

Ready2Go Marketing Solutions Proudly Presents...

The Art of *Effective* *Facilitation*

**12 Simple, Successful Strategies
for Delivering a Learning Program
with Power & Presence**



By Jonathan Tessier



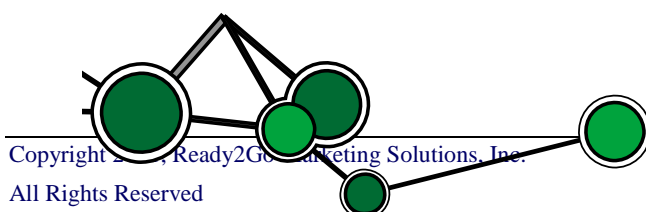
The **Art** of Effective **Facilitation**

*12 Simple, Successful Strategies for Delivering
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Introduction - Defining Facilitation

Several years ago, a young man by the name of Ted was chosen to facilitate a new training program for the company he worked for. Like most facilitators, Ted was chosen because of his years of experience in the subject of the training course.

The first time Ted delivered the new training course, he said too much to the participants, tried to rigidly stay to his instructor's guide outline, and panicked as he fell farther and farther behind schedule. As a result, he pushed people through the remaining activities, didn't debrief them, and decided to skip one whole section of the course.

When I asked him later how he thought it went, he admitted to being nervous, felt as though he had scurried through the training feeling 'two steps behind', and was thrown off by the employees' lack of participation. "They wouldn't answer my questions," he said. "I couldn't pull a response out of them to save my life! They were such a quiet, introverted bunch."

I had spent the entire training session at the back of the room taking notes on how the training went and Ted's job as facilitator. The employee's course feedback also confirmed that things could have gone better, but at the same time didn't consider the training to be a train wreck, either. Generally, Ted



received decent marks, and to his credit had done several things really well. It was also obvious by the rating scores that the employees who had attended this training felt the subject matter was an important, relevant topic to address. It was also clear that more learning and deeper learning could have taken place had Ted been a more skilled facilitator. And in time, I knew Ted would become just that. Comments like, "I was confused by the activity's directions," or "Ted seemed unorganized," or "The course dragged on" all reflected



common mistakes made by those new to the idea of delivering a training program.

When I sat down with Ted minutes after the last employee left the room, I could tell Ted was ready for a less than favorable assessment. He could see the pages of notes I held in my hand. "Don't hold back," he said. "I want to get better at this."

I looked down at my stack of notes, feeling a bit hesitant in my role as 'judge and jury.' "Ted," I said, "So much of what is written here can be corrected and improved if you just keep one simple truth about facilitating a training course in mind. And that truth is this: It's less about what you say, and more about what you do. All people need in order to learn is someone to guide them in the process. Make it simple and clear with them, and they will do the rest."

We spent the next hour going over my notes. Instead of being defensive Ted embraced everything I had to tell him. By the end of our conversation he said, "It makes perfect sense." A week later I sat in on Ted's next course offering. The results were like night and day.

21st Century Training

Standing in front of a group and lecturing is one thing; facilitating a discussion and encouraging interaction is entirely something else. Anyone can stand in front of a group and present information. And indeed, this is what we most often think will happen when we imagine attending a training course. But facilitating training is not about standing at the front of the classroom and dumping information onto people. It's not about hearing yourself speak, or having all eyes attentively fixed upon you. And it certainly doesn't involve lengthy lectures that are jam-packed with juicy 'info-nuggets' that will suddenly enrich people's lives the moment they fall from your lips. If you think this, your training will be, at best, marginally effective.

The 21st Century function of training is shifting from 'teaching' to 'facilitating.' Facilitation speaks to a 'learner-centered' approach to conducting a training program rather than a 'teacher-driven' one.

The Art of Effective Facilitation

12 Simple, Successful Strategies for Delivering a Learning Program with Power & Presence



What follows are 12 key strategies that can help you shift from being a teacher to a facilitator so that you can deliver a training program with power and presence. These strategies help define what facilitation is and the important role delivery plays in any successful training program.

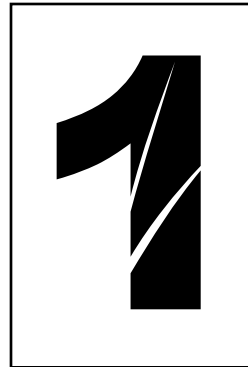
It is recommended that you read through all 12 strategies and just take them in, then go back to those strategies that speak the loudest to your own development needs. Even if all you take away from these strategies is one or two key points, your delivery of a training program can be exponentially improved.

So let these strategies serve as a personal assessment - like holding up a mirror – and be honest with yourself about what is being projected back at you. Improvement only comes once awareness is brought to light. Your ability to be an effective facilitator is closer than you think. So here are the 12 strategies that can accelerate your ability to facilitate a training course with the results you've always wanted.





Strategy #1 - Be Egoless



According to many surveys, people fear public speaking more than they fear death. The fear stems not from the physical act of speaking, but from the fear of being judged poorly by others. Facilitation should be an egoless activity.

The purpose of facilitation is to make participants succeed, not to make the facilitator look important. Facilitators create participation and draw on the wisdom of everyone in a learning program. An effective facilitator will leave participants convinced that they did it themselves.

If you are too nervous when presenting then you may be more concerned with your own failure than the participants' reception of the message. Put what's best for the learner ahead of your own ego.



When it comes to facilitating a learning program, establishing a relationship with your participants trumps your own competence around the topic.

Great facilitators know the value of giving participants constant support and reassurance.

As a facilitator, you are *on* the moment you enter the classroom and until the last person leaves. Your job is a job of



service, and through appropriate levels of energy and personal integrity, you are able to establish rapport with the diverse range of people attending the training.

To be 'egoless' means that you:

- View yourself as a servant to the needs of your participants.
- Make your participants the center of attention.
- Listen intently to understand what is being said by everyone.
- Ensure participants feel ownership for what they have learned.

All of this can only be done by forgetting yourself and being there for your learners.



Strategy #2 - Follow the 'Golden Rule of Facilitation'



The "Golden Rule of Facilitation" goes like this:

"It's not about me and my content;
it's about them and their learning."

When speaking in front of a group, we often think that it is our job to tell others the knowledge we possess. Yet the truth is that learning happens through doing, and facilitating a training program is simply guiding others on that journey of doing.

So step back. Stop talking so much, and let others speak instead. There's a saying in training circles that goes like this: *"Whoever speaks the most learns the most."* Learning is not about the instructor opening up a person's brain and just dumping information in it.

Unfortunately, this is often the case when we just lecture at others.

No, we learn best when we are given the opportunity to do the work of learning ourselves. Learning is about creating meaning, not consuming data. Really let that truth sink in.

A facilitator's job then is to briefly present new information and then to



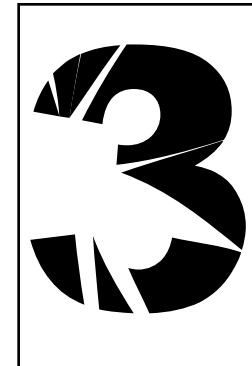


get out of the way and let the learners 'try out' the new information and process it. All the facilitator needs to do is create situations where what people know and what they think about a topic is brought to light.

