

SEVEN STEPS TO BECOME GREAT FACILITATOR

The role of a facilitator is to ask open ended questions that will stimulate discussion, generate ideas and produce outcomes. As a facilitator you must:

1. **Prepare in Advance.** Put yourself in the seats of your listener to understand what outcomes they would be after and what questions would spark discussion.
2. **Define the purpose of the meeting at the top.** “The reason we are here today”, “The purpose of this meeting is x and in the next 45 minutes, we will do, a, b and c, in that order. We will begin by”. It is imperative that you establish a group consensus—that everyone knows what outcome they are after. You must be perfectly clear if you are to lead the session effectively.
3. **Ask questions that prompt discussion.** When you think through questions in advance, think through the possible answers as well. This will help you prepare follow up questions in advance.
4. **Make sure everyone is participating.** If someone is quiet or appears left out, move the discussion toward them, using their name and asking what they think.
5. **Do not get stuck or bogged down in someone else’s issues.** It is your role to keep the conversation moving and you have every right to say---“given our time constraints and that we have a lot to cover, let’s go back to that if we can, but move on for now.”
6. **Have flipcharts** and markers in the room so you or someone you assign can write down ideas, thoughts and key words.
7. Just as you stated your goals at the top, make sure to **summarize what was accomplished** and state next steps or action steps at the end.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS

Open Ended Questions: designed to get information and encourage discussion

- Tell me about
- What do you think of
- How does this make you feel
- What's your opinion?
- Why do you think this happened?
- What do you think we should do about it?
- What about if we did this?
- What did you notice about?
- What if we did?
- What would happen if we did
- In your experience
- Tell me about
- So, you've suggested, but what do you think about?
- What ideas do you have about...?

Rephrasing and Clarifying Questions: By repeating, rephrasing or asking for clarification, you are asking people to agree, verify or correct what was said and further the discussion

- So, what you are saying is
- What do you mean when you say...?
- So, I think what you are implying is
- So, if we hear you correctly
- Help me understand
- So, you are saying if we do this or that

Closed Questions: By asking short pointed questions, you are after simple facts, consensus or closure.

- Does anyone have any additional questions
- What is the exact number?
- Do you understand?

Facilitation Tips

1. Set the stage. If you are enthusiastic and energetic, you can engage more quickly.
2. Remain Neutral. Your job is to facilitate the conversation and focus on the group process, not offer your personal opinion.
3. Start with general questions. Listen to the answer and move to specifics
4. Make sure to listen to the question
5. Ask people to comment on something just said to keep the discussion going.
6. Turn someone else's question or comment back to the group for feedback. "Richard believes x, does everyone agree or do you have some other thoughts and why?"
7. Do not give your opinion. You want to get them to give theirs.
8. Watch the "I" word. This is about them, not you.
9. Do not jump in too quickly. Give people a chance to think and talk
10. Pause to give people a chance to think
11. Re-direct and re-phrase
12. Keep everyone involved
13. If someone answers yes or no, ask them to elaborate
14. Watch out for non-verbal body language: eye contact, nodding, bored, arms crossed, disinterested, eyes shut, checking blackberry, etc. If they are not engaged, point a question toward them or lead the discussion to an area of their interest/expertise
15. Make sure your questions are clear. Pronounce words. Speak up and make sure to talk slow enough for people to hear.
16. Keep the feedback subject oriented and not personal.
17. If the group appears to be going off topic, at a loss or repeating themselves, restate the goal and the issues at hand to bring it back to the subject at hand.
18. Try not to let one person dominate. If one person is taking over, look for ways to seek input from others.
19. Silence is okay, Silence gives people a chance to think and interpret.
20. Compliment people for good thoughts and ideas



21. Let them know when things are about to wrap up, thank them and let them know what if anything is expected.