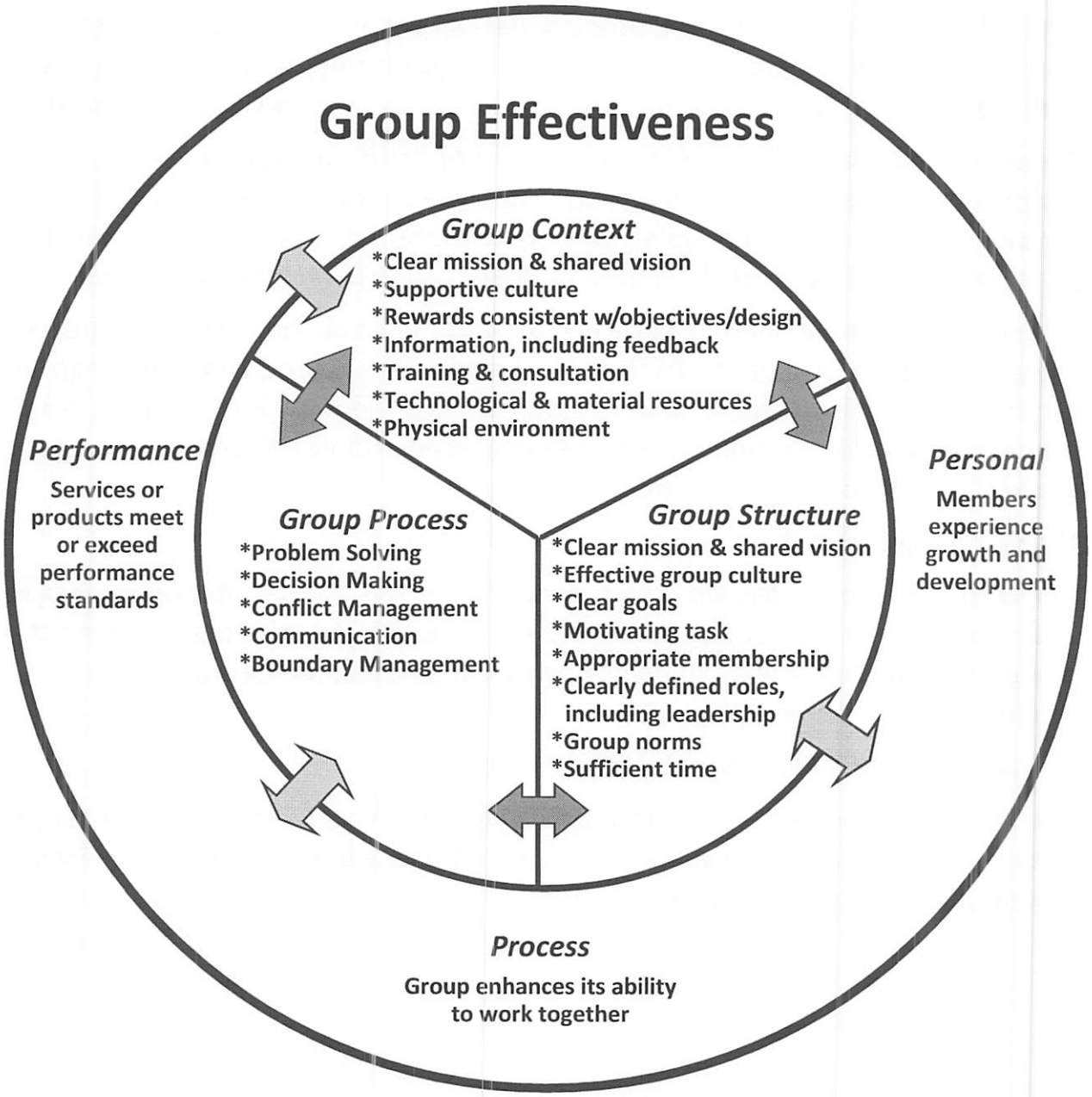
The Facilitator's Intent

Finally, the third part says **why** the facilitator does this. A facilitator intervenes **in order to increase the group's effectiveness.** Whether it is through enabling the group's dynamics or leading them in a particular process, the facilitator is there to help the group to be effective.

Characteristics of an Effective Group

I believe it is important that a facilitator have some understanding of what an effective group looks like. If we are seeking to enable a group to be effective what precisely are we trying to create?

The following model of group effectiveness is adapted from the work of Roger Schwarz.[16]



The outer ring has three dimensions:

1. **Process**: An effective group will use processes that enable it to accomplish its task effectively and in a manner that enable all members to participate.
2. **Performance**: The group is meeting its objectives on time and in a manner that is meeting or exceeding the accepted standards for its work.

3. **Personal**: The members in the group experience themselves as developing their skills and gaining new knowledge and skills through the work of the group.

The inner circle has three dimensions:

1. **Group Structure**: This has to do with ensuring that the group is organized and operating in a way that facilitates effectively engaging all members in the group's task. Everything from a clear and commonly understood set of goals through to group norms and ensuring that the group has sufficient time to accomplish its task.
2. **Group Process**: An effective group will have in place processes that enable it to problem solve, make decisions, resolve conflicts, etc. This will ensure the smooth operation of the group, avoid much confusion, and thereby enable the group to focus on its task rather than spending time dealing with operational problems. This area includes what I have previously called techniques.
3. **Group Context**: An effective team will have a supportive environment that ensures that it is able to focus on accomplishing its task. Everything from having adequate space and the necessary equipment to rewards appropriate to the work of the group will enable an effective team to maintain a high level of commitment and motivation.

Facilitating vs. Consulting and Training

In understanding the nature of facilitation it is important to distinguish it from two other types of group work with which it is sometimes confused. **Consulting, training**, and **facilitation** are all ways of working with a group, and they will often employ similar methods. There are differences, however, that need to be recognized:[17]

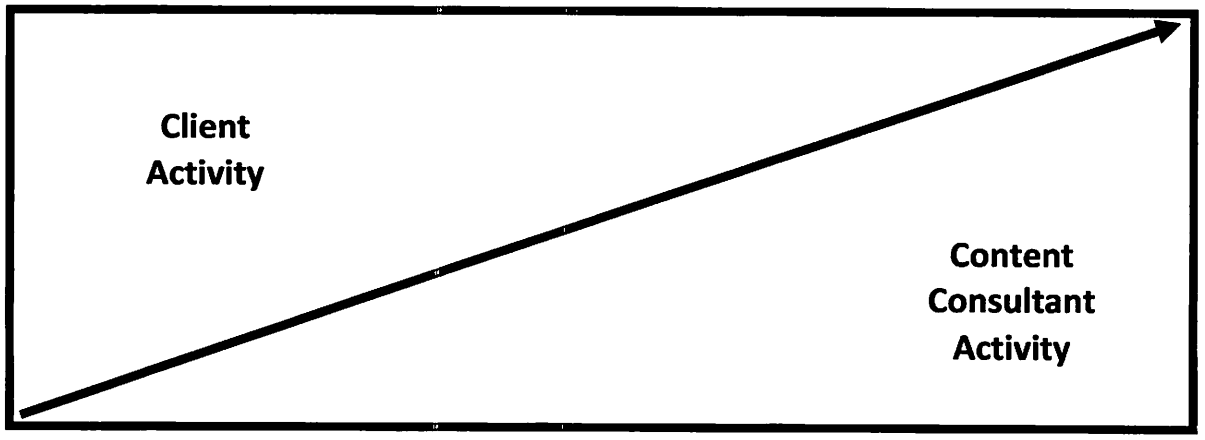
- In a **consulting** situation, a group or organization is in need of some skill or expertise that they do not have and do not want to acquire.
- In a **training** situation a group or organization is in need of some skill or expertise, and they decide to acquire it.
- In a **facilitation** situation, a group or organization has untapped expertise and uses facilitators to make those insights available for its work.

Yet facilitators brought into a group or organization are often seen as **external consultants**. Therefore, it is important understand the difference between a **group process** consultant (facilitator) and a **content** consultant.

The Role of Content Consultant

The following chart shows the classic model of a **content** consultant's work with a client, which can range from raising questions nondirectively to participating in problem-solving and directing the group.

The Work of a Content Consultant



Non-Directive----------Directive
Raises Question----------Participates in Problem Solving

The Role of Facilitator vs. Content Consultant

To further understand the difference between a process consultant and a content consultant, it is helpful to remember that in any group situation you have **two dynamics** taking place. One has to do with **the content or subject** of the meeting. The other has to do with **how the group works** with that content. In a facilitation situation **the group members are the content experts and the facilitator is the process expert.** That is, the participants focus on the "what" of the meeting and the facilitator focuses on the "how" of the meeting. In a content consultant situation, **the consultant brings expertise concerning the content or the group's task and has input into the situation.**

Thus the **process consultant** uses processes to enable a group to deal with the necessary content so that it can move toward and accomplish its goals. As a process consultant or facilitator, he will have **no input** into the content the group is working with.

Three Core Values

Roger Schwarz[18] has identified three core values that need to be observed by the facilitator when he is working with a group. They are:

- **Valid Information**: People share all information relevant to an issue, using specific examples so that other people can determine independently whether the information is true.
- **Free and Informed Choice**: People can define their own objectives and methods for achieving them; their choices are based on valid information.
- **Internal Commitment to Choice**: People feel personally responsible for the decisions they make. Each person is committed to the decisions because they are intrinsically compelling or satisfying, not because the person will be rewarded or penalized for making the decision.

These core values are exactly that: when used to guide the facilitator's work, these values will go a long way to ensuring the successful outcome of the group's activity. I have found it helpful to share these values with a group's leader or the people organizing the event I am facilitating so that they are clear about how I will be seeking to enable the group to work.

Everything Is On the Table

The first core value of **Valid Information** is fundamental in any facilitation situation. Part of a facilitator's task is to ensure that all relevant information is shared with the group, and that it is both validated and understood by all in the group.

More so than ever before, information is power in today's world, and people will occasionally seek to **avoid** sharing relevant information with the group for that reason. A facilitator needs to ensure that the group has **time** to examine the information that they have and to make sure that it is complete. While the facilitator cannot have input into the content of the meeting, he needs to **push** the group to make sure that ***everything is on the table***.

Disclosing Hidden Agendas

Another dimension of this value is the question of hidden agendas. The process that a facilitator uses with a group needs to create situations where people's **hidden agendas are revealed** and placed on the table. I always tell a training group that agendas are not a problem since we all come to meetings with our agendas—that is why we are there—but we need to be ready to **share** our agenda and to **listen** seriously to other people's agendas when they share them.

Accepting the Outcome of the Decision-making Process

The second core value of **Free and Informed Choice** is what distinguishes facilitation from **manipulation**. I always ask the leader of a group that I am going to facilitate:

Are you ready to accept whatever it is that the group decides?

Obviously, if they say no, then we have to have a conversation about **why** they are having the meeting.

One time I was asked to facilitate a group in which the group leader had already decided what they were going to do. He wanted me to facilitate the group to make the same decision. **I refused to do the meeting**. I did tell him that I would be glad to facilitate a meeting following the announcement of his decision where the group could talk about the decision, its implications, and its implementation.

Owning the Group's Decisions

Finally, the third core value of **Internal Commitment to Choice** will happen only when the first two values are being fully observed. This value is only possible when **The Engagement Cycle** is fully operational, and for that to happen the first two values must be in place.

This is the difference between someone doing something because he has been told to do it and doing it because he has invested his time, energy, and creativity in the decision that he is now implementing. When you own a decision, implementing it is profoundly satisfying.

Four Foundations of Successful Facilitation

There are four foundations of successful facilitation. A facilitator has to be concerned with and ready to deal with all four. If any of these four are not being dealt with, it is going to be very hard to accomplish the objectives of the group.

1: Structure

Structure is the procedural form that is given to the event. Every event has a structure; even an encounter between two friends or a husband and wife talking over the dinner table has a structure, although people do not think about it. So the question is not **whether** to have a structure or not. Rather it is this:

Is the structure appropriate to the content and objectives that the participants want to accomplish in the encounter?

An **inappropriate** structure is one of the major reasons so many meetings are ineffective. Thus, **structure** is one of the **key elements** that a facilitator has to pay attention to if he is going to facilitate a successful event.

2. Process/Content Divide

I have already spoken of the **process/content divide**, but it bears repeating. The facilitator is responsible for and passionate about the process, while the group members are responsible for and passionate about the content. The facilitator needs to **believe and trust** that the group members know all they need to know to deal with the work before them, and the group needs to **believe and trust** that the facilitator will guide it through a process that will accomplish its goals. This division is fundamental and needs to be respected at all times.

It is easier for me to facilitate a group when the subject of the meeting is something I know nothing about, rather than a meeting where I have some knowledge of the content. In the latter case I have to constantly remind myself to keep my mouth shut, since I am constantly tempted to make suggestions about the content of the meeting.

3. Group Management Skills

The facilitator is constantly monitoring the behavior of individuals in the group and the general mood and feel of the group situation. He is always ready to deal with any occasion that might arise that impedes the work of the group in accomplishing its goals.

A facilitator needs to be sensitive to the **group dynamics** that are happening in the group and be ready to deal with them when they begin to hinder the group's work. Situations such as one person or a few people dominating the conversation, or people withdrawing and seemingly losing interest in the conversation demand that the facilitator have group management tools and techniques that will enable the group to get back on track to accomplishing its goals.

It has been my experience that when there is a problem with an individual, it is always more effective to find a **procedural** way to deal with the situation rather than directly addressing the individual. For example, if someone is **dominating** the conversation or is **argumentative**, rather than speaking to them directly I find it helpful to change the way in which the group is working.

In this sort of situation I often ask the group to take a few minutes and write down what they remember from the conversation and then I ask them to share that with

the person sitting next to them and jointly come up with what they will share with the whole group. When they are ready, we go around the group and hear from each small group. This simple technique is usually sufficient to change the situation and allow the group to proceed with its work. Chapter 14 deals more fully with this area.

4. Participation

I have already talked about the significance of **participation**, but in summary I believe that facilitation is grounded in a profound belief in the value of every individual and his right to participate in the decision-making that is shaping his future, whether that is in the workplace, the community, or the larger society. Therefore, the facilitator is always working to ensure that every person's voice is heard.

It is the facilitator's job to **anticipate** what kind of time will be required to ensure that all who might want to speak have a chance to speak. It is also his job to devise ways to ensure that everyone has a chance to be heard.

For example, in working with a large group I often arrange the room with tables with six or so people sitting together. Then I ask them to have a conversation as a table and then decide what they feel should be shared with the whole group. Finally, I always ask if there is anyone who wishes to speak to the whole group. No one should ever feel that he did not have a chance to say his piece.

A Facilitator Juggles Three Jobs

It is my experience that a facilitator standing in front of a group has **three** full-time jobs. While offering this summary, it is also important to emphasize that all of this is going on **simultaneously** when you are in the front of the room. I will explore each of these in detail in the chapters on *Facilitating the Event.*

- The facilitator is responsible for **facilitating the process.** As the process expert in the room, it is the facilitator's job to ensure that the group accomplishes its **objectives** for the meeting in the time allocated.
- The facilitator is responsible for **enabling the group.** This means watching the group dynamics, people's participation, the group mood, etc.
- The facilitator is responsible for **eliciting the content.** While the facilitator cannot intervene in the content, he is responsible for ensuring that all valid and relevant data is shared with the group and that the content is correctly understood and appreciated by all in the group. Finally, it is the facilitator's responsi-

bility to ensure that the group uses all the data in making its decision so that it is an **inclusive** decision.

Becoming Invisible

In her book *Facilitating With Ease* Ingrid Bens defines facilitation thusly:

> Facilitation is a way of providing leadership without taking the reins. A facilitator's job is to get others to assume responsibility and to take the lead.[19]

In my training courses I say to the participants that the facilitator should **become invisible** to the participants when he is facilitating. That is to say that the participants are engaged in dialogue with each other and the content, and the facilitator is **the invisible presence** that enables that dialogue to move forward and achieve the group's objectives. The greatest praise a facilitator can receive is when the group members tell themselves that **they** have done good work and accomplished their objectives.

Section Two:

Navigating the Facilitation Cycle

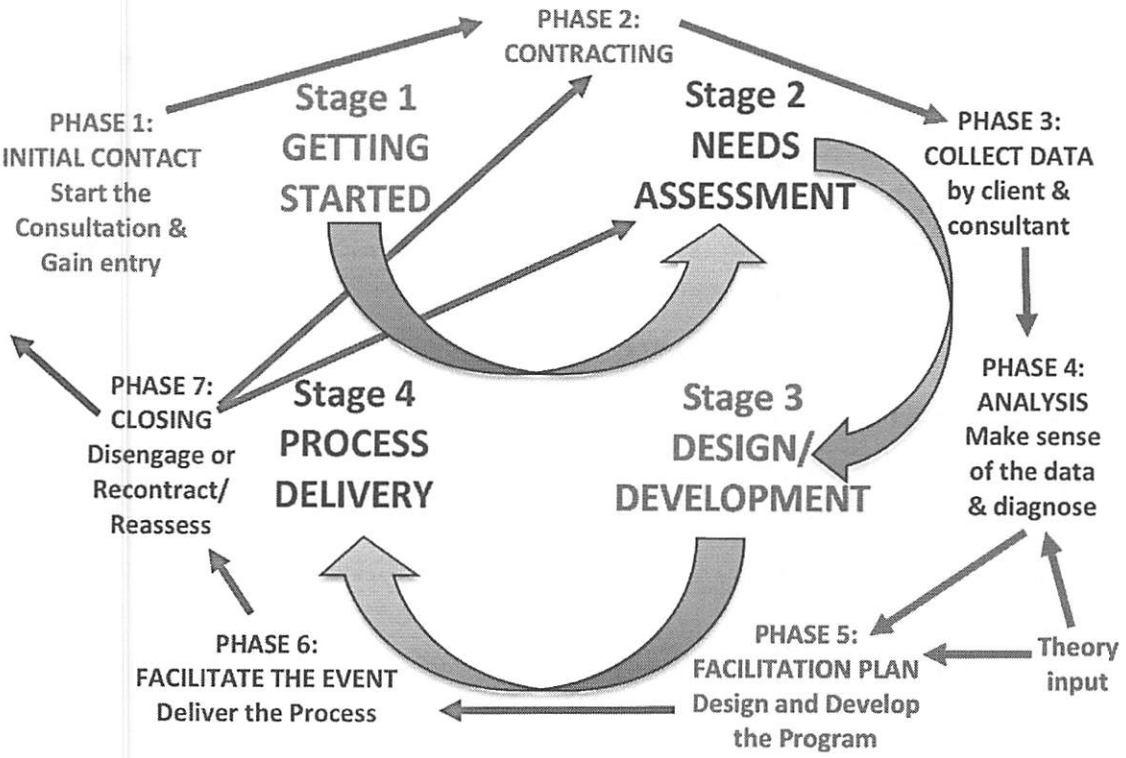
Ethical Responsibility from Start to Finish

Chapter 4
Introduction to the Facilitation Cycle

The Facilitation Cycle is an inclusive design for understanding the ethical task of a facilitator from first contact with a client through to disengagement. It is comprised of **four major Stages** divided into **seven Phases**.

It is my experience that **the work that a facilitator does when standing in front of a group is only 10 percent or so of the facilitator's task**. His effectiveness in front of a group depends almost entirely upon what he has done before he ever steps to the front of the room.

The following is a graphic representation of the four **Stages** and seven **Phases** of the Facilitation Cycle:



THE FACILITATION CYCLE:
4 Stages and 7 Phases

Since the following twelve chapters describe each of the seven Phases in detail, I will simply introduce each major Stage below.

Stage 1: GETTING STARTED

Phase 1: Initial Contact

Phase 2: Contracting

This stage encompasses the first two Phases of the Facilitation Cycle. Clients seek out a facilitator for many reasons. I always seek to identify those reasons and to make sure that what they are seeking is really a facilitator and not something else. In addition, it is important to carefully work out the contract with the client, whether it is a verbal agreement or a formal legal written document.

Stage 2: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Phase 3: Collect Data

Phase 4: In-Depth Analysis

The two Phases in **Stage 2** are fundamental if a facilitator is going to **develop the appropriate process** to accomplish the group's objectives. Very often a client will not see the need for an **in-depth analysis**, but my experience has been that some probing in depth often reveals that what the client says is the situation is really **symptomatic of much deeper issues** that must be addressed if the situation is really going to be dealt with effectively.

Stage 3: DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Phase 5: Facilitation Plan

In **Stage 3** a facilitator's knowledge of and skill in facilitating group processes comes into play. It is the facilitator's responsibility to design and develop the appropriate process that will enable a group to accomplish its objectives. A facilitator may have to design a unique process or may find a standardized process that will do the job. But as the **process expert** he always has the responsibility for making these decisions.

Stage 4: PROCESS DELIVERY

Phase 6: Facilitate the Event

Phase 7: Disengage or Recontract/Reassess

The actual event takes place in **Stage 4** as the facilitator enables the group to work effectively to meet its objectives. Finally, the facilitator ensures that what has been contracted is fully delivered and determines with the client what the next steps should be.