Remember, people come to training programs with wide and various experience levels, not only with regard to the subject being taught, but with life experiences in general. Facilitators need to allow people the opportunity for expressing what they know and have experienced in their lives. What your learners say about a subject ends up being far more important than what the facilitator has to say about it.



Strategy #3 - Manage the Learning Process



A person who is quite knowledgeable about a subject can easily overwhelm those who are less familiar with the information. The 'process' of learning is quite different than just the delivery of 'content,' and unfortunately, its importance is often ignored since we tend to think of training only from the perspective of giving content.

The 'content' of a training program is the topic of the learning program as expressed in its agenda.

'Process,' on the other hand, deals with how that content is presented, discussed, and experienced during the training program. Think about what methods, procedures, formats, and tools will be used during the training to make learning happen around the content.

Facilitation is the art of going back and forth between the content being presented and the ebb and flow of the process that has been designed to get that content presented and ultimately understood by the learners.

Facilitators work carefully behind

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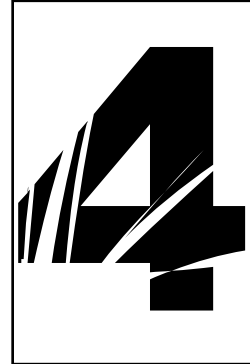


the scenes to make sure that the training is running smoothly and that participants are experiencing successful learning. To pull this off, the facilitator seamlessly coordinates and executes a thousand little details in support of the training program. The facilitator remains flexible to what is going on in the training program and letting the program expand or contract depending on the needs of the participants.

More will be said about managing the learning process under the role of the facilitator as discussed in the next strategy. For right now, remember that there is a big difference between 'content' and 'process' when it comes to learning.

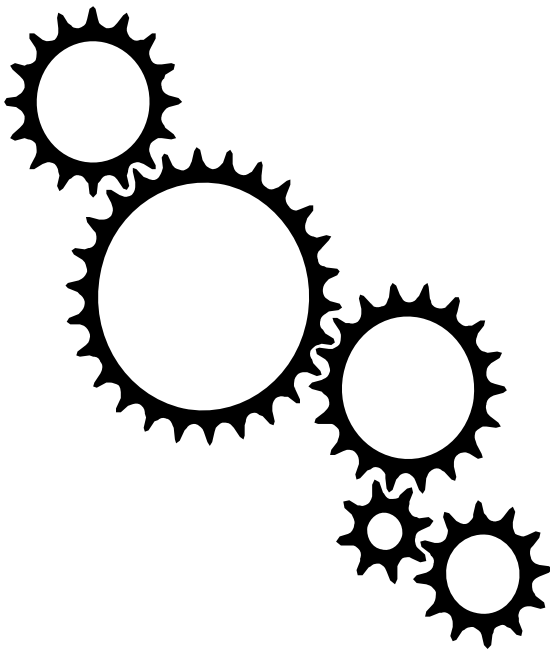


Strategy #4 - Embrace the Five Key Roles of the Facilitator



You are a role model for participants. This means everything you do and say is being watched and evaluated. The question is: "What are they seeing?" As a facilitator, your influence is constant. You don't get to pick and choose the behavior you want to count. Truth is, everything counts!

With this in mind, participants have a right to expect certain skills and abilities from their facilitator. Consider your:



- Clearness in presenting content.
- Enthusiasm for what you are doing.
- Ability to use effective eye contact.
- Tactful, non-judgmental attitude.
- Sense of humor and willingness to have fun.
- Empathy for people.
- Use of people's names and their commitment to memory.
- Ability to give personal attention to all.



In addition to you being a role model, there are five key roles that a facilitator plays during any training program. Understanding these roles and their importance can provide you with a valued perspective on what the facilitator brings to a training program beyond expertise on a topic. Live out these roles during your training and watch the way participants will be more willing to engage in the program.

Role #1 – The facilitator creates a safe environment for learning to take place.

Before the course, take the time to greet learners individually. Remember, when people first arrive at the training, they are filled with doubts, concerns, and perhaps fears. These negative barriers to learning must be replaced with positive feelings about the learning that is about to take place.

Also, when you begin the course, let participants know that training is a time for asking questions, making mistakes, experimenting, and trying out new skills and acquiring new abilities.

With both of the above techniques, the facilitator is merely establishing a safe learning environment for learners. Adults will not open up and participate in any learning unless there's a feeling of safety in it.

Because of this vulnerability, there's a natural tendency in participants to worry about things like, "Is this training going to show others that I don't have my act together?" or "Am I going to be called upon during the workshop and made to look foolish when I don't have the right answer?"

So when we say that the facilitator's first role is "to create a safe environment," it means that the facilitator must first eliminate the conscious and unconscious blocks that people bring with them to a training program and that will inhibit learning from happening. It's up to the facilitator to make everyone feel comfortable and to replace negative feelings and assumptions about learning with positive assumptions.

One of the best ways to create a safe learning environment is through the use of positive suggestions. Sometimes facilitators think they are being positive when in actuality they are reinforcing the negative assumptions people carry about learning, saying such things as:



"I have a ton to cover and not much time to do it in."

"I know this subject is dry, but we'll keep you awake."

"This subject can be complex, but hopefully you'll understand it."

Instead of qualifying results before they have even happened, or setting up the whole situation in anticipation of a negative outcome, the facilitator needs to project success and be convinced that the outcome for everyone is going to be a positive one. So make positive suggestions about the outcome of the learning participants are about to embark on such as:

"You're going to find this fun and interesting."

"This is going to be extremely valuable for you."

"You are going to be successful in this training and gain learning that's going to make a real difference in your lives."

"You are really going to enjoy this."

"You are going to find this educational and relevant."

When the facilitator sets this sort of success into the minds of participants right from the start of the training, it works to ease apprehension and loosen participants up so that they can be ready to jump in and learn. When you set the stage for something positive to happen, chances are something positive is going to happen.

Role #2 – The facilitator stimulates the participant's thinking.

If you think about the traditional way of lecture-based learning, the teacher at the front of the classroom is really just spoon-feeding information to participants, and participants are just sitting there passively receiving that information. But as indicated previously in Strategy #2, content is not something that participants simply absorb from someone else, but instead something they create for themselves. Meaning and therefore learning comes out of what participants do through their own efforts, talk about with others, and reflect upon for themselves.



The importance of stimulating participant's thinking also speaks to why we need to really question the over-use of lecturing as the sole means of giving people information or of conducting a learning workshop. There are some enormous problems with using lecturing as the only means of giving information.

To understand the concern surrounding lecturing, there is some important data you should know. According to numerous studies and resources, when you have a group of people who have come together to learn, you can break down their preferred method of learning as follows:

- **10% - 15%** of those in attendance will be 'auditory' learners. These are the people who learn best by hearing or listening to somebody else.
- **40% - 45%** of those in attendance will be 'visual' learners. These are the people who learn best by actually looking at something.
- **40% - 45%** of those in attendance will be 'kinesthetic' or 'tactile' learners. These are the people who learn best through their physical bodies, touching something or working in some way with their hands.

