



Facilitation Guide – Preparing for Your Role

Facilitation is the process of guiding a meeting or discussion. Facilitators are neutral individuals who guide and monitor the structure of discussions so teams are able to function effectively and have high-quality exchanges of ideas.

To be a truly successful training leader, you must project a positive image to participants. Adult learning is influenced by the participant's perception of the training leader's competence, credibility and enthusiasm. In other words, often the messenger is as important as the message. A training leader can either inspire action and commitment or encourage passivity and apathy.

Skills Required

The following guidelines are adapted from *The Facilitator's Fieldbook* by Thomas Justice and David W. Jamieson. Review these statements each morning to remind yourself of the role of a facilitator.

Facilitation Fundamentals:

- Listen intently. Be a role model for listening, often paraphrasing and "mirroring" what was said.
- Maintain good eye contact and stay connected to the group and each of its members.
- Trust in the resources of the group. Keep focused on the discussion.
- Use people's names.
- Stay alert and involved at each moment.
- Organize, connect, and summarize to achieve closure and a sense of completion.
- Protect each and every idea offered. Do not allow ideas to be attacked.
- Be a facilitator, not a performer. Be interested, not interesting.
- Encourage everyone to express themselves, and validate varying points of view offered. Keep track of who talks and who does not, encouraging balanced participation.
- Be the guide, not the group leader.
- Be aware of the outcomes of the session and flexible in approach to helping achieve those outcomes.

Nonverbal Communication

Albert Mehrabian, who spent a career in nonverbal research, wrote that 7% of one's perceived attitude is conveyed verbally and 93% nonverbally. Of the 93%, 38% was attributed to vocal cues and 55% to facial cues.

It is important to note that there is no universal nonverbal language. Different gestures may mean different things in different cultures.

There are several categories of nonverbal languages.

Human body. The size, shape, sex, age, physique, and special characteristics all convey messages to the receiver. How these are interpreted varies with the receiver.

Body movement and use of space. The training leader greeting people at the door and standing in the front of the room at the beginning of the discussion period sends a message of control without words. Some movements can distract participants, for example: playing with jewelry, paper or a pen, continually adjusting glasses, touching hair, or leaning against a wall or podium for support.

If using a flipchart, do not turn your back to participants. When referring to a visual, do so at a 45-degree angle.

As the space between the message sender and the receiver becomes less, the communication tends to become more personal and intense. Backing away and creating more space can have the opposite effect. For example, stand between participants to block cross talk with your body, or back away to encourage it.

Voice qualities and characteristics. The use of tone, inflection, pace and volume all have an impact on the words that we are using. Providing variety can help convey the appropriate messages at the appropriate time.

Eye contact. From the training leader perspective, use of the eyes may help in controlling who is speaking and who may speak next as you move around the room. The way you use your eyes may also impact the way you are perceived by the discussion participants. A study found that speakers who were judged sincere looked at the audience 63.4% of the time, while speakers who were judged insincere looked at the audience 20.8% of the time.

Gestures. While using gestures to emphasize various points can be effective, making too many can easily divert participant's attention away from a session's content.

Silence. Silence can provide effective communication. As a training leader, standing in front of the discussion group at the beginning of the session and saying nothing may be an effective way of conveying the message that it is time to start. You may also want to use silence after asking a question in order to allow discussion participants to mentally prepare a response. It may also be that in some cultures, if seminar participants know the subject being discussed, it is proper to remain silent.

Touch. In the context of the training leader, a handshake and greeting at the door provides communication without a single word being spoken.

Color. Color can provide nonverbal communication. The red, yellow and green colors of traffic lights, for example, have a nearly universal understanding. Training leaders may wish to consider use of color when using the flip charts.

Facial Expression. Using and interpreting facial expressions can aid that training leader. Frequently, facial expression will identify someone who does not agree with a statement or who does not understand what is being said. Training leaders can also use facial expression to express interest or concern.

Pace. A fast speaker may frustrate participants. Participants tend to view such speakers as anxious. Be sure to speak slowly enough for participants (many of whom may be taking notes or who may not be native speakers of the language) to follow.



Facilitation Guide – In the Group Discussion Room

Effective Questioning Techniques

Questions guide participants to cover key topics during the session. Asking participants questions can help to:

- Encourage analysis
- Introduce topics not yet discussed
- Evoke participants' stories and experience
- Broaden participation
- Review a difficult concept (or concepts)
- Redirect a discussion
- The *International Assembly Leaders' Guide* typically includes open-ended, overhead questions (see definitions below). However, you will want to modify the questions depending on the focus and dynamics of the group. Facilitators can ask questions in different types of ways:
 - Open-ended questions
 - Closed-ended questions
 - Overhead questions
 - Relay questions
 - Directed questions
 - Reverse questions
 - Redirected questions

Open-ended Questions. Open-ended questions cannot be answered by a “yes” or “no” response. Since they stimulate thinking and encourage greater discussion, facilitators use open-ended questions to increase a team’s participation.

