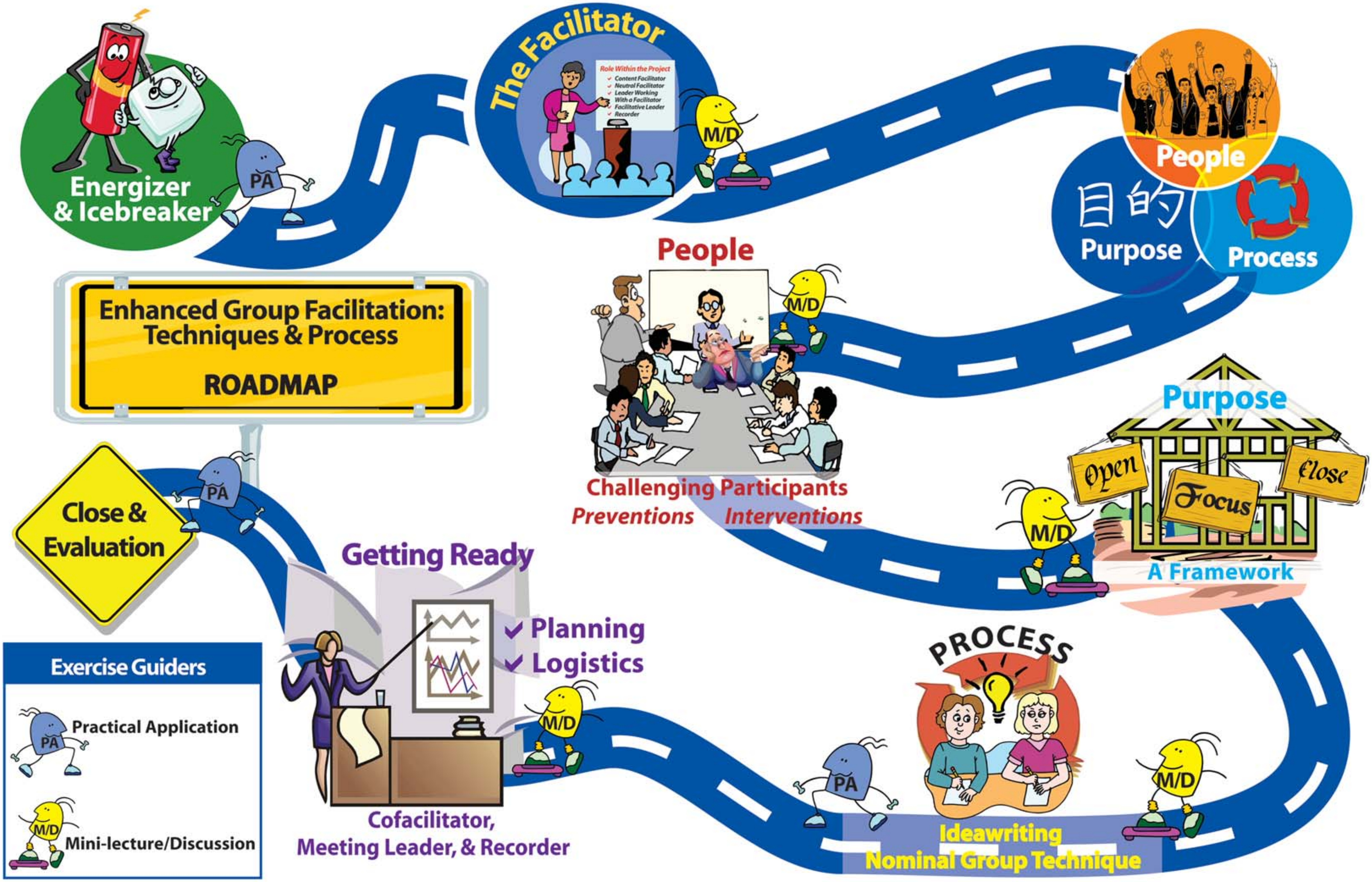

Enhanced Group Facilitation: Techniques & Process
ROADMAP
Energizer & Icebreaker
PA
The Facilitator
Role Within the Project
Content Facilitator
Neutral Facilitator
Leader Working With a Facilitator
Facilitative Leader
Recorder
M/D
People
目的
Purpose
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People
Challenging Participants
Preventions
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Purpose
Open
Focus
Close
A Framework
PROCESS
Ideawriting
Nominal Group Technique
Getting Ready
Planning
Logistics
Cofacilitator, Meeting Leader, & Recorder
Close & Evaluation
Exercise Guiders
Practical Application
Mini-lecture/Discussion

Enhanced Group Facilitation: Techniques and Process
AEA/CDC 2011 Summer Evaluation Institute
Atlanta, Georgia
Tuesday – June 14, 2011
Wednesday – June 15, 2011

Agenda

Time	Subject
9:25 to 9:55	Energizer and Icebreaker • Learning Objectives • Agenda / Roadmap • Shoot Me Now
9:55 to 10:45	The Facilitator • Role Within the Project • Characteristics of Effective Trainers and Facilitators: Self-Assessment Inventory – Activity on Your Own People • Challenging Participants • The Right People Doing the Right Things • Preventions and Interventions Purpose • A Framework – Open/Focus/Close
10:45 to 11:05	Break
11:05 to 11:45	Process – Ideawriting • Purpose and Sample Applications for Evaluation • Facilitation Steps • Expected Deliverables • Session Materials • Practical Application
11:45 to 12:20	Process – Nominal Group Technique • Purpose and Sample Applications in Evaluation • Facilitation Steps • Expected Deliverables • Session Materials • Practical Application • One Step Further
12:20 to 12:35	Getting Ready • Planning the Meeting • Logistics • Opening the Meeting
12:35 to 12:45	Close and Evaluation

Enhanced Group Facilitation: Techniques and Process
AEA/CDC 2011 Summer Institute
Atlanta, Georgia

Abstract

Description: This popular and well-received workshop will familiarize participants with the management of the group facilitation process and a variety of group facilitation techniques. Participants will learn best practices for navigating group dynamics and capitalizing on challenging attendees. We will discuss facilitator's different roles and responsibilities in group facilitation and how these roles intersect with the tasks inherent in planning and managing a group facilitation experience. Participants will also learn how to choose a facilitation technique based on goals and objectives, anticipated outcome, type and number of participants, and logistics. Two to three facilitation techniques for generating ideas, focusing thoughts, and drawing conclusions and next steps will be explored in greater detail. We will also cover variations on these techniques and how they may be used for your facilitation purposes. Job aides and reference lists will be provided.

Audience: Attendees working in any context who work with, or expect to be working with, client groups of any size.

Level: All

Offered (Two Rotations of the Same Content):
- Tuesday, June 14, 9:25 – 12:45 (20 minute break within)
- Wednesday, June 15, 9:25 – 12:45 (20 minute break within)

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AEA/CDC 2011 Summer Evaluation Institute
Atlanta, Georgia
June 14 & 15, 2011

Enhanced Group Facilitation: Techniques & Process

Jennifer Dewey, PhD
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To Do List

- Introduce Myself
- Mobility
- Name Tents
- Pipe Cleaners
- Handouts

Learning Objectives

- Understand roles and responsibilities within group facilitation
  - Associated tasks to plan and manage a group experience
- Choose a facilitation technique
  - Based on goals and objectives, anticipated outcome, type and number of participants, and logistics
  - Gain comfort in practicing selected techniques

Agenda / Roadmap

- Energizer and Icebreaker
- The Facilitator
- People
- Purpose
- Process
- Setting the Stage for Success
- Close and Evaluation

Shoot Me Now

- Think back to a meeting or training you attended that was well-facilitated or badly-facilitated
  - What did the facilitator do or not do?
  - Effect on process and outcome of the meeting or training?

The Facilitator

- One who contributes structure and process to interactions so groups are able to function effectively and make high-quality decisions. A helper and enabler whose goal is to support others as they achieve exceptional performance (Bens, 1999).

Role Within the Project

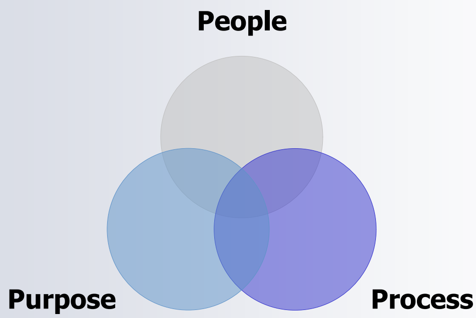
- Content Facilitator
- Neutral Facilitator
- Leader Working With a Facilitator
- Facilitative Leader
- Recorder

What role is Jennifer?

Activity On Your Own

- Characteristics of Effective Trainers and Facilitators: Self-Assessment Inventory

People / Purpose / Process



(Andersen Worldwide, 1997)

People

Understanding the role of each person in a meeting, and managing their comfort zones to gain participation

Challenging Participants

- Monopolizers
- Experts
- My Own Agenda
- Non-Listeners
- Idea Zappers
- Hesitators
- I'd Rather Be Somewhere Else

The Right People Doing the Right Things

- Right People in the Room
  - Active Discussant
  - Decision Making
- Participant Roles
  - Preparation
  - Being There
  - Participants vs. Observers

Preventions

Agreements

- What We Will Do Today
- Why It Is Important
- How We Will Work Together / Ground Rules

Keeping Focus

- Reinforce Agreements
- Listen as an Ally
- Ask Open-Ended Questions
- Be Direct and Positive
- No Defense!

Interventions

- Nonverbals
- Parking Lot / Idea Bin
- Say What is Going On / Ask
- Accept, Legitimize, Deal With, Defer
- Boomerang / Play Dumb
- Use Humor
- Protect Others
- No Defense!

Purpose

Creating a shared understanding and commitment to a meeting's objectives, rationale and outcomes

A Framework

Open / Focus / Close

Open – Issue Undefined

- Encourage divergent thinking by inviting ideas, exploring options, identifying problems, planning projects or brainstorming designs
- Examples
  - Brainstorming
  - Imaging (Professional Identity Portrait)
  - Stop / Start / Continue

Open – Issue Defined

- Continue to encourage divergent thinking by inviting ideas, exploring options, identifying problems, planning projects or brainstorming designs
- Examples
  - Affinity Diagram
  - Force-Field Analysis
  - Ideawriting
  - Phillips' 66

Focus

- Clarify information, discuss items, and prioritize ideas
- Examples
  - Forced Distribution
  - Nominal Group Technique
  - N/3
  - Simple Rank Order

Close

- Reach consensus and develop action plans
- Examples
  - Action Plan Chart
  - Percentage Poll
  - Plus / Delta

Process

Planning and managing the best method for involving people to achieve a shared purpose

Ideawriting

Purpose and Applications in Evaluation

- Group method to:
  - Generate and develop ideas
  - Move from general → specific through group interaction
- Focuses on a single topic
- Capitalizes on individual contributions in group processes
- Use with large groups, when time is limited for discussion, and when differences need to be neutralized

Facilitating Ideawriting

- Triggering Question
  - Context and question on Ideawriting form
- Independent Response
  - List responses to triggering question
  - Silent and independent
  - Phrases, key ideas, thoughts

Facilitating Ideawriting

- Written Interaction
  - – Pool forms in middle of table
  - – Select form (not yours!), read ideas
  - – Write reactions
    - What do you like?
    - What needs clarification?
    - What else can you think of?
    - How could the idea be improved?
  - – Do for all forms in group

Facilitating Ideawriting

- Analysis and Reporting
  - – Read all ideas and group comments
  - – Discuss, decide on, and record main ideas
  - – Report out

Expected Deliverables

Facilitator and/or leader can identify . . .

- Generalizations
- Exceptions
- Contradictions
- Puzzles
- Missing
- Key Assumptions

Session Materials

- Flipchart
- Markers
- Masking Tape
- Ideawriting Forms
- Pens/Pencils

Triggering Question

- <u>*Context*</u>*:* Your table has been selected by AEA and CDC to run next year's Summer Evaluation Institute. "Running" includes: creating a theme and designing an agenda, determining a date and location, selecting presentations, overseeing logistics, communicating with appropriate groups, etc.
- <u>*Question*</u>*:* What critical considerations must your table members take into account in planning and implementing next summer's Institute?