It's very important to understand that if the above numbers are true, then clearly lecturing is not the best way to have participants learn since lecturing will likely appeal to only 10-15% of your audience.

As a facilitator, you must understand the importance of this when stimulating your participant's thinking. Remind yourself: "I've got to speak the language of all my learners and approach learning in the ways that are going to work for them." That's how you can fundamentally stimulate a participant's thinking in a training program - appeal to their preferred way of learning.

Role #3 – The facilitator involves the participant in the learning process.

The facilitator must use every opportunity at his or her disposal to hand control of the learning over to participants. It also means that in the most simple, seemingly insignificant ways, a facilitator can involve participants in the learning process.



For example, what rule is there that states that the facilitator is the one who hands out training materials to all the participants? Rather, why not just put them out on a table at the back of the room and tell participants to get up and get the materials for themselves?

Again, any opportunity a facilitator has to turn something that's typically passive into something that's active for the participant will benefit learning. Even the mere fact of asking participants to stand up from their tables and walk around the room and talk to somebody else is living out this idea of involvement.

So again, whatever you can do, however big or small, to make learning an active process for participants rather than a passive consumption of information will make for a more completely engaging and successful training program. This makes a huge difference in how the training is received, yet it's a challenge for most facilitators because it means letting go of the reins and letting your learners steer for a while.

Role #4 – The facilitator manages the learning process.

A facilitator must manage the overall time of the workshop, but at the same time, not be so rigid with the agenda that the learning that could be happening at any moment is suddenly cut off for the sake of sticking to the course schedule.

This role is challenging because it means that the facilitator has to pay attention to all the little clues that are being spoken in an unspoken manner by participants. Since that's a difficult and challenging task, most facilitators shy away from this role because it requires the facilitator to be always 'on' during the training program.

Managing the learning process is quite the juggling act every time training is presented. Yes, you have your schedule and you want to say, "Okay, I've got a three-hour or two-hour workshop, or a one hour teleseminar, and I have to make sure I honor that and end when the workshop is supposed to end."

Still, you must also be like an accordion and let the program expand to more than what was planned where it needs to, and at the same time, compress it in other areas where the learning is happening more quickly. This expanding and contracting takes a great deal of judgment on the part of the facilitator.



Managing the learning process and creating 'flow' in a training program requires a facilitator to quietly adjust the workshop's time or agenda to meet the unique needs of its participants. The truth is that no two groups of participants will ever be the same.

Managing the learning process also means that it's vital that facilitators honor each and every participant that is attending the program. Again, the overall goal of the facilitator is to make it easy for participants to learn. Whatever will work for participants must be recognized and supported.

Role #5 – The facilitator insures individual participant accountability.

The fifth role of a facilitator is to ensure individual participant accountability.

Now, what does this mean?

The key word here is 'accountability,' and what accountability refers to is that the participants, not the facilitator, are responsible for their own learning.

If the facilitator sees someone who's not taking notes, or who's not communicating with the other participants in a group activity, then they have the responsibility of approaching that person in private and checking in with them on how it's going. "Hey, I'm noticing that you're not really involved or you're not taking any notes or you're really not interacting with the rest of the people in your group. What's going on? What do you need?"

Letting participants know that you are paying attention and that it's not acceptable for anyone to be sitting passively and not doing anything will send an important message that as the facilitator you genuinely care about each participant and want to ensure that everyone is actively involved and taking away as much learning as possible.

Participants have to participate. When the facilitator notices someone that is not doing that, they must inquire into what is going on. Certainly, the facilitator must broach the issue carefully, doing it in a way that doesn't sound in the least bit accusatory. And the facilitator certainly can't call the disengaged participant on it in front of the other participants because then the person would just feel embarrassed and shut down even more.



Still, at some point, the facilitator needs to graciously let the participant know, “Hey, more is expected of you.” Again, if you think about all five roles discussed, the underlying thread that connects all of them is the fact that it is the facilitator’s responsibility to make sure that learning is happening and he or she is doing everything in their power to make it so. At the same time, the facilitator can’t get people to learn if they don’t want to; they can only offer and encourage participants with every opportunity to join in. It’s still up to participants to make the choice to want to engage in the training and learn.



Strategy #5 - Notice the Three "P's" of Learning



A facilitator must constantly be monitoring participant energy levels so that the learning needs of all are being met. The facilitator remains keenly attentive and picks up on the non-verbal signals from the group. He or she is aware of those subtle shifts of building or dissipating interest and the impact these shifts have on learning.



It takes a good sense of judgment by the facilitator to say, "Okay, I am sensing a lot of energy from the group right now around this particular topic or during this particular activity, and therefore, I'm going to let it go on for a little bit longer than it's supposed to go."

Yet at other times, the facilitator must be aware of the opposite happening, which is, "Hey, the energy seems to be winding down ahead of schedule here, so that's my cue to bring everybody back together and to move on to the next topic."

An effective facilitator will be willing and able to pick up on the thoughts and attitudes of the group through the often palpable mood that exists at any given



moment in the classroom, and even over the phone. But to help in learning to detect this mood, pay attention to the following three "P's" going on at any time in a learning program:

Pace – This refers to the tempo of the training. Tempo can be defined as the characteristic speed at which the training is taking place. What is the rhythm of the learning program? Does the program feel like it is rushing ahead or dragging behind? Does it feel as if things have slowed up or sped forward? Is this rate conducive to learning or a detriment to it?

Process – The term process speaks to the unfolding of the training program through its series of actions as outlined in its design. Every learning program is made up of a series of interdependent and linked stages that create outputs that serve as inputs for the next stage. In other words, a training program should feel as though it progresses; it not only builds upon what came before, but also transitions effortlessly from one topic to the next.

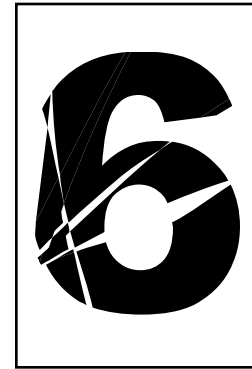
A facilitator can build bridges linking concepts by referring back to what has come before and carefully pointing participants to what lies ahead, thus carefully securing and maintaining the group's momentum. Often, transitioning from one topic to the next within a learning program results in the total fumbling of the group's energy much like a dropped call from a cell phone. Facilitators must be careful to continue to hold up the learning program as it shifts through its progressive stages.

Pulse – In the medical field, the concept of pulse refers to the rhythmic contraction and expansion of an artery due to the surge of blood coming from the beat of the heart. When facilitating a training program, pulse also indicates an intermittent contraction and expansion - not of blood - but instead of energy brought on by the emotions and sentiments of participants at any given moment.

The facilitator is always paying attention to these sudden changes in mood and making whatever changes are necessary for the sake of learning.



Strategy #6 - Know Who the Adult Learner Is



We start learning the moment we're born. We grow up learning. We learn from our parents, our siblings and our friends. We get jobs, start businesses, and raise families – all the time learning.