Chapter 5

Answer the Fundamental Questions

Stage 1/Phase 1

Whether it is initially a phone call, email, someone coming to your door, or someone in a training course, it is always important to make sure that a facilitator is what a potential client is really looking for. This initial conversation involves both the client and the facilitator sharing information with each other.

Initial Questions for Your First Contact

The purpose of this conversation in an initial contact situation is:

- For the facilitator to be convinced that this is really a potential client, and
- That he can meet their facilitation needs
- For the client to be confident that the facilitator is the person he is looking for, and
- Whether or not the facilitator is available if the event is already scheduled.

Over the years I have had to tell several potential clients that I was not the person they were looking for, and occasionally make suggestions about someone I thought would better meet their needs. In most cases their specific situation required a different professional skills set.

For example, once I was asked to work with a group to resolve a very complex and large conflict in their organization. I told them that I thought they should contact someone with professional qualifications in conflict resolution and gave them the name of someone I know who specializes in conflict resolution work. They contacted the person I recommended, and she worked with them for almost two years to successfully resolve their situation.

Who Is Your Client?

The following are the types of questions I use to elicit the information I seek to discover in an initial contact; they are not in any particular order. While trying to ensure all these questions are covered, I also try to keep the conversation from becoming an interrogation session.

- The facilitator needs to know who the person is that he is talking to, and what his role or position is in the group, organization, or institution he represents.

- The nature of the group or organization the person represents; what its purpose and mode of working are; and something of its history.
- What is the current situation, and why have they decided to seek out a facilitator?
- What do they expect the facilitator to do with them?
- Have they decided when and where the facilitated event will take place?
- Have they decided how much time to give to the facilitated event?
- How many people will be in the group, and who are they (gender mix, positions in the organization, ages, length of time in the organization, etc.)?
- Has the group had experience with a facilitator before? If yes, what did they do, and what was the reaction of the group?
- How would you state the need for this event? Does the group understand that this is a need that should be dealt with?
- How would you state the objective(s) for this event? Would the group agree with this?
- What is the final product you are anticipating that will embody the accomplished objectives?
- If there is a larger organization, is it supportive of the group doing this work with a facilitator?

Describe Your Role

The following are some of the points that I try to cover when I am introducing myself and how I work. Again, I try to weave these into the conversation rather than making a "presentation":

- I am a process expert. I do not tell any group what they should do; I ask them what they want to do.
- The larger the group, the more time a facilitated event will take.
- My clients in the past have mostly been in the area of.... (the public, private, NGO sectors, etc.)
- How did you hear about me?
- If they are asking for an event for which I anticipate using an off-the-shelf process, like ToP© strategic planning or action planning, I explain the process and what it will accomplish.

- If I don't think an off-the-shelf process will do the job, I explain that I will need to design a process to accomplish their objectives.
- I explain my fee and expense structure, including that I am always willing to negotiate with an organization.

Three Fundamental Questions

In addition to asking the question I mentioned earlier:

Are you ready to accept whatever it is that the group decides?

there are three additional fundamental questions I always ask the leadership of a potential client:

1. Are you going to be in the session?

If the leadership says "no" then I say that I can't facilitate the session. My reasoning is that if the leadership is not present, this signals to the group that this is not very important work. In addition it raises the possibility that the leader(s) will reject its work if they have not participated in creating it. Once when I was working with different administrative departments of an organization, I insisted that the department leadership had to be present for the planning and I also asked the manager in charge of all the departments to come to open the first session of each department's planning and express his support for the work they were about to do.

2. What role will you play in the session?

Whether they say that they are coming as part of the group/team or as the leader is not a problem. But I do ask them to announce this to the group themselves at the beginning of the session.

*3. Is there anything that you do **not** want the group to deal with in the session?*

If there are areas that the group should not raise, then I ask them to tell the group this at the beginning. This is their decision, and they need to take responsibility for it and deal with any questions or concerns the group might have as a consequence.

Demonstrate Your Competence

This first encounter is crucial in **demonstrating** to the client that as a facilitator, **you know** what you are doing. They are entrusting their future and the future of their group to you, and they need to know that you know that and are prepared to deal with it as seriously as they are.

Be Receptive to Your Client

A few years ago, a person called All Hallows College in Dublin and asked to speak to the gentleman who taught facilitation. The receptionist put her onto me, and we arranged a meeting. It developed that she had heard about this guy who taught facilitation at All Hallows who was "really good" but whose name the person making the recommendation could not remember. When we met, I was told that I was going to be their facilitator for a very important meeting that was happening in a few months, and that I would be working with a planning committee before the actual event. They had already decided that they wanted me to do the meeting, and they came to our meeting to "sell" me on taking the job. Fortunately, I was glad to say yes after talking with them. I tell this story just to say that a facilitator needs to be always open and receptive to what the person across the table is saying.

Discover Your Client's Underlying Need

Another time I got a phone call from a person in an organization that was looking for a facilitator. As we talked, I got the feeling that they really were looking for a **content consultant**. I explained how I worked as a facilitator and said that I didn't think I was their man. She insisted they really did want a facilitator, and would I please read the brief she would send me. I said OK, I would look at the brief. When I read the brief, I was even more convinced that they were looking for a content consultant. When she called back, I told her that I wasn't the person they were looking for. Again, she was insistent that I was and asked me to come visit them. I finally said all right and we arranged a date for me to go and spend a half-day with them. During that meeting I became convinced that they knew what they wanted, and it was a facilitator. This was the beginning of a successful eighteen-month relationship with their organization.

First impressions are important, but they can be wrong.

Chapter 6
Negotiate the Contract
Stage 1/Phase 2

Assuming that this initial conversation goes well, then we can move forward to agree on a contract and decide on the initial stages of the work.

The Intent of Contracting

The purpose of a contract is:

- to define the problem and to clarify the work to be done
- to provide the facilitator with the work's parameters and what freedom there is within them
- to set mutual expectations, goals, and objectives, and
- to establish the ground rules for the relationship.

Avoid Misunderstandings

Fundamentally, you are defining the responsibilities of both the facilitator and the client in negotiating a contract. This is absolutely essential if you are to avoid misunderstandings and complications later on. Whether written or oral, a strong contract will provide both the facilitator and the client with the following:

- Demonstrate high commitment by all parties
- Clear commitment in terms of time
- Clear statement of objectives
- Demonstrate mutual trust and respect
- Bring risks and anxieties out into the open

I have worked with groups where we had a verbal agreement, and I have worked with groups where there was a very formal contract. Usually if you are working for government groups or large international groups, then they will ask you to sign a formal contract. Most often they have a standard contract for consultants into which they fit the relevant data. Sometimes there are special situations that need to be worked through in these types of contracts.

Adjust Contractual Expectations

Once I was working for a large international organization that had a limit on the fee they would pay a consultant that was much less than my normal fee. However, the person I was working with used some other consultant fee categories that were available to meet my fee requirement.

There are usually some things that are not covered in these types of written contracts. Thus a facilitator should be sure to clarify those with the person he is working with. For example, I am always careful to make sure to clarify who will be doing the documentation of the work.

Clarify Practical Responsibilities

If you agree to an oral contract, it is important to make sure that both you and the person you are reaching an agreement with are clear about exactly what you will do and exactly what they should be ready to do. Don't forget to clarify some very practical details, such as:

- Documentation: Who will do it? When will it be done? And who receives it?
- Production and distribution of the final outcome
- What supplies are needed and who supplies them?
- How and when the facilitator should be paid?
- Any special arrangements regarding expenses, such as type of travel/lodging, etc. Depending on the group and where the meeting is, I am very flexible about accommodation. Working with religious congregations. I have found that often I can stay in one their facilities and have my meals there also, saving them money.
- Also make sure that they are clear about what work is covered by the honorarium. Some facilitators charge for preparation time and meetings, while others charge only for the actual time of the facilitated event.
- If extensive travel is involved, how do they want to manage the arrangements? Very often international groups or large organizations of any type prefer to handle travel bookings themselves, since they have arrangements with airlines and it is cheaper for them. Otherwise, you need to be ready to make your own arrangements and keep all the documentation for billing the client later.
- What documentation is needed for payment of expenses?
- Any special needs regarding the facility where the meeting will take place
- The schedule, both in terms of preparation and for the actual event itself
- Agreement upon the process for establishing the final objectives and focus of the work.

Every situation will be different, and not all the things in this list will apply in every situation. There will always be the possibility that some special considerations will have to be dealt with.

Clarify Assumptions

The only times I have had a problem with a client have been because both of us failed to clarify some crucial element when we agreed on a contract. When either the facilitator or client makes assumptions about what is included in a contract, you are almost guaranteed to have problems later on. Every organization and group is different and will have its particular way of doing things. It is the facilitator's responsibility to clarify the implications of that uniqueness for their work together.

Be Alert to Possible Changes

Finally, it is important that the facilitator alert the client to those things that might change and then result in a necessary modification of the contract.

I once had a client that was a member organization. The plan was for the staff and Board to build a strategic plan. However, they wanted to invite the member organizations to send along a representative to participate in the first day. They assured me that no more than twenty-five or so people would show up. So I agreed to their extending the invitation.

We planned to do two sessions on the first day since, with twenty-five member representatives, we would be between thirty-five and forty people in total, and I can do two full sessions of the strategic planning process with that number in a day. I failed to explain to them, however, that the sessions would take much more time if we had many more people.

As it turned out we had eighty people in the room on the morning of the first day. This meant that rather than doing two sessions, I was able to do only one and half sessions. To finish the plan we actually had to schedule an additional session at a later date.

Another time a leadership team decided to invite all their membership on condition that they commit to attending all four of the planning sessions. They assured me that no more than thirty or forty would sign up, and that we would be able to do two sessions each day.

In this case I told them that if fifty or more signed up, we would have to do a full day for each of the four sessions. In fact, they were amazed and ecstatic when some seventy-five or so people signed up, and we used a full day for each of the sessions.

A Facilitator's Presence

These first encounters are very important in shaping the nature of a facilitator's relationship with a client. Some of the qualities that a facilitator should bring to these meetings and conversations are:

- **Competence**: By asking relevant questions and eliciting appropriate data, the facilitator can establish his knowledge of and skill in facilitation.
- **Being Non-judgmental**: Often a facilitator is asked to work with a group because of some problem or difficulty it is having. In those situations the client is likely to feel that he is taking a risk revealing the group's situation to an outsider.
- **Empathy**: A facilitator needs to be ready to affirm the client and the work that they do. He needs to be appreciative of the opportunity to work with the client and manifest enthusiasm for what they will do together.
- **Honesty**: A facilitator should never over-promise or commit to doing something for a client that he cannot deliver. Facilitation is not a panacea. There are some situations where a facilitated event will not solve the problem or deal with the issue before the group. Being realistic with the client about the situation and what he can deliver will ensure that the client is not disappointed and avoids misunderstandings later on.
- **Transparency**: In a sense, all of the above are about transparency; but the facilitator needs to take special care in being open, transparent, and explicit about:
  - **Confidentiality**: A client needs to know that, just as you will not share any information from work with clients in similar situations, you will not divulge any information you learn in working with them.
  - **Facilitation Values**: A client should understand what values guide you in your work as a facilitator. For example, I am always explicit about my endeavor to ensure full and open participation by every participant. I explain that I always strive to elicit all relevant information before the group event and to make sure that any hidden agendas are revealed and the assumptions behind those agendas are revealed and examined by the group.
  - **Professional background information**: A client needs to know if there is anything in your professional history that could be construed as influencing you in your work with them. For example, if I am going to work with an organization doing community development, I always explain that I worked

for many years doing community development, but that I will not have any input into their decision-making beyond providing a process to accomplish their objectives.

A Facilitator's Authentic Style

Finally, I believe that **the style** with which a facilitator approaches a potential client in these first encounters is fundamental to a successful relationship. Every facilitator brings his own personal style to a facilitation situation, and thus I do not believe that we can define any one type of style as the most appropriate for these first encounters. What **is** important, however, is that the facilitator's style should be authentic.

The facilitator must allow his own personality and mode of relating to and working with people to be revealed through his words and actions in these first encounters. Playing a role because you think it is what the client is looking for will not be sustainable in the long term, and will lead to distrust and a lack of confidence in the facilitator as the work proceeds.

A Facilitator's Personal Qualities

Irrespective of your style, some of the qualities that a facilitator's style should manifest are:

- **Gratitude**: This has to do with making clear that you are deeply appreciative of the opportunity they are offering you to participate in creating the future of their group and its important work.
- **Humility**: This is not false modesty, but rather recognition that what is important in this situation is the group and its work. As a facilitator your objective is to enable the group to accomplish its objective(s), and you have no further objective beyond this.
- **Honoring**: This has to do with a stance that indirectly communicates that you believe that they are exactly the right group of people to do the work before them, that they have all the knowledge and skill needed to do the work, and that you have complete confidence in their ability to successfully fulfill their objectives in the time allotted.
- **Quiet Confidence**: Perhaps the best way of talking about this is to say that the facilitator needs to manifest a relaxed, almost informal nonchalance about the challenges facing the group and his ability to enable the group to deal with them. Often a group calls in a facilitator because they are anxious about a situation and not sure how to deal with it. A facilitator must be able to authentically assure them that he can enable the group to resolve the situation in a

creative and positive way. However, the facilitator must avoid any false bravura or belittling the client's concerns by demonstrating that while he is confident about their resolution, he always sees their significance for the group and takes them as seriously as they do.

- **Competence**: The facilitator needs to manifest a style that communicates that he knows and understands what is required to be an effective facilitator. He must demonstrate a profound knowledge of what works in facilitation and why it works. When the facilitator demonstrates a familiarity born of both study and experience, this will enhance the client's confidence that they have found their facilitator.

Your Reputation Precedes You

I have had the experience of having people call me up and say something like

We need you to facilitate an event for us.

In a sense they have already decided that I am the person they want as a facilitator. This happens because the client has spoken about wanting to find a facilitator with someone they trust, and with whom I have already worked, so they have done the selling for me.

In the field of facilitation that is such a hands-on and personal endeavor, I believe that your reputation as a facilitator really does precede you, and that this is why you get the call in the first place. Nevertheless, whether or not you are accepted to do the work depends completely upon those first contacts, and whether the client receives confirmation of the reputation that gave them the confidence to call you in the first place.

Chapter 7
Identify the Client System
Stage 2/Phase 3

I have divided **Phase Three** into two parts, since it is such a vital part of the work of a facilitator. **Chapter 8** will look at needs assessment, but one of the most effective first steps in working with a new client is to **identify who really is the client**. I have found that you never have a 'client', but rather what I have come to call a '**client system**'. Often the person who contacts the facilitator will portray himself as the client. But the wise facilitator knows that to truly understand the situation and to ensure that the real needs of the group are being addressed, he must reach out beyond the initial contact.

Understanding the Whole Client System

Although they are not often thought of as a client, the group you will be working with is **a vital part of the client system**. I once facilitated an event where I was able to talk only with the small planning group that had contacted me because of distance and time constraints. The event was conducted exactly as they requested, and they were very pleased with the outcome. In a follow-up evaluation, however, the members of the group made it very clear that the event did not meet their needs and was essentially irrelevant to their current situation.

The problem was that the planning group had **an agenda for the meeting** that was **not** the larger group's agenda. Having had contact only with the planning group, I was not able to discover this. Since that event I have insisted on meeting and talking with at least a cross section of the participants who will be in the meeting. In fact, to accomplish this on one occasion I had to arrange to make a series of international phone calls to different group members, all of whom were coming from different European countries.

Another time I found myself in a situation where I was being brought into a department to facilitate the formation of a strategic plan by the head of the larger organization's administration. No one in the department, including its leadership, had any experience with facilitated participatory strategic planning. By doing a series of confidential interviews with the department leadership and a cross-section of the staff before we launched into the planning process, it was possible to accomplish two things:

- I was able to get a much better understanding of the situation in the department and thus was able to refine the planning process to more adequately deal with the department's unique situation.
- The staff of the department met me before the event and had an opportunity to ask me questions about myself and what we would be doing, thereby fostering confidence in me as a facilitator and in the process that we were going to be doing together.

On another occasion I was doing strategic planning for several departments of a large organization. Again, I was being brought in by the administrator overseeing all these departments. I arranged to meet with him and the department heads to talk through and agree on the language of the **Focus Questions** for the strategic planning, which is a way of articulating the objective for the work. That session took most of an afternoon, and then we had a meeting with all the staff of the departments where I was introduced and had a chance to explain what we would be doing and to answer their questions. I also presented to the group the Focus Questions and made sure that they agreed that these would be the focus of the strategic planning.

Consulting Participants

If you involve the group you will be working with at this stage of the process, it goes a long way to avoid some of the issues that will arise in a group that is not consulted before the actual event, and you can ensure that the work truly addresses the needs identified by the group.

Consulting the Client System

One of the most helpful approaches I have used in identify the client system is to ask myself three questions, using these to guide my inquiries.

- **Who cares?** The people in the organization who have a vested interest in the outcome of the work you are doing with them need to feel that they have had the opportunity to make their concerns, insights, and desires known, even if they are not going to be in the actual work sessions. This helps to ensure that they share any appropriate information they have with people in the group and that they will be supportive of the outcome of the work.
- **Who knows?** Information is power! A group needs to have all relevant information if they are really going to work effectively and if the outcome is really going to accomplish the purpose of the meeting. Ideally, you want these people in the work sessions; when that is not possible, I have arranged for

presentations by people with crucial information before we began the actual work sessions.

- **Who can?** Who are the people in the organization with decision-making authority and/or control over the resources that might be needed to implement the outcome of the meeting? They need to be consulted to make sure that the focus of the work reflects their understanding of the situation and that they are ready to provide the necessary support.

Consulting Stakeholders

Another approach is to identify the **stakeholders** who will be affected by the outcome of the meeting. I once did a strategic planning session for a community organization where we arranged for the first session on the vision to be held in the evening to enable as many stakeholders as possible to be present. In addition to the staff and Board of the organization, this first session included a good group of their clients, people representing other community organizations in the area, people from a number of government departments that the organization related to, the local representative to the City Council and a few concerned citizens from the area.

Only a few of them were able to join us for the sessions on the next day, and finally, in the closing implementation planning session, just the staff and the active Board members who were actually going to do the work were present. Yet the stakeholders had **contributed** to creating the vision that the implementation plan would move the organization toward. Thus **all stakeholders had ownership in the plan** and the organization's future.

Another time I was working with one division of a large international organization that had three divisions. The work of the divisions was very interdependent, so it was arranged for me to meet with the heads of the other two divisions to explain what I would be doing and to answer any questions they had.

Identifying Stakeholders

The following is a quick guide to identify the crucial stakeholders. A stakeholder is anyone who has:

- Influence
- Responsibility
- Crucial knowledge
- Financial relations
- Reputation

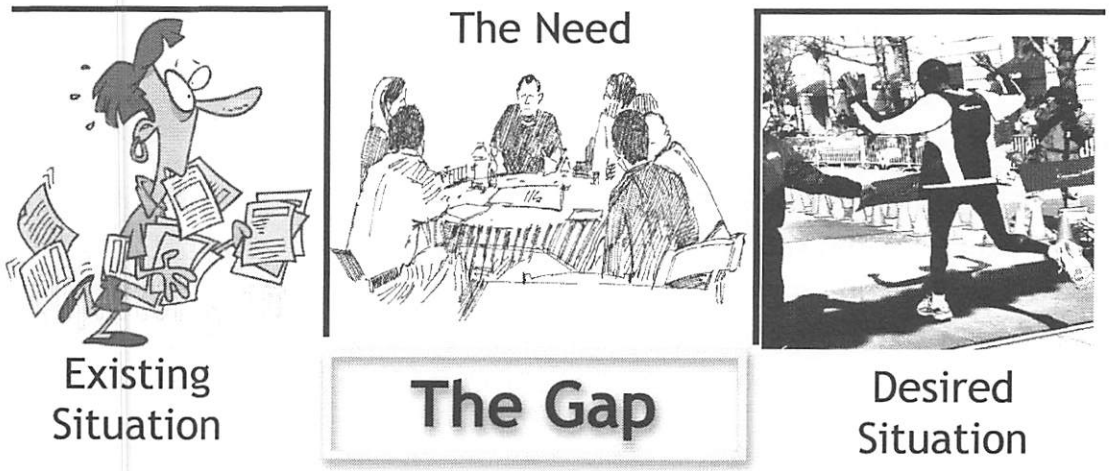
Stakeholders are any who are:

- Customers/clients
- Partners
- Suppliers

Working to identify and inform the complete client system about the event you will be facilitating can go a long way toward ensuring support and engagement for the results of the event.

Chapter 8
Needs Assessment
Stage 2/Phase 3

The following is the image I use to illustrate what a facilitator encounters when he is asked to work with a group.



Bridging the Gap

Enabling a group to move from its **existing** situation to the **desired** situation is the task of a facilitator. Facilitators are called in to assist a group because the group members feel that they do not have the skill to **bridge the gap** between the current situation and the desired situation.