Practical Application

- Independent Response (5 minutes)
- Written Interaction (10 minutes)
  - Reactions and comments to ideas for each form in the group
- Analysis and Reporting (10 minutes)
  - Read all ideas and group comments
  - Discuss generalizations, exceptions, contradictions, puzzles, etc.

Nominal Group Technique

Purpose and Applications in Evaluation

- Structured process to generate ideas and produce a prioritized set of solutions or recommendations
- Frequently used for organizational decision-making and planning

Facilitating NGT

- Silent Idea Generation
- Report Ideas
- Clarify, Combine and Categorize Ideas
- Preliminary Vote
- Discussion of Preliminary Vote
- Final Vote
- List and Agree on Prioritized Items

Expected Deliverables

- Ideas from all group members in a short period of time
- Maximum participation from each person
- Group concentrates on a specific question
- Consensus via voting
- Clear picture of next steps

Session Materials

- Flipchart
- Markers
- Masking Tape
- Paper or Index Cards
- Pens/Pencils
- Sticky Voting Apparatus

Practical Application

- Silent Idea Generation (Ideawriting)
- Round Robin Listing of Ideas (10 minutes)
- Clarify, Combine and Categorize Ideas (5 minutes)
- Preliminary Vote (2 minutes)
- Discussion on Vote (5 minutes)
- Final Vote (2 minutes)
- Listing and Agreement on Prioritized Items (5 minutes)

One Step Further

- Action Plan chart to develop next steps for prioritized ideas
- Group moves from abstract to concrete
- Example of combining Open / Focus / Close activities

Getting Ready

Working With Your Co-Facilitator, Meeting Leader, and Recorder

Planning the Meeting

- Clarify *goals* and *objectives*
- Know *participants*, gain their buy-in
- Establish *roles/responsibilities* and a *timeline*
- Agree on *deliverable* form and content
- Be *flexible!*

Devil is in the Details

- Room Size and Seating
- Equipment and Supplies
- Handouts and Takeaways
- Food!
- Meeting Time
- Directions
- Contingency Plan!

Opening the Meeting

- Introduce Yourself and Session
- Participant Introductions
- Review Purpose, Objectives, and Agenda
- Check Expectations
- Establish Ground Rules
- Use an Icebreaker!

Close and Evaluation

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Contact Information James Bell Associates, Inc. 1001 19th Street , North, Suite 1500 Arlington, VA 22209 (703) 528-3230 Phone (703) 247-2637 Direct (703) 243-3017 Fax dewey@jbassoc.com www.jbassoc.com **Education** Ph.D. in Applied Experimental Psychology (1997), Southern Illinois University at Carbondale M.A. in Applied Experimental Psychology (1994), Southern Illinois University at Carbondale B.A. in Psychology (1991), Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University	**Jennifer D. Dewey** **Jennifer Dewey** is a Senior Research Associate with James Bell Associates, Inc. She is the Project Director for the Family Connection Discretionary Grants evaluation, funded by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Children's Bureau, where she leads a team of JBA staff in designing and implementing a cross-site evaluation protocol, and provides technical assistance to local evaluators. Dr. Dewey is also a Site Team Lead for the Children's Bureau Permanency Innovations Initiative, where she engages grantees in evaluation planning processes to define populations, interventions, comparison groups and outcomes, and contributes a cross-site evaluation design to document the implementation and effectiveness of interventions. Prior to joining JBA, Dr. Dewey was a Technical Director at ICF Macro, where she directed three core studies and oversaw training and technical assistance for a multi-site evaluation of a SAMHSA-funded systems of care program. Dr. Dewey served as director of Internal Evaluation at Learning Point Associates, a nonprofit organization providing research-based expertise, resources, and professional development to educators and policymakers. She has worked for the Center for Prevention Research at the University of Kentucky and for Andersen (formerly Arthur Andersen). Her technical expertise encompasses: project management; proposal development; evaluation design and budgeting; needs assessment; field and survey research; telephone and in-person interviews; group facilitation and training; quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis; and evaluation reporting. Dr. Dewey holds a doctorate in applied experimental psychology, with a program evaluation specialization, from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Dr. Dewey is a 2007-2009 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Examiner and a 2010 Senior Examiner. She has published in the *Journal of Primary Prevention*, *American Journal of Evaluation*, *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, and has made over 45 professional conference presentations.

Facilitation: The Secret to Smooth, Synchronized Conference Calls
(Adapted from Student Enviromental Action Coalition)

The word "facilitate" doesn't mean to lead, control, or direct. Facilitate simply means to make easier. In a practical sense, the job of a facilitator is to help create a space that is comfortable and productive for a group of people. Facilitation is like slicking the wheels of a rusty caboose. Facilitators make meetings, discussions, and events of all sorts run smoothly.

The facilitator should be someone who doesn't have a strong opinion to express on the meeting's topics. As a facilitator, if you want to say something, call on yourself in turn, but make sure you don't use your role to dominate the discussion. Furthermore, you should not allow people with race, class, gender, or other subtle or non-subtle privilege to dominate a meeting. As a facilitator, you should encourage everyone to participate while moving the meeting along to meet time limits.

The Secrets

In addition to having savvy and well-prepared facilitator(s), smooth facilitation requires a group in which everyone:

1. Understands the goals of the meeting and the organization
2. Sticks to the agenda and moving forward towards the goals, refrain from making off-topic comments
3. Respects everyone in the meeting and to create a space where shy people are comfortable enough to speak.
4. Makes sure decisions are made democratically, with input from many different voices

What Good Meetings are Made of: To Do Before The Meeting: Bring the MAP!

Materials - Send relevant handouts and any documents being discussed a few days before the conference call, make sure people have enough time to review them. If a vote is to be taken on the document, make sure the version you send out is the final one to avoid additional changes that can derail the call. Get help from other folks in your preparation.

Agenda - Preparation is KEY; especially for conference calls - At the very least, have a set agenda with time limits on each item and one or two goals for the call.

Without an agenda and goals, calls can drag on forever due to endless tangents. Be sure to send out the agenda and goals for the call two or more days before the call to give people a chance to respond and suggest revisions. The agenda should include a variety of perspectives. If nobody responds by email, make a couple calls. The more people who take responsibility for the agenda the better.

People - Get the right people on the call. Remind everyone who needs to be there more than once, including once the day before the meeting. Ask a different person to be responsible for preparing and introducing each agenda item. Having multiple voices leading the meeting will make everyone feel more welcome.

Starting The Meeting

Remember, meetings should be enjoyable, efficient, and build organizational morale.

1. Assign a note-taker. The note-taker should be someone other than the facilitator without an excessive amount to say. Send the notes out to everyone as soon as possible after the call. Short, summarizing notes are best.
2. Assign a timekeeper. The timekeeper's job is to let you know when the pre-set time limit for each topic is close to or completely exhausted. You may want her to tell you when you have 5 minutes left to make sure you're prepared to end each topic.
3. Start on time whenever possible to encourage good habits. If you must wait for latecomers, thank people for arriving on time.
4. Welcome/introduce everyone present.
5. Quickly review the agenda at the start of the meeting and ask if there are any items to add (this is a good way to keep other topics from sidetracking the discussion, set aside time at the end of the call for announcements or other discussions.)
6. Explain the ground rules. Ask people to mute their lines if there is loud background noise. Two additional good ground rules are: A) if you tend to talk often in group settings make an effort to speak less, trusting that your point will be made by someone else, and B) if you tend to talk little in group settings make an effort to speak more often, helping others who are shy or hesitant to feel more comfortable.

During The Meeting

1. Stick to your agenda whenever possible. It's there to keep the group on track to achieve your goals. If you have to depart from the agenda, ask for the group's consent. If you run out of time, suggest to the group that we add a few minutes (5-30 depending on where you're at in the discussion) to that topic. Be realistic about the time limits when you set them and don't be afraid to table certain topics until the next conference call or onto an

email listserv discussion. The world doesn't end after your conference call, although it may seem like it during a poorly facilitated call.

2. Use appropriate facilitation tools - Since you don't have the luxury of seeing people in person on a conference call, it's crucial for the facilitator to have a list of everybody's name in front of them. This is especially important for doing a go-around.
3. You should use go-around more often on a call than in face-to-face meetings because people can't see when someone is about to speak. When doing a go-around, the facilitator should call on each person by name because there's no circle or order for people to follow.
4. Calling on a couple of people directly and asking for their input at the start of an agenda item, then moving into free-flow discussion, can help jump start discussion.
5. Try to keep the conversation flowing and summarize fairly often. Elicit responses from each member when addressing a key topic. Consensus does not mean that each person gets to say the same thing five times. If people seem to be saying the same thing in different ways, try to summarize and move forward. [Example: "So what I'm hearing people say is that we're not quite prepared to rally outside the president's office but that there is interest in putting increased pressure on him within the next week. Do people have other ideas for a more strategic next step?"]
6. Before ending an agenda item, recap by summarizing what actions the group has suggested be taken and asking people to take responsibility for those actions (make sure these commitments are in the notes!).

Closing The Meeting

1. Spend a few short minutes recapping your plan of action at the end of the meeting. Did you meet your goals? What are the next steps? Who's doing what? Ask the note-taker to quickly go through the list of who has agreed to take on what responsibilities so people leave the call with their commitments fresh in their heads.
2. Always leave on a positive note.

In A Nutshell: Remember, to have a good meeting, you need good product and good process. Good facilitation makes the process run smoother. To have a good product, everyone should be geared towards achieving the goals set out by the group. Don’t start a meeting without goals and an agenda for meeting those goals and don’t let a meeting stray too far from those goals once you’ve begun. And of course, the best way to make your meetings and your organization run smooth like butter over and over again, is to create a respectful space where everyone is engaged in making decisions democratically with input from many different voices.

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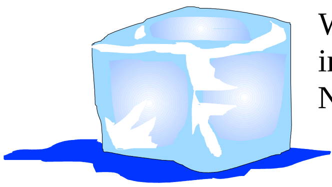
List of Icebreakers

Using Icebreakers for Maximum Effectiveness



When choosing your icebreaker, be conscious of your group dynamic. It is important that your activity not make anyone feel unnecessarily uncomfortable. No one should be forced to reveal extremely personal information or participate in an uncomfortable environment. And of course, what's personal to some may not be personal to others.

In addition to encouraging interaction, it is best if you are able to tie your icebreaker into the topic to be discussed. Are there any points of your presentations illustrated by the activity? If so, bring them out. If not, you may want to consider choosing a different icebreaker.

Ideas for Icebreakers

"Learning from Experience"
Have participants introduce themselves and explain one thing they have learned the hard way about the topic you are covering. Post the learnings on a flip chart and refer to them throughout the class.

"Challenges and Objectives"
Divide the class into small teams. Instruct teams to identify their challenges in the topic and their objectives for the training. Post work on flip charts. Have them introduce their team and share their work with the rest of the class.

"Questions"
Have each person write a question they want answered in the training on a Post-it® note. Have them introduce themselves and their question. Then post all questions on a wall chart. During or at the end of training, ask the group to answer the questions.

"Role Models"
Have each person identify someone who is a role model for the topic being discussed. Have them share the person's name and the qualities or characteristics that make them a good role model. Post characteristics on a flip chart.

"Dos and Don'ts"
Have participants introduce themselves, sharing their name, department, and either a "Do" or a "Don't" tip for the topic being discussed. Post tips on a flip chart.

"Collective Knowledge"
Have participants work in teams to identify five rules for dealing with difficult people (or the topic under discussion).

“Charades”
Have class work in small teams of 4-5. Instruct teams to identify one type of person they all find difficult. Then have the team act out that type of person while the rest of the class tries to guess what they are acting. This can be a fun activity and can lead to a short discussion about needing to keep a sense of humor when dealing with difficult people.

“Who Can Develop?”
Have participants identify someone who has contributed to their professional development. As they introduce themselves have them explain their relationship to the person that contributed to their development.

“Developing Yourself”
Have each person introduce himself and share one action they have recently taken to develop themselves (other than signing up for this class). This can be done as a group or in small teams.