What makes us different as 'adult learners' compared to learning as children is how complex we've become - how our experiences, tastes, habits, personal motivation and endless other filters affect our learning. As a facilitator this may

seem overwhelming to have to deal with, but thanks to a gentleman by the name of Malcolm Knowles, we can understand the adult learner and what this term really means.



Malcolm Shepherd Knowles was an influential American educator and promoter of adult education. He lived from 1913 to 1997 and is considered by many as the father of adult learning. His theory of 'Andragogy' has helped countless educators in creating and facilitating learning programs around several key adult learning principles. Understanding these principles can go a long way in assuring that the learning programs we facilitate will be every appealing to the adult learner.



The term 'Andragogy' is Greek and means '*man-leading*.' As the name implies, adult learning is fundamentally about recognizing and putting the adult learner first in a learning program. Let's look at Knowles' four basic principles and what the facilitator can do to make sure these principles are being honored during training.

1. The Need for Self-direction

Adult learners need to know why they have to learn something before they will learn it. This stems from the adult's need to 'take charge' and be involved in their own learning. In other words, the adult learner wants to be self-directed.

Adults are used to taking responsibility for their own lives, and this conditioning spills over into the realm of learning. Make sure your learning program affords its participants plenty of opportunities for discussion and learner-centered activities. Setting aside time for discussions is a simple way to ease the complex adult learner and his or her need for self-direction.

2. The Role of the Adult's Experience

Adult learners have lived extensive lives and bring to any learning program a variety of experiences. These experiences represent a rich resource for learning and can impact the way in which a participant approaches a new learning experience. Because the adult learner sees learning through the lens of past experiences, new information will need to be digested and incorporated into existing patterns of thought and perception.

A keen facilitator will determine as much as possible what participants already know about the topic. Asking participants to openly share their own experiences on the topic with the larger group is a simple way to honor the value they bring to a training class.

3. The Adult's Readiness to Learn



Adults will only learn what they feel the *need* to learn. They are most interested in, and motivated by, learning that will have immediate relevance to their jobs or personal lives.

Adults also need to understand the big picture. By seeing this big picture, they can recognize more clearly the relevance of what they are learning and how it fits into the overall scheme of life. The savvy facilitator will ensure that this big picture is revealed and understood by all.

Use real world examples and analogies that people can relate to. Make the topic of your program come alive with your own personal examples. Remember: "One good analogy can be worth three hours of discussion."

4. The Need for Problem-centered Learning

The days of abstract theory and concepts no longer works. Learning must be practical and realistic. It must be problem-centered rather than subject-centered. The effective facilitator helps participants understand how learning a particular skill will help them be more successful in their lives.

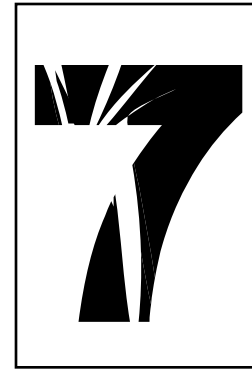
Since knowledge and skills will help adults solve problems or complete tasks, they need to be able to apply what they have learned as quickly as possible.

In Summary

Adults are complex creatures based on a lifetime of experiences. Give them credit for the knowledge they bring to training. Let them know where you will be taking them on their learning journey. Let them share ideas and real life situations with others. Let them experience learning through doing. Let them know how they can use your material or topics in their own lives. Let them own their learning. Let them know what they've learned after going through your training program. In other words, *let them...*



Strategy #7 - Remember: It's About P-E-O-P-L-E



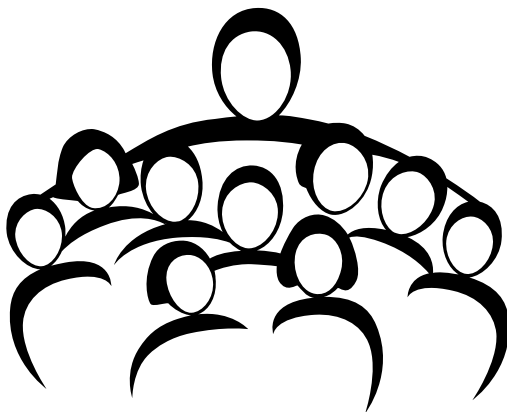
Facilitating training is really all about people. It is also about the quality of the program's delivery. Here is a great acronym to help the facilitator remember that their own delivery of a learning program will greatly affect the people it's meant to enrich. When delivering a training program, remember...

P-E-O-P-L-E.

P = Posture:

How are you coming across to participants? How do you use your hands?
What's your stance like? What is your body communicating?

For example:



- Hands Steeple – confident or superior.
- Hands Clapsed – uneasy, fretful.
- Arms Crossed – closed off, unconvinced of what's being said.
- Picking Lint – dissatisfaction.
- Touching Nose – doubtful.
- 'L' Chin Rest –evaluating.
- Mouth Blocked – resisting speech.
- Fig Leaf – Self-control, nervous.
- Arms Out – open, earnest.



Always hold your posture in a natural manner. Nod your head to show understanding and to encourage participants to continue. Never fold your arms; place your arms on your hips; clutch one arm as if it was wounded; or keep your hands hidden inside your pockets.

E = Eye Contact:

In a recent study, facilitators that were rated 'sincere' looked at the audience 64% of the time, while those rated 'insincere' looked at the audience only 21% of the time.

Making eye contact will sustain people's attention, and making eye contact with everyone will make each person feel as if you are talking directly to them.

The old rule of looking above the heads of your audience doesn't work. Instead, look people directly in the eye. Sweep the audience with your eyes, staying 2-3 seconds on each person. This will give each participant the impression that you are speaking to him/her personally. When a glance has been returned, move on to the next person.

If you are unsure of your material, your eye contact will appear hesitant. As a prerequisite to good eye contact, the facilitator must know his or her material thoroughly.

O = Orientation:

How do you hold yourself with regard to the training? Remember these points that relate to orientation:

- Make your relationships with learners more of a focus than content.
- Adopt the role of a guide rather than an expert. Don't present your opinions as if they were facts.
- Make sure your point of view is not perceived as more important than the learners.



- Recognize that a great deal of learning will happen between learners rather than just between you and the learners.
- Don't get involved too quickly if learners are experiencing difficulty in an activity. It is better to have fewer than too many intrusions.
- Give all credit for what is achieved during training to the learners.

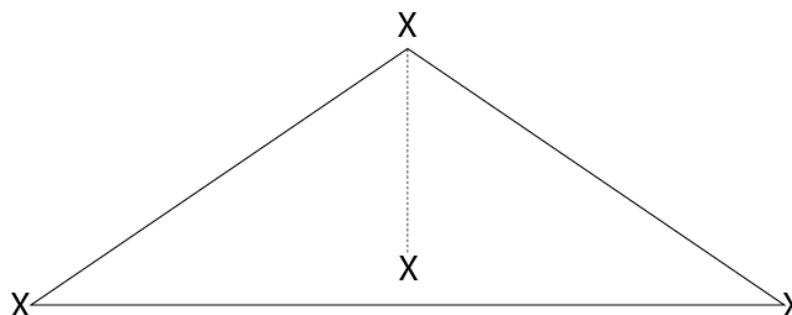
P = Proximity:

How close do you come to participants?