An effective facilitator must have a profound understanding of both a group's current and its desired situation in order to develop an appropriate process. Even if the facilitator is using a standardized process such as ToP© Participatory Strategic Planning, he must be ready to adjust the process, sometimes in small ways, to ensure its effectiveness. If the facilitator has to design a unique process, then it is essential that he has a complete and in-depth understanding of the situation if the designed process is going to accomplish the group's objectives.

Clues to Real Needs

Very often when the people who initially contact a facilitator talk about the situation and what they see as the needs and the objectives, they are really talking about things that are **symptomatic** of much deeper issues in the group or organization. Usually the people in the situation are too close to be able to see the real issues. Part of what a facilitator must do is provide a pair of fresh eyes and to ask some **probing questions** that help to reveal what needs to be addressed if the situation

is going to move forward. These 'felt needs' are important, for they provide clues to the **real needs** that have to be dealt with if the group's situation is going to change. Often the need is **not** a single problem, but rather a complex set of interrelated issues. Needs can involve dimensions of the following types of issues:

- Communication issues
- Planning issues
- Management issues
- Financial issues
- Program issues, etc.

Clarifying Real Needs

Needs are often the flip side of the objectives that the group has identified for its work. By looking at what the group has articulated as its objective, it is possible to identify the need and discern whether that is the **real** issue or whether more work has to be done to identify the real need. This will result in the objective(s) being more accurate and therefore more likely to truly address the group's situation.

Discerning Realistic Objectives

Assessing needs may also help to discern the time frame necessary for a group's work. This enables the facilitator to answer the question:

What needs may be dealt with effectively in the time frame you have?

This also helps to establish **realistic objectives** for the work. Sometimes this will result in a revision of the original time frame. One group I worked with saw that it would require more time to accomplish its objective and added a half day to the planned one-day meeting.

Identifying the real needs may also enable a group to do an effective **evaluation** of its work at a later date. Group members can accurately say where they started from and what has been accomplished since then.

The client and the facilitator need to arrive at a common understanding of both the needs and the objectives. At this stage it is important that the facilitator makes sure that crucial members of the client system **agree** with the needs analysis and **accept** the identified objectives for the work.

Inclusive Data Sources

In doing this work of needs assessment and setting objectives, the facilitator should maintain a **wide perspective** with regard to the kinds and sources of data that might be relevant to the assignment. Some of these are:

- Traditions, values, and norms
- Goals, objectives, and policies
- Problems and concerns
- Expectation of customers/clients and potential customers/clients
- Scenarios of desired futures.

Multiple Approaches to Assessment

There is no one right way to identify a group's authentic needs and establish objectives for the work that the facilitator has been contracted to do. A facilitator should be familiar with a number of approaches and adapt to the group's particular **situation**, the **time** allotted for this work, and the **scope** of the expected work.

The following are **three approaches** to doing this work:

1. Diagnostic Interviewing

The first and most direct is for the facilitator to conduct a series of **interviews**. In this approach it is important to make sure to talk with a cross section of people in the concerned group. With one client I was able to interview all of the leadership team in the department and a cross section of the other employees from all levels in the department. These interviews should be confidential and conducted one on one if possible.

The following are the general types of **questions** that may be used in this approach:

- Identifying problems
- Consequences for group effectiveness
- Potential causes: process, structure, organizational context
- Motivation and resources for change
- Experience with consultants and understanding of current request for help.

This is the approach I most often have used. I try to not allow the interview to become an **interrogation** and **avoid** taking notes until the session is over. I usually begin by explaining who I am, my background, and what we will be doing together. I encourage people to ask me their questions and express any concerns.

In one situation a woman came into the interview room and before I could shut the door, she starting ranting about what was wrong with the department and how no one would listen to her. She had been in the department since its creation, but was deeply frustrated by its current mode of operation. I let her talk and after fifteen minutes or so we actually began the interview. At the end she apologized for her outburst. I assured her it was not a problem and that it was between her and me. Later in the planning session she was one of the most creative and positive

participants. I am convinced that if she not had a chance to share her frustration with me in the interview, it would have happened in the planning session.

2. Analysis and Modeling

A second approach is to do an **analysis** and build a **model** of the group's working situation. Crucial elements of such a model are:

- The task
- The operating systems and procedures
- The work process.

Such a model will help the facilitator understand the **internal dynamics** of the group and enable the accurate identification of where **dysfunctions** are occurring in the life of the group.

3. Organizational Diagnosis

A third approach is to do a full-blown organizational **diagnosis** using a diagnostic model such as the following:

- **Purpose and task**: What business are we in? What do people do?
- **Structure**: Who reports to whom? Where is the power?
- **People**: How are relationships managed? What training is given? Who communicates with whom? How do people feel? How high is motivation and morale?
- **Rewards**: What are the incentives to perform well?
- **Procedures**: What are the decision-making mechanisms? What are the channels of communication?
- **Technology**: Does the organization have appropriate equipment? Machinery? IT? Transport?

Organizational Support

Whatever approach or combination of approaches the facilitator decides to use, he needs to ensure that it is acceptable to the organization and is supported by the people in the client system. In addition to learning about the real needs of the organization and identifying the true objectives for their work with a facilitator, the assessment process affords the facilitator the opportunity to establish himself as a credible facilitator who is committed to the best interests of the group. This credibility will translate into trust and confidence when the group enters into the actual facilitated event.

The leader of an organization that I was going to lead in building a strategic plan was very concerned that the Focus Question accurately reflected the concerns of the Board, the staff, and their member organizations. We had a series email exchanges and long Skype calls working to get it articulated exactly right.

To return to the image I shared at the beginning of this chapter: put simply, the facilitator's job is to **bridge the gap** between the current situation and the desired situation and in doing so to **meet the real need** of the group and fulfill its objectives.

Chapter 9
Identify the Appropriate Process
Stage 2/Phase 4

Discerning the Process

In working with the client system, once the facilitator has pushed through the felt need to identify the real need and then pulled together the objectives for their work, his task is to **discern the appropriate process** that will fulfill the stated objectives and deal with the real need. Sometimes this means using a standard process like the Participatory Strategic Planning Process that is part of ToP©. On other occasions the facilitator will have to design a completely unique process using his experience and knowledge of group processes to come up with the appropriate process.

I once had a client who wanted to have a half-day meeting with a group of department heads to discuss a major change that would occur for all of them in a couple of years. They had not talked about the implications of the change for their departments or how they interrelated. He did not want it to be a decision-making event or an event where the department heads felt they had to defend their department and its work. Nor did he want it to turn into a debate about the change and whether or not they approved. It was to be strictly a non-judgmental, 'share-your-thinking' event to get a dialogue started. Fortunately, I had several months to prepare for the event, as it took the preparation of several plans before producing an acceptable process that would produce the results they were seeking. The procedures I generated for this event are shared at the end of Chapter 11.

Four Elements of Facilitation

I have found the following model of facilitation to be helpful in thinking about an appropriate process. Facilitation is much more than leading a group through a particular process. The process is fundamental, but it will succeed only if all the elements are performing well. In this model facilitation consists of:

- **The Task**: At the center of facilitation is **the work** the group is trying to get done.
- **The Process**: Fundamental to facilitation are the **actions and tools** that the facilitator uses to enable the group to accomplish its task.
- **The Group**: While not a group psychologist, a facilitator needs an understanding of **group dynamics** and how to manage them so that they enable the group to accomplish its task.

- **The Facilitator**: The kind of presence the facilitator has with the group can be very significant in enabling a group to work effectively together. I believe that the facilitator needs to **model the behavior** he expects from the group.

The Content Objectives

Once the facilitator has reached agreement with the client system concerning the objectives for the work, these objectives are what I call the **content objectives.**

The Final Product

It is also helpful to identify what I call the **final product**. In other words, what will the participants have in their hands at the end of their work? This is different than the content objectives, since it is the concrete result of the work. It may take the form of a plan with assignments, a document, or a matrix holding the group's wisdom in answer to a focus question. It is important to identify the nature of this final product and agree with the client system on its form.

The Process Objective

Once you have the content objectives and the final product, you can then move to establishing the **process objective.** The process objective guides the facilitator in deciding what process he will use to meet the content objective and produce the final product for the group.

I use the following example to help training groups understand how to arrive at the appropriate process.

The Current Situation	Bridging the Gap	The Desired Outcome
New software is being introduced that will require a new teamwork plan.	**The Need:** the new software will require a new work plan. **The Content Objective:** the team participates in creating the new work plan. **The Final Product:** a project plan to create and implement the new work plan. **The Process Objective:** a process to enable the team to create an implementable project plan.	The new work plan up and running.

In this example I would use the ToP© Action Planning Process to enable the team to produce its action plan for creating and implementing the new work plan.

Three Types of Process Objectives

I have discovered that there are essentially **three** types of process objectives. In practice these might not be mutually exclusive, but I have found it helpful to use this analysis in thinking through what process I will use with a group to meet its goals.

1. Enabling Interchange

The **first** process objective type has to do with **enabling interchange.** This objective would occur when a group needs to do the following:

- **Share perspectives**: Often situations arise in groups where people do not really understand or appreciate the perspective of other members of the group. Enabling every member of a group to share his concerns and perspective can ease emerging tensions and help people move toward a common perspective.
- **Data collection**: Sometimes it is necessary for a group to have sufficient time to simply share all relevant information about its situation.
- **Clarify issues**: A group facing a crucial issue needs to have sufficient time to clarify the issue before them and reach a common understanding of the issue in all its dimensions.

2. Reaching a Consensus

The **second** process objective is related to interchange but moves beyond simple interchange to **building a common mind and decision-making:**

- **Establishing a group perspective**: Often a group needs to reach a common understanding of some situation or issue. Depending on the depth of involvement and passion surrounding the situation or issue, this can be a very difficult task for a group to accomplish. It stops short of decision-making but is certainly a necessary precursor of decision-making.
- **Consensus discernment**: This is the process wherein a group discerns its decision about a situation or issue.
- **Establishing a group stance**: This goes further than just a group consensus in that it is a process where a group not only discerns a consensus, but it goes on to articulate what that consensus means for the group.

3. An Inclusive Planning Process

The **third** process objective has to do with **planning**. When a group has to decide on some future action or direction, then the process objective will be around some planning process.

- **Inclusive**: Any planning process needs to be inclusive of the total situation of the group and all of its members. It needs to deal with all the factors that might impact the group's plan in order to ensure its success.
- **Appropriate**: The planning process needs to develop a plan of action that is appropriate to the reality of the group and to the situation they are working in.
- **Implementable**: The plan that the group develops needs to be carried through to the implementing stage with timelines and people assigned to particular activities. This greatly increases the likelihood that the plan will be implemented.

Establishing a **process objective** is a very useful way for a facilitator to begin the process of deciding on an appropriate process, especially when he is designing a unique process. It helps him focus on what the process needs to accomplish and keeps his work related to the content objective and final product objective.

Considering Critical Factors

Finally, a process does not happen in a vacuum. There are a number of other factors that need to be considered in deciding upon the appropriate process.

- **The size of the group**: A process that might work well with a group of fifteen people could prove very difficult or even impossible with a group of seventy-five people. The size of a group should inform the facilitator's consideration of an appropriate process from the very beginning.
- **Special group dynamics**: I have facilitated events where I was told that certain issues were sure to generate a lot of debate and that the debate might become contentious. Being aware of such possibilities and other special concerns means that the facilitator can be prepared and ready to deal with them to ensure that they don't block the group's progress toward its objectives.
- **A multi-cultural mix (if any)**: Working with a multi-cultural group has many implications for the process. Language difficulties or how people are accustomed to participating in a group are just two important considerations for determining an appropriate process.

- **The time frame**: Often the time frame has been determined before the objectives have been set. In designing a process, it is vital to ensure that the group can do the work to accomplish its objectives in the time allotted.
- **Facilitator's skill and experience**: A facilitator should be confident about his ability to lead the concerned group through the process. Any lack of confidence on the part of the facilitator will quickly communicate itself to the group, and they too will lose confidence in the process.
- **Facility and equipment considerations**: Everything from the shape and size of a room to a facility's usual meal schedule can affect the effectiveness of a process. If certain types of equipment are needed, it will be necessary to make sure that they are available and that the facility agrees to their use. I have facilitated meetings where we needed twenty or so flip chart stands for the small group work. Another time a facility did not want anything posted on the walls, so we had to find free-standing display boards that could be used to post the group's work.

Deciding on the Process

Once this preparatory work is completed, the facilitator is ready to actually sit down and to decide on a standardized process or to design a unique process to meet a group's objectives. I find that after years of experience, my mind starts thinking about an appropriate process even during the first conversation with a client. I really believe that with experience a facilitator becomes sensitive to process and in most situations is able to identify an appropriate process fairly quickly.

Chapter 10
Program Design
Stage 3/Phase 5

It is in **Phase 5** that a facilitator's experience and expertise in group processes comes into play. The task here is to conceive and develop a process that will accomplish the objectives of the group, given all the realities of the group and its situation.

I find it helpful to make a distinction between Program Design and Session Development. **Program Design** is the task of identifying the major process steps necessary to **bridge the gap** between the current situation and the desired situation. The focus is on the logical sequence of the steps, flow, and fitting the work into the time available.

In **Session Development** (Chapter 11) the focus is on thinking through the detailed procedures that will be required for the group to accomplish each process step. The focus is on the logical sequence of the instructions, rhythm, participation, the availability of any materials needed, and a detailed analysis of the time necessary to complete the work.

Essential Program Design Guidelines

Program Design is about the overall **design of the bridge** that a group needs to cross from its current situation to its desired situation.

What Roger Schwarz calls Core Values (discussed in Chapter 3) are also useful as guides in designing a group process. I have added an additional guideline of **Free and Total Participation**. In this context these are less values and more **operating guidelines** against which I check every decision I make about the process I am designing.

- **Valid Information**: In today's information age information is power. It is crucial that the process you design enables the group to obtain and have available all the relevant data. This is fundamental to the group making inclusive and effective decisions and building a plan that is based in the reality of its situation and is inclusive of all dimensions of that situation. If some vital piece of information is missing from group members' understanding of the situation, it will cripple them and make it very difficult for them to reach a decision or build a plan of action that has a good chance of success in accomplishing what they desire.

  The implication of this guideline for the process is that the facilitator must ensure that the process has an effective data-gathering component and that

adequate time is provided for this dimension of the process. Obviously this guideline is closely related to Free and Total Participation, for without free and total participation you will not be able to elicit all valid information from a group.

- **Internal Commitment**: The participants' commitment to the final products of the process must truly be free and without any sense of external compulsion. This will happen only if the process engenders in them a sense of ownership. I have already explained the Engagement Cycle, but here the guideline helps the facilitator design a process that functions to ensure that the participants are fully engaged in every step of the process.
- **Free and Informed Choice**: At no point in the process must the participants feel that they are being coerced into making a particular decision. Their sense of ownership will depend on their sense of having freely arrived at the decision they are making. As a guideline, this means that the facilitator must design a process that in itself is a process of discernment that, when completed, has revealed the group's consensus.
- **Free and Total Participation**: There are several dimensions to ensuring that everyone in the group has a chance to share his thinking and wisdom concerning the topic of the work. Fundamental to this is ensuring that people feel free to share what they are really thinking and feeling with no fear of derision or reprisal for speaking honestly. Creating and maintaining a **'safe zone'** where authentic interchange can take place is one of the fundamental tasks of the facilitator.

  This is why I always ask a group's leader(s) *if there is anything that they do not want the group to discuss*. If there is, I ask them to tell the group this since it is their decision. In addition, I ask the leaders to be prepared to tell the group *if they are participating as the leaders or as members of the group*. I can work with either decision, but this is crucial to creating a 'safe zone.'

  The other key responsibility of the facilitator is to ensure that everyone has **the opportunity to speak** and share all he wishes to share. Ensuring adequate 'air time' for each participant is fundamental to enabling every group member to feel that he has been heard and to building ownership in the final product of the process. This is especially crucial in large groups, and a facilitator must plan to **allow the time** that such inclusive participation will take.

  I have worked with groups of seventy-five or eighty people where we had numerous discussions lasting forty-five minutes or more. This obviously has

implications for the process being designed. I have found that if adequate time is given for full and free discussion, the next steps are much easier for a group.

In a sense these guidelines are interdependent; thus none of them can be implemented effectively without the others. In process design, however, it is useful to tease them apart and to constantly check your work against them.

Fundamental Considerations

The following are all factors that should be considered in designing a process. Clarifying them **before** you begin the design work will help to ensure that your plan is implementable and will accomplish the group's objectives.

- **Time Allotted**: I have already mentioned the time frame of an event, but since a group will often have already **decided** on the time available to devote to a particular situation, it is the facilitator's responsibility to design a process that will accomplish its objectives in the time he has been given. If the facilitator feels that this is not possible, he needs to **ask for more time** or decline the assignment. Trying to do a four-hour process in two hours is a shortcut to **failure**; thus the facilitator, as the process expert, must avoid such situations. Obviously, the time required will depend upon a number of these other considerations such as the **size** of the group. In addition, if there are any **contentious issues** the facilitator needs to ensure that there is adequate time allotted for full participation to deal with these.
- **Size and Nature of the Group**: Part of the Needs Assessment stage of the Facilitation Cycle should include gathering data about the group itself. Not only is the size of the group important, but such things as gender mix (if any), average age, education levels, past and current work experience, etc. are all factors that the facilitator needs to be aware of when he designs a process.
- **Any Given Elements**: I once facilitated a group where the participants were driving from all across Ireland to attend the meeting. This meant that we scheduled the start time at ten o'clock and ended at four o'clock to enable their travel. Another time I was working with a large group where the average age was the late seventies. We had to use a sound system and to pass several wireless microphones around as people participated to ensure that everyone could hear. Sometimes a facility will have certain things like meal times that are not flexible. Anything that is a given part of the situation should be discovered ahead of time and considered in designing the process.

- **Output (Form and Content)**: Simply clarifying and agreeing on the objectives for the event is not enough. It is important for the facilitator and the organizers to agree on what form the **final product** of the meeting will take. For example, when I do Participatory Strategic Planning, I explain that I will document the results of each of the four workshops and that not only will the participants receive a copy of the previous workshop at the start of the next workshop, but further, I will prepare a document at the end containing all the work of the meeting. Whatever form the output is to take, the facilitator needs to ensure that the process produces the material required to create the final product.
- **Organizational Guidelines**: Sometimes organizations have certain rules and regulations that might affect the process a facilitator plans to use in a meeting. For example, I once worked with a department of a much larger organization, in which the department had no control over either personnel or finances, so those two arenas were off the table in terms of our planning. Knowing such factors in advance will avoid unnecessary tension and wasted group time.
- **Any Constraints**: there may be certain factors involved in the situation itself that constrain what the facilitator is able to do with the group in terms of process. Once I was asked to facilitate a meeting with a group in which the divisive nature of long-standing issues and the simmering anger that existed around these issues meant that any discussion would quickly deteriorate into arguments. In this case, there was to be no discussion and all participation in the large group was to be written. Another time I facilitated a meeting that was actually part of the organization's legal structure, which meant that certain activities were prescribed and had to be done in a very particular way.
- **Any Cultural or Social Considerations**: When a facilitator is working with a multi-cultural group or in a culture where he is not a native, he needs to be sure to understand any constraints that this places on what he can do with the group. If the participants are working in what is for them a second or third language, the facilitator needs to take special care to make sure he is communicating with the group. I have worked with numerous groups where everything was being translated into as many as three different languages. Translation, even instantaneous, is time-consuming and can be very tiring for both the facilitator and the participants.

The Design Process

The following is the four-step process I use to design a group process. Because every situation is unique, the amount of time and work involved in each step will vary. I have found, however, that including **each** of these four steps is essential to creating an effective group process.

1. **Clarify Overall Objectives and Final Output**: This is about making sure that the facilitator has firmly in mind what the group's **intent** is in doing this work. Usually I review my notes from the session where the objectives and output were discussed and agreed upon.
2. **Clarify All Fundamental Considerations**: Again, this is just reviewing the information you have collected as the facilitator to make sure that you are not overlooking anything that is crucial to what you can do with the group.
3. **Identify major process steps to move from Current Situation to fulfilled Objectives**: Here the facilitator brings his process knowledge, skill, and experience to bear on the situation. While every facilitator will have his own way of working, I find it helpful to try to establish the major steps, while looking for logical flow and sequence as I work. If it is a multi-session event, I identify the major focus for each session and its product, again watching for logical flow and sequence. This step is a constant dialogue with the objectives and considerations as I try to conceive a process that will fulfill the group's objectives within the reality of **all** the considerations.
4. **Final Check**: Once I have the major steps of the process, I like to lay them out on a kind of flow chart and then check them for logical flow and appropriate sequence. I also review the fundamental considerations to make sure that I am not overlooking anything.

An Example of the Design Process

A number of years ago I was asked to work with an organization that was preparing for a planning meeting that would be held in three months. As part of the preparation for the meeting, they had decided to generate input from their members for the work of the meeting. They had been receiving this input over the previous nine months and had generated a huge amount of raw data from their members.

Objectives and Outputs

- **The Current Situation**: A huge amount of data—generated by over 300 members over a nine-month period—was still in its raw form.
- **The Need**: To organize and gestalt the input into a form that would be manageable and coherent for the preparatory team to be able to work with during the three months remaining before the meeting.
- **The Desired Situation**: The input from the members is reformed in such a way that the preparatory team can prepare it as input for the planning meeting.

