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Group Facilitation

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ENGINEERING AND OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT LUNCH & LEARN WEBINAR SERIES

December 18, 2018



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TODAY'S PRESENTER

Terry A. Bresnick

Mr. Bresnick has more than forty years of experience in applying the techniques of decision analysis to complex problems of government and industry. He served as an officer in the U.S. Army, and currently works as a consultant in the private sector. Mr. Bresnick is a field expert in the areas of decision analysis, risk analysis, strategic planning, resource allocation and budgetary analysis, evaluation of competing alternatives, cost-benefit analysis, and business area analysis.

He is an Executive Senior Analyst at Innovative Decisions, Inc., a company that he co-founded and previously led as President/CEO, and he is currently President of Innovative Decision Analysis.

His teaching experience includes time as an Assistant Professor of Systems and Decision Analysis at the U.S. Military Academy, as well as teaching courses for the MSOM program.

He is a Registered Professional Engineer (PE), a Certified Analytics Professional (CAP), a Certified Financial Planner (CFP), and a Fellow in the Society of Decision Professionals.



Group Facilitation

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18 December 2018



Why Talk about Facilitation with Faculty?

Educators have many skills and talent, but sometimes have little formal training in:

1. **Decision making**
2. **Strategic planning**
3. **Creative thinking/cognitive biases**
4. **Time management**
5. **Group facilitation**

I have addressed some of these topics in a previous webinar; this year we will look at Group Facilitation as a talent that can serve you well.

Purpose of Today's Training

Purpose: To learn the basics of how to facilitate groups

We'll cover:

- What is a facilitator?
 - Roles and Responsibilities
 - Tasks and Behaviors
- Group behaviors and facilitator responses



What is a Facilitator?



Oh good, the
facilitator is here

What is a Facilitator?

“A facilitator is a person who **helps** a group free itself from internal obstacles or difficulties so that it may **more efficiently and effectively** pursue the achievement of **desired outcomes**”



Kayser,
Mining Group Gold

Facilitator versus Subject Matter Expert

- **Facilitator** - manages the group processes, intervenes when necessary to keep the group on target.
- **Subject Matter Expert** - provides content and expertise on the topics under discussion.

Sometimes, your role is as a Facilitator, not as a Subject Matter Expert! Your expertise will enable you to ask the right questions and understand the responses



Facilitating Groups versus Teams

• Groups

- get together on a one-time or infrequent basis
- no sense of group identity
- may be little reason to seek or expect consensus

• Teams

- get together regularly
- common sense of group identity and purpose
- consensus is often the goal



Facilitator Tasks



- Assist in group process
- Focus the group efforts and energies
- Gain group commitment
- Define needs, issues, and concerns
- Manage expectations
- Keep the group on topic and on schedule
- Set a positive tone for the meetings
- Encourage participation when appropriate
- Analyze and suggest when appropriate
- Manage conflicts
- Keep notes
- Summarize and synthesize discussions

Communications Skills for Facilitators

- **Ask questions carefully**

- Clear vocabulary
- Clarify and elaborate
- Ask for feedback
- Be consistent



- **Listen to the responses carefully**

- Give the speaker your full attention
- Stop speaking
- Don't worry about what you will do and say next
- Use listening techniques such as paraphrasing, repeating word for word, etc.
- Be cognizant of your body language and expressions

- **Provide feedback**

Facilitator Responsibilities

As a facilitator, you must:

- Stimulate the conversation
- Stay neutral on content
- Understand, not evaluate participants' feelings
- Refocus the group based upon desired outcomes
- Stay focused on the situation, not the group behaviors
- Balance group participation