Many facilitators hide behind lecterns or sit in seats at the head of the class. Moving toward and among the learners is an important gesture on the part of the facilitator, signaling to participants that there is no gap between teacher and student. Closing the distance between yourself and participants can also convey enthusiasm and passion for what you are teaching.

At the same time, excessive facilitator movement can be distracting. Many facilitators, without realizing it, pace back and forth like targets in a shooting gallery, or sway back and forth in their stance as if they are on a boat at sea.

To avoid this, a good habit is to mark four points on the floor as displayed in this diagram:



Move deliberately between these points throughout the training program. The point at the top of the triangle is that point that is closest to the participants. It is here that any key points are made or questions addressed as this is a power position. Then directly back in a straight line from the power position is the main speaking position. It is here that the facilitator presents information or makes points that are more neutral or less significant in nature. For variety, facilitators shift to either side of the room. Coming to the sides of the room will also allow



the facilitator to connect with and include those participants sitting in seats at the edges of the room.

As a general guideline, facilitators will spend approximately 30% of their time presenting from the sides of the room. They will occupy the neutral position approximately 60% of the time, and express key points or take questions from the power position 10% of the time.

L = Listening:

Are you actively listening and engaging with participants?

The ability to be fully present for participants may be one of the facilitator's most important qualities as this ability can have a number of positive effects on learners. The ability of the facilitator to focus on learners will assist participants in exploring their thoughts; reinforce their participation, and make them feel comfortable and accepted.

The facilitator not only hears every word spoken by participants, but also the context of the conversation and all its nuances. In order to actively listen, a facilitator must assume a relaxed posture, and face participants squarely. It's even advisable to take a small step toward the participant or lean in a bit towards them. At the same time, the facilitator must block out the world around them and to manage any distracting thoughts they may be having internally. Again, the importance of eye contact cannot be understated when it comes to listening.

Throughout the interaction, the facilitator is encouraged to show their interest in what the participant is saying through the use of head nods, and comments such as "uh-huh," "okay," "sure," or "say more."

When the participant is finished speaking, the facilitator can demonstrate his or her attention by paraphrasing what the participant has said. This will allow the facilitator to check for understanding, which will lead to clarifications on any unclear items.

E = Expressions:



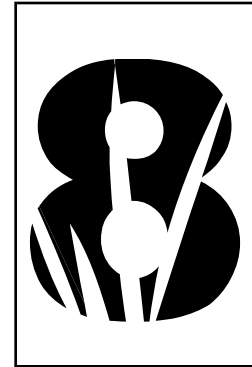
The best way to show intensity is through your voice and facial expressions. Since your voice is one of your main tools as a facilitator, it's important to understand some of its characteristics such as raising or lowering your voice, emphasizing key words, and changing the rate of your speech.

Other considerations:

- When facilitating, your voice will need to project with more volume than when you are speaking naturally with others in everyday conversations.
- Beware of your voice becoming monotone or following a predictable pitch pattern.
- Make sure you are articulating your words as clearly as possible for the benefit of your learners and their understanding.
- Vary the emphasis you place on certain words you speak. This variety can help you stress key points or significant messages in the training.
- Vary your rate of delivery. People can listen at more words per minute than they can speak them. Increasing the speed of your speaking can maintain interest, but be careful not to lose your learners in the process.
- Use pauses in your speaking for dramatic affect. This can also be used to stress important points.
- Use demanding stimuli. These are phrases that focus the participant's attention. For example: "Note this..." "Here, this is most important..." "Write this down." "Now, think about this." Stress in any given moment where you want participants to place their attention.
- Bring content to life through the use of analogies and metaphors. Analogies and metaphors can paint a vivid picture of a concept, can sharpen understanding, and lead to quicker insight to what is being taught. Metaphors and analogies work because they quickly compare something new to something that the learners already know about.

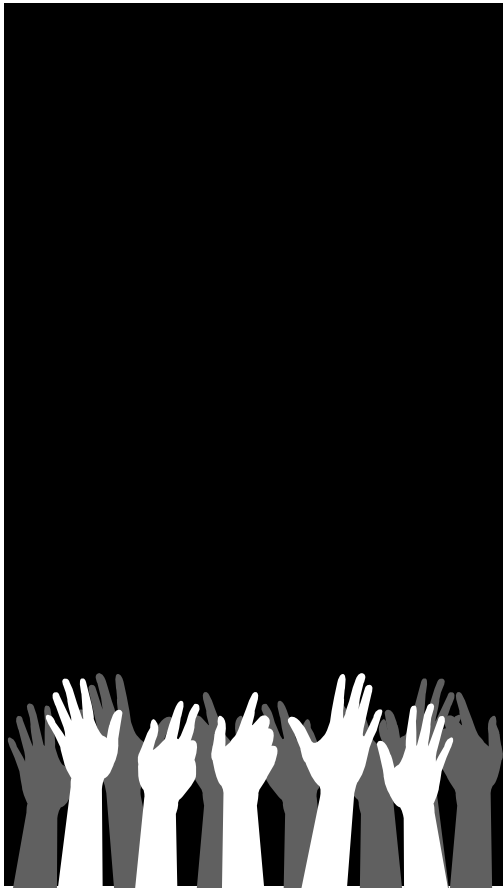


Strategy #8 - Create Participant Involvement



Your first step in getting people to participate in a training program is to realize why they don't want to participate in the first place.

Consider the following main reasons why participants aren't inclined to participate in a training program:



- No commitment to the topic.
- Feeling unsure about what they will be able to contribute to the discussion.
- Feeling uncomfortable with the idea of having to speak in public before others.
- Unsure how others will react to them.
- Being shut down by more outgoing, talkative learners that like the spotlight.
- Feeling unsafe with the prospect of having to open up.
- Feeling withdrawn.



Ways to Get Participants to Participate:

As a facilitator, understanding what leads to full participation can lead to better response from your learners. In general, people will participate if they:

- Feel relaxed with others.
- Feel interested in the topic.
- Feel safe in expressing their opinions.
- Feel confident in the facilitator.

In addition, what you say and how you say it can either encourage or discourage people from participating. Through what you say, validate participants and they will be more inclined to open up. Here are three ways to validate them:

1. Accept them. – Participants will be lifted up and willing to contribute when encouraged. Say:
 - *"I'm glad you brought that up..."*
 - *"Say more about that..."*
 - *"Thank you for your point of view. Who else has a thought?"*
 - *"Good point. Let's build upon that..."*
2. Accept their ideas – Have the discussion build upon the suggestions that participants make. Say:
 - *"As Bob mentioned a moment ago..."*
 - *"To piggyback on your point, Colleen..."*
3. Accept their emotions – Learning can feel vulnerable. Acknowledge what people are feeling so they know it's okay to be this way. Say:
 - *"You seem to feel very strongly about this..."*
 - *"I know it's hard to remain positive..."*
 - *"I can just imagine how tough this is for you."*

Maintaining Participant Attention



Typically, adults have short attention spans. Research indicates that the average person thinks at a rate of anywhere from 800 to 1000 words per minute, but the average person speaks at only 150 to 200 words per minute. What does this immediately tell you? It says our minds can easily wander, especially during lengthy presentations. You can hold your participant's attention by utilizing what many in the training industry refer to as the '8/11 Rule.'