“Acceptance Speech”
Have participants introduce themselves and thank someone who has contributed to their professional development. They should thank the person as if they are receiving an Academy Award. You may need to limit speeches to 30 seconds.

“First Job”
Have participants introduce themselves, sharing their name and something they learned on their first paying job.

“Dinner Plans”
Have each person complete the following sentence: “If I could have dinner with any person, living or dead, it would be ______________________ because_________________________.”

“Experience Tally”
Ask each participant how long they've been with the company or in their current job. Total the number of years. Point out that the class will have X number of years of experience on which to draw.

“Good or New”
Ask each person to share something good or new they have experienced in the last 24 hours.

“I Noticed”
If participants have made commitments in a previous workshop to change behaviors, ask others to share one thing they've noticed another person doing differently. As an alternative, have each individual share one thing he/she has done differently since the last session.

“I’m Unique”
Ask each person to share one thing that makes him/her unique.

“My Slogan”
Explain that many companies have slogans or “mottoes” which reflect their values. For example, Ford Motor Company uses the slogan, 'Quality is Job One.' Ask each person to write (or borrow) a slogan to describe him or herself and share that with the class.

“The Worst Team”
Have each person share a description of the worst team they have ever been on and why. Post characteristics on a flip chart. Debrief this exercise by having the team identify ways to avoid the “worst team” characteristics.

“Three Truths and a Lie”
Give each individual a 3x5 card and instruct them to write 4 statements about themselves: one of the statements should be false while 3 should be true. Explain that the goal is to fool people about which is the lie. Allow 5 minutes to write statements; then have each person read the 4 statements and have the group guess the lie. Award a prize to the individual who makes the most correct guesses.

“Fears”
Ask each person to share his or her greatest concern about participating in the team building or training. Post fears on a flip chart. At the end of the session, revisit the list and ask the group to share whether their fears were realized.

“Picture Perfect”
Have each person on a team draw a picture or series of pictures to represent their current view of the team. (They can draw on pieces of paper or flip charts posted around the room.) Allow 5 minutes; then have the rest of the group explain what they see in each other's pictures.

“Something New”
On the second day of a team building meeting, ask each person to share one thing they learned about someone on the team in the last day. Have the rest of the group try to guess who is being described.

Source: List reproduced by permission of Results Through Training, www.rttworks.com.

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Role of the Facilitator

Content Facilitator

- Serves as the **content** and **process** expert, usually for training purposes.

Neutral Facilitator

- Serves as the **process** expert as opposed to a **content** expert, although the facilitator may be knowledgeable in the content area.

Neutral facilitator responsibilities include:

- Explaining their role, and the role of the recorder, to the group.
- Presenting and reaching agreement on the meeting agenda and ground rules.
- Contributing to the meeting process, and remaining neutral on meeting content.
- Keeping members focused on the task by encouraging equal and respectful participation.
- Keeping time, using judgment in making adjustments to the agenda.
- Communicate with the meeting leader during critical or strategic moments to determine next steps and directions.
- Encouraging group members to take ownership of decisions and implementation plans.

Leader Working with a Facilitator

- The leader is responsible for the **content** and **final outcome** of the meeting. Responsibility for the **process** belongs to the facilitator. The leader may be a meeting participant, observer, content resource, or may not participate at all.

How the leader can help the facilitator:

- Familiarize the facilitator with the purpose of the meeting, success factors and desired outcomes, industry or organizational trends, personalities and group dynamics, and technical information as appropriate.
- Introduce and explain the role of the facilitator and recorder.
- Support the facilitator by keeping the group on task.
- Meet with the facilitator during breaks to discuss process and progress.

Facilitative Leader

- This is the most difficult role because you are responsible for the outcome of the meeting, and serve as the meeting facilitator. In this role, you can be collaborative and flexible, but you do not have to be neutral on the content and process. Regardless, you will need to make a decision as to whether you can facilitate and participate – it is difficult to do both.

Recorder

- Keeps the “group memory” or a written record of ideas and decisions generated during a meeting (via flipcharts or newsprint). This seems like a secondary role, but it is incredibly important because critical ideas and decisions can be lost if there is no recording. This is a great role for a “facilitator in training”. P.S. Spelling doesn’t count.

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Characteristics of Effective Trainers and Facilitators
Self-Assessment Inventory

The purpose of this self-assessment instrument is simply to give you a way to look at your own knowledge, skills, and values/attitudes related to being a facilitator or trainer. It is for your purposes only, to share with others as you wish, and to guide your own development and growth as a facilitator.

For each item, rate yourself from "excellent" to "needs improvement" based on your own experience and your assessment of strong you are on that item.

		Excellent	Good	Fair	At a Loss Sometimes	Needs Improvement
Values and Temperament						
1.	Respects the needs of adult learners.					
2.	Holds all group members in "unconditional positive regard."					
3.	Honestly represents the role of the facilitator and the purpose of the training/meeting.					
4.	Seeks to empower group members.					
5.	Self-awareness, including a sense of impact of his/her own behavior on others.					
6.	Patience to pace self in accordance with the group's developmental phase or informational needs.					
7.	Flexibility and adaptability in response to the group's needs.					

		Excellent	Good	Fair	At a Loss Sometimes	Needs Improvement
Knowledge/Understanding						
1.	Understanding group process and the stages of group development.					
2.	Knowledge of learning theory and motivation for learning and/or participating in groups.					
3.	Understanding of what background information you must have about the specific group – history, purpose, accomplishments, members, needs, etc.					
4.	Working knowledge of subject matter under consideration by group, and knowledge of resources available to become more grounded in the subject.					
Use of Facilitation Tools and Techniques						
1.	Ability to convey purpose and direction clearly for group activities.					
2.	Ability to keep group on track.					
3.	Ability to select appropriate techniques and tools for intended purpose and for the composition of the group.					
4.	Ability to use the training/meeting time effectively.					
5.	Ability to establish objectives and to move a group towards them.					
6.	Ability to model behaviors that are taught.					
7.	Ability to make appropriate interventions, including giving constructive feedback even when feedback might be perceived negatively.					
8.	Ability to deal with his/her own and others' feelings.					
9.	Ability to deal with volatile or controversial material.					

		Excellent	Good	Fair	At a Loss Sometimes	Needs Improvement
Communication Skills						
1.	Communication is concrete and easily understood.					
2.	Communication is relevant – it supports what the group is doing and the process for doing it.					
3.	Communication is respectful – focuses on issues, problems, data, and goals, not on mistakes, errors, weaknesses of group members.					
4.	Ability to encourage everyone to participate in discussion and group activity.					
5.	Ability to encourage participants to take risks without embarrassment.					
6.	Ability to facilitate learning among participants.					
7.	Ability to facilitate decision-making within the group of participants.					
8.	Ability to plan and organize presentations.					
9.	Ability to deliver clear presentations.					
10.	Ability to make effective use of visual aids.					
11.	Solicits, receives and considers feedback from the environment (participants, observers, others).					
12.	Ability to draw connections between comments.					
13.	Summarizes discussion periodically, highlighting main points.					

Enhanced Group Facilitation: Techniques and Process
AEA/CDC 2011 Summer Evaluation Institute
Atlanta, Georgia
June 14 & 15, 2011

Challenging Participants

Monopolizer

- Big talker, gobbles all air time if allowed.

Experts

- Always looking for opportunities to disagree or show others up, beyond healthy disagreement. Parades big words and name dropping.

My Own Agenda

- Wants to achieve their own goal, not necessarily the meeting's goal. Not necessarily obnoxious, but will take a stand on an issue and rarely move. May be hostile or angry, depending on the issue.

Non-Listeners

- Tends to interrupt, cut off, and leap into discussion before others have had their say. Is very eager and wants to advance her ideas (may be a "My Own Agenda" person too). May also be uninformed and unprepared, so comments are not productive and may lead group off on tangents.

Idea Zappers

- Puts down other people's ideas and has many reasons for why a new or different idea won't work because it's too late, it's too early, we've tried it before, etc. Tends to be negative and may be hostile or angry. May be a complainer who blames, faults, and shares pet peeves.

Hesitators

- Participants who should be at the meeting, they can contribute content and may have a decision-making role. But shy, reluctant, silent most of the time, easy to overlook, and melts into the background.

I'd Rather Be Somewhere Else

- Did not volunteer nor are they a willing participant in the meeting. May have been sent by the boss. They show this by whispering to others near them, doing other work, working on their Blackberry, fidgeting and yawning, and sleeping.

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Preventions

Facilitation techniques used in anticipation of certain common meeting problems

Key Prevention Strategy: Get the group to agree on process and then hold the group to that process.

Preventions	
Technique	**What to Say or Do**
Get agreement on desired outcomes, agenda, decision making, ground rules	✓ Before we get into our agenda for today, I'd like to make sure we all agree on how were going to work together.
Suggest a process	✓ I'd suggest looking at criteria before trying to evaluate options.
Get agreement on how to proceed	✓ Is everyone willing to identify criteria first?
Listen as an ally	✓ Let me be sure I understand your view of the problem. You're saying that _____ Is that right?
Educate the group with "process commercials" about how groups work	✓ There is no one right way to solve a problem. Which way do you want to start? ✓ If we don't agree on the problem, we will never agree on the solution. ✓ You can't solve two problems at once.
Ask open-ended questions	✓ What do you think we should do? Say more about your idea for doing that?
Be positive ***Encourage participation***	✓ I know this issue is quite emotionally charged, but if we take our time and work our way through the problem, I'm sure we can find a solution we can all live with.

Remember: Building a group decision is based on a series of small content and process agreements made along the way.

Examples	Open	Focus	Close
Process Agreement	"Are we ready to brainstorm?"	"Are we ready to organize the information?"	"Are we ready to make a decision?"
Content Agreement	"Is this the complete record of all of the focus groups' responses?"	"Are these the right categories?"	"Is this our final list of recommendations to take to the board?"

Preventions

1. **STATE CONTENT:** Clearly state the content of what will be discussed (and what won't) at the beginning of the session.

2. **CLARIFY THE PROCESS:** Explain HOW the content will be covered or discussed before beginning.

3. **CHECK FOR AGREEMENT:** Make eye contact. Ask specific questions.

4. **FOCUS ON AGREEMENT:** Summarize what's been accomplished, decided or agreed upon, even if there are points of contention. We've made a lot of progress in this meeting, especially in the last 30 minutes. We can finish this last item in the next 10 minutes.

5. **NOSTUESO:** No One Speaks Twice Until Everyone Speaks Once, A great ground rule to lay out, especially if you anticipate that one or a few people will dominate the discussion.

Interventions

Facilitation techniques used when certain common meeting problems occur

Interventions	
Technique	**What to Say or Do**
Boomerang	✓ What do you think we should be doing? (Returns their questions to them)
Maintain/regain focus	✓ Let's all stay focused on identifying problems. Are we all together? ✓ Just a moment, one person at a time. John, you were first, then Linda.
Say what's going on	✓ It's very quiet here. What does the silence mean?
Avoid process battles	✓ Cut off argument on the "right" way to proceed. ✓ "Can we agree to cover both issues in the remaining time? OK, which do you want to start with?"
Enforce process agreements	✓ We agreed to brainstorm. It sounds like you're starting to evaluate the ideas now. Would you hold onto that evaluation idea for now?
Difficult people: ***1. Accept*** ***2. Legitimize*** ***3. Deal with/defer***	✓ You're not convinced we're getting anywhere? That's OK, you maybe right. Would you be willing to hang on for 10 more minutes and see what happens? ✓ Thanks for raising this issue that wasn't on the agenda. Do we need to address that now or should we put it on the clipboard for your next meeting?
Don't be defensive	✓ I cut you off? I'm sorry. Please continue. ✓ You think I'm pushing too hard. Thanks for telling me. How would you like to proceed?
Use body language	✓ Don't point; reach out underhanded; keep palms open. ✓ Change position to become the focus or block disputing people's view of each other.
Use humor	✓ Be funny, but not offensive.
Protect others from personal attack	✓ Joe, you've interrupted Sue several times in the last few minutes. I'd like to hear what she has to say.

Interventions

Interventions are techniques you can use to put things back on track when they have begun to go astray. Pay close attention to the group. Look for the issues below to get involved.