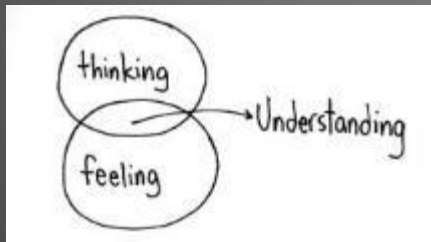
Stimulate the conversation

- **Listen actively**
- **Ask probing questions**
 - Non-threatening questions
 - Specific questions
 - Open, not closed ended questions
- **Four questioning techniques:**
 - Direct questions
 - General address questions
 - Return questions
 - Relay questions



Understand, don't evaluate participants' feelings

- Distinguish among facts, feelings, and emotions
- Use non-evaluative probing
- Look for verbal and non-verbal cues



Refocus the group based upon desired outcomes

“If you don’t know where you are going, you’ll wind up someplace else and not know how you got there”

- Yogi Berra, American philosopher



Facilitators We Dread

GOOD BAD

From Facilitator Guide, Tom Siebold

- **The Drill Sergeant** – is rigidly stuck on the agenda, puts clock above content
- **The Guardian** – makes certain that all conversation goes through him or her and not from participant to participant
- **The Know-it-all** – always has the answer. The know-it-all can't say "I don't know."
- **The Ice Cube** – is distant and aloof and is unwilling to personalize the experience
- **The Blabber** – loves the sound of his or her own voice.
- **The Pretender** – doesn't ask real questions but only "pretense questions" that are really designed to give the facilitator an excuse to pontificate.
- **The "I Can't Hear You" Guy** – refuses to listen.
- **The Marathon Man** – piles activities on top of one another, doesn't allow for breaks, and ignores the need for groups to reflect on a topic or idea
- **The Parrot** – relentlessly recaps information, restates ideas, and summarizes
- **The Molasses Man** – is painfully slow, has no feel for pacing, variety, or style
- **The Passenger** – lets people talk too long and gives up the reins of facilitation,
- **The Storyteller** – tells far too many cutesy stories, never really gets to content.
- **The Centerpiece** – makes himself or herself the real content of the workshop
- **The Tunnel Driver** – keeps doing the same thing hour after hour

Dysfunctional Group Behaviors

- Silence
- Chronic Objectors to the process
- Dominators
- Side conversations
- Rambling answers
- Off-the-wall comments
- Latecomers
- Conflict



For All Dysfunctional Behaviors:

- Be friendly, but firm in confronting the behavior
- Focus on the behavior, not the individual
- Highlight the impact of disruptive behaviors
- Suggest more functional behaviors
- Avoid sustained one-on-one arguments/ exchanges
- Use others in the group to help



Dealing with Silence



Behavior - *Participant(s) have nothing or little to say during discussion periods; group seems to stagnate; people may be introverted or intimidated*

Facilitator response:

Dealing with Silence



Behavior - *Participant(s) have nothing or little to say during discussion periods; group seems to stagnate; people may be introverted or intimidated*

Facilitator response:

- Ask probing questions
- Call upon individuals by name
- Go around the room for comments
- Talk to individual outside the group to find out if there is a reason for silence with which you can deal

Chronic Objectors



Behavior - *Participant(s) complain about the process, about the time they are wasting by being here, about the last time they participated in a study, attacking others' ideas etc.*

Facilitator response:

Chronic Objectors



Behavior - *Participant(s) complain about the process, about the time they are wasting by being here, about the last time they participated in a study, attacking others' ideas etc.*

Facilitator response:

- Keep tempers in check
- Make light of the circumstance
- Identify the positive in the experience
- Reframe the issue
- Ask for positive recommendations
- Talk privately to the individuals

Side Conversations



Behavior - *Participant(s) disrupt the session by talking to those around them while others have the floor*

Facilitator response:

Side Conversations



Behavior - *Participant(s) disrupt the session by talking to those around them while others have the floor*

Facilitator response:

- Remind the group (not the individual) that we need one conversation at a time so that you can hear
- Ask the offender to “share” the conversation with the group
- Talk privately to the individual(s)
- Use a facilitation aid such as the “talking stick”