This rule states that participants will have a maximum unbroken attention span of around eight minutes to 11 minutes. This means that every eight to 11 minutes, you need to change things up. Either you have to move, change who is talking, or ask a series of questions. You can also raise or lower your voice, emphasize a key statement, or vary their rate of speech.

Participants, on the other hand, can be asked to write something down, stop one activity and start another, or even just stop and reflect upon something that's just been presented. The key driving factor in all of this is change. Change of any type will keep the attention going.



Strategy #9 - Follow the Activity Learning Cycle



At the heart of facilitation, especially learner-centered programs, is the activity learning cycle of 'prepare,' 'do,' and 'reflect.' Each component is critical and will impact the other two. Let's look at what each component really means and what the facilitator's job will be during each one.

Prepare – Setting up for the activity that is about to take place.

What many inexperienced facilitators end up doing is giving all the directions for an activity quickly – all at once - and they forget that participants cannot process all the steps of an activity like that. Facilitators have to give participants the steps to an activity one at a time.



Remember, people can really only focus on one thing at a time. If they are given more than one thing to process, or asked to do more than one thing at a time, then confusion invariably results because something will be missed, and participants will not be sure what it is they are supposed to do. By giving participants



activity steps one at a time, the facilitator ensures participant attention, and keeps everyone on the same page in setting up the activity.

Conducting the 'prepare' phase of a learning activity in this manner will result in participants having much greater success when they actually do an activity. It will also influence the quality of the debriefing after the activity has been completed.

Do – After preparing participants for an activity, the learning activity cycle moves into the 'do' phase. The 'do' phase is the core of the activity. This is where participants complete the required work or task of the activity. But this does not mean that the facilitator has nothing to do during this phase. The facilitator, first and foremost, circulates around the perimeter of the room during this time, aware of all that is going on.

By walking around, the facilitator is letting people know that he or she is readily available when and if needed. This way, participants can see the facilitator out of the corner of their eye and can, in any instance, reach out to ask a question, clarify something that's confusing, and then immediately jump right back into the activity.

Once all questions, clarification, or confusion has been addressed, the facilitator's job shifts to engagement with participants. This engagement usually takes the form of the facilitator stopping and taking a few moments to listen in on participants and their discussions. This behavior lets participants know that the facilitator is curious and engaged in the learning process just as much as participants.

It should be stressed that the facilitator is not intervening here, but simply taking a moment to be with participants and let them see the interest he or she has in how the activity is unfolding for them. Generally speaking, the facilitator will allow participants to struggle with an activity during the 'do' phase. The facilitator should only intervene if:

- The objective of the activity is not being met.
- Participant discussions are digressing in a serious way.
- The time allocated for an activity is running out.



- Participants have clearly misunderstood what they are supposed to be doing for the activity.

During most of the 'do' phase, the facilitator remains quiet and only speaks up and breaks participant concentration in those waning moments of an activity when it's important to let participants know how much time is left – 5 min, 2 min, and one minute.

Reflect – Considering what was learned, and determining ways to apply knowledge and skills.

In any learning program there must be the opportunity for participants to identify what has stood out for them; and for them to determine for themselves what had personal relevance and will likely have an impact in their personal lives.

During the 'reflect' phase, the activity is now over. Whatever participants experienced in the activity has now been completed. That doesn't mean that the activity is over, though. In fact, the activity has actually now moved into its most important phase because this is where the real learning takes place. This is where information is turned into knowledge because the 'reflect' phase is where participants assign meaning to what it is they have experienced during the activity. This phase can also be referred to as the 'debriefing' phase. Again, this is the part of the activity where participants get to reflect upon what it is they have learned.

'Reflect' involves the opportunity for participants to step back from the activity and review what has happened, how they feel about what has happened, and what the experience ultimately means for them. It is the time in training where participants interpret the events within the activity and explain the impact it has had on them.



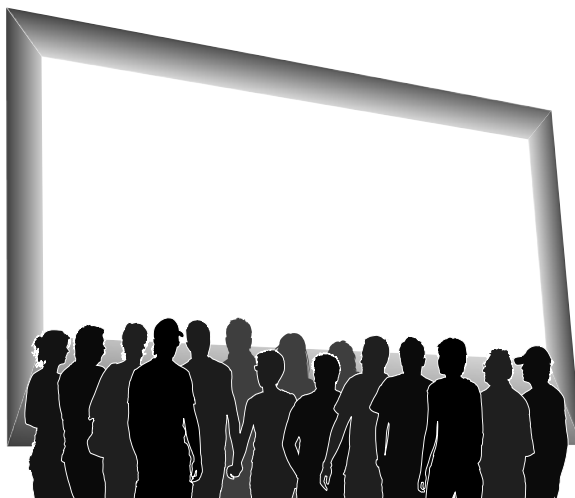
Strategy #10 - Help Participants Assign Meaning



Participants are the ones that make meaning from what has been presented. To be effective, learning must contain personal meaning for the learner.

Meaning can be aided in its formation in three ways:

- 1) Patterns – Participants connect what has been learned to things in their real-life.
- 2) Emotions – Participants are asked to identify the values, feelings, and beliefs they are experiencing as a result of what they are learning.
- 3) Relevance – Participants link what they are learning to life experiences they already possess.



Debriefing

The use of debriefing in learning is a powerful method that often results in a more meaningful and lasting learning experience.

Debriefing around experiences, ideas and beliefs help the learner to be more engaged, which results in new knowledge that the learner then owns.



Debriefing is not simply asking random questions. The questions you ask allow participants to think through an experience from beginning to end. While an activity is important, it is the process of learning from that activity that is far more significant. Considering what was learned, or thinking about the ways what was learned could be applied – that's debriefing.

Here is a simple five step debriefing technique that can be used for almost any activity. These five steps are progressive, each step going deeper than the previous step. Keep in mind that this model doesn't have to be rigidly followed. During debriefing, participants may jump in to the debriefing process at any point. Work forward from whatever step participants choose to explore first.

1. **What happened?** Gather thoughts about what happened during the activity. Encourage participants to compare and contrast individual perspectives on what occurred during an activity.
2. **How do you feel?** Invite participants to get strong feelings and emotions experienced during the activity off their chest.
3. **What did you learn?** Ask participants to come up with the key learning points from the activity and to discuss them.
4. **How does this relate to the real world?** Discuss how the activity relates to participants' real world experiences.
5. **What next?** Ask participants to come up with ways they can apply what they have learned so that the learning makes a difference in their lives. Invite them to apply their insights from the activity to their real worlds.



