

Training Title

Meeting Facilitation: Keeping Meetings Engaging and Effective

Indianapolis Facilitator

Gerry Stark (Baton Rouge, LA)

Goals

- Discover the importance of identifying the purpose(s) of your meeting
- Identify key components of effective meetings
- Discuss important facilitation skills to manage group dynamics
- Experience the process of discussion that leads to action
- Provide ideas, tips, resources to make your meetings engaging and effective

Agenda

- Welcome, Prayer, Introduction of Facilitator, Overview of Goals/Agenda (10 min)
- Build It and They Will Come (5 min)
- Taking the Road Less Traveled (5 min)
- Group Activity (10 min)
- Stepping Over the Cracks in the Sidewalk (5 min)
- At the Top of the Mountain (5 min)
- Questions and Answers (5 min)
- Evaluation, Closing Prayer (5 min)

Supplies

Easel, flip chart paper, markers, tape

Handouts

Meeting Facilitation Handbook

Facilitator's Notes

Welcome, Prayer, Introduction of Facilitator, Overview of Goals/Agenda (10 min)

Opening Prayer

You were with us in the beginning, Lord.
You planted us in the midst
of this world's turmoil.
You nurtured us and watched over us.
We ask you to be with us today.

Help us, O God,
to return to Your purposes
for Your church,
to recognize all people as gifted.
May Your great love flood our lives
only to overflow
and touch with healing and grace
the lives of every one
of Your children.

You are in our world, O God.
May we serve You here by ministering
to the needs of each other
and all people.
Amen.

Build It and They Will Come (5 min)

Identify purpose(s), set goals, prepare agenda, set tone, start with prayer, build relationships

Plan in Advance of the Meeting:

Identify purpose(s), Establish goals

Prepare and distribute agenda

Solicit agenda items from members

Distribute in advance of meeting

Tone Setting = Convey importance/"the point" of the meeting; Set mood properly

STEP 1: Welcome, Opening Prayer

STEP 2: Overview of Goals and Agenda
Ask for additions, questions

STEP 3: Set ground rules/ways of being/a covenant (for the group or for that particular conversation)
Group generates the list, but you add anything critical they miss
Check back to make sure that everyone can go along with completed list. If not, why not?
Address by making change to covenant (often it is one particular word that is bothersome), soliciting creative agreement, or by talking to person individually after the meeting

STEP 4: Spend some time in relationship with one another
Rounds question that all answer
Should be oriented to getting to know people
Motivations and values vs. ideas
Mini_1:1 conversations to get to know each other, or around a specific topic
Plan time for socializing

SAMPLE AGENDA

(5) Welcome, Opening Prayer, Review Goals/Agenda

(0-5) Ground rules (if necessary)

(10-15) Relational Component

(5-10) Review/Reports

(???) Brainstorm/Synthesize/Evaluate/Decide

(10) Next Steps/Commitments

(5) Evaluation and Closing Prayer

Taking the Road Less Traveled (5 min)

Leading discussion that gets to action

RULES OF THUMB

- Listen to what people are saying
- Respond to people as they are saying it
- Build agreement in the group
- Ask for permission if you feel jumping ahead is in order (ie. there seems to be consensus around two issues without getting to evaluation, so jump ahead to decision making)
- Get to a decision or set a revised timeline by when you will have it!

STEP 1: Brainstorming Ideas

- Any idea is OK
- Creative
- Synergy
- Refrains from evaluative comments
- Builds
- Try to hear from everyone

STEP 2: Synthesizing Ideas

- Recap what you are hearing
- See and state common ground
- Make connections
- Draw upon common values
- Point out where you see agreement building

STEP 3: Evaluating Ideas

- Critical Discussion
- Evaluative Grid
- Creative Debates
- Period of Discernment/Silence

STEP 4: Deciding

- Ask for clear proposals
- Go through pre-determined decision-making process
- Check with group before deciding to determine where people stand and see if more discussion is needed
- 100% consensus is NOT always possible
 - Consensus: high commitment to implement the proposal
 - 2/3 support for proposal and no major objections from anyone
- Restate what has been decided
- Affirm everyone's commitment to the decision that the group made
- Celebrate decisions made!