Closed-ended Questions. Closed-ended questions solicit a one-word response. Typically, you would avoid asking closed-ended questions, unless you are working to clarify the group’s perspectives or narrow down ideas to a workable number.

Overhead Questions. Addressed to the entire group to encourage discussion, overhead questions channel group thinking, or are used to bring out different opinions. If a lively discussion has suddenly stopped, you might revive it by asking, “What are some of the other items we could consider under this heading?” “What other remedies for this situation have you found?”

Relay Questions. These questions are returned to the group as in the following example: “That’s a good question. How have some of the rest of you handled that problem?”

Directed Questions. Asked to a specific individual, directed questions initiate discussion, redirect the conversation, or draw out the participant. Be careful not to overuse this technique or the group will expect

your questions and the meeting will become a question / answer session. Present the question before directing it to an individual to ensure that others in the group also consider possible responses.

Reverse Questions. These questions are used to suggest that the person posing the question give his or her own answer. This method calls for tact. If it is apparent that the participant has his or her own opinion, it is helpful to elicit additional comments. Even if the questioner obviously has no answer, you might want to reverse the question to encourage the participant. On the other hand, be alert to group members who fall into the habit of asking many questions on topics about which they have strong viewpoints.

Redirected Questions. This technique encourages further discussion and at the same time relates the question back to previous discussion. A question may also be redirected to a member known to have special knowledge. Example: A participant asks you a question and you redirect the question to another this way. "Thank you for the question. Perhaps <NAME> could respond as he / she may have some knowledge of that topic."

Intervention Techniques for Disruptive Behavior Scenarios

You may encounter several of the following scenarios. The following suggestions are from the experience of past training leaders.

The side bar conversationalist

A Rotarian starts a quiet discussion with a neighbor while the training leader is facilitating discussion among the rest of the group.

Possible Solutions:

- Walk near the talking participants.
- Use silence and look at the Rotarian to get his / her attention.
- If the Rotarian does not respond to these intervention techniques and it appears he / she is disrupting other participants you may want to ask if they need help or have a question for the group. Some people are shy about sharing a comment with the entire group unless they are called upon. Some may have lost something or have a personal distraction that can be alleviated by telling them you will help them after the session.
- If the person is still not responsive, you may approach him / her after the session to ask that they be considerate of neighbors who may wish to participate in the discussion.

The know-it-all participant

Each time the training leader asks a question, one Rotarian is always the first to answer and gives his / her answer in a way that makes it appear as though his / her club is superior to other clubs.

Possible Solutions:

- Use a directed question (rather than an overhead question) to ask another Rotarian to answer the next question.
- Say "Thank You" to the Rotarian who is monopolizing the conversation and say "Let's hear from some other leaders in the group who have yet to participate."

The health emergency

Someone collapses and appears to be in serious distress.

Possible Solutions:

- Call, or ask the club coordinator to call, for help (dial the number posted on the venue telephones)

The long answer lecturer

A Rotarian volunteers to answer a question and then takes control of the discussion as though he / she is now instructing everyone in the room.

Possible Solutions:

- Before you call on individuals to answer a question, “queue” them in advance by saying “Let’s hear from <NAME>, then <NAME>, and then <NAME>.” That way the speaker knows two people are waiting their turn to speak.
- Walk near the talking participant, effectively blocking the Rotarian’s view of his / her “audience.”

Disagree with the Rotary position

A Rotarian disagrees with “the Rotary position” and states that his / her way of thinking is better based on his / her experience.

Possible Solutions:

- Turn this statement to the group, by asking “Does everyone agree with this position?”

Challenge the training leader

A Rotarian challenges the way the training leader presents information. He / she says “You are not clear – you must say it this way so that we understand.”

Possible Solutions:

- The first time the confusion happens, say “Thank You” and “Let me repeat.” Sometimes we forget to speak slowly and clearly; it is crucial to be accommodating and to make sure everyone understands.
- If the Rotarian is personally challenging you, you might ask the group, “Is everyone having difficulty with this concept?” or “Can anyone else help explain this concept to <NAME>?”

Question the facilitator’s credentials

A participant asks you how you were selected as a training leader and asks about your practical experience with the discussion topic.