- ✓ **BOOMERANG:** When a participant attempts to question the process or otherwise wants to take the group in a different direction, it can be helpful to turn that question to the group. You can ask, “Well, what do you think?” or “Let’s consider that question for a minute. What are people’s thoughts?”

- ✓ **REINFORCE PROCESS AGREEMENTS:** Keep people working with the process and ground rules that the group agreed to. “Remember, this is just the brainstorming stage; clarifications and discussion will follow later?” or “If you would like to speak, I need to see a raised hand, as we agreed. It doesn’t work to have people cutting each other off.”

- ✓ **REGAIN FOCUS:** Use the goals, agenda, outcomes, activity at hand or other ways to refocus the group. For example, “We’re getting off track with this item. Remember our purpose is to decide a theme for the training; we can deal with the issue of space, but we need to make a separate time for that.” Or “Let’s refocus; take a five minute break, then come back and let’s get through this.”

- ✓ **ACCEPT/LEGITIMIZE. THEN DEAL WITH OR DEFER:** Accept participants’ statements, even when emotional, without letting them take the group totally off track. For example, “It’s clear that you have some very strong opinions about this. Let’s keep thinking about how to turn these problems into solutions.” “Wow, that’s an important point. Perhaps we should take five minutes to address that point before moving on. Does everyone agree?” “That’s a critical issue. Keep it in mind because we’re going to talk about this a few items down our agenda.”

- ✓ **USE HUMOR:** Or someone else’s humor. Allow for some laughter and good natured joking. It can help to diffuse tension and lighten difficult situations.

- ✓ **ASK/SAY “WHAT’S GOING ON?”:** Being direct can be a useful technique when there is clear tension or resistance. Be prepared to deal with the answer.

- ✓ **BREAK:** Call a break if participants look like their attention is waning. Have a stretch. Play a short game or do an icebreaker.

Professor John Barkai (based on the work of Donna Ching), University of Hawaii Law School

How to Facilitate a Meeting

What is a Facilitator?: The facilitator is the person in charge of the meeting. They move the meeting along.

The Facilitator is Responsible for:
- Getting agreement on agenda and processes before and during the meeting
- Conducting the meeting - makes sure the group keeps to ground rules, time limits, etc.
- Guiding discussion
- Staying neutral, asking questions and suggesting ways to approach parts of the agenda
- Making sure the group comes to decisions and work is divided among members
- Keeping the group on track when they head off onto tangents
- Watching the vibe of the meeting and helping to keep energy up
- Making sure everyone participates and no one dominates
- Creating a safe and positive environment (protects people from personal attack)
- Intervening if problems come up, dealing with concerns
- Creating a comfortable environment - using language that makes everyone comfortable

Strategies for Good Facilitation: **(see the back of this sheet for specific things you can say during the meeting)**
- Ask person who put specific item on agenda to give a brief introduction on important background information and what they want done
- Give 5 minute warnings when moving on to another agenda item. Appoint a separate timekeeper if necessary.
- Put off off-subject topics - Create a list (a "parking lot") for items to be discussed at another time
- Paraphrase (repeat back in your own words) to check for the sense of the discussion
- Help people avoid repeating themselves by summarizing discussion and asking only for comments in areas that haven't been mentioned
- Make suggestions for how to move forward - after discussion has gone on for a while, try to summarize, look for agreement or sticking points, and come to decision
- Ask questions
- Be positive and encourage full participation - make sure everyone gets to speak, try to notice when someone is holding back
- Focus on issues, not personalities
- Ask someone else to facilitate if you want to actively participate in the discussion
- Check briefly for agreement before moving on - make sure everyone understands decisions

Techniques for making decisions in meetings:
- Brainstorming
- Prioritizing (ranking items)
- Pro's and Con's
- Straw voting (informal poll to see where people are)
- Going around to everyone to check for the sense of the group

This resource sheet was developed with help from CompassPoint Non-Profit Services

Suggested Wording for Facilitating a Meeting
(from the North American Students of Cooperation Cooperative Education and Training Institute)

1. Make sure each agenda item is introduced by the person responsible for it. This way everyone understands why the item is being discussed. The introduction should include: information that everyone needs to know, what needs to be decided, and possible pro's and con's.

Jane, could you please give us a little background on this issue and tell us what action you are requesting?

2. Make sure everyone has a chance to speak.

I've noticed a few people have been saying a lot on this issue; before hearing any more from them, is there anyone who hasn't spoken yet who has something to add?

3. Encourage everyone to say what's on their mind. Try to notice when people are holding back; that could make it hard for them to come to a decision later.

I sense some hesitancy from folks to speak openly on this issue; it's important we hear all points of view, so I encourage everyone to be honest about their feelings.

4. Make sure people speak only on the matter at hand. If other issues come up, keep track of them on a "parallel agenda" and let people know that the group will return to this agenda before the end of the meeting.

Joe, you're raising some good points and I've noted them here; we'll come back to them before the end of the meeting, but let's focus more directly on the issue at hand.

5. Encourage people to avoid repeating themselves and others by summarizing discussion periodically.

So far, I've heard the following objections raised…The arguments in favor of the proposal seem to be…I've heard people propose the following possible solutions…

6. Keep the meeting moving along. Remind people of time and appoint a timekeeper if necessary. If designated time runs out, ask the group to agree to spend more time on the issue, postpone it until later in the meeting, or put the discussion off until another meeting.

We're about to run out of the designated time on this issue. Is there agreement to spend another ten minutes to get a few more ideas on the table and make a decision now, or should we postpone a final decision until our next meeting?

7. Encourage the group to take a break to restore energy or ease tension.

I'm seeing a few people "resting their eyes." Would anybody object to a five minute break to get up and stretch and get some fresh air?

8. After a topic has been discussed for a while, start trying to move the group toward agreement by summarizing discussion points, looking for common points of agreement, identifying sources of conflict, etc.

I'm hearing most people agree with…but there seems to be a few points of view on…Perhaps we could focus on how to agree on these last few issues.

9. Know when the group has reached a decision. Also know when a group cannot reach a decision; suggest postponing a decision when…

- **a) the group needs critical information**
- **b) the group needs to hear from others**
- **c) the group is not prepared**

I'd like to propose we postpone this discussion because…

10. Make sure everyone understands the decision.

Could we briefly summarize the proposal that's being decided right now?

11. If you want to participate actively in the discussion, ask someone else to take over facilitating the meeting. If you have a quick personal comment, signal to the group that this comment comes from you personally.

I'm recognizing myself as speaker. (Stand up or take some other physical action to distinguish you are not speaking as facilitator.)

A Framework – Open / Issue Undefined

Brainstorming
Generate a large number of facts, ideas or solutions in a short period of time. Brainstorming encourages creativity and produces many alternatives.

<u>Materials</u>
Flipchart, Masking tape, Markers

<u>Process</u>
1. Generate ideas by: a) introducing the session and the issue statement, b) recording all responses on the flipchart and hanging all flipchart pages for everyone to see, c) limit time, and give a five-minute warning.
2. Clarify each idea by reading it aloud and facilitating discussion about the idea as needed. Do not evaluate the ideas.
3. Combine ideas that are almost identical by looking for easy agreements. Do not combine if there is extended discussion, which usually indicates disagreement.
4. Categorize ideas by looking for easy agreements. Consider using an Affinity Diagram to group ideas.
5. Use a focus technique to narrow down or prioritize ideas.

Ground Rules:
- Freewheeling is expected
- No evaluation during generation stage
- More ideas are better
- Combine and extend others' ideas where possible

Pointers:
- Ensure participation by all group members; use round robin if needed.
- Set a goal for a certain number of ideas.
- Encourage creativity and "piggybacking".
- Use "What if?" or other triggering questions to stimulate idea generation.

Imaging
Imaging allows group members to creatively visualize their ideas about an issue. Participants can work individually or in groups.

Imaging enables participants to address issues from a nonverbal perspective. It can get traditionally verbal teams "out of the box" and can be considered for use with a variety of teams (e.g., teenagers, tribal communities, etc.)

Materials Needed
Flipchart, Masking tape, Markers

Process
1. Group members draw images (markers, crayons, etc.) of the issue on flipchart paper. ***Do not*** use words in the drawings. Examples include:
    a. Draw your ideal team
    b. Draw the problem
    c. Draw causes or solutions to the problem
    d. Draw your job, team, or organization in five years

2. Once drawings are complete, each participant explains their drawing to the group.

3. Proceed with one of several follow-up techniques
    a. Force field analysis, SWOT analysis, Fishbone diagram
    b. Participants set personal goals to make changes
    c. Teams write vision or mission statements based on drawings
    d. Use an Action Plan Chart to identify and document next steps

See also: Professional Identity Portraits

Lassoing
The meaning of certain words or phrases in issue statements may be taken for granted, may be interpreted differently by different groups of people, or may be unclear. Use the lasso technique to make vague issue statements specific so that all the terms will be more clearly defined and better understood.

Materials
Flipchart, Masking tape

Process
1. Write the issue statement on the flipchart.
    Example: Solve communication problems among project team.

2. Circle or "lasso" words that you or the group members feel need clarification or specificity.

3. ***Example:*** In the above statement, the words "solve", "communication" and "problems" may be circled.

4. Ask participants to be more specific with the circled words.
    Example: Ask what is meant by "solve", what type of "communication" is involved, and what type of "problems" exist.

5. Transition from the lasso technique using the following statement: “Now that we clearly understand the issue or problem we are dealing with, let’s brainstorm some alternatives for addressing it.”

Note: Participants may want to reword the statement. The facilitator should consider the value in this activity in terms of clarifying meaning and time remaining for contributing potential solutions.

Stop/Start/Continue
As a facilitation technique, Stop/Start/Continue can be used between two people, within a team, or between teams to negotiate behavior changes for purposes of improvement. The technique can be used within a single group to determine actions that should be stopped, started, or continued to meet a goal.

This has also been used on evaluation surveys as an open-ended item.

<u>Materials</u>
Flipchart, Masking tape, Markers

<u>Process</u>
1. Brainstorm behaviors that the other group, or their group should stop, start or continue. Include ***why***.
2. One group or individual makes a request for the other group or individual to stop a behavior. No discussion or rebuttal.
3. The receiving group or individual paraphrases the request. Check with the initiating group or individual to determine if the request was paraphrased correctly.
4. The receiving group or individual responds to the request.
5. Both groups discuss the behavior.
6. Both groups define action steps.
7. Continue through stop, start and continue behaviors.
8. Have action steps for each behavior typed and distributed to participants.

A Framework – Open / Issue Defined

Affinity Diagram

Affinity diagrams organize a large amount of information into groupings according to relationships among items. This process works best with groups of 4 to 8 people.

Materials

Flipchart, Masking tape, Markers, Post It notes

Process

1. Write the topic of discussion as an open-ended statement on the flipchart
2. Participants brainstorm issues related to the topic and record one issue per Post It note.
3. One participant places one note on the flipchart. Group members place other notes with related ideas next to the original note.
4. Continue process until all ideas are posted.
5. Reach agreement on a title or heading for each group of notes.
6. Complete diagram by connecting headings to all related notes.

Force-Field Analysis

Force-field analysis determines forces that will drive and block change to define and analyze problems, and develop action plans. An imbalance in the forces must be discovered if change is to occur.

Driving forces are factors or pressures that strongly support the goals of change. Restraining forces are factors that are obstacles to change. Change can be facilitated by strengthening driving forces and weakening restraining forces.

Materials

Flipchart, Masking tape, Markers, Post It notes

Process

1. Identify issue by:
    a. Group members envision and list the components of their ideal situation
    b. Participants share ideas that are recorded on the flipchart
    c. Group members envision and list components of the present situation
    d. Participants share ideas that are recorded on the flipchart
2. Brainstorm and record lists of:
    a. Driving forces that encourage change from the present to ideal situation
    b. Restraining forces that prevent change from the present to ideal situation
3. Clarify items
4. Identify critical forces by:
    a. Using a focusing technique to prioritize both lists
    b. Recording top forces on a new flipchart page
    c. Each participant evaluates each item on a scale of 1 (Low) to 5 (High) via Post It (See: Rating Scales)
    d. Calculate values assigned to driving and restraining forces

5. Develop action strategies for changing each of the strongest forces to move from the present to the desired situation.

