

Group facilitation techniques

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A facilitator is a person who makes group interactions easier and reduces any friction in a group setting.

Some ways in which they might do this is by directing the topics of discussion in the group, resolving any disagreements that may occur, and guiding and deciding the overall structure and flow of the meeting.

What are the aims of facilitation?

1) Group engagement and participation.

- a) A facilitator can make sure that all members of the group participate and offer their opinions during the meeting.
- b) They can also make sure that everybody has a chance to speak!
- c) That way, a select few people do not dominate the conversation.

2) Increasing productivity.

- a) By creating an environment where everyone feels like their opinion is heard and matters, they will be more willing to share their opinion
- b) This will increase the exchange of ideas and overall productivity.

3) Meeting key objectives.

- a) By having a group facilitator, the meeting is more likely to be kept on track and discussions remain relevant.
- b) Key objectives set at the beginning of the meeting are more likely to be met, making sure that time is used efficiently.

Facilitation techniques to implement

Starting the meeting

Icebreakers

Break the ice and get people talking to each other, perhaps by completing a group activity or sharing something about themselves.

For example, go around the group and ask each person to share their name, role, and an interesting fact about themselves.

This will make members feel more at ease if this is the first time that they have worked together, and encourage participation from everyone in the group from the very beginning.

Ground rules

Before the meeting begins, agree as a group on boundaries that will be maintained, to make sure that everybody feels respected and listened to.

At this point, discuss what the key meeting objectives are, to emphasise that these should be the focus of the meeting and conversations and should remain relevant.

For example, you may set ground rules such as:

- Not interrupting someone else speaking.
- Being respectful of opinions that you may not agree with.
- Making a list of points that are made that may not be relevant to the meeting objectives, but that can be revisited later.

During the meeting

Encourage participation

Make sure that all voices are heard, and that everybody gets a chance to speak.

Example: go around the group and have people offer their input on a particular topic one by one. After this, open the floor for feedback and discussions.

It is also important to make sure that the meeting stays on track.

Example: any irrelevant points that are made can be noted down, and revisited either at the end of the meeting if there is time, or at a later date.

At the end of the meeting

Summarising

At the end of the meeting, summarise everything that has been discussed so that all group members are on the same page.

Reflect on the key objectives set at the beginning of the meeting, and evaluate if these have been met, and if not, why, and what needs to be done.

Discuss next steps, and any actions or tasks that people need to complete off the back of the meeting.

Have you set clear tasks and deadlines? Does everyone know what their individual responsibilities are?