Possible Solutions:

- Begin the first session with each group by stating that the cumulative experiences of the group are greater than your own personal experience.
- Remind the group that you are here to facilitate the session and are not a subject matter expert on every topic.

“I do not believe the answer my colleague provided is correct.”

A Rotarian challenges the answer that was provided by a colleague.

Possible Solutions:

- If it is a matter of fact, ask the group if anyone has expert knowledge of the subject.
- If it is a matter of opinion, recognize that opinions may vary and practices around the world are different.
- If the correct information does not come forward, give the information if you know it, or ask the staff person to get the answer.

The bored participant

One participant is visibly uninterested in the discussion (i.e. flips through the workbook, rummages in his / her bag, reorganizes materials, etc.).

Possible Solutions:

- Walk near the participant.
- Ask that person a directed question.
- If using a flip chart, ask the Rotarian to help and be the recorder.

Leaving during the session

During the middle of a discussion, a participant asks to be excused for 30 minutes to make an important phone call.

Possible Solutions:

- Tell him / her respectfully that this is very disruptive to the other participants and that he / she can make the call during the lunch or during a break.

The fast talker

One participant speaks so fast that it is difficult for non-native language speakers to understand.

Possible Solutions:

- Restate the response or question.
- Remind the participants to speak slowly and clearly.

The tired participant

A participant is clearly falling asleep during the session.

Possible Solutions:

- Walk near the participant.
- Ask that person a directed question.
- Ask the whole group to stand up and stretch.
- Try an alternate training activity (buzz group, pair and share, slip writing, etc. See “Training Activities” for ideas.)

The late participant

A participant arrives 1 or 2 minutes after the session started and tries to find out what he / she has missed from neighbors.

Possible Solutions:

- Always start on time.
- Walk near the disruptive participant to encourage him / her to stop talking.
- After the session, ask the Rotarian to arrive on time in the future so as to avoid disruptions for the group.

Language difficulty

When asked a question, the Rotarian does not respond or indicated that he / she does not understand the question.

Possible Solutions:

- Make an effort to speak slowly and clearly and repeat your questions.
- Turn the question to the group to “help” the participant.
- It may help to write the question on a flip chart.
- After the session ask if the Rotarian is having difficulty and how you can help (pair him / her with another Rotarian).

Questions and answers off the topic

A Rotarian provides answers that do not pertain to the topic at hand.

Possible Solutions:

- Offer to place the question/issue on a flip chart so that it can be addressed during the open forum.

Continue to pursue an issue

A participant continues to pursue an issue when you need to continue to another topic.

Possible Solutions:

- If the group is interested in the discussion and if you have sufficient time, it is okay to continue the discussion.
- After a point, offer to post the issue on the flip chart so that it can be addressed at the end of the session, as time permits.

The interrupter

One Rotarian continually interrupts other participants who are speaking.

Possible Solutions:

- Walk near the talking participant, effectively blocking the Rotarian’s view of his / her “audience.”
- “Excuse me. Before you continue, may I ask <NAME> to finish with his / her point?”
- “Thank you, you’ve made a number of points. May we hear now from some who have not expressed an opinion?”

No participation from the whole group

You ask a question and no one answers.

Possible Solutions:

- Be patient with the silence. Immediate response is not appropriate in every culture. Give participants time to think.
- Restate or rephrase the question.
- If one person looks like he / she has a response, but is hesitant to share, ask a directed question.
- “What is your opinion of....., <NAME>?”
- “<NAME>, from your experience on this general subject, would you.....?”

Too much participation

There is too much “cross talk” at the same time.

Possible Solutions:

- Some “cross talk” is good; it shows enthusiasm and interest in the subject.
- If it gets too loud or seems to only involve a few Rotarians, walk towards participants to block the cross talk with your body.
- Say “Excuse me. Before you continue, may I ask if anyone has a comment on the point you have just made?”

Expecting answers

The group asks you to answer the question instead of participating in the discussion.

Possible Solutions:

- Remind them of the role of the facilitator. Be humble. Recognize that you don’t have all the answers, but that the experience in the room will ensure that all questions are answered. Assure them that the staff liaison can help to determine any factual information they need.
- When a Rotarian asks you a specific question, resist the urge to answer it. Try using a “relay question” to ask the group for an answer. Or use a “reverse question” and ask the person who raised the question (see “Effective Questioning Techniques”).

Incorrect information

A number of participants have the wrong information on an issue and they are certain they are correct.

Possible Solutions:

- Ask the group if anyone has a conflicting opinion on the matter. “How many others would agree with the point just raised?”
- Ask the district resource person to verify the information.