Dominators



Behavior - *Participant(s) dominates conversations, interrupts others, has to have the last word; asserting authority or superiority; the resident expert*

Facilitator response:



Dominators



Behavior - *Participant(s) dominates conversations, interrupts others, has to have the last word; asserting authority or superiority; the resident expert*

Facilitator response:

- If it adds value and is temporary, allow it
- Acknowledge the dominator's contribution, involve others in the discussions
- Identify the positive in the experience
- Ask for positive recommendations
- Talk privately to the individuals
- Use ground rules, e.g., floor time per person

Rambling Conversations



Behavior - *Participant(s) talk about everything but the problem at hand; “war stories” dominate the conversations*

Facilitator response:

Rambling Conversations



Behavior - *Participant(s) talk about everything but the problem at hand; “war stories” dominate the conversations*

Facilitator response:

- Refocus the group
- Deflect the errant conversations
- Restate the urgency and time constraints

Off-the-Wall Comments



Behavior - *Participant(s) make off-color, inappropriate, or distracting comments during the session; use of non-verbal, physical gestures*

Facilitator response:

Off-the-Wall Comments



Behavior - *Participant(s) make off-color, inappropriate, or distracting comments during the session; use of non-verbal, physical gestures*

Facilitator response:

- Do not allow this to continue, but avoid direct confrontation in front of the group
- Take individual(s) aside, be firm but polite
- Have a respected member of the group take the individual aside

Dealing with Latecomers



Behavior - *Participant(s) arrive in the middle of the Focus Group*

Facilitator response:

Can I make up
for arriving late
by leaving early?

Dealing with Latecomers



Behavior - *Participant(s) arrive in the middle of the Focus Group*

Facilitator response:

- Do not stop the group, do not repeat everything
- Take individual(s) aside, bring them up to speed
- If necessary, have them stay afterwards to complete the exercise



Managing Conflict



- **Some friction is good if it:**
 - stimulates critical thinking
 - enhances creativity
 - minimizes stagnation
- **If there is destructive conflict:**
 - Clarify opposing points of view
 - Define areas of agreement
 - Use effective problem-solving techniques
 - Identify areas of disagreement
 - In some cases, try to resolve differences



Managing Conflict (Con't)

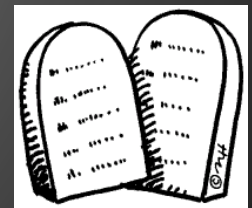


Conflict can be deal with through:

- Avoidance-“no winner, no loser”, no solution
 - withdraw, give up, leave
- Collaboration - “win-win”
 - generate solutions, probe, brainstorm
- Accommodation - someone “wins”, someone “loses”
 - give in, yield, smooth over
- Compromise - “no winner, no loser”
 - tradeoffs, middle ground, lowest common denominator
- Domination- someone “wins”, someone “loses”
 - overwhelm, defend, heated argument, pull rank

10 Commandments for “Active” Facilitators

1. You are there to help group process, not to solve their issues
2. Always stay focused on the goal of the session
3. Rational argument will not win over intense emotionalism!
4. Listen to what the group is telling you
5. Be flexible -- if one approach fails, shift to another
6. Display a positive attitude - the group will feed off of it
7. Never display your anger to the group, even if justified
8. Maintain your sense of humor and use it with the group
9. Stay aware of time and schedules
10. Relax and have fun; enjoy your work!



Source: Unknown

10 Commandments for “Passive” Facilitators

1. Do not do anything the team can do for itself
2. Intervene only to satisfy the team’s needs (not your own)
3. Wait before intervening; give the team time to solve the problem on its own
4. Start and end with validating the individual
5. Avoid editing, let the team use its own methods and language
6. Try to speak no longer than 30 seconds at a time
7. Do more asking than telling. Do more listening than talking.
8. Do not try to talk over the team. It always backfires.
9. When you hear the same thing for the third time, intervene
10. When the group falls silent, that is your clue to keep silent.