Best Debriefing Questions for Each Step:

1. **What happened?** (Strict reporting of events.)
 - What occurred during the activity?
 - What did you notice?
 - What went on during the activity?
2. **How do you feel?**
 - What did this activity make you feel?
 - What emotions did you witness during the activity?
 - What are you feeling now?
3. **What did you learn?**
 - What stood out for you?
 - What have you discovered?
 - What did you learn or relearn?
 - What do you most want to remember?
 - What ideas are new to you?
 - What are you taking away from this activity?
 - What will you take away from this activity?
4. **How does this relate to the real world?**
 - How does this relate to your job? Life?
 - How was this activity representative of what you experience on your job? In your life?
5. **What next?**
 - How do you see yourself applying these skills to your job? Life?
 - As a result, what are you going to implement in your job? Life?
 - In what situations could you see yourself using these ideas?



Capturing Thoughts & Ideas

When using a flipchart, accurately record what people say. Capture key words that people use. Since people often say more than can be recorded, facilitators are always challenged to create brief summaries. Skillful facilitators edit so that the shortened statement still manages to be faithful to the participant's original idea.

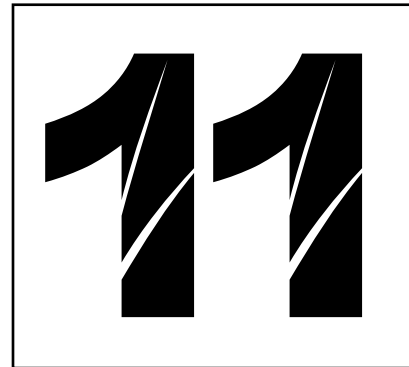
Here are two rules that can help when recording to a flipchart:

Rule #1 – Use Their Words – Listen carefully for the key words that participants use and make sure that these words are included in what gets written down.

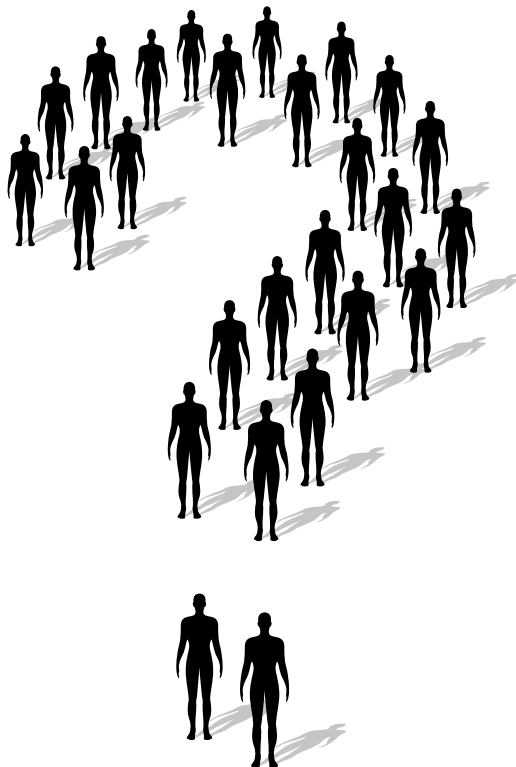
Rule #2 – Ask Permission to Change Words – If it's necessary to shorten a statement or introduce a new word, get approval from participants on what's gets written down.



Strategy #11 - Ask Questions that Get Responses



During training, a facilitator wants an audience that is engaged, interested in the topic being given, and fully paying attention. But consider this scenario: During the training, you stop several times to ask the audience if they have any questions on what was just covered. Each time, you are met with silence. After this happens several times, you come to the conclusion that people just aren't that interested in what you have to say.



Facing an unresponsive group showing little interest in getting involved in learning can be disheartening. And even though a facilitator may understandably entertain the idea that participants just aren't interested in the topic, the truth may simply be that people are being this way because the facilitator hasn't nurtured a sufficient willingness in them to speak up. This nurturing is done through the art of questioning.

Proper questioning is truly an art, and for anyone to become a more effective facilitator, they must become more proficient at its use.



Questioning is an important part of any learning process, and effective facilitators know how to form the right kinds of questions that will stretch participant's willingness to respond.

Facilitators use questioning for many reasons:

- to get feedback.
- to stimulate discussion,
- to provoke thought,
- to maintain interest.

A facilitator can never ask too many questions, but he or she can ask them in a wrong way. Mishandling the way questions are worded and asked can destroy an effective debriefing session from the start.

Here are five simple techniques that can immediately improve your questioning skills and get even the most unresponsive participants involved in your training.

Tip #1 – Grow People's Willingness to Respond

The key to getting participants to respond and be engaged in learning is to nurture their willingness to respond. One simple example of this would be to ask the audience several rhetorical questions that get them saying 'yes.' Saying 'yes' isn't intended to be something you hear people saying out loud; it's more of an effort to get them 'nodding' in agreement internally. This allows the audience to connect and build rapport with you. It also signals that you are also willing and desirous of connecting with your learners. Enhance this connection by stepping toward your audience when posing your questions.

By nodding or agreeing with what the facilitator is saying, a foundation for future, more fully realized participant engagement is established. Follow this type of rhetorical questioning with questioning techniques that will require more of a commitment from participants. These questioning techniques include 'yes/no' questions, followed by 'fill-in-the-blank' questions, and then finally, 'open-ended' questions. Going from simple to complex in the type of questions asked will



build a responsive frame of mind in participants who will slowly feel more and more comfortable in speaking up.

Tip #2 – Let Silence Happen

After asking a question, be quiet. This sounds simple enough, right? But so many facilitators hardly allow the question to hit the ears of participants before they either egg the audience on for a response - to the point where the audience actually resists responding - or they wind up answering their own questions. Here's some short, straightforward advice: Let silence happen.

Silence may be uncomfortable, and facilitators may feel the urge to speak to fill the void. Resist this urge. Learn to ask a question and then be silent for at least five to ten seconds to give people time to think of a response. Questions are like an invitation for participants to search the caverns of their own minds to find a suitable answer. This takes time. So allows participants to have the time they need to process the question and formulate a response that will be respectfully received. Trust the process here and know that no matter how long you wait, someone will eventually respond to you.

Tip #3 - Manage Audience Involvement

So when your learning program gets to the point where participants feel involved and willing to comment without much prompting, you will need to manage this participation so that you have enough time to get through the entire program. Consider these techniques:

When you ask a question, indicate how many responses you want to get back.

Example: *"Let me hear from three of you about your thoughts on this idea."*

This technique can also be used to prompt for additional responses in the event that you feel you have not received an adequate number.

Example: *"Let's hear from one more person on this topic."*



Finally, using the word 'who' to start your question can also be very effective at soliciting a response.

Example: *"Who has a thought on this?" Or, "Who can give me one idea related to this topic?"*

And by all means, avoid asking your audience, "Do you have any questions?" This closed-ended, 'yes/no' question will immediately stifle any dialogue or discussion from opening up.

Tip #4 – Hand over the Spotlight

Most participant questions received by a facilitator are really just requests for the spotlight. You can give this spotlight to participants in two ways – by reflecting or deflecting back their questions.

Reflect – Make sure you understand fully the question that's being asked of you. Don't be quick to answer the question and take back the spotlight. People often have a difficult time expressing the points that they want to make. Get clear on what the participant is really looking for in the question he or she is asking. "If I understand you correctly, you are asking..."