Flipchart example:

Driving Forces	Restraining Forces
• Driving force #1 • Driving force #2 • Driving force #3 • Driving force #4 • Driving force #5 • Etc.	• Restraining force #1 • Restraining force #2 • Restraining force #3 • Restraining force #4 • Restraining force #5 • Etc.

Item Writing
See Item Writing Job Aide.

Phillips' 66
A variation on Nominal Group Technique, break a large group into groups of 6 (this is a guideline, group size can vary from 4 to 12), allowing them 6 minutes to generate ideas. Provides a small-group atmosphere within a large-group setting.

Materials
Flipchart, Masking tape, Markers, 3x5 Index cards, Pens/Pencils, and Post It notes

Process
1. Present issue
2. Divide groups into 6 persons (can be groups of 4 to 12)
3. Take 6 minutes for silent idea generation
4. Rank ideas within small group
5. Reform large group. Report and record top ideas from the small groups via round robin method
6. Clarify, combine and categorize ideas
7. Rank ideas
8. Conduct and discuss preliminary vote
9. Conduct final vote

SWOT Analysis
A Strengths / Weakenesses / Opportunities / Threats, or SWOT analysis, is a structured group technique used to identify internal and external forces driving an organization's competitive position in the marketplace. SWOT analysis can also be used to assess an internal group's positioning within an organization.

SWOT analysis results can lead to: solving problems, implementing change, and developing strategies for achieving an internal group or organization's mission, goals and objectives.

<u>Materials</u>
Flipchart, Masking tape, Markers

<u>Process</u>

1. Define SWOT
    a. ***Strength*** – Internal attributes that help achieve goals and objectives, provide a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Examples include, but are not limited to: Experienced staff, staff commitment and loyalty, amount of funding, authority, political support, communications infrastructure, training plans, technical skills, etc.

    b. ***Weakness*** – Internal attributes that are harmful to achieving goals and objectives, or that detract from a competitive position in the marketplace. Examples include, but are not limited to: Lack of staff, lack of funding, lack of commitment and loyalty, lack of expertise, wildly divergent needs, disagreement on goals and priorities, etc.

    c. ***Opportunity*** – External conditions that help to achieve goals and objectives, and that can contribute to a competitive advantage. Examples include, but are not limited to: Convenient service locations, awareness of and access to local, state and federal grant money and cost-sharing programs, new technologies, etc.

    d. ***Threat*** – External conditions that may derail goals and objectives, inhibit the attainment or maintenance of a competitive advantage. Examples include, but are not limited to: Inconvenient service locations, lack of coordination with statewide initiatives, ineligibility for desirable funding, new competitors, rising costs, etc.

2. Analyze Internal Environment
    a. Ask participants to identify ***strengths*** via questions such as:
        - What strengths are unique to our group or organization?
        - What differentiates our group or organization from others?

    b. Ask participants to identify ***weaknesses*** via questions such as:
        - What knowledge do we lack?
        - What skills do we lack?
        - What systems do we need to change?

Flipchart example:

Internal Environment Problem / Change / Strategy: ________________________________	
Strengths	Weaknesses
• Strength #1	• Weakness #1
• Strength #2	• Weakness #2
• Strength #3	• Weakness #3
• Strength #4	• Weakness #4
• Strength #5	• Weakness #5
• Etc.	• Etc.

3. Analyze External Environment
   a. Ask participants to identify ***opportunities*** via questions such as:
      - What additional services can we offer?
      - What new markets should we investigate?

   b. Ask participants to identify ***threats*** via questions such as:
      - Who are our existing competitors?
      - What new organizations might start up?
      - What environmental issues will cause us concern?

Flipchart example:

External Environment Problem / Change / Strategy: ________________________________	
Opportunities	Threats
• Opportunity #1	• Threat #1
• Opportunity #2	• Threat #2
• Opportunity #3	• Threat #3
• Opportunity #4	• Threat #4
• Opportunity #5	• Threat #5
• Etc.	• Etc.

Note: It may not be clear whether an item is an internal or external force. Query participants to understand what drives each idea, and classify it appropriately.

4. Clarify Ideas
    a. Review each idea with participants. Ask if there are any questions about the ideas.
    b. If a question arises, ask the participant who provided the idea to clarify. Continue the list until you reach the end.

    Note: The purpose of this step is to clarify, so avoid debating the importance of ideas.

5. Narrow List (if appropriate) – Choose a focusing technique to prioritize the list for each component. See N/3, Rank Order, or Nominal Group Technique Step #4.

6. Develop a Strategy – Develop 4 to 6 key strategies (goals) from the information gathered in the SWOT analysis.

7. Write Action Plans – Write action steps for each strategy (goal). See Action Plan Chart

Notes:

- SWOT analyses can be time consuming. You may want to conduct the SWOT over a span of time and complete the Action Plan Charts during a different meeting. You will need to consider if the same group members need to be present at each step; this may impact your scheduling.
- Note that one internal group's opportunity may be another internal group's threat. You may need to help groups make these connections to truly explore weaknesses and threats.
- Make sure group members pay equal attention to each SWOT category in order to gain maximum benefit from the analysis. Participants can get very involved with one category at the expense of another.

A Framework – Focus

Forced Distribution

Participants rate items according to importance by sorting each item into one of four categories – Less Important, Somewhat Important, Important, and Most Important. Limit the number of items that can be placed in each category. A "normal distribution" should be followed, with most of the items placed in the middle categories and very few in the extremes.

A general rule should be to have two-third of items in the middle categories; split the other third into the outer categories. Here's an example with 30 items:

5	10	10	5
Less Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Most Important

<u>Materials</u>

List of items, Pens/Pencils, Flipchart, Masking tape, Markers

<u>Process</u>

1. Determine the number of items to be placed in each category. Draw an adaptation of the above diagram on flipchart paper.
2. Individually, participants rate 5 items as "less important", 10 items as "somewhat important", etc. based on a question such as, "What are the primary goals of this project?", What should be our team's priorities?", etc.
3. Write each item on flipchart paper, and assign a letter to each item (use double, then triple letters if there are more than 26 ideas).
4. As a group, participants indicate their ratings of each idea.
5. Facilitator totals ratings, and places each item in the "less important" to "most important" categories.
6. As needed, repeat the rating process, using another question such as, "What are our individual priorities?", "What are the secondary goals of this project?", etc.

Nominal Group Technique

See Nominal Group Technique Job Aide.

N/3

The N/3 technique narrows a list of brainstormed ideas to the most important items. The final product is a list of ideas with the most important items indicated by a greater number and the less important items with a smaller number.

<u>Materials</u>

Flipchart, Masking tape, Markers, Post It notes, Item list

Process

1. Assign a letter to each brainstormed idea (use double, then triple letters if there are more than 26 ideas).
2. Divide the total number of ideas by 3 to determine the number of votes each member gets.
3. Participants vote for ideas with each vote going to a separate idea (cannot vote for one idea twice).
4. Create a second flipchart with top ideas (based on number of votes) to reduce distraction and determine if a second round of voting is needed.

Rating Scales

Used to narrow a list of brainstormed ideas to the most important items. Participants assign a rating of 1 to 5 to each idea on the list.

Materials

Flipchart, Masking tape, Markers, Item list

Process

1. Assign a letter to each brainstormed idea. Use double, then triple letters if there are more than 26 ideas (e.g., A-Z, AA-ZZ, AAA-ZZZ).
2. Write the scale on a flipchart page as shown:
   1 = Not important at all
   2 = Somewhat unimportant
   3 = Neither important or unimportant
   4 = Somewhat important
   5 = Very important
3. Participants rate each idea from 1 to 5.
4. Total the ratings for each item, and write the total next to the item. This can be done during the meeting, during a meeting break, or after the meeting where the results are presented during the next meeting.
5. If needed, initiate the rating scale or another voting process to further prioritize items (e.g., N/3).

Simple Rank Order

Individuals rank their top ideas according to importance. Individual rankings are tallied for a group ranking. This is different from N/3 during which individuals choose their top ideas with equal weight placed on each item.

Materials

Flipchart, Masking tape, Markers, Post It notes, Item list

Process

1. Assign a letter to each brainstormed idea. Use double, then triple letters if there are more than 26 ideas (e.g., A-Z, AA-ZZ, AAA-ZZZ).
2. Divide the total number of ideas by 3 to determine the number of votes each member gets.

3. Based on number of votes, participants assign numbers to Post It notes with highest number as most important, lowest number as least important (e.g., if five votes, number Post It notes "1", "2", "3", "4", and "5").
4. Create a second flipchart with top ideas (based on number of votes and vote values) to reduce distraction and determine if a second round of voting is needed.

A Framework – Close

Percentage Poll
Use to assess how quickly participants are to an agreement when you are working on consensus. Often used in creating goals and objectives or mission and vision statements.

Materials
Flipchart, Masking tape

Process
1. Ask participants to review the statement on the flipchart. Begin by asking if the group is 70 percent complete.
2. If the majority of participants do not raise their hands, move down to 60 percent, then if needed, 50 percent.
3. If the majority of participants raise their hands, move up to 80 percent, 85 percent, etc.
4. At the point where agreement level drops off, focus discussion on areas where further discussion is needed:
    a. What will it take to obtain a higher level of agreement?
    b. What are key ideas that should be developed further?
    c. What are superfluous ideas that could be dropped?

Action Plan Chart
Use an Action Plan Chart following issue identification or solution generation to develop next steps.

Materials
Flipchart, Masking tape, Markers

Process
1. Complete the chart below (or one similar to it), being as specific as possible.
2. Identify facilitators and barriers to each action, using this information to prioritize or further develop actions.

Action Plan				
Action	Responsible Party	Due Date	Needed Resources	Milestones / Performance Measures / Goals
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

Plus/Delta
Quick and easy format for evaluating an activity, process or event, by assessing "pluses" or positive feedback, then "deltas" or areas for change.

Plus/Delta is a more specific alternative to general question such as, "What did you think about the training?" It can be used as a quick, interim evaluation for a longer meeting (e.g., after Day 1 of a two-day meeting) or to obtain quick feedback if a meeting or training is not going as well as projected. This makes it a Tool to Open.

As in focus groups, the Plus/Delta discussion format often prompts ideas in group members, providing interaction and more feedback than may be obtained via individual, written feedback alone.

<u>Materials</u>
Flipchart, Masking tape, Markers

<u>Process</u>
1. Create the following chart:

+	Λ
• • • • •	• • • • •

2. Ask participants to think of the positive aspects of a topic (e.g., training, meeting, product) and record them in the + column. Obtain feedback via round robin in order to ensure all participants contribute.
3. Ask participants to think of the areas to change and record them in the Λ column. Obtain feedback via round robin in order to ensure all participants contribute.
4. Determine which items can be changed, and which are beyond the control of the group.
5. Use feedback to make changes in the topic.

Professional Identity Portraits

Professional identity portraits are a drawing and story-telling activity that engages individuals in:

- Reflection on one's identity and how it intersects with one's personal past, and the different groups or ties that one has developed, the work that has been done, and the ties that are in place.
- Representations of professional identity in picture, graphic, and text formats.
- Sharing their professional identity story with others.

This activity is a creative way for participants to explore individual and group identity. The overarching goal is to use self-disclosure to develop trust and to build a sense of connectedness with members in your training group.

<u>Materials</u>

- Flipchart paper for each participant
- Markers
- Post It notes
- Space and material to display the gallery of portraits for sharing

<u>Time</u>

- 60-90 minutes, depending on number of participants

<u>Opening Script</u>

- Each of us belongs to / associates with a number of different groups. These groups reflect our ethnicity, occupational and vocational cultures, and social groups that shape or reflect our values. Membership in groups is determined by how you identify with the group members, the work you do, and also how you are seen by group members. Think about your identity as an evaluator. What shapes this identity? Think about personal forces, interactions, planned and unplanned history, and the work you have done and how you are seen by others. On the paper you have been given, find a way to represent the different individual, groups, projects or ties that you believe have contributed to your professional identity. If you can, show the relative importance and influence of each group by the size and placement of the pictures/graphics that you draw. You can use the materials in any way that help you illustrate these ties.

