

# The Facilitation Toolkit

## – Activity Summary –

### SECTION 1: The Role of the Facilitator

#### 1. What is Facilitation?

This resource pack is about facilitation. Before considering the skills of facilitating group processes, it's important that you have a good understanding of what facilitation means, where it comes from and how it has evolved, as well as the role of facilitation and how this differs from training.

#### 2. Facilitation Styles

Different groups require different styles of facilitation. To be a good facilitator you must recognize this and also be aware of your own natural style of facilitation. The style of facilitation you feel most comfortable with may not suit the group you are facilitating.

#### 3. Understanding Groups

In order to be an effective facilitator you need to recognize what makes groups tick. So how do you tell what stage of maturity a group is at? How do you respond to different stages of the group life-cycle? This session will help you gain an understanding of the stages of team development and how to interpret group dynamics.

#### 4. Understanding Individuals

The last session provided you with information on group dynamics. But, of course, groups are made up of individuals. This session will help you to identify the roles people play as individuals in groups.

#### 5. The Facilitator and Change

Change has now become part of everyday organizational life. Often, facilitators can help the transition from the old to the new. This session will provide you with an understanding of the change process, how people react to change, and the role the facilitator can take in assisting organizational change.

### SECTION 2: The Skills of Facilitation

#### 6. Facilitative Behaviours

In this session you will find an overview of the skills needed for effective facilitation and an opportunity for you to assess your current skill levels and identify any areas for change.

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## **7. Developing Empathy and Trust**

This session deals with the important question of how to develop a good rapport with your group so they feel that you understand and relate to them. It provides practical tips on building empathy and trust, together with exercises to help you build a good relationship with your group.

## **8. Neutrality**

A facilitator needs to remain impartial, whatever the situation. This session provides examples of neutral behaviour and guidelines on what to say and do, or not to say and do, in order to show your impartiality.

## **9. Active Listening**

Listening is one of the core skills of facilitation. A facilitator's ratio of listening to talking should be at least 2:1. This session outlines active listening and what this involves. It identifies barriers to listening to groups and how the facilitator can identify feelings as well as facts so that they can better interpret what's happening in the group.

## **10. Questioning Skills**

Effective facilitators don't remain silent: they use effective questioning to help group processes. This session establishes why questioning is important in facilitation, and when, what and how to question. It also gives you examples of useful question types.

## **11. Observation Skills**

The role of the facilitator is to act as a neutral observer of the group. This session discusses the signals that the facilitator needs to look for and how to interpret them.

## **12. Intervention Skills**

Intervention can be defined as questions and suggestions made by the facilitator to help the group achieve its goal. Unless a group is highly mature and has asked for low input from the facilitator, group members will nearly always expect the facilitator to intervene to help the group achieve its goal. This session deals with the skills of intervention and provides examples of how and when these interventions may take place.

## **SECTION 3: Facilitation in Practice**

## **13. The Stages of Group Work**

This session provides an overview of the stages a group will go through in working together to achieve their goal. These stages will probably take place over a number of meetings. The following sessions then expand in greater detail on each of the stages and outline techniques that the facilitator can use to help structure each stage.

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## **14. Preparing For the Group**

This session provides you with hints and tips for preparing a group meeting. Although ultimately the responsibility for the meeting preparation lies with the group, the facilitator can play an important role in assisting this process.

## **15. Contracting With the Group**

Contracting is the term given to the very beginning of the meeting when objectives, expectations and ground rules are discussed and agreed upon.

## **16. Overview of Group Techniques**

Part of the facilitator's skill is to know when and how to use a variety of different tools and techniques to structure how the group works together. This session provides a brief overview of the different techniques available.

## **17. Beginning the Session**

This session outlines techniques that can be used to help the group structure the meeting smoothly after contracting has taken place. It looks specifically at five techniques that can be used at the beginning of a session to help clarify and define the issues.

## **18. Problem Analysis**

The facilitator has a useful role to play in helping the group understand the root cause of a problem, so that it can come up with workable solutions. This session outlines four techniques that the facilitator can use, as appropriate, with a group to help them identify the causes of a problem.

## **19. Exploring Different Viewpoints**

Once the root causes of problems have been identified, the group can move forward to generating options and alternatives, and testing reactions to ideas. This session provides you with four techniques that can be used to generate ideas and air different viewpoints.

## **20. Reaching Consensus**

This key stage of group work includes selecting the prime issues, decision making, and action planning. If the group doesn't truly reach consensus at this point then commitment to the implementation of planned changes will be poor.

## **21. Facilitating the Review Process**

It's helpful to take time and space with the group to review performance. This may be at your or their suggestion. Remember, if the group decline the invitation to review their performance then you have to respect their choice.

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## **22. Dealing With Difficult Situations**

This session provides you with guidance on how to deal with a variety of difficult situations in a group including conflict and sabotage. It also points out how to deal with our own emotions and reactions when things become difficult.

## **23. Reviewing Your Own Performance**

As your experience as a facilitator grows, you will probably become familiar with reviewing group performance. But what about reviewing your own?

## **24. Facilitation as a Management Style**

By now you will have recognized that facilitation can be applied as a way of managing people as much as a way of assisting group processes. This session briefly summarizes how facilitation can be used in a management context.

### **SECTION 4: Trainer's Notes**

This section is a mirror of Sections 1, 2 and 3, but provides specific guidelines and materials to guide you in running a training program to develop others to become effective facilitators.

**NOTE:** There are no trainer's notes for Session 24.