Deflect – As the term implies, you are redirecting what's coming at you, in this case the question that's being asked. There are three options for deflecting:

1. You can deflect back to the entire class:

"How do the rest of you feel about what's being asked?"

"Who has some thoughts on how to answer this question?"

2. You can *ricochet* the question back to a particular participant:

"Bill, you're an expert on this. What do you think?"

3. You can also *reverse* the question back to the person who asked it:



"You have obviously done some thinking on this. What's your view? What do you think?"

Remember, be coach-like when you're facilitating. Use open-ended questions, paraphrase when needed, and then only after participants have expressed their thoughts, add your own thoughts and opinions.

Tip #5 – Responding to Participant Questions – Three Potential Pitfalls

Repeating the Question:

Sometimes a facilitator's response misses the point that the participant is trying to make or the question they are asking. This can happen when the facilitator doesn't take the time to verify what the participant actually asked. With this in mind, always repeat or paraphrase the question back to the participant before answering it. Doing this has several benefits:

- It buys you time in collecting your thoughts before answering.
- It ensures that you heard and understand the question correctly.
- It gives the rest of the learners the opportunity to hear the question and be engaged in the discussion.
- It gives power to the participant as they continue to drive the direction of the conversation.

Responding to Individual Concerns:

A participant may ask a question that has nothing to do with the topic being discussed, but at the same time is significant enough to them. This presents a challenge for the facilitator who must keep the discussion on topic, yet not alienate a participant in the process. When this happens, it is important for the facilitator to acknowledge the participant, give a brief response, but then get the discussion back on topic. The facilitator can let the participant know that the question can be explored in more depth during a break. It is important for the facilitator to always be projecting a willingness to talk further one-on-one with any participant. Above all else, the facilitator needs to exhibit kindness and concern in these circumstances.



What Not to Say:

As your participants begin recognizing that your learning program is safe and a positive experience, they will slowly open up. This will lead to them not only answering the questions you pose, but will stimulate them to ask questions of you. In an effort to be supportive and encouraging, many facilitators will often respond to participants questions by saying something like:

"That's a good question."

"That's an interesting question."

"That's a great question!"

On the surface these responses seem harmless. The danger in responding this way is that you may come across as insincere. Also, what do others feel if you don't comment in the same way about the questions they asked? Will those participants be left feeling like their questions weren't as good?

It's important to affirm any question you receive, but try not to evaluate questions with comments like, 'That's a great question!' Make everyone feel equal by simply saying,

"Thanks for asking that question."

"I appreciate that question."

This way you affirm without alienating. And when you do get a question, look at everyone as you answer the question. This way all will feel included and will continue to be involved in the discussion.



Strategy #12 - Be Prepared for Difficult Learners



Although participants for the most part are pleasant, you may from time to time have a participant in your learning program that will be a challenge. Difficult learners create an imbalance of sharing among participants. Facilitators must patiently and kindly navigate past these unwanted behaviors. If you encounter any of the following difficult learner types, don't challenge, fight or confront the behavior being displayed. This will only make matters worse. Instead, gently redirect the focus away through the use of some fairly simple remarks.





Difficult Learner #1 – The Clueless One



- The clueless participant has no idea about what's happening in the workshop. This person easily misunderstands the current topic. In answering questions, this person will state an answer that has no or little relation to what's currently being discussed.
- Deal with the clueless person by saying: "Something I expressed seems to have lead you astray. I was really trying to say was..."

Difficult Learner #2 – The Know-It-All



- The know-it-all in a workshop really wants to upstage the trainer and sees themselves as an expert on the subject. By assuming a superior role, this participant takes every opportunity to parade their vast knowledge in front of others.
- Deal with the know-it-all by saying, "That's certainly one perspective, but there are other ways of looking at it, too."

Difficult Learner #3 – The Confrontational One



- The confrontational participant can be openly aggressive and prone to argue every point that is made by you or other participants. This person will likely be unfavorable to you as the facilitator, questioning your credibility and knowledge.
- Deal with this person by saying, "I understand and appreciate your perspective. What do the rest of you think?"

Difficult Learner #4 – The Silent One



- Silent participants appear to be paying attention, yet they don't seem to want to contribute to any discussion. They seem quite content to merely listen, or speak only when in a small group. It's quite all right if someone wishes to be this way. The concern comes if you consider that these participants may have something valuable to contribute to a discussion, and it would be a shame to miss out on their insights.
- Deal with silent participants by saying, "We haven't heard from you. It would be helpful if you would share your thoughts with the group."

Difficult Learner #5 – The Comedian



- The comedian exhibits humor that is certainly not meant to be hurtful. They just have a tendency to let the humor get out of control. Also, by making jokes or sprinkling funny comments in order to get attention, this participant can become a great distraction to the subject being discussed.
- Deal with the comedian by saying, "We all enjoy a little humor, but right now, let's try and concentrate on the topic at hand."

Difficulty Learner #6 – The One That Rambles



- The person that rambles will talk at great lengths about nothing at all. This person gets off topic often and has a tendency to bring up examples that do not connect to what's being discussed. It's as if they have their own agenda for the workshop and are determined to follow it.
- Deal with the rambler by saying, "Help me understand something. How does what you are saying relate to what we are talking about?"



Difficult Learner #7 – The Complainer



- The complainer does just that: complains. They complain about their circumstances in life, and the people in their life. This participant displays a great deal of negative nonverbal behavior such as frowning, crossing arms, rolling eyes, sighing heavily, or any number of defensive postures.
- Deal with the complainer by saying, "I understand your concerns. What suggestions do you have that could change your situation?"

Difficult Learner #8 – The Chatty One



- The chatty participant has a great deal to say about any topic and interjects something into every discussion. This person seeks to be the center of attention.
- Deal with the chatty person by saying: "I appreciate your contribution, but let's hear from someone else."

Difficult Learner #9 – The Stubborn One



- Stubborn participants have no interest in seeing someone else's point of view. In a group setting, this person will likely refuse to give in on a point, and will make coming to consensus very difficult.
- Deal with stubborn participants by saying, "I appreciate your point of view, but for the sake of the activity we need to move on. We can talk about this later if you would like."



Conclusion

All 12 of the facilitation strategies presented here are, at their heart, about connecting with people. Participants want and deserve something deeper from their facilitators. They can get lots of information through many channels outside a training program. It's not about content first. Instead, give participants something compelling, something that they will not get anywhere else. That something is you!

You can express thoughtful sincerity as a facilitator and touch the lives of your participants by implementing any or all of these 12 facilitation strategies. In the final analysis, though, facilitating a successful training program can come about by simply practicing some fundamental interpersonal skills as listed below.

Handle every situation with grace and professionalism. Remember, learning is not about the content you give them, but instead about what participants take away from the total learning experience, and that includes the impact you as a facilitator have with all you say and all you do. Best wishes!

Traits of a Successful Facilitator

Listen carefully.
Be warm and friendly.
Enjoy people.
Accept others.
Be willing to discuss feelings and emotions.
Be keenly aware of people's feelings.
Offer yourself as someone worthy of trust.
Possess honest communication.
Have a sense of humor.





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Kim can help you develop your very own multi touch marketing strategy that best suits your business needs.