Group Activity (10 min)

Experience the process: brainstorm, synthesize, evaluate, decide

Select a facilitator to lead you through the four steps to a decision about the following:
What will it look like when your affiliate is transparent and accountable?

Stepping Over the Cracks in the Sidewalk (5 min)

Group facilitation and management techniques, overcoming obstacles that can derail the agenda

DREADED SCENARIOS

People Seem Bored/Stop listening

Say their name
Make a loud noise
Have people do a quick energizer
Project voice and energy
Do something unexpected
Plan for engaging meetings to maintain interest
Remind them why they are there – “the point”
If several exhibit boredom, ask the group

Someone dominates the discussion

Start/interject with “We want to hear from everyone”
Validate, but ask to hear from others
Don't call on them
Remind people to step up (if quiet) and step back (if outspoken)
Go around the room and get every person's thought on an issue
Talk to that person 1:1 later about dominating
Point out possibility
Set ground rules before we begin

People don't want to participate/complete silence

Single someone out to answer a question
Ask a question they have to answer
Remind people of “the point”
Encourage people to “just try it”
Remind them that there is no right or wrong answer
Remind them that everyone has something valuable to share
Go around the room and get every person's thought on an issue
Turn it back to them/“What are you thinking?”
Let silence sit for a minute
Identify that there seems to be some kind of problem, invite them to share
Explain that you are not there to “force” them to do anything
Ask for deltas (suggestions for change)
Tell part of your story and request that from them
Use small groups

Side conversations

“Excuse me...”
Whisper/Stop talking
Remind people of the importance of hearing all voices/one conversation

Someone gives an off-topic but significant comment

Decide whether you should talk about it NOW, LATER TODAY, NOT TODAY and share (sometimes you may want to ask the group, sometimes not)
Keep a running list for topics to be addressed later today, or for another time (parking lot list)
If it should be talked about, follow the steps for Leading a Discussion...

People have a lot to say

Remind people of the agenda
Ask for permission to stay an additional X minutes
Intervene when conversation is running longer than productive
Tell people that you are going to move things along so we can get to everything, and ask next question/proceed to next step
Affirm your respect for their time
Affirm your commitment to have them out on time

Someone publicly challenges/Dissents

Take a deep breath
Ask them to remember that you are learning too!
Affirm where they are coming from, if possible
Ask why they are coming from that place
Figure out if that person represents a larger view
If yes, make room for discussion
If no, try to keep process moving
Reaffirm common goals/values
Refer to ground rules, if applicable
Encourage that person to give it a try
Remind people of mutual respect
Remind people to challenge ideas, but not other people
Don't be afraid to say what you believe
Put it back to the group/invite other people's input/don't get engaged in power struggle
Tell them you can talk 1:1 afterward
Offer to get back to the person/group later if it involves information you don't have
Last resort – invite them to leave

At the Top of the Mountain (5 min)

Closing the Meeting: Commit, evaluate, pray

STEP 1: Next Steps/Commitments

Review what is happening next (so people feel like we are making progress)
Outline commitments you need people to make
 Attend next meeting/action
 Take specific responsibility
 Recruitment (i.e. bring 5 people)
 Logistics (i.e. bring sign-in sheets, do room setup)
 Content (i.e. facilitate rounds question or bring prayer)
Ask people to make the commitment publicly
 Raise hands
 Stand at seat
 Write names on flip chart/board
 Fill out commitment cards
Thank people for their commitments and celebrate them

STEP 2: Evaluation

Explain the purpose of evaluation
(to learn how to do this better next time)
Introduce Pluses and Deltas
 Pluses – what you liked, what went well today, what we should repeat
 Deltas – delta is symbol for change, what we want to do differently, suggestions for improvement
Try to make at least one commitment to change one of the deltas immediately

STEP 3: Closing Prayer

End as we began

Questions and Answers (5 min)

Evaluation, Closing Prayer (5 min)

Evaluation

What are some aspects of today's training that:

- You liked
- You thought went well
- You would like to see repeated when this training is offered in the future

What are some aspects of today's training that:

- Can be improved (how?)
- Should be changed when this training is offered in the future

Closing Prayer

Lord God, guide our thoughts
and continue to speak to us.
Open the eyes of our minds
and the ears of our hearts,
that we may have a richer understanding
of the wonderful work of Your hands.