<u>Process</u>

1. Encourage each person to create a portrait that reflects the complexity of his or her professional identity.
2. Each person displays their drawing on the wall.
3. Let members mill around the room examining and discussing the drawings – gallery walk.
4. Each person explains their drawing to the group.

Group Reflections

- How did it feel to draw a diagram of your professional identity?
- How well did it represent yourself?
- What have you learned about your colleagues?
- What did you learn about group membership and professional identity?
- What ideas do you have for the rest of the training?

Professional identify portraits is an adaptation of the Cultural Portrait Activity described in Lindsey, R.B., Robins, K.N., & Terrell, R.D. (2003) Cultural proficiency. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Enhanced Group Facilitation: Techniques and Process
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Ideawriting Supplemental Information

Writing Triggering Questions for an Ideawriting Session

"Good" triggering questions …

1. Provide relevant context, background, and explanations.
2. Are ***open-ended*** **–** Avoid dichotomous questions and create opportunities for discussion and creativity.
3. Ask for ***ideas, possibilities, solutions, strategies, recommendations*** instead of perceptions, attitudes, or values.
4. Convey ***one main inquiry*** **–** Some questions may have different parts, but you need to watch for too much layering. It takes more time for participants to complete the process and clarify their responses, and it may create conditions where the group only responds to one piece of the original idea, or each individual responds to a different part of the idea.
5. Stimulate a variety of responses -- it will likely fizzle if there's no diversity around particular topic.
6. Incite sufficient reflection so that people will have something to write about and something to interact around. This means it should have some degree of complexity.
7. Are based on topics that people are comfortable sharing with others in writing and orally.
8. Are questions that go beyond what has been asked of the participants through other mechanisms (e.g., a survey). Asking the same questions again may make people feel that they haven't been heard

The acid test: Finally, remember it should be a "triggering" question. If it doesn't act as a catalyst for reflection and discussion it won't work.

Some good "starters" for triggering questions:

"What is an effective strategy for …"

"What are critical considerations that must be taken into account in implementing…"

"What actions would you recommend for…"

"What actions would you recommend that this organization could use to…"

"What can we do to…"

"What actions can we take to…"

Adapted from Ideawriting sessions by Vicki Tardino (Vicki_Tardino@alumni.umass.edu)

Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages	Disadvantages
• Efficient-parallel work • Takes relatively little time, even with large groups • Mixes interaction with individual work • Results in a written product • Easily combined with other data collection methods • Facilitation requirement low	• Participants must be willing to express themselves in writing • Participants must be able to express themselves in writing • May not provide sufficient opportunity for clarification • May not be best method when verbal or more intensive group interaction is preferred

Applications

Strategic	Tactical
• Help understand needs • Enhance evaluation use (i.e., action planning) • Support participatory, collaborative and developmental approaches to evaluation • Engage evaluative thinking • Support ongoing organization development initiatives	***Survey Data*** • Exploring meaning of survey findings • Developing ideas suggested by survey data • Generating action plans with stakeholders ***Focus Groups*** • Pre-meeting to focus groups • Open and transition questions ***Process Improvement*** • Challenging thinking/“paradigm busting” sessions • Process redesign sessions • Action planning sessions • Strategic planning sessions ***Initiating Dialogue*** ***Build on Results from Other Analytic Tools***

....written by facilitators for facilitators since 1993

THE FACILITATOR[sm]

Spring 2004

Ideawriting:
a facilitation tool for developing ideas in groups

By Vicki M. Staebler Tardino
(Vicki_Tardino@alumni.umass.edu)

A wide variety of tools are available to facilitate the *generation* of ideas in groups, such as simple brainstorming and creativity tools. While it may also be used for idea generation, "ideawriting" picks up where other tools leave off by providing a systematic process for *developing* ideas and plans for groups of any size, whether a small cross-functional team or a large group. Its power is in the unique combination of individual contributions with group interaction for making meaning.

Ideawriting sessions have been used to design and implement system-wide change strategies such as organizational quality improvement and to involve organizational stakeholders and unleash their creativity in refining ideas and action plans to implement them. For example, in my own practice I have used ideawriting in a variety of ways—as a catalyst for focus groups and organizational visioning processes, as an action-planning step following a traditional needs assessment, as a mechanism for developing ideas suggested by employee and customer survey data, as a component of business process redesign sessions geared toward "busting assumptions", and as a mechanism for building on ideas generated from force field analysis or other analytic tools.

Facilitator Preparation

Preparing to facilitate an ideawriting session involves the development of one or more "triggering questions". These questions, which focus on action, form the foundation of the process and should be crafted thoughtfully. You may use one question for the whole group, assign different questions to small working groups, or ask each small group to select a question from a list of alternatives. For example, the following context and question was provided to initiate an ideawriting process for a national professional organization seeking to develop a vision:

> *Context:* There has been discussion among our leaders and members regarding the development of a *compelling vision of the future* for our organization that can guide priority-setting and long-term planning. Also, there is interest in making this an open, inclusive, practical and useful process that represents the views of members.
>
> *Triggering Question:* What are some effective ways (i.e., inclusive, practical and useful) that we might develop this vision of the future for the organization?

Two additional examples of triggering questions are:

- What strategies can we implement to reinforce effective customer service interactions?
- What actions can we take to improve the networking experience for conference participants?

You may have noticed that what all of these examples have in common is a focus on development and action, using language to elicit plans rather than perceptions.

At the beginning of the session, a large group will be divided into smaller working groups of approximately 5-7 individuals. While not absolutely necessary, it is helpful to have each small group designate a team leader who will be responsible for keeping the group process flowing smoothly by attending to and reminding others of the facilitator's instructions.

Steps in Facilitating an Ideawriting Session

Step 1: Independent Response

The facilitator poses the triggering question to each small working group either on a flipchart or pre-printed sheet with the question typed at the top. Individuals read the question and silently, independently respond in writing with key thoughts or ideas, phrases or sentences that may include evaluations, solutions or strategies. Typically this step is timed and brief, perhaps 3-8 minutes depending on the nature of the question. At the end of this step, each person places his or her form in the center of the group.

Step 2: Written Interaction

The second step constitutes the building on individual ideas. Each individual selects another group member's form and reads their initial ideas. They then spend several minutes reacting *in writing* (there is still no talking at this stage) to the ideas presented, identifying aspects they like or dislike and making suggestions for improvement and potential next steps. This process is repeated for all forms in the work group to create a snowballing of ideas. To ensure that sufficient depth is provided, the facilitator may post basic thought questions to be considered such as:

- What do I like/think is a good idea? Is it important?
- What do I dislike/think is a bad idea? Is it important?
- What is missing? Is it important?
- How can I improve existing idea(s)? What are some suggested next steps?

Step 3: Analysis & Reporting

The final step involves the synthesis of the individual ideas through group interaction. First, each individual retrieves his or her own form and briefly reviews comments made by others to their initial response. Each small working group then spends time discussing the main ideas developed in their group and summarizing these on a flipchart or notepad. If more depth and reflection is required for a particular question, the facilitator may ask the groups to consider questions such as: Looking across these ideas…

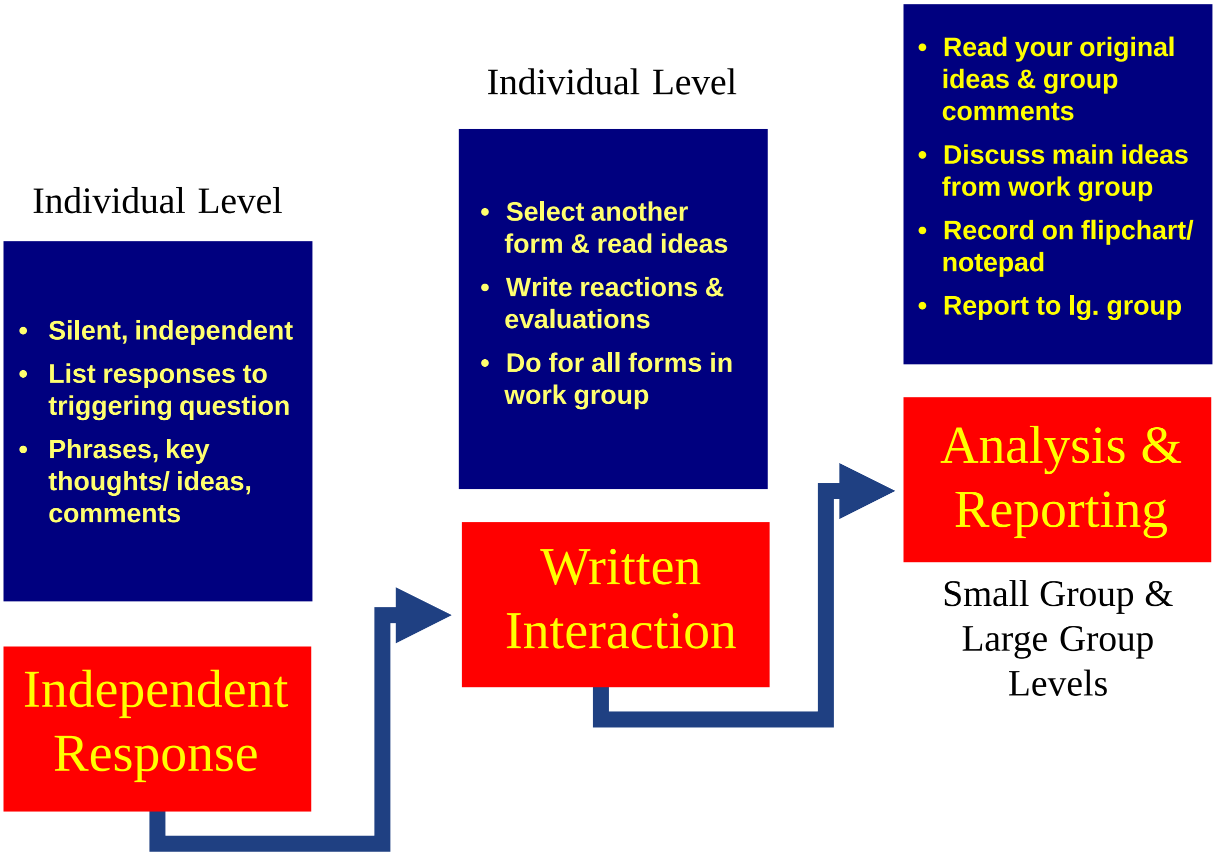
- What generalizations can you make? What are the exceptions? What meanings do we get by comparing these?
- What contradictions exist? What do they mean?
- What puzzles exist? What do they mean?
- What is missing? How do you know?
- What are some key assumptions and "taken-for-granteds"?
- What implications does this solution or action have?

The final activity in this step is for a spokesperson from each small working group to report out to the larger group. The facilitator records the results of this large-group synthesis. If the small working groups responded to the same triggering question this may lead to a facilitated discussion of the similarities and differences and implications. If small groups responded to different but related questions, this aspect of the session can lead to a facilitated discussion of how the different questions connect to form a bigger picture, focusing on connectivity. For example, several groups responding to various questions about improving a conference experience for participants may now link their specific area (e.g., networking, skill building, etc.) to improving a participant's conference experience overall and to spot critical linkages between the various aspects of experience.

The final product of an ideawriting session contains data from several levels—1) individual's reactions, 2) pair interactions within small working groups, 3) small working group summaries, and 4) the large group summary. There are many ways that data from an ideawriting session can be utilized, depending on the purpose for the group ideas. For instance, if you are interested in using the ideas as inputs into a decision process you might select the most developed suggestions and evaluate each one according to the degree to which it facilitates important goals (e.g., cost effectiveness, use of existing resources, maximum involvement of process stakeholders or other criteria relevant to the decision at hand). The ideas may also be used by a small sub-set of the original participants in the development of action plans.