Fundamental Considerations

- **Time Allotted**: Two days with two sessions each day.
- **Size and Nature of Group**: Twenty-four to twenty-six people, including the extended leadership of the organization and a number of managers from various offices and related agencies, not all of whom would be considered as members of the organization but as employees. Mostly men, but with a small number of women, all of whom are employees.
- **Any Given Elements**: Nine months of input from meetings, surveys, and specially prepared topical papers with input from reflection sessions.
- **Outputs (Form and Content)**: To process the input so that the preparatory group can use it to prepare an agenda for the planning meeting. (The focus should be on action and future directions for the next six years).
- **Organizing Guidelines**: The planning meeting taking place in three months is the decision-making body. We are processing the input to enable the preparatory group to prepare the agenda and recommendations for consideration by the meeting.
- **Any Constraints**: No constraints
- **Any Cultural or Social Limitations**: None

The Overall Process Design

Day One—Identify Strategic Arenas

Session One: Using the collected input, identify crucial recommended actions or directions.

Session Two: A plenary workshop to organize the recommended actions or directions into strategic action arenas.

Day Two—Create the Catalytic Proposals

Session Three: Identify the crucial catalytic proposals in each strategic action arena that the group wants to move forward with.

Session Four: A plenary session to present, discuss, amend, and approve or disapprove the proposals in each of the strategic arenas.

A Journey Master of Program Design

I have used the image of a **gap** between a group's current situation and its desired situation and proposed that a facilitator's task is to bridge that gap so that a group can move to its desired situation. **Bridges take many forms**. Our task as facilitators is to use the skills and resources we have, while we honor the **reality** and **situation** of the group in bridging the gap it must cross. A facilitator is a group's **journey master**, leading with process to its desired situation.

Chapter 11
Session Development
Stage 3/Phase 5

In **Session Development** the facilitator is thinking through the detailed steps that will be required in a session. In a multiple-session event the development of each session is possible only when the facilitator has done the **Program Design** work, since the overall design informs the nature of the task in each session.

Consider the Context of the Session

The following are some of the considerations that a facilitator needs to review when starting to design a session.

- Review the **Fundamental Considerations** in order to ensure that the procedures for a session are **informed** by these fundamental considerations and **honor** the information they provide.
- Review the **Overall Objectives**, since each session must enable the group's journey to accomplishing its objectives. The facilitator needs to identify how this session will **contribute** to fulfilling the objectives.
- Consider both the **Time Allotted for the Session** and the **Time of Day** when the session will occur. Groups work differently in the morning, the afternoon, and the evening. The facilitator needs to consider what can realistically be accomplished in the allotted time and what the capabilities of the group will be, given the time of day.
- Consider any **Physical Limitations** that might influence what you can ask the group to do. For example, if you are working with a large group and you want them to work in small groups, where will the small groups work and how will the results of their work be presented to the whole group? What are the possible seating arrangements? Are tables available? Can things be posted on the walls? etc.
- A session's **Place in the Design Flow** will inform the nature of the work that needs to be accomplished in the session. The logical flow and sequence of the overall design needs to be respected, and each session's procedures need to honor and empower the overall design.

- Consider any **Resources** required by your plan. A facilitator needs to think carefully about any supplies that his planned procedures will require and whether or not they will be available for the session.

Creating a Session

Just as there are some fundamental considerations that inform the design of the overall program, there are certain **considerations** that inform the facilitator's thinking when working through the creation of a session.

- **Use a variety of methods**: In any session it is important to ensure that a variety of methods are used. This will keep the participants engaged, help to maintain their attention, and give them a sense of movement in the session. For example, the Basic Workshop method of the Technology of Participation (ToP©) involves five steps, each using a particular method: They are; Context, Brainstorming, Organizing, Naming, and Conclusion.
- **Enable participation, discussion, engagement**: The methods used in the session should enable every member of the group to share his concerns and ideas and to feel free to participate in the discussion. Facilitating his engagement in the discussion and work of the session is fundamental to developing every group member's sense of ownership of the session's outcome.
- **Clarify what the group will actually do in each step of the session**: In thinking through a session, it is important for the facilitator to think through the **details** of each step. He may not need to share the details with the group, but working every step through in detail will ensure that there are no **pitfalls** in the step that could trip up the group and disrupt the journey of the session.
- **Watch the logic and sequence of each step in the session's method**: The facilitator should make sure that each step in the session flow is logical and in sequence from the previous steps. Nothing will create **group confusion** quicker than a step that does not flow logically from the work done up to that point in the session. Each step should **'make sense'** in light of the work that has already been done in the session and **be obvious** in its role of moving the group toward fulfilling the objective(s) of the session.
- **Be inclusive—all can do it**: It is the facilitator's responsibility to ensure that the methods being used in the session will enable work that everyone in the group can do. For example, if you have participants with special needs, then you need to ensure it is possible for them to do each step of the process. I have done many sessions with groups in which there were many people who were

unable to read or write. This need not be a problem if you think through each method step with that reality in mind.

- **Watch the allotted time**: It is the facilitator's responsibility to make sure each session starts and ends on time. This will happen only if the facilitator is realistic about how much time the group will need to do each step of the process. A fundamental rule of thumb is that the larger the group, the more time each step will require. This is particularly true of any steps where the whole group is working together, such as a plenary.

The Five Steps in Session Design

1. **Set session objectives**: Each session should have objective(s) that show how it will fulfill the overall objective(s) of the program. They should be specific and identify both the **final outcome** and the **form** that outcome will take: i.e.

   The session will produce an analysis of the **challenges** *the group is facing in the current situation that will be held in a* **matrix** *organizing all the data from the group.*

2. **Identify key steps**: Every process has fundamental steps that will enable the group to accomplish the objective(s) of the session. Identifying these steps will enable the facilitator to develop a realistic process that considers the group's total situation.

3. **Organize key steps and check logic of flow**: Laying out the key steps in sequence will enable the facilitator to make sure that there is a logical flow to the process and to identify any **intermediate steps** that may be necessary to enable the group to move smoothly forward from each step.

4. **Allocate the available time per step:** The facilitator needs to think carefully about the **time** each step will take and whether or not the whole process is **possible** in the available time.

5. **Write the detailed instructions that the group will need to complete each step**: Finally, the facilitator will see the **feasibility** of the total process only by **detailing** the work the group will do in each step of the process. It is very important to make sure the procedures are **explicit** and clearly state **what the group will do**. The **logical flow** of the session will be fully revealed only at this point.

Every facilitator must develop his own way of preparing this work. For me it is important to have a kind of **'script'** for each session. Such a script details what I

need to say to the group and what **stage directions** are necessary to ensure the effectiveness of the session. Rather than 'winging it', I find that I am much more secure having a detailed script if and when it becomes necessary to deviate from the planned process. With a detailed script I am able to allow for a **detour**, knowing where the detour needs to go in the overall process.

Design the Opening and Closing

A facilitator is finally ready to **write an opening and closing** for the session. Only after the heart of the session has been thought through and created can the facilitator go back and create the appropriate opening context and a closing that will enable the group to recognize and celebrate its hard work.

The opening provides a **context** that prepares the group to do the work of the session. It is fundamental to building **confidence** and **motivation** in the group and creating **trust** in the facilitator.

There are **four intentions** that an opening should reflect.

- First, it should put the session into **the context of the whole event** showing how the session fits in the flow of the larger event and why it is crucial to accomplishing the overall objectives.
- Second, it should **lay out the flow** of the session and how that journey will accomplish the purpose of the session and secure the desired outputs.
- Third, it should **detail the outputs** of the session and their importance to the work of the group.
- Finally, an opening or context is about the facilitator securing the group's **permission to lead** them on the journey of the session. He needs to assure the group that it is **capable** of doing the work and that he is **capable** of guiding them successfully.

I use the analogy of a person waiting on a city street to catch a bus. He doesn't get on a bus without looking to see if it is going where he wants to go. The same is true with a group. They want to know **where** they are going and **how** they are going to get there.

An opening should have the following **practical elements**:

- The purpose of the session and (if appropriate) its role in the overall work
- A walk-through of the process
- Identify the output(s) and their significance

- A brief conversation or event that shows the participants they can do the work
- Practical details: timing, break, ground rules, etc.

A **closing** has a similar overarching purpose in that it is fundamental to maintaining a group's **motivation and commitment** to the process and the work. It should enable a group to step back from its work, to see and understand what the participants have accomplished, and to affirm it. It should enable them to **celebrate** the hard work they have done in the session and realize the extent of their **accomplishment**. Finally, if appropriate, it should **set the stage** for the next step in the process and **prepare** the group to continue its work.

Elements that should be included in a closing:

- A review of what they have accomplished
- A way for them to appreciate the great work they have done
- State how this work sets the stage for the next step in the process
- Practical details: Time of the next session, etc.

A Detailed Example of Session Procedures

The following is the Session Design for the group I mentioned at the beginning of Chapter 9.

To review the situation: it was a half-day session for a group of administrators who were facing a major change in the life and work of their organization. I was asked to enable them to share their current thinking: both about their present situation and their anticipations about their future situation. This was **not** to be a decision-making session, but rather an opportunity for them to share their best thinking with **no judgment or pressure**, so that they were free to speak their minds. This was the **first** time they had talked about this situation as a group. I had worked with some of the people in the group before, but for a number of them this was our first encounter.

I have edited the procedures to remove anything that might reveal the group's identity. Because this session was something I had never done before and was something I had invented to meet the group's need, the procedures are very detailed. They really are a 'script,' and while I do ad-lib when I am in front of a group, I find that actually writing what I want to say gives me the freedom to ad-lib without missing important parts of what I need to share with a group.

Session Design for TOUR D'HORIZON

The steps in the session are identified in the column on the left, the script is in the center and the stage directions are on the right. The title of the session is a military term invented by the French in Napoleon's time. It seemed an apt description of what the group needed to do: that is, to look at both its current situation and the anticipated future. The session was held in the morning starting at 9:30 and was timed to last 3½ hours.

I had a 4-meter-long sticky wall that was divided into four columns to hold the data from the workshop (see the chart below).

A Master Image Wall Chart

What are some characteristics of the Administration's current situation?	**The "gaps" in our Current situation**	**What kind of organization do we need to be today if we are going to be that kind of organization in 2008-2010?**	**What do you intuit will be our working situation in the context of the years 2008-2010?**
This is the data from **step one,** but it is posted in **step four** only after the data from steps two and three are posted	This is the data from **step five**	This is the data from **step three**	This is the data from **step two**

As you can see from the workshop procedures, the first part of the workshop was to enable the group members to share their individual reflections. Then they worked in small groups to reflect on their individual reflections, and finally the whole group had an hour-long focused conversation on the whole picture that it had developed. Note that we used a different color card (size A5) for each of the four sections.

Both the administrators and the Director of the Administration who was in the workshop expressed their appreciation for the workshop. They were especially pleased to discover that, except in minor areas of concern, they really did have a common anticipation for the future.

TOUR D'HORIZON THE ADMINSTRATORS 22 APRIL 2004		
Steps	**Procedures**	**Notes**
CONTEXT **15 minutes** **What we are going to do**	1. Good morning 2. Who I am for those of you I have not met. (name cards) 3. The ICA 4. What we are going to do This morning we are going to look at the current operating situation of the administration. However, we are going to do that with some understanding of what we are anticipating for our work in the years of 2008-10. The idea is to use our anticipations of the needs of the Organization at that point in the future to inform our grasp of our current situation and where we might need to focus our concerns in the nearer term future. We are going to move through a four-step process that looks like this. o A brainstorm of what is the current working situation of The Administration. o Then we will journey in time to 2008-10 to share our intuitions about what we feel will be the working situation of The Administration in that time period. o Then we will come back to today and ask ourselves, "What are the implications for today of what we see as the working situation of The Administration in 2008-10?" o We will do these steps relatively quickly and not discuss our individual responses beyond dealing with any questions of clarity. The idea here is to trust our intuitions and each other. The final steps will involve a lot of discussion so we need to do quickly the first three steps, which give us the raw material for our conversations. o The fourth and final step will happen in two parts. We do the first part in small groups. We will ask each group to look at the current situation of The Administration and the current implications list and identify two or three crucial "gaps" between these two lists. Then they would look at the implications of these "gaps" for The Administration's work.	**Have the wall divided into four columns with a title at the top of each**

	I thought that an example from another organization of all this might be helpful. • A characteristic of the organization today is ***"Board, Secretariat, Members' roles not defined"*** • A future characteristic is ***"Active, committed membership"*** • A current implication of the future characteristic is ***"Well functioning communication between office staff, member organizations, and the Board of Directors"*** • The gap is ***"No clarity on role of members, Board, Secretariat, and their functional relations"*** o Then we will come back together, share our work in the small groups, and do a reflection on the general significance of the gaps and their implications for The Administration.	**Have ground rules posted**
Questions and ground rules **THE WORKSHOP** **Step one 15 minutes**	Any questions? GROUND RULES—Explain and get agreement to abide by posted list of fundamental ground rules. All right let's get to work. I want each of you to answer this first question. **"What are some characteristics of the current working situation of the Administration?"** I want you to think, negative--positive, strengths—weaknesses, good at—not so good at, easy/proficient at—not so easy/not so proficient at, etc. In addition, we want practical/concrete things—something like "not very effective" is not helpful while "difficult inter-section communications" tells us something. Try to get half a dozen or so of these, then look over the list, and decide which the two or three that are crucial for the operation of The Administration. We want to put these crucial ones on dark pink cards. Use a marker and WRITE BIG/5-7 WORDS/ONE ITEM PER CARD. ***COLLECT THESE CARDS AND KEEP THEM—EXPLAIN THAT WE WILL GET THEM ON THE WALL LATER.***	**Have this question written large to post on wall** **Have cards and markers on the table for all to use** **Have card instructions on cards to post**

Step two **30 minutes**	Now we want to do some time travel. ***Do a visualization for 2008-10***	
	Now answer this question. **"What do you intuit will be the working situation of The Organization in the context of the years 2008-10?"** Try to list at least 6 or 7 ideas. From your list select the three or four that you feel most confident about (you would bet money on these being true for 2008-10). Put these on light pink cards and get them out on the wall. Answer questions of clarity.	**Have this question on paper to post**
Step three **15 minutes**	Now looking at what we have for 2008-10, answer this question: **"What kind of organization do we need to be today if we are going to be that kind of organization in 2008-10?"** Again, try to get 5 or 6 insights, pick the most crucial, put those on green cards, and get them on the wall. Answer questions of clarity.	**Have this question on paper to post**
Step four **15 minutes**	***NOW POST THE CARDS FROM STEP ONE, WHICH HAVE THE CURRENT WORKING SITUATION ON THEM.***	
Step five in small groups **40 minutes**	Divide into four small groups (ensure a mix of people). In the small groups, you should do the following. 1. Look at the current situation and the implications for today from 2008-10 and discuss where you see differences. Out of that discussion push to identify 2 or 3 crucial "gaps" in the current situation of The Administration. 2. As part of identifying the "gaps," say what you see as a potential implication(s) of the gap for the immediate future of The Administration. 3. Put these "gaps" and their implications on the cards provided and have someone be ready to report to the larger group. 4. Put your work on the wall.	**Have these instructions written up so each group has a copy**
Break **20 minutes**	**BREAK**	

Plenary **60 minutes** **Reflection**	**PLENARY** 1. Have each group report on their work and answer any questions of clarity. 2. Do the following reflection: a. What words or phrases have caught your attention? b. What images have come to mind? c. Where did you start to feel excited? d. Where did you start to feel anxious? e. Where have you heard something like this before? f. Which one is a major challenge? g. What one would be an 'easy fix'? h. Which one, if you dealt with it, might be catalytic? i. In terms of action, which one would you make your first priority? Second priority? Third priority? j. Stepping back to look at the whole picture, how would you summarize in a few words the current situation of The Administration? k. Again stepping back, how would you talk about the general implication of this picture for The Administration? l. Finally, if you were "God of the Administration" and there were no blocks, what would be your three-point plan for the Administration?	**Have a scribe ready to copy all the responses to the questions**
Closing **2 minutes**	That is it. I will document Thanks for hard work and patience.	

Investing Trust in a Facilitator

Program Design and Development is the **heart** of the Facilitation Cycle. I say in my training courses that facilitation is 90% preparation and 10% what you do in front of a group.

A facilitator is often asked to help groups deal with vital issues, difficult situations, and to chart the future of their organization. I was once asked to facilitate a meeting where the outcome would affect thousands of people and involve millions of dollars. Another time I facilitated a strategic plan for an organization with a budget over ten million dollars a year, a thousand employees, and serving over sixty thousand people.

People invest an incredible amount of confidence and trust in a facilitator, and we can do no less than our best for them. Designing and developing an effective process for a group is a fundamental responsibility of a facilitator, and the only way to ensure we meet the confidence and trust that they place in us.

Chapter 12
Deliver the Process
Stage 4/Phase 6

Experiencing Self-Doubt

Sometime during the 24 hours or so before I facilitate an event I usually experience an interlude of profound self-doubt. I suddenly realize that I should never have agreed to facilitate the event and that I am completely inadequate as a facilitator. These moments have nothing to do with the situation I am preparing to work in or the type of process I am about to facilitate.

I once facilitated eight strategic planning events in one month, and before the launch of each of them I experienced this moment of self-doubt. I actually helped to invent the Participatory Strategic Planning Process that is part of ToP© and probably could do it in my sleep, but I still have to go through those moments of self-doubt.

Reminders of My Humanity

I have come to realize that these moments are part of my preparation for the moment when I stand in front of a group and say, "Welcome." I believe that they serve to remind me that, while I have acquired a particular skill and a certain capacity in the exercising of that skill, I am not omnipotent and do not always have all the answers. They remind me of my humanity and that, as the cliché says, "**We all have feet of clay**."

As a facilitator begins to work with a group, the reason why being reminded of his humanity is so important is that **the capacity to empathize with a group is fundamental to good facilitation**. That will not happen if the facilitator somehow believes he is **different** from or **superior** to the people in the group.

Problemlessness

Another part of this is something I learned in becoming a pedagogue teaching the courses of The Ecumenical Institute in the late 1960s. We used to say that a pedagogue hangs his problems, concerns, and preoccupations on the doorknob as he enters the room to work with a group. The same is true for a facilitator. Facilitation requires 100 per cent of your concentration and attention. You can't give the group that sort of intense attention if your mind is someplace else. Your head and heart have to be totally present to the group and what is happening in the room.

I mentioned in Chapter 3 that a facilitator has three full-time jobs when he is working with a group. Now I want to use this analysis to organize our work of actually doing a session.

The facilitator's three full-time jobs:

- **First**: To **guide the group** through the process in an effective manner. The facilitator is the process expert in the room, and he must ensure that the group accomplishes its objectives through the process.
- **Second**: To **deal with the group dynamics** that always take place in a group. Whether it is a minor thing, like someone dominating the conversation, or something major like a heated dispute between group members, the group will look to the facilitator to guide it through such times and keep it on track to accomplish its objectives.
- **Third:** To ensure that the group is dealing with all the **relevant content** which must be considered if its work is to be successful. While the facilitator is content-neutral, he has a responsibility to ensure that all relevant content is shared with the entire group and that any hidden agendas are revealed.

A facilitator will adequately manage these tasks only if he is **fully present** and engaged with the group and its work.

Maintaining Empathy is Key

Finally, I always say, **'our(s)'**, **'we'**, **'us'** etc. I never talk about **'my'** or **'your'** concerns, issues or responsibilities. For the time a facilitator is working with a group he must **enter into the situation** of that group and, while maintaining his content neutrality, **empathize** with the group and the challenges it is facing. A group will not trust someone whom it senses is not understanding of and **sympathetic** to its situation. This does not mean that a facilitator does not ask the hard questions. But a group will be more ready to deal with those hard questions if it feels that the facilitator is **with it** in facing those questions.

Every facilitator has his own style of working with a group. To begin with, we all use the reality of **who we are physically**. I am a white male with white hair and am over six feet tall. When I stand in front of a group I am a different presence than a woman who is five foot six. How I use my physical presence to enable me to facilitate effectively is something that I have had to think carefully about and experiment with.

For example, I have found that when people are working individually or in small groups and someone has a question, it helps me connect with them if when I go to them, **I kneel** so that I am speaking face-to-face and not looming over them.

We all bring our personalities to our facilitation. I don't like confrontation. Therefore I almost never confront participants, but rather look for other means to deal with them. In addition, since I am a big guy it is very easy for the group to perceive me as a bully if I confront a participant.

I want to talk about the task of a facilitator in front of a group using the image of having three full-time tasks that I mentioned earlier. Thus in Chapters 13, 14, and 15 I will talk first about guiding the group through the process, then about ensuring effective group dynamics, and finally about ensuring that all relevant content is shared with the group.

