

*“The goal of facilitation is enhanced group effectiveness.”*



# A Glimpse Into Being a Facilitator for Group and Team Meetings

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# What a Facilitator Does

Facilitators attend meetings to guide members through their discussions, step-by-step, encouraging them to reach their own conclusions.

Contributions facilitators make to group/team meetings are:

- Research the needs of the group
- Help define a goal and objectives
- Prepare a detailed agenda
- Help create rules of conduct
- Question and probe for more information
- Offer tools and techniques for optimal communication
- Encourage participation
- Guide discussions
- Make notes
- Manage member differences
- Redirect ineffective behavior
- Provide feedback
- Help to achieve closure
- Help with accessing resources
- Provide a way to evaluate the meeting



*"A meeting without a facilitator is about as effective as a sports team trying to play a game without a referee."*

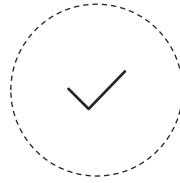




# 5 Fundamental Ways Facilitators Help Guide Discussions

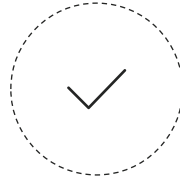


*“Facilitation is a helping role.”*



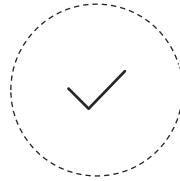
## Stay Neutral on the Content

Since facilitators have no stake in the outcome, they can remain neutral and help members better communicate and reach an amicable outcome.



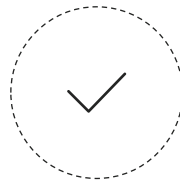
## Listen Actively

This helps a facilitator understand how to best guide the meeting and can engage member participation through eye contact and body language.



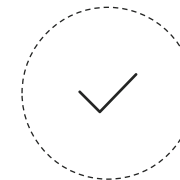
## Ask Questions

Asking questions is an extremely important aspect as this helps test and challenge assumptions, find hidden information, and get to root causes quicker.



## Paraphrase Continuously

This skill helps to acknowledge member input, engage members, and allows for additional clarification of ideas.



## Summarize Discussions

This is done at the end of a discussion topic and can help check for accuracy, consensus, and provide closure.



# Using Open Ended Questions

When facilitating, it is effective to use open ended questions that require more than a Yes or No answer. This will help stimulate thinking. Open ended questions begin with “**What, How, When, and Why.**”

## Examples of Open Ended Questions:

### Fact-Finding

**What** kind of training are you doing now?

### Feeling-Finding

**How** do you feel about the effectiveness of the current training?

### Tell-Me-More

**How** can you be more specific?

### Best / Least

**What's** the best thing about your current training program?

### Third-Party

Some people find that designing new training is too time-consuming. **How** does that sound to you?

### Magic Wand

If time and money were no obstacle, **what** kind of training would you design for the department?

*“Be aware that responding to direct questions can take you out of the facilitator role.”*



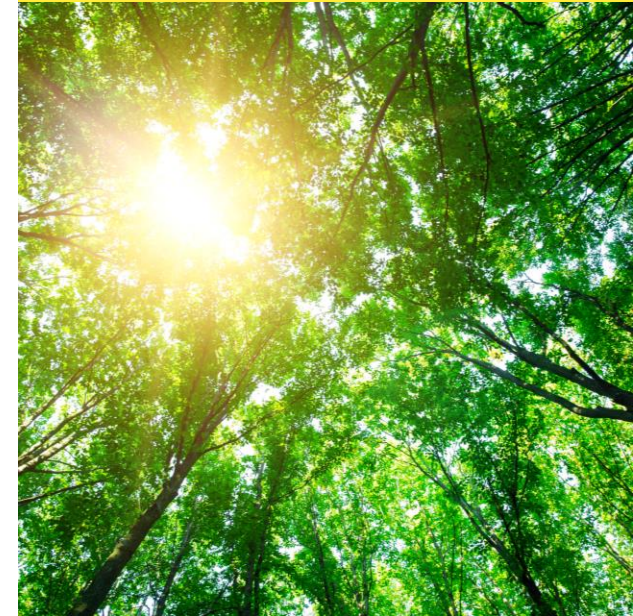
# Strategies for Internal Leaders to Facilitate More Effectively



If you choose an internal member to facilitate a discussion, they should try to utilize some of the following strategies. This will help them to remain neutral and create an environment where members want to contribute.

- Pick the right topics to facilitate
- Explain what a facilitator does
- Provide the reasoning for taking on the facilitator role
- Explain how long you will be in the facilitator role
- Know the levels of empowerment and communicate this to members
  - For example, will members be deciding or generating ideas
- Accept that group generated idea(s) might have flaws
- Help identify traits of an effective solution and ask for additional input
- Ask questions with a neutral tone so there are no motives implied
- Avoid leading questions
- Provide structure for complex topics
- Share facilitation tasks with members

*“Mastering the language of facilitation will help you avoid sounding critical or judgmental.”*





# Starting a Facilitation

As the facilitator you should be the first person to arrive to the meeting. An ideal room set-up is large, uses modular furniture, and evenly spaced round tables with groups of 5-8 members. When starting a facilitation, you will want to describe the purpose, process, and time it will take and consider the following:

- Your Introduction
- Role Clarification (Facilitator and Members)
- Member Introductions
- Housekeeping Items
- Warm-up Activity to Help Relax the Group
- Review Data Collected and Post for All Members to See
- Review the Agenda and Clarify the Objectives
- Review the Behavioral Norms and Meeting Guidelines
- Review Member Empowerment Level
- Make a Clear Statement About Each Agenda Item
- Describe the Process, Tools, and Techniques to be Used
- Set the Timeframe for Each Agenda Item
- Start the Discussions





# Ending a Facilitation

The most common problem faced at the end of a meeting is the lack of closure and an undefined path forward. Facilitators can help ensure a decision is reached by making sure action steps are created. Consider the following ways to help close a meeting:

- Provide summary statements about decisions made
- Action items should be accompanied with an action plan
- Note the items not discussed and put those in a parking lot
- Help members create an agenda for the next meeting
- Make digital copies of flipcharts and notes
- Send out an exit survey to members
- Hand out a written evaluation form so members can express immediate feedback
- Thank the participants



*"It's essential to bring proper closure to all discussions."*

# A Glance Into Groups vs Teams

## Group:

“A group is a collection of people who come together to communicate, tackle a problem, or coordinate an event. Even though they may meet often, they’re a group and not a team because they have specific traits.” “Group members typically pursue their own individual goals and groups tend to exhibit “I”-centered behavior when debating.”

## Team:

“A team is a collection of people who come together to achieve a clear and compelling common goal that they have participated in defining. To the members of a true team, that goal is more important than their own individual pursuits.”



## Comparison Chart

Group	Team
“I” focus	“We” focus
Individual purpose	Common goal
Uses external rules of order	Uses team norms
Works alone	Has linked responsibilities
Irregular meetings	Regular meetings
May like each other	Shares a strong bond
Not as trusting	Trusting
Fixed leader	Shared Leadership
Focuses on information sharing	Focuses on problem-solving
Focuses on coordination	Focuses on improvement
Fights to be right	Debates to make decisions





## Reference:

Bens, I. (2018). *Facilitating with ease! : core skills for facilitators, team leaders and members, managers, consultants and trainers* (4th edition.). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.