Some Advantages & Limitations

By combining individual contributions and group interaction, ideawriting overcomes major sources of coordination loss that are common to brainstorming tasks. For example, individuals tend to forget some ideas or nuances when forced to "hold" them and listen to others' ideas during brainstorming. In addition, individuals tend to "loaf" or contribute less effort toward group brainstorming tasks compared to individual ones. Ideawriting is also very efficient—1) multiple small groups may work in parallel on one or more related questions, 2) even with very large groups, the process takes relatively little time compared to other idea development methods and 3) the process only requires one facilitator no matter what the group size.



Personally, I have facilitated this process for groups of up to 50 individuals in within 30 minutes, and longer (approximately 2 hours) for groups tackling more complex issues or when more intensive interaction is preferred. Others report using this process for groups as large as 300.

Ideawriting is a very useful tool when it is important to let everyone's ideas be heard equally and to neutralize group differences. For example, I have found it effective in drawing out individuals with preferences for introversion—allowing them sufficient opportunity to react silently before sharing their ideas with a group verbally.

As the name implies, individuals must be willing and able to express their thoughts in writing, so it may not be the best mechanism for all groups. Additionally, in some cases the process may not provide sufficient opportunity for clarification. Finally, it may not be the best method when verbal or more intensive group interaction is preferred.

Summary

Ideawriting is a facilitation tool that can be used in a variety of situations. Like any other facilitation tool, its application will require basic facilitation skill to fully leverage its benefits. You are encouraged to try it out for yourself and share your thoughts, unique challenges and application to promote our learning community. œ

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Moore, C. M. (1994). *Group Techniques for Idea Building*, 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.

Staebler Tardino, V. M. (2002). *Ideawriting: A Group Technique for Developing Ideas and Meaning*. Presentation materials prepared to support a facilitated session with members of Gateway Industrial/ Organizational Psychologists, Saint Louis, MO.

Additional Resources

Staebler Tardino, V. M. (2001). *How to Write Effective Triggering Questions*. (A handout available upon request).

VanGundy, A. B. (1992). *Idea Power: Techniques and Resources to Unleash the Creativity in Your Organization*. New York: American Management Association

Wycoff, J & Richardson, T. (1995). *Transformation Thinking: Tools & Techniques that Open the Door to Powerful New Thinking for Every Member of Your Organization*. NY: Berkley Books.

Sample Application
Ideawriting and Force-Field Analysis

As stated earlier, ideawriting can be coupled with data from force field analysis (FFA) to move from analysis to action planning.

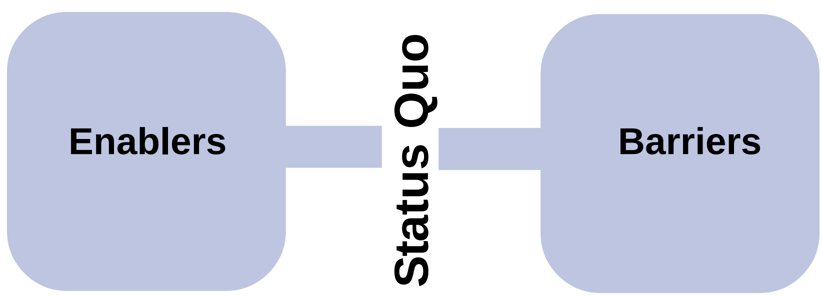
The first step would be to conduct the FFA in the usual manner, brainstorming enablers and barriers to a given change and determining their relative priority or strength.

Next, create triggering questions that are based on the most important enablers and barriers to change or to enablers and barriers overall. For example, in a FFA regarding an upcoming merger, a group might have indicated that a similarity in values between the two organizations will be the most significant enabler of a positive merger.

You might then develop a triggering question such as: “What specific actions can we take to leverage our shared values in creating a positive change?”

Following suit with the identified barriers, you would then create a question to address a significant barrier or group of barriers such as: “What strategies would be effective for insuring open communication between our two organizations?”

Step 1: Brainstorm enablers and barriers



Step 2: Create triggering questions

Q: What strategies would be effective for leveraging this (these) enablers?

Q: What strategies would be effective for reducing this (these) barriers?

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Nominal Group Technique Job Aide
Seven Steps in Facilitating

Step	Purpose	Process
Silent Idea Generation (10-20 minutes)	• Provides time to think, focus, and creative thought in a creative setting. • Encourages each participant to search for ideas. • Avoids competition, status differences, conformity pressures, evaluation and closure, and polarizing on ideas.	• Facilitator presents the question to the group in written form, then verbally reads the question. • Each participant takes 5 minutes to list their ideas in response to the question in brief phrases. • Participants work silently and independently.
Recorded Round Robin Listing of Ideas on Flipchart (20-40 minutes)	• Structures equal sharing and participation. • Encourages each member to build on others' ideas. • Depersonalizes ideas. • Tolerates conflicting ideas. • Reinforces concentration by hearing and seeing ideas. • Provides written permanence.	• Each participant reads one of his/her ideas in turn. • Facilitator records idea on flip chart as it is read. • The procedure continues around the table enough times for participants to exhaust their lists. • Label each response with a letter of the alphabet. When the alphabet runs out, use double, then triple letters (e.g., A-Z, AA-ZZ, AAA-ZZZ). • Post filled flip chart pages on the wall.
Clarify, Combine, and Categorize Ideas (20-40 minutes)	• Reinforces that each idea is as important as another. • Gives equal time to ideas. • Clarifies ideas.	• Discuss each listed idea in order. The facilitator reads the idea, then asks the group if there are questions, statements of clarification, or statements of agreement/disagreement the members would like to make about it. • Discuss the idea only to clarify it; avoid debating the importance or worthiness of an idea.

Note: Times are approximate,
based on group size, issue complexity, etc.

Step	Purpose	Process
		• Combine nearly identical items if appropriate and easy to combine. Categorize similar ideas if appropriate.
Preliminary Vote on Priorities (10 minutes)	• Provides focus on important issues. • Structures equality in choices. • Allows a "trial run". • Avoids a premature decision, and dominance by strong members.	• Facilitator distributes five 3"x5" cards to participants. • Participants select and record one idea per card for the five ideas s/he considers most important. • Participants then rank each of the five ideas as either a 1 (least important), 2, 3, 4, or 5 (most important). • Facilitator tallies the votes on the flipchart by each idea and summarizes the final vote on a separate flipchart page.
Discussion on Vote (20-40 minutes)	• Clarifies misunderstandings. • Encourages minority options. • Promotes "criticizing" ideas on wall, not the people who generated them. • Provides preparation for a decision.	• Participants discuss inconsistent voting patterns, items perceived as receiving too many or too few votes, etc.
Final Vote (10 minutes)	• Structures an independent judgment from each member. • Promotes a sense of accomplishment. • Motivates involvement in future phases of planning and problem solving. • Provides closure, and a written record of generated ideas.	• Repeat preliminary vote to determine a final list of participant priorities. • If desired, more sophisticated voting techniques such as ratings, N/3, simple rank order, prioritization grid/paired comparison, or forced distribution may be used.
Listing and Agreement on Prioritized Items (5-10 minutes)		• Facilitator lists results from Final Vote on flip chart to provide a permanent record of the group's agreement.

Note: Times are approximate,
based on group size, issue complexity, etc.

Nominal Group Technique Job Aide

Effective / Not Effective

Effective	Not Effective
• Small group meetings (N = 7 to 9) • Fact-finding • Idea generation • Search for problems and solutions • Clear relationship between process and next steps	• Routine business • Bargaining • Predetermined outcomes • Groups requiring consensus

Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages	Disadvantages
• Creative problem identification • Focus on problem solving • Balance and increase participation, influence of individuals • Reduce errors in group decisions • Easy alternative to focus group • Administration and analysis time is low	• Requires advance preparation; not a spontaneous technique • Limited to single-purpose, single-topic meeting • Some participants may resist structure of the meeting • Ideas may be ill-formed or impractical • As with any tool, not a magic bullet

EVALUATION eTA

Evaluation Briefs

No. 7 | November 2006

Gaining Consensus Among Stakeholders Through the Nominal Group Technique

This brief discusses the definition of nominal group technique; how to prepare for it; the four-step process to conduct it; when to use it; and the disadvantages and advantages of its use.

Defining the Nominal Group Technique

Nominal (meaning in name only) group technique (NGT) is a structured variation of a small-group discussion to reach consensus. NGT gathers information by asking individuals to respond to questions posed by a moderator, and then asking participants to prioritize the ideas or suggestions of all group members. The process prevents the domination of the discussion by a single person, encourages all group members to participate, and results in a set of prioritized solutions or recommendations that represent the group's preferences.

How to Prepare for NGT

The Meeting Room
Prepare a room large enough to accommodate five to nine participants. Organize the tables in a U-shape, with a flip chart at the open end of the U.

Supplies
Each U-shaped table set up will need a flip chart; a large felt-tip pen; masking tape; and paper, pencil, and 3" x 5" index cards for each participant.

Opening Statement
This statement clarifies member roles and group objectives, and should include: a warm welcome, a statement of the importance of the task, a mention of the importance of each member's contribution, and an indication of how the group's output will be used. (For an example of a good opening statement, see http://instruction.bus.wisc.edu/obdemo/readings/ngt.html).

The Four Step Process to Conduct NGT

1. **Generating Ideas:** The moderator presents the question or problem to the group in written form and reads the question to the group. The moderator directs everyone to write ideas in brief phrases or statements and to work silently and independently. Each person silently generates ideas and writes them down.

2. **Recording Ideas:** Group members engage in a round-robin feedback session to concisely record each idea (without debate at this point). The moderator writes an idea from a group member on a flip chart that is visible to the entire group, and proceeds to ask for another idea from the next group member, and so on. There is no need to repeat ideas; however, if group members believe that an idea provides a different emphasis or variation, feel free to include it. Proceed until all members' ideas have been documented.

3. **Discussing Ideas:** Each recorded idea is then discussed to determine clarity and importance. For each idea, the moderator asks, "Are there any questions or comments group members would like to make about the item?" This step provides an opportunity for members to express their understanding of the logic and the relative importance of the item. The creator of the idea need not feel obliged to clarify or explain the item; any member of the group can play that role.

4. **Voting on Ideas:** Individuals vote privately to prioritize the ideas. The votes are tallied to identify the ideas that are rated highest by the group as a whole. The moderator establishes what criteria are used to prioritize the ideas. To start, each group member selects the five

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most important items from the group list and writes one idea on each index card. Next, each member ranks the five ideas selected, with the most important receiving a rank of 5, and the least important receiving a rank of 1.

After members rank their responses in order of priority, the moderator creates a tally sheet on the flip chart with numbers down the left-hand side of the chart, which correspond to the ideas from the round-robin. The moderator collects all the cards from the participants and asks one group member to read the idea number and number of points allocated to each one, while the moderator records and then adds the scores on the tally sheet. The ideas that are the most highly rated by the group are the most favored group actions or ideas in response to the question posed by the moderator. (For an example of a ranking sheet and final tally table of an NGT session, see: http://www.siliconfareast.com/ngt.htm).

When to Use NGT

NGT is a good method to use to gain group consensus, for example, when various people (program staff, stakeholders, community residents, etc.) are involved in constructing a logic model and the list of outputs for a specific component is too long and therefore has to be prioritized. In this case, the questions to consider would be: "Which of the outputs listed are most important to achieving our goal and are easier to measure? Which of our outputs are less important to achieving our goal and are more difficult for us to measure?"

Disadvantages of NGT

- Requires preparation.
- Is regimented and lends itself only to a single-purpose, single-topic meeting.
- Minimizes discussion, and thus does not allow for the full development of ideas, and therefore can be a less stimulating group process than other techniques.

Advantages of NGT

- Generates a greater number of ideas than traditional group discussions.
- Balances the influence of individuals by limiting the power of opinion makers (particularly advantageous for use with teenagers, where peer leaders may have an exaggerated effect over group decisions, or in meetings of collaboratives, where established leaders tend to dominate the discussion).
- Diminishes competition and pressure to conform, based on status within the group.
- Encourages participants to confront issues through constructive problem solving.
- Allows the group to prioritize ideas democratically.
- Typically provides a greater sense of closure than can be obtained through group discussion.