Chapter 13
Guide the Group through the Process
Stage 4/Phase 6

A Failure of Process

Depending on the group, I sometimes explain at the beginning of our time working together that there are two dimensions operating in the group's interactions. The first of these is the content of the discussion, and the second is the way in which the group conducts the discussion. The first is the **topic** of the interaction and the second is the **process or method** the group uses to deal with that topic. Everyone is conscious of the first, but most people never think about or realize the **significance** of the process that is happening in the group. If you talk to people about meetings they attend, however, you often will hear the following kind of comments:

- The same people talk all the time.
- We never make decisions, it's all just talk.
- People are afraid to say what they are really thinking.
- We never deal with the real issues.

All of these comments point to a **failure of process**. People's frustration with many of the meetings they participate in has to do with the inadequate processes that are being used in the meeting.

A facilitator is asking a group to trust him and to allow him to take it on a journey that will, in the end, fulfill its objective(s) for the meeting. But before a group will trust a facilitator as its journey guide, the facilitator must **demonstrate** to the group that he has complete confidence in the process he has decided to use.

Backwards and Forwards

This brings us back to the fact that effective facilitation depends on **in-depth preparation**. Whether it is an off-the-shelf process, like one of the ToP© methods, or a process that the facilitator has created like the *Tour d'Horizon* I shared earlier, a facilitator must know it backwards and forwards. He must be comfortable with the process in the sense that he knows exactly what he has to do and has thought carefully about what the participants will be doing in each step and what issues might arise in each step.

If I am doing a process that I have created or one that I am doing for the first time, I like to leave it for a day or two and then come back to it and do it as though I am

a participant; following the directions, answering the questions, and generally getting a feel for what participants are going to experience when I ask them to do this. This often reveals things like unclear directions or questions that don't quite elicit the data needed to move the process forward.

Facilitating the Group Process

Once the facilitator has shared an outline of the process and the group has accepted it, the group is ready to begin the work. As the facilitator guides the group through the process, there are a number of things that he must be careful about and be constantly paying attention to in terms of being responsible for the process:

- Making sure that the **directions** he gives are **clear and understood** by the group. Sometimes an **example** of what the group should do or produce can be helpful. The facilitator must be careful, however, to not influence the group's thinking with his example. Also, if the facilitator is explaining the instructions and **paraphrases** them, he needs to be careful that his paraphrasing is an **accurate** reflection of the original instructions.
- Observing the group and ensuring that **everyone is participating** and following the work. I sometimes say things like:

  If you are stuck, take a look at what your neighbor has done to see if that gives you some ideas. This is not an exam.

- I also **walk around** the room, especially if it is a large group, so that people who might be **unsure** about what they are doing feel free to catch my eye and **ask** their question.
- In a brainstorming situation I sometimes look at what people are writing and do the following if I feel it will help the total group. If they are supposed to be brainstorming contradictions and a small group has written something like, *'a lack of money,'* I will ask its permission to share that with the total group and I say something like:

  This is not a contradiction; it is a description of the situation.
  The question is: Why is there a lack of money?
  What is causing this situation where the funding is inadequate?

  This helps to clarify for the group what exactly they are supposed to be doing, and it is a kind of reassurance that they are proceeding in the right direction. It is important to get permission from the individual or small group to share their

work and to thank them for allowing me to use their work to help the whole group.

- Another thing I do in a brainstorm situation is **never** tell people to brainstorm a certain number of answers to the question. I always give them a range to work toward. For example, I would not ask a group to brainstorm 10 answers to the question. Rather I would say 'Brainstorm 7 to 10 answers.' This gives people who can only think of 6 or 7 answers permission to be satisfied with their work while someone who comes up with 10 or more also has permission to keep going.
- The facilitator must **do the math** when planning a brainstorm. Even in a large group, once you get fifty or sixty brainstorm items from a group you begin to get only repetitions of what you already have. Thus, as a facilitator I figure out how many items I need to ask a group to come up with.

  For example, if I am working with a group of thirty people, I will ask them to individually brainstorm 8 to 10 responses to the question. Then I will have them work in groups of three, sharing their individual responses and together come up with 5 to 7 items they want to share with the total group. Since thirty people give me ten groups of three and each group is doing 5 to 7 items, this will result in a brainstorm of 50 to 70 items. Some groups will do 5 items and some 8, which is no problem. What you are working toward is **ensuring that a full and accurate picture** of the group's thinking is on the wall.
- It is the facilitator's responsibility to keep the group moving through the process so that they complete their work in the time allotted for the session. But the facilitator should **never** communicate to the group members that they need to rush or that they are taking longer than he anticipated in completing a step in the process.

  Time management is part of the facilitator's process responsibility. I find it helpful to tell a group how much time I am going to give them to do a particular step and to warn them when the time is almost finished. However, I don't give a group a particular time, i.e. *You have five minutes.* Rather I will say: *We will have five or six minutes to do this work.*

  Communicating **flexibility** and a **calmness** about time helps a group to stay focused on the work of the session and to feel like they are doing a good job. If it is necessary to continue past the scheduled stopping time, however, a

facilitator needs to tell the group how much more time is needed and **get its permission** to continue. I have never had a group say ***No*** to such a request.

- If for some reason it becomes necessary to **change the process** that has been shared with and accepted by the group, the facilitator should be very clear with the group about **why** he is changing the process, **what** the change will involve, and the **implications** for the outcome of the session. If a change in the plan for a session is not managed carefully, it can damage the group's confidence in the facilitator's ability to lead them. However, if the facilitator is transparent about why the change is necessary and how it will enable the group to accomplish its objectives, it can actually serve to **demonstrate the facilitator's competence** and to increase a group's confidence in him.

  I remember once when I had to make a major adjustment to the process in mid-session, one participant commented at the end that he really appreciated my **flexibility** in being willing to change the process, my **competence** in coming up with a workable modification to the process, and my **transparency** throughout the whole event.

  The key to making these adjustments is two-fold. One is having a **wide range** of processes at your fingertips. I am always looking for new approaches and methods for working with groups. The second is in the **detailed preparation** the facilitator has done for the session. Such preparation enables the facilitator to modify his process plan without losing sight of the ultimate objective. If it is effective, a highway detour will enable you to arrive successfully at the final objective of your journey. The same is true when you modify your process plan.

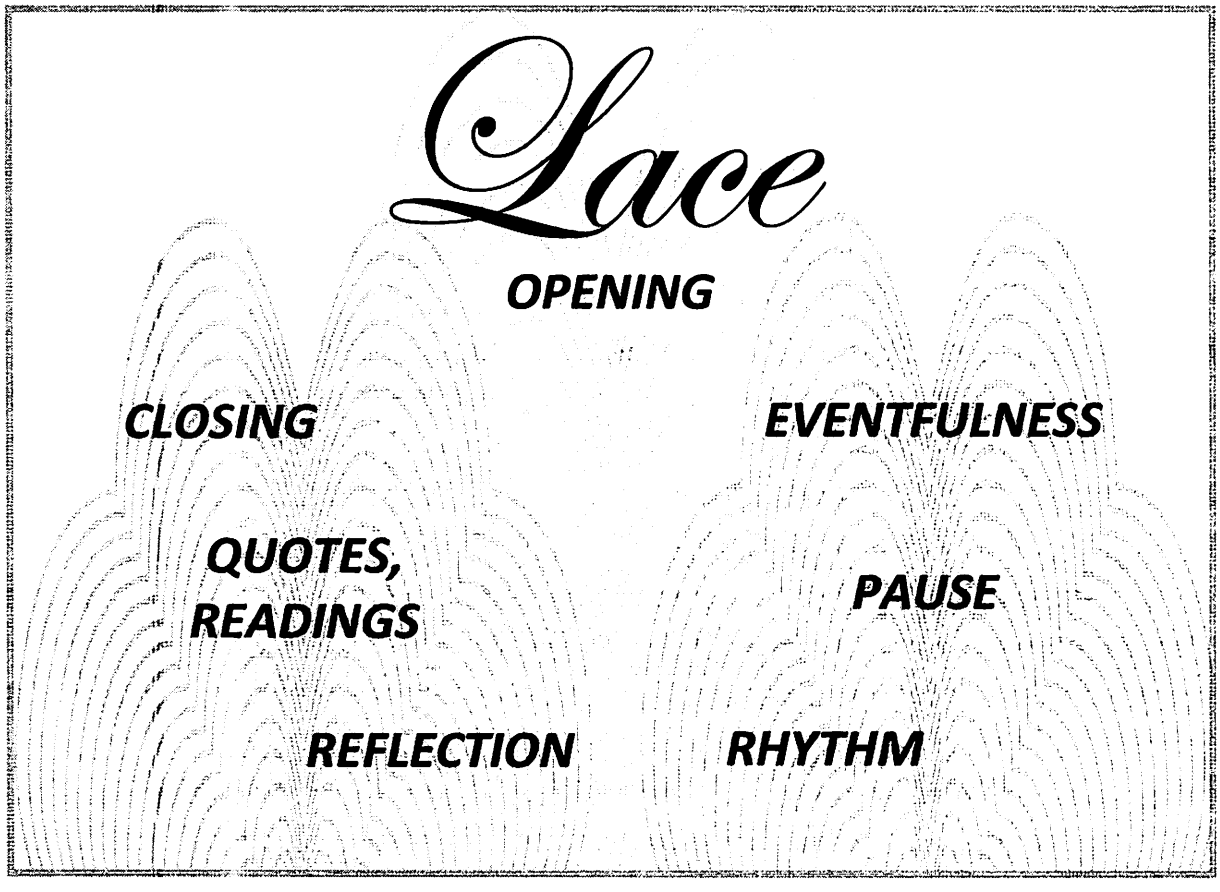
The Importance of 'Lace'

Something I learned when I was preparing to be a pedagogue in the late 1960s was that there are tools and techniques that can help to weave a session together, thus helping to make it a creative and engaging experience for a group. These things are not really part of the process but rather are **interspersed** in the procedures to enable the group to work more effectively. We called these tools and techniques, lace.

Lace is simply something that only takes a few minutes to execute and usually has nothing to do with the topic or actual process of the session. These tools and techniques vary in their purpose depending on the nature of the event and their placement in the flow of a session. On the next page is an image I use in my trainings that holds a number of these tools and techniques. I have already talked about

openings and closings, but I will go on to say something about the other examples on the image and to share some examples of each.

It is very important that anything you do like this be appropriate to the group, particularly if it is a multi-cultural group. Depending on the group and your relationship with them, it may also be necessary to get the group leader's permission to do such an event.



Using Quotes and Readings

One of my favorite tools is to use **quotes and readings** with a group. I especially like to do that at the beginning of a session. I find that that in most groups it takes awhile for participants to actually become present to the situation. Their bodies are there but their minds are still consumed with whatever they were thinking about or doing before they arrived. For a number of years now I have created PowerPoint presentations using photos and some favorite poetry along with appropriate music. These last just a few minutes, and I simply say that I want to share something that is meaningful to me, show it, and then say something about the author and where it comes from. Depending on the group, I also have some stories I can tell.

When I was working with religious congregations of Sisters in Ireland, I would often tell some of my favorite stories about St. Teresa of Avila. Sometimes, especially at the end of a long day, I will share something with the group as a final 'sendout.' Often these will be something humorous or a music video that is powerful. Tina Turner singing 'Simply the Best' in her farewell concert at Wembley Stadium in London is an amazing video of someone giving everything she has and one hundred twenty thousand people responding.

In deciding whether or not to use a particular quote or tell a particular story, you need to make sure that both the content and the length are appropriate. Remember that the group is not there to appreciate your taste in poetry, stories, or music.

Creating Eventfulness

Eventfulness should be used to enable the facilitator to move the group forward, to provide humor, to energize a group, and/or to relieve tension.

For example, if participants have been working hard and sitting for a long time, I sometimes ask them to stand, to think of a song that they like, play it in their heads, and dance in place for a minute or two. I have used a few minutes of walking meditation with soft music to help reenergize a group.

It is important to make sure that whatever you are asking the group to do it is appropriate and that it is not too time consuming. If I know that there is someone in the group who is a good singer, I will sometimes ask him to lead the group in a song while we all stand and stretch. I always get someone from the group to lead it since I am not a singer.

I have a deck of cards that have all kinds of pictures on them. I put them out on a table and ask people, as they arrive, to pick one that they can use to tell the group something about themselves. Another way to use the cards is to have people draw a card without seeing the picture and then ask them to tell a story about what is happening in the picture. Both of these events are best used with small groups since they can become time-consuming.

If a group has been having a particularly tense discussion, it can be helpful to do something to break the tension. This can be a very delicate situation, and the facilitator has to judge the timing and the nature of the event carefully. In this situation **knowing the group** is really crucial. An inappropriate event will only make the situation more tense and cost the facilitator the group's trust.

A Pause in the Process

A **pause**, often called a coffee break or just a break, is not usually thought of as a tool or technique, but if used wisely, can be very helpful to a group. **Breaks** provide discontinuity and a 'change of scenery' for a group. I try to ensure that the coffee break involves getting out of the room where we are meeting, even if it is only in a hallway outside the room. A break can also **renew energy and engagement** of the group in its work.

It is the facilitator's responsibility to judge when it is **appropriate** to take a break. I very rarely use a break to deal with a situation in the group, but I have done so on a few occasions simply because the group was unable to continue working.

Once a participant got very emotional about a situation in the group, really stunning the whole group with the depth of her feelings. At that point I suggested that we take an hour-long break. Fortunately, we were in the country on a day with good weather, so everyone went out for walks. When they returned, we were able to renew the conversation and deal with the situation calmly and creatively.

How long a break should be depends entirely on the group's situation and the timing of the session. To ask a group to take less than a fifteen-minute break is usually unrealistic unless there are particular issues that the group is aware of and accept. I have asked participants in an afternoon session if they would like to take a break or work through and finish up earlier than scheduled. They usually opt to work through and leave early. In that situation I give people permission to just get up and go to the bathroom if and when it is necessary.

Finally, a facilitator needs to judge ahead of time when a break in the work will be **least disruptive** to the flow of the process and aim to have the break at that point. However, in using breaks to enable a group to accomplish its objectives, it is essential to be flexible and responsive to the group's needs.

Fascinating Rhythm

Rhythm can be very helpful to a group to deal with difficult content and to remain focused in spite of distractions. By rhythm I mean something more like a change of pace, a change in the process, or space that gives a group a sense of moving forward.

For example, having **break-out rooms** for small groups helps to give the group a sense of moving forward in its work. **Varying the process** participants are doing can also help them feel forward movement. If the group has been having a **difficult discussion**, it sometimes helps to stop the discussion, ask everyone to write down

his reflections and share them with his neighbor, and then ask a few people to share their reflections with the whole group. This change of process is also **a change of pace** since it slows down the process and creates **reflective time**.

The problem-solving workshop in ToP© has five steps, each of which uses a different process, so that the group is never doing the same thing for a long time. This helps to keep people engaged and energized as you move through the event.

Taking Time for Reflection

Reflection simply points to the wisdom of taking time with participants to step back and think more deeply about what they are doing, saying, etc. It helps a group to appreciate the **significance** of its work or situation and to develop a common understanding of whatever is the focus of its concern.

It is important to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to participate in the reflection, although that can be time consuming in a large group. It is therefore important that the facilitator, when he decides to do a reflection, makes sure that the timing is appropriate and that there is adequate time.

Finally, the focus of the reflection needs to be on sharing insights, learnings, and in affirmation of the work of the group. I use both short and long conversations using the Focused Conversation Method from ToP©. In the procedures shared in Chapter 11 there is a long focused conversation at the end of the workshop that is really the significant part of the workshop.

Conversations are not the only way to do a reflective event. You can ask people to draw a picture or to think of a quote that expresses what they are feeling or thinking at that time. You can ask people to work in small groups for a few minutes and decide how they would express the significance of the work they have been doing. The possibilities are limited only by the facilitator's creativity, the appropriateness of the activity to the group, and time.

Sensing a Group's Willingness to Participate

A number of factors should be considered when planning any activity with a group. These considerations are interrelated, and all have to do with people's readiness to open themselves and share with the group.

- **Willing to risk**: A facilitator must have a sense of a group's comfort level and whether or not they are, as individuals, willing to participate in an activity that might move outside of their comfort zone. Misreading the group in this area can very quickly destroy any trust the group has in the facilitator.

- **Confidence in the situation**: A facilitator must make sure that people feel 'safe' in the situation and have trust in the facilitator and in the process. Unless they can reveal personal information without censure or ridicule, **the event** will just serve to develop resistance and withdrawal.
- **Trust in the group**: Every member of the group must feel that the group will honor and respect them and anything they share with the group. If people feel that the group is likely to judge them negatively because of something they have shared, then an atmosphere of distrust will pervade the group.
- **Opening self to the situation**: A facilitator must be sure that people in the group are willing to open themselves and participate in what he is planning for the group. There are many factors that affect people's willingness to open themselves to a situation. These include cultural norms, past experiences in groups or with this particular group, sensitivity to particular issues, some particular event or topic people are not ready to **consider**, etc.
- **Interpersonal relations**: A facilitator must have some sense of the state of the interpersonal relations in the group. Not only are the factors I mentioned in the previous category in play here, but you also have dynamics such as power and authority relationships, personal likes and dislikes, and assumptions that all people make about other people's motives, etc.

Working with Cultural Norms

Any facilitator who has worked with a group from a culture other than his own knows that special sensitivity is required to **avoid violating the cultural norms** of a group. In addition, a group can be even more complex and challenging if several different cultures are represented. The following are some fundamental considerations that a facilitator should keep in mind when preparing to work with such groups.

- **Roles, how people relate to each other**: There are many factors that determine how people will relate to each other. Such things as people's position in a hierarchy of power and authority, traditional attitudes toward elders or youth, norms in family members' relations, etc.
- **Personal space**: Every person has the public and private space of his life, and certain things and activities that belong to each. People can get very defensive of their personal space if they feel that it is being violated or endangered. For example, a facilitator should make sure of what level of touching is allowed in

a culture before planning an activity that might involve holding hands or whispering in someone else's ear.

- **Male/Female dynamics**: This is an especially sensitive area in any cross- or multi-cultural situation. I once facilitated a strategic planning session in Cairo where all the women sat on one side of the room and the men sat on the other. When we broke into small groups, it was into groups of women and groups of men. The women would wait until the men spoke before making their contributions to the general discussion.

  A facilitator's task is not to change these cultural norms but to work within them to accomplish the objectives of the group. At the same time a facilitator needs to maintain the fundamental values that guide his facilitation. For example, I would always make sure that the women in the group in Cairo were given every opportunity to participate and share their wisdom and concerns. Once data was placed on cards and posted on the wall it was no longer women's or men's data, and it was all respected and treated in the same way.

  Multi-cultural groups can be challenging for facilitators, but with sensitivity, knowledge of the cultural norms, and a willingness to be flexible in implementing their processes, there is no reason they should have to compromise their fundamental values as facilitators.

- **Levels of personal exposure**: I have already talked about this, but it needs to be recognized as a powerful cultural norm and one that a facilitator violates at his peril. Nothing will destroy a group's trust in a facilitator quicker than the violation of the norms regarding what can and cannot be shared in a group.

Planning Special Events

Once a facilitator decides to do a special event with a group, there are several steps that must be followed.

- **Considering the audience**: I have already talked about the factors that need to be considered in deciding to an event with a group. The most important of all these is thinking carefully about the event's appropriateness for the group you are working with.

- **Writing Procedures**: If the event involved some sort of instructions or directions, the facilitator needs to make sure that they are very clear and will not confuse the participants. If appropriate, an example will usually be helpful. Here the facilitator needs to consider such things as any requirements for equipment, space set-up, etc.

- **Staging the event**: There are four steps in staging an event: an introduction that will ensure that the group is ready and willing to participate in the event; giving clear instructions if necessary; the actual doing of the event; a reflection if appropriate; the closing and transition to the next phase of the program.

Chapter 14
Manage the Group Dynamics
Stage 4/Phase 6

A Facilitator's Focus

I don't like the word 'manage,' but I haven't found a better one to talk about the responsibility of a facilitator for how people interact and relate to each other in a group. The facilitator should never forget that he is there to enable a group to **accomplish** a particular objective(s). He is **not** there as a psychologist or as the guide for a support group. The focus of a facilitator's concern for the **dynamics** in a group is whether or not they are enabling the group to accomplish its objectives.

There are many approaches to managing group dynamics as a facilitator, but I want to share some of the techniques I have found helpful. These techniques reflect my personal style and approach to facilitation. I think that this is the key to their effectiveness. Every facilitator must determine for himself what works for him.

A Facilitator's Presence Is Key

Personal authenticity is fundamental to dealing effectively with group dynamics. A facilitator must speak and act out of what he profoundly believes and knows about how people should relate responsibility to each other in a group. A group can tell when a facilitator is simply playing a role and there is no conviction backing up his words. Participants will quickly lose confidence in such a facilitator and thus lose their trust in him to guide them effectively.

Perhaps even more important to managing group dynamics effectively is the facilitator's **modeling the behavior** required for the group to work effectively. If the facilitator expects the group to **listen carefully** to every member's contribution, he must be seen to do the same. If the facilitator expects the group to take the work of the group **seriously**, he must be seen to do the same. A facilitator can ask a group to behave in a certain way only when he is modeling that behavior. A facilitator who asks a group to behave one way and then behaves differently will quickly lose all credibility with the group.

