

**Session SU 209 – Facilitate Discussions With Impact**

Sunday, June 1, 2008, 1:45 PM – 3:00 PM

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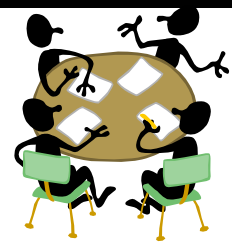
Session Learning Objectives:

1. Everyone has something to contribute.
2. Get the most out of a discussion to solve problems, make teams productive, and add participation and involvement appropriately.
3. Participate in two problem solving simulations to develop your skills.
4. Identify eleven types of facilitation roles and when to use each.



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## PROBLEM SOLVING DISCUSSION I

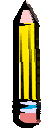


1. Through discussion try to determine:
  - Names of 4 people
  - Occupation of each person
  - Color of shirt each person is wearing
  
2. Following the discussion identify:
  - What helped you as a group to solve the problem?
  
  - Was there a turning point in the discussion?
  
  - What hindered your solution?
  
  - What could you have done differently to solve the problem sooner?
  
3. What are the characteristics of a productive discussion?
  
4. What typically takes discussions off track?
  
5. How can a facilitator get a discussion to be productive?
  
6. How will you use this experience to be a better facilitator?

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# GROUP PROCESS OBSERVATION SHEET

Use this inventory to identify what occurs as your group's discussion progresses.



## **TASK FUNCTIONS**

1. Begin a discussion
2. Seek information or opinions
3. Give information or opinions
4. Ask others to clarify meaning
5. Make a summary
6. Test for consensus

## **MAINTENANCE FUNCTIONS**

7. Encourage everyone to participate
8. Express group feelings
9. Create harmony
10. Ask others to change their mind
11. Enforce the rules
12. Evaluate what others say
13. Minimize risk
14. Keep on track

In general, look for what moves the discussion forward and what hinders the group's progress.

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## FACILITATION TECHNIQUES

**1. Encourage participation** – Create a comfortable opening for participants to share ideas, thoughts and concerns. This technique is frequently necessary during the early stages of the focus group or interview, while participants are getting comfortable with the situation and with each other.

Examples:

*“What is the client’s perspective on this issue?”*

*“What concerns is this issue raising for you?”*

*“Who has an experience to share about this issue?”*



**When would you use this technique?**

**2. Gather ideas** – This is a technique for getting as many ideas out as quickly as possible. Start with a clear definition of the task of gathering in order to limit discussion and problem solving. Use mirroring, and, occasionally, paraphrasing to acknowledge thoughts and ideas. Use energetic body language to keep participants involved.

Example:

*“To get us started on this section of the project, I’d like everyone to feel free to express their ideas about the needs of this specific product. We will chart these ideas and then discuss them individually.”*

**When would you use this technique?**

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## FACILITATION TECHNIQUES CONTINUED



**3. Draw participants out** – Use open-ended, non-directive questions or leading statements, frequently coupled with paraphrasing, to support and encourage participants to clarify and refine their ideas.

Examples:

*“So it sounds as though you’ve been happy with the program. What are some examples of positive experiences?”*

*“You’ve mentioned concerns with the income levels in the customer. Can you say more about that?”*

*“What I’m hearing you say is we need to ..., because...”*

**When would you use this technique?**

**4. Make time and space for quiet participants** – Quiet participants may not be contributing for a variety of reasons. They may be intimidated by the more verbal participants, they may be unsure of the reception for their ideas, or they may feel inferior to the group and not want to seem foolish or “not as smart.” Demonstrate a willingness to hear from all participants and to validate the contributions of all.

Examples:

Watch body language and invite them to speak – *“Was there a thought you wanted to express?”*

*“You look like you have an idea about ...”* If the participant declines, move on – this is meant to be an opportunity, not to put them on the spot.

If necessary, hold off the very verbal participants and direct the focus to the quiet participant who is trying to speak. *“Let’s hear from Judi first.”*

If participation is very lopsided, try a structured go-around to give each person the opportunity to speak. *“Let’s go around, one at a time and gather your thoughts on this issue.”*

**When would you use this technique?**

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## FACILITATION TECHNIQUES CONTINUED



**5. Paraphrase** – Use your own words to reveal what you think the speaker meant, to clarify and validate your understanding. Ask for confirmation that you “got it right.”

Examples:

*"So the major issue is . . ."*

*"It seems to you that . . ."*

*"Let me check to see if I have all the information . . ."*

*"Your major concern is . . ."*

*"It appears to you that . . ."*

*"Are you upset because . . ."*

*"So the problem is . . ."*

**When would you use this technique?**

**6. Mirror participant's language** – Repeat the speaker's exact words – to demonstrate that the person has been clearly heard. This builds trust that thoughts and ideas are valued. Keep your tone and body language warm and accepting, even if the speaker's tone is angry or challenging.

Examples:

If the participant said a single sentence or phrase, repeat it word for word

If the participant used more than a short sentence, repeat key words or phrases word for word

**When would you use this technique?**

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## FACILITATION TECHNIQUES CONTINUED



**7. Silence is golden** – A short pause can give a participant the time to collect thoughts and decide what they want to say and how they want to express it. Three to five seconds of silence may seem like an eternity to the facilitator yet it is a powerful technique to allow a participant to reflect on a comment or to clarify thoughts.