Resources

Dunham, Randall. *Nominal Group Technique: A User's Guide*. University of Wisconsin. http://instruction.bus.wisc.edu/obdemo/readings/ngt.html. (Accessed 11/7/06)

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Enhanced Group Facilitation: Techniques and Process
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Getting Ready

Beginnings

When starting a session:

1. Present basic information
    a. Who you are as the facilitator
    b. Context for the session, relevant history (what led to this or has transpired that is important for the group), who worked on the session, and its importance
    c. Desired outcomes or goals for the session
    d. How those desired outcomes of goals fit into a larger process
    e. Overview of the agenda/outline

2. Clarify if necessary (Ask the following):
    a. Does anyone have questions?
    b. Does this make sense to everyone?

3. Check for agreement
    a. Look for cues
    b. Make eye contact

4. Begin

The Facilitation Flow

It's helpful to consider a basic principle of flow when deciding how to structure or handle topics or items during a session. Think, for example, of a typical conversation or problem-solving attempt:

1. **Set out the question or issue** (like defining an outcome) in the context of a conversation, such as "What kind of ice cream do we want for dessert? We can only have two kinds" or "What should we do to recruit volunteers? We only have three weeks and $500." And you might open it up with relatively few constraints, "Look they have 50 kinds of ice cream; I want chocolate; he wants rum raisin; what's your favorite?" or "Fliers work for me; I like tabling at the fair: ask the people who were in it last year to do it;" etc.

2. **Focus in a bit**, "Rum raisin isn't good after eating oranges; let's get the ones that are most favored by the group" or "We only have time to do two strategies fully; let's do what's most important."

3. **Close or transition the process**, "80 percent of the people like vanilla, and the birthday girl really wants mint chip. Let's go with that" or "The surveys show that the fair brought

in more than half the recruits and the others were tapped by alumni; we agree on those strategies."

Summarize what you might consider the following general flow:

1. **OPEN**: Consider a topic through open-ended activities. First clarify the content and scope of the topic (using outcomes and specificity).
   a. Brainstorm
   b. List
   c. Survey
   d. Hear from every participant
   e. Free-roaming discussion

2. **NARROW**: Use a process to narrow the information and considerations.
   a. Material, time, resource constraints
   b. Polling or N/3 technique
   c. Eliminate duplicates
   d. Voting
   e. Consensus process (if agreed on as decision-making approach)

3. **CLOSE**: Reach closure or transition (e.g. next steps for process).
   a. Negative poll
   b. Decision from N/3 or voting
   c. Combine and build agreement until goal is reached
   d. Define next steps for decision (e.g. "Okay we have three possibilities to research – let's come back next week with the information and we'll decide based on that."

As a facilitator, you need to continue to clarify the process throughout.

Opening Techniques

1. **Brainstorm: While many people are familiar with brainstorming, there are some important tips that make it work effectively.**
   a. Important guidelines: Always review the guidelines, inviting participants to generate them if they know them: 1) quantity not quality; 2) no put downs, comments, or discussion; 3) repeats are okay
   b. Use a person (or two) as a notetaker: it makes your job as the facilitator who must pay attention to the group's behavior much easier.
   c. Write topic at the top: Write your topic/question on the paper, board, or whatever so that everyone can see it. Check for clarification.
   d. Use two colors on flip charts, alternating them for better readability.
   e. Don't crowd items.
   f. Enforce the guidelines.
   g. Affirm and encourage participants: with statements that show you're listening (but not evaluating!) like "Got that." "Keep them coming." "We're jamming!"
   h. Wrap it up: by signaling you're going to end, "Okay, I'll take three more."

   i. Add ideas: Yes, the facilitator and recorders may add ideas at the end; note that you are stepping out of your role.

2. **Once Around**: Often, the best way to include everyone, especially if you have quiet participants, is to ask a focused question and have each person contribute their response to that question. Have a recorder note those responses up front.

3. **Free Association**: If your group is stuck with old ideas, you may want to interject a structure that promotes creativity. One way is to use some kind of toy or silly object and have people generate a response to the topic that is somehow a free association with it. Another is to use articles, quotes, or other materials.

Narrowing Techniques

1. **Working with a Brainstorm**: After completing the brainstorm, try the following steps:
   a. Check for clarification. Often people throw up an idea or word that other people don't understand or don't interpret in the same way. Ask the group, "Is there anything up there that anyone wants clarified?" Allow for the person who said the item to briefly explain what s/he meant.
   b. Eliminate duplicates. Literally cross them off the list, asking the group for help and permission in eliminating the items. You have to get the group's agreement for eliminating synonyms (e.g. make sure that the group agrees on the meanings of the items).
   c. Get a spread. Use the N/3 tool or polling.
   d. Delete low interest items. You can use Negative Polling.
   e. Combine. This is often the hard part, but it requires synthesizing the items into categories or areas that the group agrees to.

2. **N/3**: Count the items left and allow each person to vote for N/3 items (e.g. if there are 15 items, everyone can vote for 5). This is not a vote—it is to see the spread of responses. Therefore, people can place all of their votes on one item or spread them however. Use sticky dots, colored markers, or other tools to do this visually, with everyone participating.

3. **Negative Polling**: This involves removing items from consideration, usually after an N/3 or other polling. You ask the group, "This didn't get much attention/any dots. Is it okay with everyone if we take it off our list?"

Tips for Team Facilitators

Creating the Environment

- Post team-related quotes on the wall. See Appendix A for ideas of quotes.
- Clip cartoons on team themes and post them around the room.
- Use color to enliven the room: flip charts, posters, tent cards, etc.
- Learn to make simple line drawings and incorporate them into your visual aids (flip charts and slides).
- Bring toys into the room related to the topic being discussed. For example, if training on problem solving, bring in different types of puzzles and brain teasers.

Icebreaker Ideas

- Have team members write down 3 truths and 1 lie about themselves. Then have the rest of the team guess which is the lie.
- Have team members identify one thing others don’t know about them. Then have the group guess who’s who.
- Have each person identify several people on the team who are most different from themselves. Then try to find 5 things in common with those “different” people.
- Have each person share three rules they live by. Then develop rules for the team to live by.
- Write 3X5 cards with statements about teams (ex: Good teams never disagree). Distribute cards to team members and have them swap until they hold a card they agree with. Swapping must be done silently, without knowing the card they will receive.

Involvement Tips

- Use a Koosh Ball to get participation. The person with the Koosh has the floor. When they are finished speaking, they toss the Koosh to someone else. This allows the team to direct the discussion and prevents interruptions.
- Have individuals write one question they want answered about the topic of the meeting on a 3x5 card. Then revisit the question at the end of the meeting and have their team mates answer the questions.
- Have individuals write down their feelings about the team on 3x5 cards. Then collect all cards and redistribute them. Have team members read and explain the cards based on what they think the writer meant. This allows issues and concerns to be brought forward without fear of punishment.
- When brainstorming, have team members write their ideas on post-it notes. Then have them post the notes on a wall or flip chart and cluster related notes.
- Use chips to control talkers. Each person receives 3–5 chips, each worth up to 1 minute of floor time. When you want to speak, you turn in a chip. When chips are gone, you cannot speak.
- Have each person draw their vision of success for the team (pictures only - no words). Then have others explain the vision.
- Have each person complete this sentence; "One thing F need to understand on this team is..." Then discuss the answers.

Meeting Facilitation Tips

- Use and post an agenda. When discussion strays, use the agenda to bring the group back.
- Use a "Parking Lot" flip chart—record side issues or those outside of the agenda on a flip chart. At the end of the meeting, determine when those issues will be addressed.
- When you want to lead the discussion, stand front and center in the room. When you want the team to lead the discussion, sit or stand to the side of the room. Changing position sends cues to the team and helps you maintain control.
- Capture minutes and decisions on flip charts during the meeting.
- Set ground rules as a team and review at every meeting.
- Conflict Management Tips
- Have the team identify the criteria they will use to make a decision. Then evaluate ideas against each criteria.
- Post each position on a flip chart, with two charts per idea (one pro and one con). Have participants silently post their ideas on the appropriate flip chart. Each idea must be no more than 5 words in length. Each person can spend no more than 1 minute at a flip chart.
- When two people disagree, ask each to reflect the opposite position using active listening. Continue reflecting until the other person agrees that they fully understand the position.

- Summarize the issues on which there is agreement and confirm to show progress and possibilities.
- When there appears to be agreement, confirm with each team member.
- Look for non-verbal signs of dissent and address them openly.
- Divide team into two groups. Assign each group either positive conflict behaviors or negative conflict behaviors and have them identity five items on their assigned list. Then have groups act out the behaviors on their list while the other group guesses. Debrief by developing a list of ground rules for conflict on the team.
- Never take sides. Instead, suggest a way for the team to overcome its roadblock.

Tips for Ending a Session

- Ask for one thing each person learned in the session.
- Revisit action items and assignments and confirm due dates,
- Develop a game or quiz for the team to see how many questions they can answer correctly about the meeting content. For example, if the meeting was a "get acquainted" meeting for a new team, one question might be: "Which person on your team has been to Graceland three times?"
- Ask each person to share one action they will take in the next week as a result of the team session.
- Have each person draw a picture of something they learned in the meeting. Then have others guess what it is.
- Questions for Getting Feedback on How You're Doing:
- What is one thing I could do differently next time in my role as facilitator?
- What would you like me to be doing that I am not?
- What could I have done to make this meeting more productive?
- What should I be doing to make you (the team) self-sufficient (not need me)?
- What has to happen for you to rate our meetings a "10"?

Appendix A

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. – Margaret Mead

A group becomes a team when each member is sure enough of himself and his contribution to praise the skills of the others. – Norman Shidle

Socrates: Let us examine the question together, my friend, and if you contradict anything that I say, do so, and I shall be persuaded. – Plato

The most successful decision makers follow a set of rules that helps them select the best alternatives under the circumstances. – Phillip Branslettor

None of us is as smart as all of us. – Anonymous

"Someone ought to do it, but why should I?" "Someone ought to do it, but why not I?" Between these two questions lies whole centuries of moral revolution. – Annie Besant

There is a big difference between hard work and teamwork. – Jim Lundy

We will never be better as a team than we are to each other. – Unknown

We didn't come over in the same ship, but here we are in the same boat. – Unknown

How is it we can find time to do it over, but not the time to do it right initially? – Proverb

Build with your team a feeling of oneness, of dependence on one another, and of strength derived from unity in the pursuit of your objective.

We would rather have one man or woman working with us than three merely working for us. – FM. Woolworth

We are born for cooperation, as are the feet, the hands, the eye-lids, and the upper and lower jaws. – Marcus Aurelius

Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, and working together is success. – Henry Ford

You can buy someone's time, you can buy someone's physical presence at a given place; you can even buy a measured number of skilled muscular motions per hour or day. But you cannot buy enthusiasm; you cannot buy initiative, you cannot buy loyalty; you cannot buy devotion of hearts, minds, and souls. You have to earn these things. – Clarence Francis

All are but parts of one stupendous whole. – Alexander Pope

We must indeed all hang together, or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately. – Ben Franklin

The keynote to progress in the 20th century is teamwork. – Dr. Charles H. Mayo

The trouble with most of us is that we would rather be ruined by praise than saved by criticism. – Norman Vincent Peale

You have to listen to adversaries and keep looking for that point beyond which it's against their interests to keep on disagreeing or fighting. – Cyrus Vance

We are dependent on one another, every soul of us on earth. – George Bernard Shaw

A habit cannot be thrown out the window. It has to be coaxed down the stairs one step at a time. – Mark Twain

I asked "Why doesn't somebody do something?" Then I realized, I was somebody. – Unknown

It is well to remember that the entire population of the universe, with one trifling exception, is composed of others. – John Andrew Holmes

I don't believe in just ordering people to do things. You have to sort of grab an oar and row with them. – Harold Geneen

It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself. – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Few burdens are heavy when everyone lifts. – Anonymous

It is not who is right, but what is right, that is of importance. – Thomas Huxley

Nothing ever succeeds which exuberant spirits have not helped to produce. – Nietzsche

What do we live for if not to make the world less difficult for each other. – George Eliot

Conversation leaders can marshal a group through the shallows of trivia, the rapids of argumentation, or the clouds of abstractions. – Stanfield, 2001, The Art of Focused Conversation

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