Empowering Participation

Once when I was facilitating a large group, the leadership told me that I should not worry about one of the members of the group who was very elderly and frail. He

came to the meetings, but he hardly ever participated because he could not speak very well.

I don't operate that way as a facilitator! When we were having a discussion I went to him and asked him what he would like to share with the group. I knelt beside him so I could hear him and repeated what he said to me so that the group could hear his ideas. His comments were both relevant and helpful to the group's discussion. A number of people came up to me after the session and said how much they appreciated me making the effort to ensure the elderly man's participation.

Another time when I was working with another very large group, we were meeting in a large room with a very high ceiling. We had a PA system with a wireless mike. We had only one mike, however, so when we were having group discussions I would move around the room, handing the mike to those who wished to speak. When several of the more elderly participants indicated that they did not want to use the mike, I told them to tell me what they wanted to share and I would repeat it for the group. Again, this was deeply appreciated by the group and a demonstration of the respect for each member of the group that I was expecting from the group.

Establishing Group Norms

Establishing a set of ground rules is a very useful tool for dealing with group dynamics as a facilitator. I prefer to call them **group norms**, since I don't like the image of 'rules'. To establish beforehand some basic understandings about how the group is going to work together is invaluable, whatever you call them. Essentially, a set of group norms does three things in a group:

- They serve as a **diagnostic frame**. This simply means that they guide the facilitator and members in the group to understand what is happening in the group and to identify when behavior is **unhelpful**.
- The ground rules **guide your behavior** as a group leader. This has to do with the facilitator modeling the behavior that he is expecting in the group. They also help you diagnose what is happening in the group and how you might respond as a facilitator.
- The ground rules serve as a **learning tool** for developing effective group norms. My experience is that once a group establishes a set of group norms, the group quickly learns to operate within those norms.

As mentioned earlier, there are two types of group norms.

- The first type is **procedural norms**. These are things like

  We will start on time and end on time.
  Turn off your phone, or if necessary put it on silent and take calls out of the room.

  These procedural norms establish how the group will operate and can be used by the facilitator to guide the group as they work together.

- The second type is **relational norms**. These are things like

  Focus on the issue, not on personalities.
  There are no stupid questions and no wrong answers.

  Relational norms help a group to understand how they are expected to interact and relate responsibly to each other.

Introducing Generic Group Norms

Every facilitator has his own way of establishing group norms with a group. I have a short list of norms that I introduce to a group as my generic norms. I post the list on a large sheet and explain that I have found them helpful in working with groups, and ask participants if they are willing to use these as their group norms for our time together. At the same time I invite them to **suggest** other norms or to **remove** something from the suggested list.

My generic norms are:

- We start on time and end on time
- There are no stupid questions and no wrong answers
- We focus on the issue(s), not on personalities
- We turn off our phones or put them on silent and take calls out of the room
- We have one conversation
- Respect all information
- What we say stays in this room unless we decide otherwise

The following are three examples of group norms:

3 Examples of Ground Rules for Groups		
1. Sessions start on time. There will be no review for those who are late. 2. Phone messages will be delivered at breaks except for personal emergencies. 3. One person talks at a time. 4. What is said here stays here. 5. If you miss a session, support the decision made in your absence. 6. Listen first as an advocate for the other person's idea.	1. This is not problem-solving, but learning. 2. Every idea and comment is valid. 3. People need not agree. 4. All data is recorded in group memory on flip charts. 5. All tasks have recorded outputs. 6. We stick to the time. 7. Consultants (conference managers) structure time and tasks. 8. No lectures.	1. All ideas are valid. 2. Everything goes up on flip charts. 3. Listen to each other. 4. Observe time frames. 5. Seek common ground and action—not problems and conflict.

As a general rule, a list of group norms should be between five and ten items. You want a group to quickly **internalize** the norms and get to the point where they don't have to look at the posted list to know what they are and when one of them is being violated.

A facilitator should **not** use group norms to 'beat up' on a group when they violate one of the norms. Rather, norms give the facilitator a way to call the group's attention to what is happening and work with them to find a solution. Finally, if a facilitator is working with a group long term, it is often worth taking the time to do a workshop so that the group can develop its own set of group norms. In addition, I have found this option very helpful when working to help a team in the **formation stage** of its journey.

How To (and How *Not* To) Address Dysfunctional Group Behaviors

Every group is a collection of human beings, and thus it will always be far from perfect. Thus the facilitator needs to be prepared with numerous tools and techniques to enable him to deal with behavior and actions in the group that **hinder** its effective working together. Every facilitator needs to develop his own set of tools and techniques that he is comfortable using with a group.

Avoiding Confrontation

Personally, I seek to **avoid** any kind of confrontation with individuals or with the group as a whole. To deal with unhelpful behavior I try to use slight **modifications** to the way the group is working together. I have already mentioned changing how the group is working if a small number of people are dominating the conversation.

The following **matrix charts** list fifteen situations that can arise in a group and offer some suggestions for how to deal with them. Again, they reflect my personal approach to such situations. I include them in the hope that they will stimulate other facilitators to think about these types of situations and decide how they will respond. In each matrix you will find:

- A brief description of a situation
- Common characteristics of such situations
- What I consider to be unhelpful facilitator responses
- What I consider to be helpful facilitator responses

Responding to Dysfunctional Behaviors: an Index

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1. Discussion Dominated by One or Two People

An Example: As the meeting went on the same two people controlled the discussions more and more. They were the first to speak on every topic—often interrupting the person presenting the topic before he was finished. They would state their opinions as "fact" and often look around belligerently as if challenging anyone to question them. They would cut off or ridicule other people's contributions. Soon the other members of the group made less and less effort to participate.

Characteristics of these situations

- Only one or two people do all the talking.
- People seem frustrated and/or holding back with their ideas.
- People are being cut off or their contributions are being ridiculed.
- Discussions are perfunctory.
- Usually there is only one option to discuss—no exploring of alternatives.
- Non-participating members appear bored and have pushed back from the table.
- Usually talkative, friendly people are reserved and withdrawn in the meeting.

What Not to Do as a Facilitator	Group-building Facilitator Actions
• Try to control the offenders—"Excuse me Mr. Q, do you mind if I let someone else take a turn?" You should not let this become a contest of will and power between them and you as the facilitator. • Reprimand the dominators—"Excuse me Mr. Q, you're taking up a lot of the group's time..." This will only create resentment and hostility toward you as the facilitator. • Speak to the dominating people outside the meeting about their behavior in the group. Again, you do not want to get into a contest of wills with these people, nor do you want to appear to be singling them out for criticism or special attention. Also, you do not want to get into an argument where you have to defend yourself and your actions in the meeting. This will inevitably carry over into the meeting and cause you more problems.	• Structure discussions so that others can participate: 1) Give each person an opportunity to speak in turn, going around the room 2) Set up two- or three-person sub-groups for discussion, and then have them present their results to the whole group 3) Have each individual write suggestions before or during the meeting for dissemination before or during the meeting. • Remind the group members of their common purpose and their need for everyone's participation. • Initiate a clarification of the agreed-upon work processes. • Help the group create ground rules (make sure to include one about total participation) and enforce adherence to them. • Hold a group discussion about the agreed-upon purpose and work processes of the group. • Lead reflections that help a group to evaluate what was good and what could be done to make its meetings more effective.

2. People Not Paying Attention

An Example: The meeting has degenerated into a number of discussions that people are having with their neighbors. There is no focus, and it is no longer possible to have one discussion. Some people are "goofing around" (making and throwing paper airplanes, telling jokes, etc.). Generally the group has lost all coherence and focus.

Characteristics of These Situations

- People talking to their neighbors and not speaking to whole group.
- People drawing or otherwise not paying attention.
- People doing things that further disrupt the focus of the group.
- Some people asking what the group is doing or what the topic of the group's discussion is supposed to be.

What Not to Do as a Facilitator	Group-building Facilitator Actions
• Try to organise or control the group. "Okay, everybody, let's get refocused." This works only when the problem is not very serious; otherwise you get into a power struggle with the group that the facilitator usually loses. • Try to refocus the group by making them feel guilty. "All right, we have a lot of work to get done today and not much time, so let's pay attention." This will build resentment in the group toward the facilitator—people don't like to be made to feel guilty or bad. • Do something at the front of the room that is wild enough to capture peoples' attention. Often this will only increase the confusion and leave the group even more chaotic.	• Take a break. A group often becomes unfocused because they are overloaded or worn out and need a change of scenery. A break should get them out of the room, allow them to move around, and generally "recharge" themselves. • Do some activity that is completely unrelated to the group and the purpose of the meeting. For example, asking the group to stand and do some easy physical exercises will often enable a group to refocus. • Ask the group what is going on and why they have lost focus. This will often give you clues about why the situation has developed and what would be a helpful next step. • Suggest that the group leave the current topic (perhaps to return to it later) and move on to the next item on the agenda.

3. Low Participation by the Entire Group	
An Example: The group is simply refusing to participate in the discussion. There have been a few comments, but no one has responded to them. People have their heads down, and some of them are writing or drawing on their notes. There seems to be some unexplained tension or anxiety in the room.	
Characteristics of These Situations • No interaction or responses to what comments are made. • People unwilling to look at each other or at the facilitator. • The room is tense, and people are looking anxious. • No one is willing to state his or her personal opinion or ideas about the topic.	
What Not to Do as a Facilitator	**Group-building Facilitator Actions**
• Assume that silence means consent and move on. • Try to force participation by focusing on one individual: "Sue, why don't you share your thinking about this issue?" This puts the person in a very uncomfortable position and may increase the tension in the room. • Try to find out what the problem is by asking one person to explain why people don't want to participate. Again, this puts one person on the spot and may increase the tension and anxiety in the group.	• Use other methods to help people share their thinking and ideas: 1) Use individual and/or small group brainstorming and have people write their ideas down before sharing; 2) Have each person make his own list of ideas, and then have him pick two or three to share with the group by listing them on flip chart paper on the wall; 3) Go around the room two or three times, having each person share an idea with no comment from the group—then do a reflection on what people heard in the sharing. • Focus on the agenda and process—ask the group if they are ready to work on the issue at hand. If the answer is 'no,' then work with the group to develop a plan for how they will deal with the issue.

4. The Use of Insulting or Disparaging Remarks (Zingers)

An Example: When one of the team members came to the meeting and announced that he had not been able to finish his assigned task and that he did not know how to solve the problems he was facing, one of the members was heard to say, "So what's new? We are always doing his work!" This kind of remark was not new in the group. Throughout the working day such remarks were constantly flowing back and forth. Some of the group members seemed to be better at it and seemed to enjoy it. They claimed they were "just kidding" and "didn't really mean anything by it." When most members of the group were asked about this type of remark, they defended this way of communicating. "This is just the way we talk to each other. Nobody takes it seriously."

Characteristics of These Situations

- Humor is often at the expense of one or two group members.
- Such remarks make up a lot of the dialogue in the group.
- Group members withdraw after they have been the focus of such a remark.
- People who make these comments often use them to establish dominance in a group or to protect themselves from the comments of others.
- Other people who rarely use them will do so as a form of self-defense.
- Usually it is aimed at questioning a person's sense of self-worth, his capability, and value to the group.

What Not to Do as a Facilitator	Group-building Facilitator Actions
• Use this type of remark as you facilitate the group. • If you are the focus of such a remark, become defensive, withdraw, or reply in kind. • Join in the laugher that may occur in the group when such a remark is made. • Question a person who has just made such a remark. This will only make the person defensive, and sometimes it even can make the whole group defensive and thus less willing to trust the facilitator.	• Monitor self to see how you react to these remarks. Note: All of the following should be done at a time when the facilitator decides to focus on this problem. These should **not** be done in reaction to a particular event. • Share with the group your own experience of the remarks. • If the group does not suggest it, then suggest a ban on such remarks as an addition to the ground rules. • Help the group to understand the counterproductive nature of these remarks. • Invite group members to share how these comments feel to them and support their sharing the painful or angry side of these remarks. • Explore other ways to have humorous exchanges in the group. • Review how they expect to work together.

5. Leader or Manager Breaks Rules

An Example: The manager of the group is also responsible for several other groups. He is, however, not the facilitator for the group. The manager was present when the group agreed to the ground rules, but he is notorious for breaking them. He is usually late for meetings and often leaves early. He has annulled decisions made by the group after he left the meeting, even though he agreed that the group would make such decisions without interference. He has on occasion reminded the group that he is the manager, and that his word carries more weight and if necessary is the final word.

Characteristics of These Situations

- Ground rules are being broken by the manager and often by others in the group.
- People are not willing to talk about the problem.
- Some group members are fearful to speak up and to make a contribution to the discussions.
- Some group members are now skipping meetings, claiming they have other pressing responsibilities.
- Key work is falling behind schedule.
- Group members spend non-meeting time complaining about the manager's conduct.
- Group members do not have a clear understanding of the group's purpose.
- Accountability is weak—neither the manager nor the group is free to really practice effective accountability.
- The group's working and meeting procedures are weak and need to be reworked.
- Roles in the group are not clear—including that of the manager.
- Processes for resolving conflict need attention.
- The whole situation is seen as a power issue between the manager and the group.

What Not to Do as a Facilitator	Group-building Facilitator Actions
• Challenge the manager in front of the group. He will likely become defensive and then attack you, thus lessening your influence with the group as the facilitator. • Talk with the group about the situation without the manager present. This will increase the sense of "Him vs. Us." • Go to the manager's superiors. This is probably a sure way to end your career as the group's facilitator. • Ignore the situation and hope for the best. • Let yourself as the facilitator start to break the ground rules. "If you can't beat them, join them" is never a solution.	• Have the group review its ground rules and renew its commitment to each one. • Review and reaffirm the group's charter or get one created. This should include something about the manager's role and responsibilities to the group. • Reaffirm the group's process for resolving conflicts or agree to create one.

6. Group Has Difficulty Completing Work

An Example: Once again the group has just about made a decision and moved on an action plan when one of the members raises another issue, claiming that it was a crisis and a more important issue than the one they were working on and should be dealt with immediately. This has happened often in the past, and usually the group never got back to the original issue, and it was very likely that before they decided about the "urgent issue" something else would come up and they would move on without deciding anything. The group seemed incapable of sticking to a topic until they had made a decision and agreed on the action plan for its implementation.

Characteristics of These Situations

- Units of work are not completed before the group shifts its attention.
- There is a growing backlog of uncompleted work.
- Supervisors are expressing concern about the backlog of uncompleted work.
- Group members tend to blame others as the reason for the lack of completed work.
- Members complain about being overloaded with work and never having time to really focus on a task.
- The group is interfered with by non-group members.
- The group's and organisation's priorities change.
- The group has no charter or doesn't use it to guide its work.
- Group members cannot manage accountability, have not agreed on how they will know that a job is completed, and cannot prioritise their work.
- The group leader is not managing the group's external relations.
- The group does not have a clear process laying out the steps to complete work.

What Not to Do as a Facilitator	Group-building Facilitator Actions
• Try to get the group back on track by saying things like, "Now is not the time for this," "Could we stay on the topic at least once," "I don't think that is important, so let's finish dealing with the current topic." • Make the group feel guilty about what they are doing by saying something like, "This group is always trying to avoid making a decision, and you are doing it again." • Get into an argument with the person who is distracting the group. You can only alienate the group, and if you are seen as 'picking on' the person, you will create sympathy for that person and reduce the group's trust in you as its facilitator.	• Structure a time when the group members can discuss what is happening in their meetings and the effect it is having on them and their work. • If they have a charter, revisit the charter and either affirm or modify it. • Introduce the concept of the "parking lot" as a technique to deal with distractions. • Discuss what it means for the group to complete a task and how they will know it is finished and celebrate that achievement. • Have the group agree on how it will manage multiple demands on its time. • Help the group to develop a monitoring process for tracking work in progress.

7. Group Conflict Over Priorities

An Example: The group's meetings seem to cover the same ground over and over again. The members are anxious to agree on the next steps, but are unwilling to compromise or otherwise surrender their own ideas and thoughts. A few people are silent, but most people take sides and participate in heated arguments about what to do. They have received no direction from their supervisor.

Characteristics of These Situations

- There is no agreement on the next task.
- People take sides and fail to reach agreement.
- Meetings seem to have no clear purpose.
- People complain about the lack of progress.
- People's commitment and motivation are falling.
- The group has no clear process for determining priorities.
- The group's assignment is unclear and/or it has received conflicting directions.
- The group has no agreed-upon process for dealing with conflicts.
- The group has no agreed-upon process for making decisions.

What Not to Do as a Facilitator	Group-building Facilitator Actions
• Take a wait and see attitude: "After a while they will be ready to make a decision and move forward." It's more likely that time will only increase people's frustration and anger. • Lecture the group members about how they have been successful in the past and need to do it again. This will increase the pressure on them but give them no help in resolving their dilemma. • Talk to some of the members outside of the meeting and suggest that they just keep quiet and let the others have their way. This will only increase division in the group and destroy people's commitment and motivation. • Suggest that the group's supervisor come in and give them a 'pep talk'. Again, this will increase the pressure on them, but it will not help if they don't receive some clear directions from the supervisor.	• Name the problem and help the group talk about it. • Support the group members if they decide to request clarification of their assignment from their supervisor. • Help the group to reflect on the processes they use for setting priorities, resolving conflicts, and making decisions. If needed, help them to develop more effective processes in these areas. • Help the group to articulate its vision as a way to build unity and common focus. • Help the group think through the dynamics of its meetings and what kind of agenda/format would be most effective.

8. Group Conflict Over the Use of Resources

An Example: The group is working on a very demanding project with a short time frame. Two of the group members are responsible for key sections of the project. Their work requires the use of some of the same people in the group. They are constantly arguing over whose work has priority and who is going to get the time of one of the group members. The rest of the group is finding the arguing distracting, and the project is beginning to fall behind schedule.

Characteristics of this Situation

- The conflict repeats itself without resolution.
- Other group members are avoiding contact with the two people who are arguing.
- The project is falling behind schedule.
- Co-operation across the whole team is declining (people are afraid to ask each other for assistance).
- Focus is on individual success, not the group's accomplishing of the overall project.
- People are unclear about the total work plan for the project and find they are dealing with the immediate next step with no anticipation for future demands on resources.

What Not to Do as a Facilitator	Group-building Facilitator Actions
• Give a 'pep talk' about the need for everyone to work together for the good of the group and the project. • Tell the two people arguing to stop it and get on with their work. • Talk to the rest of the group when the two people arguing are not present. • In some way threaten the two people: "I can speak to your supervisor and have you removed from the project." • Indicate support for one or the other of the two people.	• With the whole group, name the problem and help the group to get an objective understanding of the situation. • Help the group to develop and use a conflict resolution process. • Help the group to review the whole project work plan and anticipate where there might be conflicting demands and how they can deal with these potential conflicts before they arise. • Review the group's assignment and help members to renew their commitment to the overall project. Focus on why they are together and why individual success is tied to overall group success. • If appropriate, help the group to develop a procedure for deciding about sharing resources, including giving a priority for the use of each resource.

9. Group Is Resisting Change

An Example: The group members were working very well together and doing a great job on their assignments. Then, because of the restructuring of the larger organization, they were given a new task, some members were moved out, and new people moved in. Since then almost all of the old members have spent every meeting complaining about the changes and refusing to accept them. The group's ability to get work done is greatly reduced, and the spirit of co-operation and commitment to the group's task has disappeared.

Characteristics of this Situation

- There is constant complaining about the changes, etc.
- There is a division between the old and new people.
- Work is not getting done as required.
- People are missing meetings or arriving late and leaving early.
- People appear listless and/or disengaged.
- People insist on completing previous tasks.
- People feel that their identity within the organisation has been challenged, and that a negative judgement has been made against them.
- People spend time blaming "them" for the situation while longing for 'the good old days.'

What Not to Do as a Facilitator	Group-building Facilitator Actions
• Act like nothing is wrong and that it is a 'business-as-usual' situation. • Meet with the old members or the new members separately. • Give 'pep talks' about how "change is good for you" etc. without any practical ways to deal with the changes. • Act as if people who are struggling with the changes are not normal and should be punished for their resistance. • Insist on blind acceptance of the change: "They know what they are doing!"	• Encourage the group to name the change as a loss that must be grieved over and to talk extensively about it. • Structure a time when the group can explore the change and see if they have legitimate challenges to it. Too much might have been 'thrown out.' • Structure a time for the group to work on its charter in light of the changes and new assignments they have. • Acknowledge time for the group to 'grieve' the passing of the old and to take on board the new. • Help the group members to understand the change process and to objectify their experience of it. • If possible, ask more senior supervisors/ managers to come to the group to explain the larger picture and the rationale for the change and to listen to their concerns. • Create some situations where the members can begin to get to know each other on a more informal basis.

10. Group Too Angry to Work

An Example: In the midst of a crucial project, the larger organization has made some changes to the way the group must work and also to some of the key personnel. This has angered a couple of the group members who cannot seem to get past their anger, but use every meeting to vent their anger and frustration with the larger organisation. They are so busy complaining that they are blocking the group's work, and the project is in danger of falling behind schedule. Because they are stuck in their anger, the group's work has ground to a halt.