Wipe away all our fears
and give us the bravery to stand
and be counted
for what is right
and true
and good
no matter the cost.
Amen.

Meeting Facilitation: Keeping Meetings Engaging and Effective



A Guidebook

Voice of the Faithful National Convocation
Indianapolis, IN
July 8, 2005

Opening Prayer

You were with us in the beginning, Lord.
You planted us in the midst
of this world's turmoil.
You nurtured us and watched over us.
We ask you to be with us today.

Help us, O God,
to return to Your purposes
for Your church,
to recognize all people as gifted.
May Your great love flood our lives
only to overflow
and touch with healing and grace
the lives of every one
of Your children.

You are in our world, O God.
May we serve You here by ministering
to the needs of each other
and all people.
Amen.

Adapted from *Psalms / Now* by Leslie F. Brandt

Goals

1. Discover the importance of identifying the purpose(s) of your meeting
2. Identify key components of effective meetings
3. Discuss important facilitation skills to manage group dynamics
4. Experience the process of discussion that leads to action
5. Provide ideas, tips, resources to make your meetings engaging and effective

Agenda

Welcome, Prayer, Introduction of Facilitator (5)

Overview: Goals, Agenda (5)

Build It and They Will Come (5)

Identify purpose(s), set goals, prepare agenda, set tone, start with prayer, build relationship

Taking the Road Less Traveled (5)

Leading discussion that gets to action

Group Activity (10)

Experience the process: brainstorm, synthesize, evaluate, decide

What will it look like when your affiliate is transparent and accountable?

Stepping Over the Cracks in the Sidewalk (5)

Group facilitation and management techniques, overcoming obstacles that can derail the agenda

At the Top of the Mountain (5)

Commit, evaluate, pray

Questions and Answers (5)

Evaluation, Closing Prayer (5)

Build It and They Will Come

Plan in Advance of the Meeting:

- Identify purpose(s)
- Establish goals
- Prepare and distribute agenda
 - Solicit agenda items from members
 - Distribute in advance of meeting

Tone Setting

- Convey importance/"the point" of the meeting
- Set mood properly
(i.e. if topic may cause conflict, be peaceful; if it needs energy, show energy)

STEP 1: Welcome, Opening Prayer

STEP 2: Overview of Goals and Agenda
Ask for additions, questions

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- (5-10) Review/Reports
- (???) Brainstorm/Synthesize/Evaluate/Decide
- (10) Next Steps/Commitments
- (5) Evaluation and Closing Prayer

Taking the Road Less Traveled

Leading a Discussion That Gets to a Decision

Rules of Thumb

Listen to what people are saying

Respond to people as they are saying it

Build agreement in the group

Ask for permission if you feel jumping ahead is in order (ie. there seems to be consensus around two issues without getting to evaluation, so jump ahead to decision making)

Get to a decision or set a revised timeline by when you will have it!

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Consensus: high commitment to implement the proposal

2/3 support for proposal and no major objections from anyone

Restate what has been decided

Affirm everyone's commitment to the decision that the group made

Celebrate decisions made!

Stepping Over the Cracks in the Sidewalk

Managing Dynamics Within the Group

Bored/Stop listening

- Say their name
- Make a loud noise
- Have people do a quick energizer
- Project voice and energy
- Do something unexpected
- Plan for engaging meetings to maintain interest
- Remind them why they are there - "the point"
- If several exhibit boredom, ask the group

Someone dominates the discussion

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- Single someone out to answer a question
- Ask a question they have to answer
- Remind people of "the point"
- Encourage people to "just try it"
- Remind them that there is no right or wrong answer

People don't want to participate/complete silence (contd.)

- Remind them that everyone has something valuable to share
- Go around the room and get every person's thought on an issue
- Turn it back to them/"What are you thinking?"
- Let silence sit for a minute
- Identify that there seems to be some kind of problem, invite them to share
- Explain that you are not there to "force" them to do anything
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References

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Gerry Stark

17027 George O'Neal Road

Baton Rouge, LA 70817

gerryastark@aol.com

(225) 751-0381