Source: Slideserve.com

Questions?



Facilitation Class Exercise



Survival Exercise – Part 1

Instructions: While on a Retreat sponsored by the the University of Arkansas, you and 25 others become adrift on a rented yacht in the Atlantic Ocean. As a consequence of a surprise storm causing a fire of unknown origin, much of the yacht and its contents have been destroyed. The yacht is now slowly sinking. Your location is unclear because of the destruction of critical navigational equipment and because the guests and the crew were distracted trying to bring the fire under control. Your best estimate is that you are approximately four hundred miles south-southwest of the nearest land. Following is a list of items that are intact and undamaged after the fire. In addition to these articles, you have a serviceable, rubber life raft with oars. The raft is large enough to carry 12 people, and all the items in the following list. Your task is to select the top 6 items that will enhance survivability.

List of Available Items

- Sextant shaving mirror
- Five-gallon can of water
- Mosquito netting
- One case of U.S. Army MRE-rations (Pork and beans)
- 12 seat cushions (flotation device approved by the USCG)
- Two boxes of chocolate bars
- A set of very sharp kitchen knives
- Two-gallon can of oil-gas mixture shark repellent
- Twenty square feet of opaque plastic
- One quart of 160-proof Puerto Rican rum
- Fifteen feet of nylon rope
- Fishing kit
- Maps of the Pacific Ocean

Adapted from Pfeiffer's Classic Activities for Building Better Teams/© 2003 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Survival Exercise – Part 2

Instructions: Now that you have decided what equipment to take with you, you must decide who will go in the life raft since it will sink if it holds more than 12 people. What are the criteria that you will use to decide who goes in the lifeboat?

Any Final Questions?



M.S. IN OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT

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- 30 Credit Hours (10 Graduate Courses)
 - With up to 4 pre-requisite classes
- Five 8-week Sessions Per Year
- No GRE/GMAT required with 3.0 Bachelor's GPA
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- Can be completed in one year, but you have up to six years to complete

PROJECT MANAGEMENT GRADUATE CERTIFICATE AT A GLANCE:

- Online and Live Course Options
- 12 Credit Hours (4 Graduate Courses)
- 8-week sessions
- Five Enrollment Periods: Aug, Oct, Jan, Mar, May
- Entire Program Cost: Approximately \$5,000
- 2.5 GPA with a Bachelor's Degree required for admission
- Certificate courses can also count toward MSOM degree

FULL WEBINAR SCHEDULE:

Date:	Webinar Title:	Presenter:
Wednesday, August 29th	<i>Presenting to Sr. Decision Makers: Clear, Concise, & Complete</i>	Kirk Michealson
Tuesday, September 25th	<i>Leading Through Change **Live Presentation at Walmart Home Office**</i>	Travis McNeal
Thursday, October 25th	<i>Stop “Droning” on about Unmanned Aircraft Systems and Do Something About It</i>	Dr. Ham
Tuesday, November 27th	<i>Introduction to Data Analytics and Emerging Real-World Use Cases</i>	Dr. Chaovalitwongse
Tuesday, December 18th	<i>Group Facilitation</i>	Terry Bresnick
Wednesday, January 23rd	<i>Machine Learning</i>	Dr. Rainwater
Thursday, February 21st	<i>Project Selection: The \$1 Trillion Decisions</i>	Leonard Nethercutt
Wednesday, March 27th	<i>BlockChain</i>	Dr. Ed Pohl
Thursday, April 25th	<i>An Engineered Approach to Site Selection: Determining Where Facilities Should Be Located</i>	Kerry Melton

THANKS FOR ATTENDING!

- For information about our flexible degree program options, email Mindy Hunthrop, hunthrop@uark.edu.
- The video from today's webinar will be available on our website within about a week, registered participants will receive an email with the video link.
- We hope to see you online next month!