Characteristics of This Situation

- One or more group members' expressions of anger disrupt the group.
- One or more group members' attention is fixed on something that upsets them.
- These people and their anger are blocking the group's work.
- People are questioning their future in the group, or even in the organisation.
- The group doesn't know how to deal with strong feelings and expressions of emotions.

What Not to Do as a Facilitator	Group-building Facilitator Actions
• Ignore the problem and hope that the angry people will get over it before they do too much damage. • Talk to the rest of the group without the people who are angry present. • Talk to the angry people without the rest of the group present. • Either give or get someone from outside the group to give a talk about the importance of the work. This will only fuel the members' anger: "If our work is so important, why have they done things to make it harder for us to do our job?" • 'Beat up' and/or embarrass the angry people in front of the whole group. For example: ask them to leave the meeting; tell them to be quiet; tell them to get control of themselves, etc. • Put pressure on them to 'shape up or ship out', i.e. settle down and get to work or leave the group.	• Hold a session where you name the experience of anger. • Help the other group members to support fellow members with their feelings of anger. • Help the group develop a process to move through emotional issues and then focus on the work to be done. • Help the group to understand the stages of change and what it takes to move through them. • Have the group look at its charge and charter and modify where necessary. • In *severe cases*, a private, sensitive suggestion of outside counselling may be helpful.

11. Group Too Busy to Discuss Process

An Example: Peter the facilitator had often suggested that the group should spend some time deciding on a planning process that it would use across all its work. However, some of the group insisted that it was not necessary and that they did not have time for such "touchy-feely stuff." As a result, every time they had to do some planning they spent a considerable amount of time talking about how to do it. Usually they 'reinvented' the process they had used in the past. Thus the amount of time spent doing this far exceeded the amount of time it would have taken to develop a process and then to agree to use it all the time.

Characteristics of This Situation

- Work is slowed up and often late because of a lack of a good process.
- Discussing process is seen as a waste of time.
- People assume that everyone knows how to complete a particular work.
- People assume that everyone is in agreement about how to do some particular work.
- People act as independent individuals rather than as members of a group.
- Meetings are seen as a waste of time.
- People do not see the use of process in achieving success.
- Group members have little experience of consciously creating process.
- Group members do not see a relation between process and productivity.
- People are unsure what is meant by process and have no self-conscious experience of creating and using processes.

What Not to Do as a Facilitator	Group-building Facilitator Actions
• Get angry or defensive if the group rejects your suggestion that they need to work on a process. • Refuse to help them when they are making it up as they go along. • Adapt an 'I told you so' attitude when they run into difficulties related to process. • Lecture them about the theory of processes, etc. Assume the problem is a lack of knowledge.	• When the situation occurs, name the problem as a lack of process and point out the price the group is paying for not developing one. • Point out the difficulty members face in changing from their more individually oriented behaviors. • Make sure that they are self-conscious about what they are doing when they are struggling to create a particular process. Help them see the validity of self-consciously creating processes that can be used again and again. • Suggest that an effective meeting process would be a good place to start.

12. Members Not Contributing

An Example: For the last half-hour or so the group leader has been trying to lead a discussion about the completion of the group's major project. A couple people have responded very briefly to direct questions, but none of that has led on to a general discussion. Otherwise, no one is responding to her questions. Most of the members are sitting pushed back from the table, staring blankly into space. A few of them are drawing on their notepads.

Characteristics of This Situation

- People are reluctant to contribute ideas.
- The leader has to work very hard to get any participation.
- Members appear to be distracted or preoccupied by something else.
- Members talk actively in other settings.
- Sometimes they seem to be paying attention but are not contributing.
- Members are usually quiet in other settings.
- People don't seem to be committed to the work
- An appropriate process for getting participation is not being used.
- The group leader may be unconsciously discouraging participation.
- Some group members may be discouraging others' participation.
- Some members may be more introverted, requiring different participatory processes.

What Not to Do as a Facilitator	Group-building Facilitator Actions
• Act as though silence signifies agreement with what's been said. • Ignore the quiet ones and be thankful they are not creating trouble. • "Ms. L., you haven't talked much today. Is there something you want to add to our discussion?" This may work when a shy member has non-verbally indicated a wish to speak. But all too often the quiet person feels put on the spot and withdraws further. • Express anger or impatience with the group members for their lack of participation: "What's the matter with you today?" "What's wrong? Does everyone have a hangover this morning?" etc.	• Look for an opportunity to have a discussion on "What's important to you about this topic?" Have people break into small groups to begin the discussion. This gives everyone time to explore his or her stake in the outcome. • "I'd like to get opinions from those who haven't talked for a while." • Breaking into small groups works even better. Small groups allow shy members to speak up without having to compete for 'air time.' • Develop other ways to get input: written lists, small groups, post-its. • Have a discussion with the group about how they want to participate. • Monitor participation and help the group to assess its participation. • Review the meeting process with group. • Look at the group's charter to see if it might need modification.

13. Group Always Goes Directly to Solutions

An Example: The problem was barely presented before several group members began to suggest ways to solve it. This was a very action-oriented group. It had a full agenda, and nearly everyone expressed the need to keep moving. As facilitator, Robert appreciated the group's ability to get work done, but he was concerned. This was a complex problem, however. Nevertheless, the group was acting as if it had all the information needed to identify the best solution. One member stated she felt the problem needed more in-depth study, but other members dismissed her assessment. Robert expressed his concern that they were not following a good problem-solving process, but several members rejected that idea because they didn't have time for such a process. He reminded them that in the past they had had to reconsider a number of problems because their solutions were inadequate.

Characteristics of This Situation

- People rush to suggest solutions.
- Individuals appear to be competing to be the first to suggest a solution.
- People don't ask questions that secure more information about the problem.
- Members express impatience if the group spends more than a few minutes on a topic.
- Members are not interested in evaluating past solutions.
- There is no agreement about how to collect more information.
- People push the first suggestion, even though it does not have the full support of all in the group.
- Members' concerns are dismissed without really being considered—especially if they would delay a decision about a solution.
- Group does not have an analytical process for use with complex problems.
- People do not appreciate the differences between people in the group.

What Not to Do as a Facilitator	Group-building Facilitator Actions
• Just sit back and wait until the group makes a really seriously mistake, so that you can then point out its problem. • Decide to take a stand and get into an argument with some group members about how the group is working. • Suggest that the group is doing poor work and that members are going to get into trouble if they don't change their ways. • Ask the group's supervisor to come in and tell the group members that their work is shabby and that they had better start doing better.	• Assess if the situation is unique or a common pattern. • Examine whether or not the group's charter is adequate. • If it is adequate, remind them of it and how they need to use it. • If it is not, then suggest that they need to revise the charter and use it more fully in the future. • Help the group to analyze how they discourage participation and are not supportive of each other. • Encourage the group to work in a more collaborative way.

14. Members Have Conflicts Over Expectations of Each Other

An Example: Once again the group has come to a meeting and found that two of its members are angry with each other. Sandra is sure that Robert has been told to prepare a report for presentation at the meeting. However, Robert insists that while the group members have talked about the need for the report, they have not decided to do it and certainly have not assigned him to do it. Sandra cannot remember anyone saying, "All right, let's have a report for the next meeting and Robert should prepare it," but she feels that, given the conversation the group has had, it is obvious that the report is needed and that the group expected Robert to do it. This sort of situation had happened before and resulted in hurt feelings and anger that was affecting the members' trust and confidence in each other.

Characteristics of This Situation

- Group members have very different memories of the Who, What, or When of assignments when they do not state goals clearly.
- Group members make assumptions about each other's roles without having talked about them.
- Group members make assumptions about the concerns of others without having talked about them.
- People feel they are "right" and others "wrong."
- Conflicts between group members become a 'cold war.'
- Group has not clarified its goals, roles, and procedures.
- Process for assigning tasks is either not clear or not followed.
- Process for conflict resolution is either not clear or not followed.

What Not to Do as a Facilitator	Group-building Facilitator Actions
• Resolve the immediate situation without examining why this situation keeps arising. • Say things like, "All right, let's move on and maybe we can have the report for the next meeting." "Okay, it doesn't help to blame each other, so let's get on with this week's agenda." Both of these comments are just 'papering over' the situation and not dealing with the underlying issues or the sense of frustration of Sandra and Robert.	• Revisit the group's charter to remind them of the procedures they agreed to for setting goals and making assignments. • If the group does not have a charter, use this opportunity to work on the procedures for setting goals and making assignments. • Assess the working relationships within the group and initiate activities to help the group members work more effectively together. • Introduce a conflict resolution process to help people reconcile when conflicts arise.

15. Members Arrive Late/Leave Early

An Example: It was 15 minutes past the starting time of the meeting and the group's facilitator was very frustrated. In spite of having a very full agenda and a whole series of crucial decisions to make, there were still three members who had not arrived. In addition, if the patterns of the past were repeated, within 30 minutes of starting the meeting people would begin to excuse themselves and leave. The people who consistently showed up on time ready to stay for the full length of the meeting were also frustrated. It was obvious that the group was going to have a hard time meeting its deadlines for completing its work.

Characteristics of This Situation

- Group members do not follow the ground rule about arriving on time.
- Group members do not appear concerned about completion of the group's task.
- Group members are getting frustrated with the apparent lack of commitment of others.
- People complain about the late arrivals and early departures, but take no further action.
- Conflict within the group is increasing with no resolution.
- People seem to have a growing number of demands on their agendas that are not encompassed by the group's assignment.
- Process for holding group member's accountable not established or consistently followed.
- People's priorities may have shifted, and this is not reflected in the group's activities.

What Not to Do as a Facilitator	Group-building Facilitator Actions
• Wait for the arrival of all the 'people who count.' This obviously means starting late—but hey, what else can you do? • When it's time to end, go overtime without asking. If anyone has to leave, they should tiptoe out. • Just sit around and say nothing to the people who show up on time. This will only encourage them to come later themselves the next time. • When people come late or leave early, act as if nothing was happening and just keep going on with the agenda. • Keep postponing important decisions because "the key people are not here right now."	• Start when you say you're going to start. (Waiting encourages lateness.) • If you must go overtime, call a break so people can rearrange their agendas. • If going overtime is recurrent, improve your agenda planning. • Create an opportunity for the whole group to discuss the problem instead of continuing the complaining. • Review charter and ground rules or talk with the group about creating them. • Create opportunities for renewal of people's commitment to the group. • Find ways for the group to support people who have conflicting demands. • Use a conflict resolution technique if appropriate.

The Reality of Fistfights

'Managing' how people interact in a group can be **challenging**. I once was asked to facilitate a meeting of a large group whose last meeting, some six months before, had ended in a **fistfight** in the parking lot. This was part of the reality of the group that I had to deal with in planning the meeting.

Sometimes groups have simply fallen into **bad habits** and developed a set of group norms that are not enabling to the group's effectiveness. Often a group will decide to call in a facilitator because they are aware of the problem and **hope** that having an outsider at the front of the room will help them change the dynamics in the group. Whatever the situation, an effective facilitator will be ready to deal with the way people are relating to each other and always stays focused on enabling a group to accomplish its objectives.

Chapter 15
Manage the Content
Stage 4/Phase 6

Information Is Power

More than ever before, living in the information age means that information is power. People who have relevant information of any type related to the topic of a meeting must be enabled to share that information with the group. There are many reasons why people are sometimes reluctant to share information. It is the facilitator's responsibility, however, to create an environment where people are able to share their data, concerns, and issues.

A facilitator must maintain neutrality relative to the content of the meeting that he is facilitating. The International Association of Facilitators' Code of Ethics states:

> **6. Stewardship of Process**
> We practice stewardship of process and impartiality toward content. While participants bring knowledge and expertise concerning the substance of their situation, we bring knowledge and expertise concerning the group interaction process. We are vigilant to minimize our influence on group outcomes. When we have content knowledge not otherwise available to the group, and that the group must have to be effective, we offer it after explaining our change in role.

What then is the role of the facilitator in 'managing' the content of a meeting? One of Roger Schwarz's Core Values is:

> ***Valid Information***: People share all information relevant to an issue, using specific examples so that other people can determine independently whether the information is true.

A Facilitator's Responsibility

I believe it is the facilitator's responsibility to ensure that **all** valid and relevant information is shared with the group, and that people in the group have an opportunity to both **question** and **challenge** the information presented.

Once I facilitated a meeting of a large group that was facing a number of major and difficult decisions that had significant implications for everyone in the group. In planning the meeting, I had to allow sufficient time for people to share their concerns, to ask their questions, and to share relevant information. As their facilitator my task was to keep the conversation moving, ensuring that everyone who wanted to speak had a chance to do so. I used a technique where after a period of

conversation I would stop the conversation, ask the group to reflect on what they had heard, and then ask three or four people to share their reflections. I would then ask a question like:

What other considerations or concerns do we want to share?

In addition, when a number of people had spoken about a similar concern or consideration that they felt was important, I would say something like:

We have been talking about ..... for a while now.
Does anyone have any further information or reflections in this area that they want to share?"

Surfacing Hidden Agendas

I have already pointed out that people coming to a meeting with an agenda is not a problem. We all go to meetings with an agenda—we won't go if we did not have an agenda of our concerns and issues to be dealt with in the meeting. Even so-called hidden agendas should not be a problem. A facilitator's responsibility is to create a situation where all agendas, hidden or not, are presented and placed on the table for the group to consider.

I have been warned by group leaders that there were people in the group who were **angry** or particularly **passionate** about the topic of the meeting and that I should expect them to be very vocal. I try to communicate to those people and the entire group that we are there to **hear from everyone** and to deal seriously with every contribution. I try to encourage people to respond positively and with understanding to people's contributions even when they are negative or spoken in anger.

One of ways I try to do this is to get people to explore why they are angry or passionate about the topic. Saying things like:

Could you explain more about how you see the issue?
What are some examples of what you are talking about?
What has led you to this conclusion?

Exploring Assumptions

By encouraging people to explore the **assumptions** they are making about a topic and the **background** of their concern, you not only help the group understand and appreciate their perspective; you also communicate to them that they are being dealt with seriously.

In addition, I sometimes ask questions like:

Who has similar concerns?
Has anyone experienced something similar?

Questions like this help people to see that they are **not alone** in their concern and that they are **not fighting against the group** but are part of the group in their concern.

Forging a Consensus

If people feel that they can speak what is truly on their mind and heart with **no fear of ridicule**, then the group is much more likely to arrive at a point where their work is truly representative of the wisdom of the entire group. If they are striving to make a decision, then a decision that is **inclusive** of the whole group's wisdom is much more likely to be the **true consensus** of the group.

Getting all the relevant information out and **on the table** is a fundamental responsibility of a facilitator. Every member of the group should feel that he has had **a chance to participate** in the discussion, even if he never actually speaks. He should look at the results of the group's work and see **his wisdom** reflected in the final product.

When Facilitation Happens

When a facilitator is effectively and simultaneously 'managing' the **process**, the **group dynamics**, and the **content** of a meeting, then facilitation is happening. Both the facilitator and the group will leave such a meeting knowing that they have done their best work and truly fulfilled the objectives of the event.

Chapter 16
Disengage or Recontract/Reassess
Stage 4/Phase 7

Ensuring a Happy Ending

Disengaging at the end of your work with a client is just as important as the facilitator's first contact, if not **more** important. ***How* you disengage** with your client can very likely determine any of the following outcomes:

- Your future work with the client
- Their recommendation of you to other groups
- Your reputation in the community that the client is part of

Every situation and client will require a different approach to disengagement. However, here is a checklist of some guidelines that apply in most situations.

- Ensure that the **documentation** of the event is taken care of. If you as the facilitator are doing the documentation, make sure the client knows what they will receive and when and how they will receive it.
- Clarify exactly what the client **requires** from you in order to pay your fee, and how and when they need the information. Make sure they have the financial information they need to pay you successfully.
- Allow time after the event for any reflection or **evaluation** that the client may want to do. Be prepared for questions like: "Next steps?" "What do you think of our work?" etc.
- If you want to use the client as a reference, secure their **permission** to refer potential clients to them.
- Clarify any **follow-up** activities, whether it is something you are doing or something they will do on their own.

  For example, when I do strategic planning for a client I have a small manual that contains the procedures for the quarterly and yearly implementation planning meetings that they will need to do. The procedures are written in great detail so that with some preparation anyone can follow them. I give this manual to the client and explain it briefly, telling them to feel free to contact me if they have any questions.

- I always tell groups in my training courses and clients that I have worked for to feel free to contact me if they have any questions or situations that they feel I may be able to help with. Former training course participants and clients I have worked with regularly have contacted me with questions and requests for input into facilitation work they were doing.
- If you are doing further contracting with the client, **clarify** when and how the next contact will happen.
- When you get home, send the client a letter **thanking them** for the opportunity to work with them and for the chance to contribute to their important and significant work.

A Fireman's Reality

I sometimes say in my training courses that I very often feel like a fireman. People call me only when they are in a situation that they feel they cannot handle themselves. Once I work with a client, two things happen, much as with firemen after they have put the fire out. I pack up and leave with people telling me what a good job I did and how glad they are that I was able to help them. And in almost every case I never hear from them again. This is **not** a problem. They had a need, I was able to meet that need, and both of us have moved on.

A Transparent Process

I remember a story that I read which was told by a colleague. He picked up his wife at the end of a day when she had been facilitating a meeting. She told him that the people were really excited about the day, and as they left were congratulating each other on the great work they had done. My colleague commented that this is the sign of a great facilitator: when the facilitator and the process become **transparent** and the group knows itself as **capable** and able to meet the challenges before them.

Conclusion

A Facilitator's Care

Over the years I have been thanked many times for my "hard work" with a group and heard expressions of pleasure with what the group has accomplished. While thanking participants for their kind words, I always remind them that **the group did the hard work** and I was just an enabler. I have already said that a facilitator only has one objective; the objective of the group he is working with. Facilitation depends upon the facilitator's **caring and empathy** for the people he is working with. I believe that the most important factor in a facilitator's capacity to effectively lead a group to fulfilling its objective is **his confidence** that the members are capable of doing the work and **their confidence** that the facilitator will lead them to accomplishing their objective.

Facilitating Transformation

The title of this book is ***Facilitating Authentic Participation***. We spend our lives in groups, and these groups have a profound influence upon our well-being. I myself have left groups where I found myself frustrated and unable to see any way to make a positive contribution to the group's future.

For me, facilitation is about enabling people to share their wisdom, knowledge, and passion so that they know themselves as **creators** of the group's future. I have seen frustration, anger, despair and negativity turned into enthusiasm and commitment to creating the group's future. I believe that our human propensity is **to create and not to destroy**.

All too often, however, people do not feel that they have a way to participate in the creation process. This is the facilitator's **profound task**: enabling people to **be**, and to **know** that they are, **creators** of their and their group's destiny. The following is a quote that I found many years ago, and that I have often used in talking about facilitation:

> *Change is disturbing when it is done to us,*
> *but exhilarating when it is done by us.*
> —Rosabeth Moss Kanter

It is a cliché to say that all life is change. However, people often forget or do not appreciate what change can mean in their lives. Facilitation is about ensuring that people experience themselves as participating in the 'doing' of the change rather that experiencing the change as 'being done to them.' For me this is fundamental

to any understanding of the task of a facilitator. It is why I am both proud and humbled to be able to call myself a facilitator. I remind people in my trainings that when a group asks someone to be its facilitator, it is **entrusting its future** to that person. There is nothing more serious than that.

A Life of Gratitude

Over the years I have been privileged to work with many wonderful groups full of amazing people. I have laughed with them, I have struggled and agonized over difficult and painful decisions with them, I have celebrated with them and faced uncertain futures with them. I am deeply grateful for what they have shared with me and helped me learn about myself and about life.

Appendix

Core Facilitator Competencies

The following are the IAF's Core Facilitator Competencies[20] that are used in the IAF's Certification Program through which a facilitator can become a Certified Professional Facilitator (CPF). I have found it helpful to have participants go through the competencies and rate themselves. This gives them a very inclusive picture of their strengths and areas where they need to work.

Background

The International Association of Facilitators (IAF™) is the world-wide professional body established to promote, support and advance the art and practice of professional facilitation through methods exchange, professional growth, practical research and collegial networking. In response to the needs of members and their customers, IAF established the Professional Facilitator Certification Program.

The Professional Facilitator Certification Program provides successful candidates with the professional credential "Certified Professional Facilitator™" (CPF™), as signified by a Certificate. This credential is the leading indicator that the facilitator is competent in each of the basic facilitator competencies. This document, *Core Facilitator Competencies* © IAF™ *2003*, provides an overview of the competency framework that is the basis of the CPF certification.