Examples:

Say nothing, not a word. Don't use body language – nodding or head shaking – that will distract the concentration of the speaker. Just stay focused and relaxed.

It may be necessary to stop other participants from “jumping into the silence” – hold up your hand to halt comments.

**When would you use this technique?**

**8. Organize the sequence of speakers** – When several participants indicate a desire to talk at the same time, create a speaking order by assigning numbers. This procedure relieves the facilitator of the responsibility of keeping track of who is to speak next.

Example:

Start by asking all who want to speak on a particular topic to raise their hands.

- Create a speaking order: “*Jean, you're first. Gary, you're second and Kevin, you're third.*”
- When Jean has finished, “*So, who was second? OK, Gary, your turn.*”
- After Kevin, ask “*Who else would like to say something?*”

**When would you use this technique?**

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## FACILITATION TECHNIQUES CONTINUED



**9. Keep track** – In a group there are often multiple thought lines or topics being discussed. It is the facilitator’s job to keep track of the various elements being discussed and to treat each as valid and worthy of discussion. When the facilitator publicly keeps track of the various issues it helps the participants stay involved and engaged.

Example:

Start by summarizing the conversations “on the table”, checking for accuracy and then leading the discussion on one at a time.

- *“It seems to me we have 3 different topics being discussed at the same time. I want to make sure I’m tracking each of them.”*
- *“One conversation is about finances. One is about customer complaints and another is about how to communicate the changes.”*
- *“Do I have these right?”*

The group members will usually respond to this clarification and be willing to discuss the issues in a more organized manner.

**When would you use this technique?**

**10. Balance the input** – Help the group “round out it’s discussion” by asking for points of view that may be present but have not been expressed.

Examples:

*“What do others of you think about this point?”*

*“Does anyone else agree with this is a critical issue?”*

*“How many people think it would be a good idea to...?”*

*“What are some other ways of looking at this issue?”*

**When would you use this technique?**

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## FACILITATION TECHNIQUES CONTINUED



**11. Listen for common themes** – When different opinions or disagreements polarize a group it will be difficult for the participants to recognize that they have anything in common. Validate the group’s areas of disagreement and focus them on the areas of agreement.

Examples:

*“Let me summarize what I’m hearing – I’ve heard a lot of different concerns and I’ve also heard some similarities.”*

*“It sounds like there are some diverse issues that you want to discuss. One group wants to talk about a plan to channel the resources to... and the other group would prefer to ... Even so, you all seem to agree about the need for a solid plan with timelines and clearly delineated responsibilities. Is that right?”*

**When would you use this technique?**

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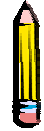
## PROBLEM SOLVING DISCUSSION 2

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## JOB AID: USING 5 ADULT LEARNING STEPS

This is a general description of what takes place during the five steps of adult learning. Adults need to progress through these five steps for any discussion to achieve a learning objective.

### 1. **Instructor sets up the learning activity**

To be successful, any learning experience needs a set-up so the participants understand what they are going to do and why they are doing it. Adult learners become motivated when they understand the benefit or importance of the activity to themselves. Directions and ground rules are usually included regarding how the learning activity is to be conducted. Set-up can include such things as:

- Tell participants the purpose of the activity
- Divide participants into groups
- Assign roles
- Give the ground rules
- Explain what the participants are going to do
- Tell why they are doing the activity without giving away what is to be "discovered"

### 2. **Learning activity**

For a discussion (learning activity) to be successful, an adult needs to be involved as much as possible. It is also appropriate to consider how the activity will appeal to the senses of sight, hearing and touch.

### 3. **Learners share and interpret their reactions to the activity**

This step is essential to help conclude the discussion and help learners identify what happened during the discussion. Some trainers call steps 3, 4, and 5 a "debrief" of the discussion. This step is meant to help the learner analyze the discussion and then develop individual and group reactions to the objectives of the discussion. Learners share their reactions by identifying what happened to themselves, others, how his/her behavior affected others, etc. Often questions are asked like, "What was your partner's reaction when you did . . .?" or "What helped or hindered your progress?" "Summarize the key points from the discussion."

Sometimes, it is appropriate to have each participant write down his/her reaction so that another person does not influence it before sharing it.

Sharing a reaction is the beginning step of developing a pattern. If some participants do not share their reactions, it is difficult to "end the activity" and they may prolong some unfinished business that spills over into other activities during the workshop.

### 4. **Learners identify concepts from their reactions**

This is the "so what did I learn" step. Questions that develop concepts include, "What did you learn about how to conduct an interview, discipline a subordinate, teach a new job, etc." If this step is left out, then learning will be incomplete. Participants will have been entertained, but may not be able to apply new learning to similar situations outside the classroom. When concepts are inferred from an activity, adult learners are ready to apply these newly learned or recently confirmed concepts to future situations.

### 5. **Learners apply concepts to their situation**

This is the "so what now" step. Adult learners are asked to use and apply new information learned from the activity and confirmed through a discussion of general concepts to their situation. This often involves an action step like, "How will you use this questioning technique the next time a subordinate asks you for a favor?" or "In what types of situations would you be more effective if you used this technique?" If this step is left out, then the learner may not see the relationship between the learning activity and his/her job or situation and consider what was learned by others as not useful to him/her.