The competency framework described in *Core Facilitator Competencies* was developed over several years by IAF with the support of IAF members and facilitators from all over the world. The competencies reflected in the document and assessed in the Certification Process form the basic set of skills, knowledge, and behaviours that facilitators must have in order to be successful facilitating in a wide variety of environments. Copies of this document are available free of charge from the IAF web site (http://www.iaf-world.org) or from the certification Program Administrator, at *certify@iaf-world.org*

The Core Competencies

A. Create Collaborative Client Relationships

1) Develop working partnerships

- Clarify mutual commitment
- Develop consensus on tasks, deliverables, roles & responsibilities
- Demonstrate collaborative values and processes such as in co-facilitation

2) Design and customize applications to meet client needs

- Analyze organizational environment
- Diagnose client need
- Create appropriate designs to achieve intended outcomes
- Predefine a quality product & outcomes with client

3) Manage multi-session events effectively

- Contract with client for scope and deliverables
- Develop event plan

- Deliver event successfully
- Assess / evaluate client satisfaction at all stages of the event / project

B. Plan Appropriate Group Processes

1) Select clear methods and processes that

- Foster open participation with respect for client culture, norms and participant diversity
- Engage the participation of those with varied learning / thinking styles
- Achieve a high quality product / outcome that meets the client needs

2) Prepare time and space to support group process

- Arrange physical space to support the purpose of the meeting
- Plan effective use of time
- Provide effective atmosphere and drama for sessions

C. Create and Sustain a Participatory Environment

1) Demonstrate effective participatory and interpersonal communication skills

- Apply a variety of participatory processes
- Demonstrate effective verbal communication skills
- Develop rapport with participants
- Practice active listening
- Demonstrate ability to observe and provide feedback to participants

2) Honor and recognize diversity, ensuring inclusiveness

- Create opportunities for participants to benefit from the diversity of the group
- Cultivate cultural awareness and sensitivity

3) Manage group conflict

- Help individuals identify and review underlying assumptions
- Recognize conflict and its role within group learning / maturity
- Provide a safe environment for conflict to surface
- Manage disruptive group behavior
- Support the group through resolution of conflict

4) Evoke group creativity

- Draw out participants of all learning/thinking styles
- Encourage creative thinking
- Accept all ideas
- Use approaches that best fit needs and abilities of the group
- Stimulate and tap group energy

D. Guide Group to Appropriate and Useful Outcomes

1) Guide the group with clear methods and processes

- Establish clear context for the session
- Actively listen, question and summarize to elicit the sense of the group
- Recognize tangents and redirect to the task
- Manage small and large group process

2) Facilitate group self-awareness about its task

- Vary the pace of activities according to needs of group
- Identify information the group needs, and draw out data and insight from the group
- Help the group synthesize patterns, trends, root causes, frameworks for action
- Assist the group in reflection on its experience

3) Guide the group to consensus and desired outcomes

- Use a variety of approaches to achieve group consensus
- Use a variety of approaches to meet group objectives
- Adapt processes to changing situations and needs of the group
- Assess and communicate group progress
- Foster task completion

E. Build and Maintain Professional Knowledge

1) Maintain a base of knowledge

- Knowledgeable in management, organizational systems and development, group development, psychology, and conflict resolution
- Understand dynamics of change
- Understand learning/ thinking theory

2) Know a range of facilitation methods

- Understand problem solving and decision-making models
- Understand a variety of group methods and techniques
- Know consequences of misuse of group methods
- Distinguish process from task and content
- Learn new processes, methods, & models in support of client's changing / emerging needs

3) Maintain professional standing

- Engage in ongoing study / learning related to our field
- Continuously gain awareness of new information in our profession
- Practice reflection and learning
- Build personal industry knowledge and networks
- Maintain certification

F. Model Positive Professional Attitude

1) Practice self-assessment and self-awareness

- Reflect on behavior and results
- Maintain congruence between actions and personal and professional values
- Modify personal behavior / style to reflect the needs of the group
- Cultivate understanding of one's own values and their potential impact on work with clients

2) Act with integrity

- Demonstrate a belief in the group and its possibilities
- Approach situations with authenticity and a positive attitude
- Describe situations as facilitator sees them and inquire into different views

- Model professional boundaries and ethics (as described in ethics and values statement)

3) Trust group potential and model neutrality

- Honour the wisdom of the group
- Encourage trust in the capacity and experience of others
- Vigilant to minimize influence on group outcomes
- Maintain an objective, non-defensive, non-judgmental stance

The following is the Code of Ethics of the International Association of Facilitators (IAF).[21]

Statement of Values and Code of Ethics for Facilitators

Adopted 20 June 2004

This is the Statement of Values and Code of Ethics of the International Association of Facilitators (IAF). The development of this Code has involved extensive dialogue and a wide diversity of views from IAF members from around the world. A consensus has been achieved across regional and cultural boundaries.

The Statement of Values and Code of Ethics (the Code) was adopted by the IAF Association Coordinating Team (ACT), June 2004 The Ethics and Values Think Tank (EVTT) will continue to provide a forum for discussion of pertinent issues and potential revisions of this Code.

Preamble

Facilitators are called upon to fill an impartial role in helping groups become more effective. We act as process guides to create a balance between participation and results.

We, the members of the International Association of Facilitators (IAF), believe that our profession gives us a unique opportunity to make a positive contribution to individuals, organizations, and society. Our effectiveness is based on our personal integrity and the trust developed between ourselves and those with whom we work. Therefore, we recognise the importance of defining and making known the values and ethical principles that guide our actions.

This Statement of Values and Code of Ethics recognizes the complexity of our roles, including the full spectrum of personal, professional and cultural diversity in the IAF membership and in the field of facilitation. Members of the International Association of Facilitators are committed to using these values and ethics to guide their professional practice. These principles are expressed in broad statements to guide ethical practice; they provide a framework and are not intended to dictate conduct for particular situations. Questions or advice about the application of these values and ethics may be addressed to the International Association of Facilitators.

Statement of Values

As group facilitators, we believe in the inherent value of the individual and the collective wisdom of the group. We strive to help the group make the best use of the contributions of each of its members. We set aside our personal opinions and support the group's right to make its own choices. We believe that collaborative and cooperative interaction builds consensus and produces meaningful outcomes. We value professional collaboration to improve our profession.

Code of Ethics

1. Client Service

We are in service to our clients, using our group facilitation competencies to add value to their work.

Our clients include the groups we facilitate and those who contract with us on their behalf. We work closely with our clients to understand their expectations so that we provide the appropriate service, and that the group produces the desired outcomes. It is our responsibility to ensure that we are competent to handle the intervention. If the group decides it needs to go in a direction other than that originally intended by either the group or its representatives, our role is to help the group move forward, reconciling the original intent with the emergent direction.

2. Conflict of Interest

We openly acknowledge any potential conflict of interest.

Prior to agreeing to work with our clients, we discuss openly and honestly any possible conflict of interest, personal bias, prior knowledge of the organisation or any other matter which may be perceived as preventing us from working effectively with the interests of all group members. We do this so that, together, we may make an informed decision about proceeding and to prevent misunderstanding that could detract from the success or credibility of the clients or ourselves. We refrain from using our position to secure unfair or inappropriate privilege, gain, or benefit.

3. Group Autonomy

We respect the culture, rights, and autonomy of the group.

We seek the group's conscious agreement to the process and their commitment to participate. We do not impose anything that risks the welfare and dignity of the participants, the freedom of choice of the group, or the credibility of its work.

4. Processes, Methods, and Tools

We use processes, methods and tools responsibly.

In dialogue with the group or its representatives we design processes that will achieve the group's goals, and select and adapt the most appropriate methods and tools. We avoid using processes, methods or tools with which we are insufficiently skilled, or which are poorly matched to the needs of the group.

5. Respect, Safety, Equity, and Trust

We strive to engender an environment of respect and safety where all participants trust that they can speak freely and where individual boundaries are honoured. We use our skills, knowledge, tools, and wisdom to elicit and honour the perspectives of all.

We seek to have all relevant stakeholders represented and involved. We promote equitable relationships among the participants and facilitator and ensure that all participants have an opportunity to examine and share their thoughts and feelings. We use a variety of methods to enable the group to access the natural gifts, talents and life experiences of each member. We work in ways that honour the wholeness and self-expression of others, designing sessions that respect different styles of interaction. We understand that any action we take is an intervention that may affect the process.

6. Stewardship of Process

We practice stewardship of process and impartiality toward content.

While participants bring knowledge and expertise concerning the substance of their situation, we bring knowledge and expertise concerning the group interaction process. We are vigilant to minimize our influence on group outcomes. When we have content knowledge not otherwise available to the group, and that the group must have to be effective, we offer it after explaining our change in role.

7. Confidentiality

We maintain confidentiality of information.

We observe confidentiality of all client information. Therefore, we do not share information about a client within or outside of the client's organisation, nor do we report on group content, or the individual opinions or behaviour of members of the group without consent.

8. Professional Development

We are responsible for continuous improvement of our facilitation skills and knowledge.

We continuously learn and grow. We seek opportunities to improve our knowledge and facilitation skills to better assist groups in their work. We remain current in the field of facilitation through our practical group experiences and ongoing personal development. We offer our skills within a spirit of collaboration to develop our professional work practices.

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Ethical Dilemmas in Facilitation

The following are a series of brief descriptions of situations that a facilitator might find himself in. I ask participants in my training courses to use the IAF Code of Ethics to decide what they would do as a facilitator confronted with each situation.

Applying the IAF Code of Ethics

A Team-building Retreat

You are facilitating a team-building retreat for an existing team. The group has just begun to discuss what you think might be a sensitive issue. While you are posting a piece of flip chart paper on the wall, the team leader (who is a senior person in the larger organization and who initially called you in) comes up to you and whispers, "You need to get this group off this topic now!" The team leader returns to his seat before you have a chance to respond. ***What do you do?***

Three Scenarios[22]

1. You have been invited to facilitate some team building. Your contact is the manager of the team who will not be attending the team building sessions. She wants you to report to her on team progress and keep a special eye on a particular team member who seems to be a disruptive influence in the team. ***What do you do? How do you respond to this request?***

2. You have been hired to facilitate a strategic plan for a company. During the process you become aware that you have information that vitally affects the competitiveness of the company. You have this information because you facilitated a strategic plan for a competitor a short while ago. ***Do you share the information?***

3. During a break in a daylong workshop, a participant approaches you (the facilitator). The participant wants to give you some information about one of the other group members. The participant insists that you need this information. ***What do you do?***

Balancing Roles

You have been hired to assist in the design and facilitation of a public-private partnership to develop a plan for the downtown area of a major city. You are currently facilitating a process design committee composed of representatives of the business, government, and non-profit sectors.

1. How do you balance your role as a neutral facilitator with your role as consultant with expertise in the design of collaborative processes?
2. What do you do when the committee heads toward the exclusion of a key stakeholder group?
3. What do you do when the mayor remains silent during the discussion of an issue that you know she cares deeply about?

End Notes

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About the Author

- As one of the **pioneers** who helped define and develop the professional field of process facilitation, James M. Campbell has practiced and taught facilitation skills at the university level since 2004. He has designed and facilitated group process work in North America, Europe, Africa, and Latin America for local community groups, international corporations, United Nations agencies, and in the NGO sector, including groups such as CARE International in the Balkans. He was a planning consultant with the administration of ICTY (the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia).
- Jim's undergraduate teaching and his writing of this book based on his university courses is the **capstone** of a lifetime of work in the developing field of facilitation across four continents around the world.
- Jim **extended** the International Association of Facilitators' outreach in Europe and Middle East region starting in 1996. He has served on the IAF's Global Board and was the European Regional Representative during the four years when the IAF's European membership grew from around seventy-five to almost five hundred. He has contributed to IAF's publications (listed below).
- As a staff member of The Ecumenical Institute and the Institute of Cultural Affairs, Jim was instrumental in **facilitating** EI/ICA's work with local community leadership in comprehensive socioeconomic reformulation, beginning with the Fifth City Human Development Project on Chicago's West Side and extending the Fifth City Model to work with rural and urban communities in Kenya and Brazil.
- Jim is a key **contributor** in developing the Technology of Participation (ToP)®, ICA's proprietary structured facilitation methods for group work that draws upon more than a half century of experience in facilitating group processes, forging community consensus, developing locally based community organizations, and teaching imaginal education and group process methods in fifty nations around the world.
- A native of western Pennsylvania, USA, Jim is a graduate of Pennsylvania's Edinboro University. He joined the staff of The Ecumenical Institute after teaching high school in Iquique, Chile for three years. After his recent retirement as the director of the ICA's Brussels office, Jim returned to Latin America where he lives with a Columbian family and pursues **writing, consulting, training,** and **teaching**. His memoir, *A Journey of Beginnings*, is forthcoming from Amazon.

Also by James M. Campbell

- **Renewing Social Capital: The Role of Civil Dialogue.** Chapter 2 in Schuman, Sandy, ed., *Creating a Culture of Collaboration: The International Association of Facilitators Handbook.* San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2006.

  This chapter explores the relationship among social capital, social trust, confidence, and civil dialogue. It demonstrates the need for facilitated processes to ensure effective civil dialogue.

- **Foreword** to Epps, John L., ed, *Bending History: Societal Reformulation—Toward a New Social Vehicle*. Lutz, FL.: Resurgence Publishing Corporation, 2011.

  Documents more than 30 years in the evolution of effective methods of individual and group participation and processes for responsible local leadership and sustainable social change.

- ***Parish Pastoral Councils: A Formation Manual.*** (co-authors: Deborah Snoddy and Andrew McNally.) Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2010.

  A workbook with detailed step-by-step procedures for forming, enabling, and sustaining a parish pastoral council that has sufficient knowledge and training to get some `real' work done. Accompanying CD provides visual aids and kick-off points for discussion.

- **Defining Forms of Group Work**. Professional Development Pamphlet Series: No. 1. © 2007 The International Association of Facilitators European Region.

  Differentiates nine forms of group work: Facilitation; Training; Content Consulting; Negotiation, Mediation, and Conflict Resolution among two or more groups; Moderation; Support Group; and Group Therapy. Distinguishes the uniqueness of facilitation in relation to the other forms of group work. Available at www.mindatwork.nl/bestanden/document_version_one.pdf

- **Facilitating Change, Our Only Task?** Professional Development Pamphlet Series: No. 2. © 2007 The International Association of Facilitators European Region.

  Facilitation is about enabling effective, more human change in our institutions, organizations, and communities across this troubled world. It is always about the future and how we participate in creating the future we desire.

- ***A Journey of Beginnings: A Memoir***. Forthcoming from Amazon in 2019.

Beginning with his childhood in the hills of rural western Pennsylvania, Master process facilitator and author James M. Campbell shares his experiences to discover how his personal history has shaped his relationships with others and his care for the world. Nothing about Jim's life has been ordinary, from his birth in 1940 to his retirement in 2013 in Colombia. Over and over again he found himself setting out into a new chapter with new demands and new challenges. Jim shares his experiences in each of these chapters, and what he has learned about the world and himself through this journey of beginning again and again.

- **Participation and its Facilitation.** 2001*
  In today's fast-paced world of constant change and pressure for responsiveness, all organizations must dance to new rhythms. And so the Giants are finally waking up and learning to dance. One of the most important dance steps they are learning is to involve their people in problem-solving and planning. —Rosabeth Moss Kanter in *Winning Through Participation.*

- **Managing and Facilitative Leadership.** 2001*
  Modernism, which dates from the late 19th century, is associated with mass production, uniformity, and predictability; post-modernism with flexibility, choice and personal responsibility. —Michael Prowse, "Post Modern Test for Government" *Financial Times*, April 21, 1992

- **The Facilitator's Task.** 2001*
  The leader knows how to have a profound influence without making things happen. For example, facilitating what is happening is more potent than pushing for what you wish were happening. Demonstrating or modeling behaviors is more potent than imposing morality. Unbiased positions are stronger than prejudice. —John Heider, *The Tao of Leadership*

- **Change Management: What is going on?** 2002*
  Change management used to be taught separately from 'regular management'. Those were the days when you could look at organisations and distinguish between periods of relative calm and shorter bursts of rapid change. This is no longer true. It is now a cliché to say that the only constant is change itself. —Jean-François Manzoni, *Financial Times*, 15 October 2001

- **Change Management: Leadership in Managing Organisational Change.** 2002*
  The leader must put the organisation into a position where the highest level of performance is necessary in order to succeed. There is no escape from commitment.
  —Sun Tzu quoted by Peter J. Reed, *Extraordinary Leadership, Creating Strategies for Change.*

- **Change Management: The People Factor in Managing Change.** 2002*
  Just past the middle of the 20th century my brother went to work for one of the largest American corporations. After a few years the courts decided that it was "too large" and broke it into a number of separate corporations. My brother found himself working for one of these new corporations. A few years later when he was in his early fifties he was fired as the corporation underwent one of its periodic restructurings.

- **Change Management: Beyond Change Management.** 2002*
  The acceleration of organisational change is captured in a recent study at the University of Oxford of top 50 UK companies from early 1991 to 2000. In the early 1990s, about 20 per cent of these companies were undergoing major reorganisations every year, yet by the end of the period the rate of reorganisation was well over 30 per cent. The average big business today can expect major reorganisation every three years. Microsoft has gone through the process four times in the past five years.

*Published by ICA: Belgium and available at www.icab.be/articles/index/html.

About *Facilitating Authentic Participation*

All too often, asking any group to work together without effective facilitation is a shortcut to disaster. —James M. Campbell

In this revealing step-by-step guide, master group process facilitator James M. Campbell takes you behind the scenes of the usually hidden planning and diagnostic process leading up to the "magic" of guiding a group process that allows the group's deepest wisdom to be shared in a feasible action plan that everyone is motivated to accomplish.

What may look simple, effortless, and easy to accomplish is the culmination of an intensive series of consultative stages of preparation requiring the listening, analytical, and collaborative skills of a master facilitator.

This is the text that shares the process that the author taught in university-level courses in Europe after a lifetime of innovative process work with groups on four continents.

Jim has written elsewhere:

> ...people know that participating in creating their destiny is an essential part of their humanity... The process whereby people are enabled to experience this combination of the freeing of their humanity and the ownership which generates commitment and motivation is truly transformative. By the force of their own experience people realise that they can participate in creating their future and the future of their organisation or community. Thus people experience themselves as responsible for their destiny and so resignation and despair are transformed into hope and belief-in-self. People's anger and frustration at their disenfranchisement is transformed into energy invested in creating their destiny.

This conviction—that **authentic participation is transformative**—has been the foundation of Jim's work as a facilitator.

Praise for *Facilitating Authentic Participation*

Not just driving the process or holding the space, responsible facilitation requires skilful care and attention to the whole of the facilitation cycle. In this book Jim Campbell, a pioneer of our profession, draws on fifty years of diverse experience in the field to share practical examples and models, tools and tips to empower you, your clients and your groups—not least, as you navigate the too-often-overlooked early phases of the facilitator's role, before the process is designed or the space is opened. ***A comprehensive and invaluable resource, highly recommended!***

—**Martin Gilbraith**, IAF Certified Professional Facilitator; former Chair of the International Association of Facilitators; former President of the Institute of Cultural Affairs International.

Just as the students in All Hallows College found Jim Campbell's facilitation courses to be life- and career-enhancing, so too will the readers of this manual find much food for thought as they prepare to facilitate groups. In this new, so-called 'post-truth' age ***the facilitator who appreciates the need for responsible and ethical facilitation will find this manual extremely useful.***

—**Margarita Synnott** MTh, facilitator in adult education (retired), All Hallows College, Dublin.

This is a book about being a disciplined facilitator. It is step by step guide to embracing the task of caring; for a client, the task, the process, the group, and oneself. ***It is really about what it means to fully love the whole journey of enabling the creativity that is released in the short time of actually being 'on stage'.*** *It is a serious advanced book for those who are learning the art of facilitation. Jim has taken his years of diverse experiences and distilled it into the essence of facilitation Mastery.*

—**Jack Gilles** has been doing Strategic Planning and Leadership Development for over 35 years, 22 of which were in India. He has also done work in the USA, Canada, Mexico, Zambia, Nigeria, Egypt, and Indonesia. Most of his work has been with the Private Sector. He resides in Mexico.

A comprehensive context for facilitation*, plus great practical tools for every stage of the facilitator's work, grounded with stories of experience at every stage. Anyone planning to become certified as a facilitator—or just to become a highly competent facilitator—will benefit from Jim's experience.*

—**Jo Nelson**, IAF Certified Professional Facilitator; ICA Certified ToP Facilitator; founding member of the International Association of Facilitators (IAF); ICA Associates, Inc., Toronto.

Learning the facilitation cycle and its corresponding processes has given me ***a set of transferable skills*** *that I will carry through my personal and professional life.*

—**Elizabeth McBride** MSc, Personal and Leadership Coach and Facilitator, Dublin.

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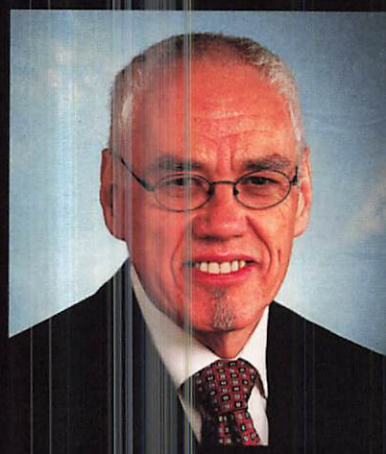

jimcampbell.facilitation@gmail.com

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