

Jacqueline Christina Noguera

[jacqueline@jcnoguera.com](mailto:jacqueline@jcnoguera.com)



# Meeting Facilitation

[jcnoguera.com](http://jcnoguera.com)

# Agenda

- Session One
  - The Purpose of Meeting Facilitation
  - Core Values of the Facilitator
  - The Role of the Facilitator
  - Key Facilitator Responsibilities
    - Setting Meeting Objectives
    - Agenda Planning
  
- Session Two
  - Key Facilitator Responsibilities
    - Setting Meeting Ground Rules
    - Managing Meeting Process
    - Meeting Follow-Up
  
- Appendix
  - Sample Action Items Chart
  - Problem-Solving Model
  - Moving from Traditional Leadership to Facilitative Leadership

- **The Purpose of Meeting Facilitation:**
  - To Improve the **Effectiveness** of the Group or Team by Improving its **Process**
  - **Process** includes defining the scope and objectives for the meeting and helping members to meet those objectives. It also involves how members talk to each other, how they identify and solve problems, how they make decisions, and how they handle conflict. In contrast, **Content** refers to what a group is working on or discussing.
  
- **Core Values Guiding Facilitation, and Leading to Group Effectiveness:**
  - Valid Information
    - People share all relevant information
    - People share information in a way that others understand it
    - People share information in a way that others can independently validate it
    - People continually seek new information to determine whether previous decisions should be changed
  - Free and informed choice
    - People define their own objectives and methods for achieving them
    - People are not coerced or manipulated
    - People base their choices on valid information
  - Internal commitment to the choice (buy-in)
    - People feel personally responsible for their decisions
    - People find their choices intrinsically compelling or satisfying

# The Role of the Facilitator

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- **A Facilitator...**
  - Helps a group to improve its process by acting in ways that are consistent with the core values. The facilitator does this by helping the group establish ground rules for effective group process, identifying behavior that is both inconsistent and consistent with the ground rules, and helping members learn more effective behavior. The facilitator models effective group behavior.
  - Is a Neutral party with no decision-making authority OR a group member or leader who temporarily suspends preferences and decision-making authority and uses facilitation techniques to help the group.
- **A Facilitator Is Not...**
  - An arbitrator or judge
  - A clerical or errand person for the group
  - An intermediary between the group and the larger organization
  - Responsible for Errors in Content, e.g., bad decisions (unless these errors are due to process failures)
    - Bad decisions can be based on bad information
    - Effective group process is necessary but not sufficient for creating an effective group. An effective group also requires
      - an effective group structure (e.g., people with the skills and time to perform the group's work) and
      - a supportive organizational context (e.g., supportive culture, reward structures).

## Key Facilitator Responsibilities: Setting Meeting Objectives

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- Why a meeting?
  - There are a lot of ways to communicate. A meeting is a relatively expensive way, and so the decision to have a meeting should be made after consideration of what needs to be accomplished and alternative vehicles. For example,
    - One-way information sharing or status updates can take place via e-mail, memo, or web site. In fact, this is usually the best way to ensure that everyone who needs to know something is informed, since people may not attend the meeting or may be distracted during the meeting.
  - Meetings are useful when people need to collaborate to reach a decision or solve a problem.
  - Meetings are also useful to create a feeling of “team”: to develop group norms and shared experiences.
- Setting Objectives
  - Be explicit (no “hidden agendas”)
  - Limit the number of objectives (usually 1-4)
  - Describe the objectives in terms of tangible outcomes
  - Objectives should be attainable; if the facilitator doubts that the stated objectives will be met by the meeting, he/she should challenge the meeting owner(s) to define attainable objectives.

# Key Facilitator Responsibilities: Agenda Planning

Task	Meeting Type		Responsibility		
	Ad Hoc	Ongoing	Owner	Facilitator	Team Members
Define the meeting purpose and desired outcomes / objectives	X	X	X	X	
Define regular topic categories that will meet objectives (e.g., Project Status, Issues, Next Steps)		X	X	X	
Determine specific meeting topics, desired outcomes for each topic, and amount of time required for discussion	X	X	X	X	X
Identify meeting participants, and ensure that the key people required for decision-making are on the list	X	X	X		
Make sure that all the participants who will contribute to an agenda item, present a document, or have a particular role in the meeting understand what is expected of them	X	X	X	X	
Prepare agenda, share the agenda with key participants, and ask for their input	X	X		X	
Finalize agenda, schedule the meeting and publish the agenda, and make sure that the key participants can attend	X	X		X	
Make sure that the necessary information is available to the participants before or at the meeting. For example, if pre-reading is required, make sure that participants receive it a reasonable time beforehand and understand that they are to review it prior to the meeting	X	X	X	X	X

## Key Facilitator Responsibilities: Setting Meeting Ground Rules

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- Unless a group is experienced in establishing its own Ground Rules, the Facilitator should suggest some at the initial group meeting, and solicit input to ensure buy-in.
- Post Meeting Ground Rules in the Team's Meeting Room, so that they may be referred to during the meeting(s)
- Periodically re-visit the Ground Rules with the Team, to self-assess adherence to the Ground Rules, and to invite additions that would lead to more effective Group Process.
- Base the Ground Rules on the Facilitation Core Values and on a foundation of Mutual Respect, e.g.,
  - Start and End On Time
  - No interruptions or distractions (e.g., turn cell phones off for the duration of the meeting)
  - No sidebar discussions (only one conversation at a time)
  - Stay focused
  - Headline; don't monopolize the discussion
  - Communicate openly; share relevant information
  - Challenge others' opinions and logic to ensure complete understanding of issues or problems
  - No personal attacks; minimize defensive behavior

## Key Facilitator Responsibilities: Managing Meeting Process

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1. Start on time
2. Make sure all participants are introduced
3. Present & get buy-in on meeting ground rules (initial group meeting, periodic touch-base)
4. Identify each participant's expectations from the meeting (ad hoc meetings)
5. Review the agenda
6. Run the meeting according to the agenda and the time contract (unless the group agrees to change the time contract due to particular circumstances)
  - Point out when ground rules are not being followed, or note when individuals stop themselves from breaking ground rules; thereby helping participants to adhere to ground rules
  - Facilitate participation of all meeting participants
  - Bring discussion items to closure, if required (e.g., summarize the issue or decision, ask what the Next Steps should be)
  - If interesting issues are raised requiring additional discussion, but are out of the meeting scope, capture them on a "Parking Lot"
  - Capture Action Items (Next Steps) as necessary, and assign responsibility and target dates for their resolution.
  - Capture any Key Decisions or Key Discussion Points
7. At the end of the meeting, check if the participants' expectations have been met (ad hoc meetings) OR (periodically) end the meeting by soliciting Benefits (B's) and Concerns (C's) -- What participants have gained from the meeting, and what they are leaving the meeting concerned / worried about.

## Key Facilitator Responsibilities: Meeting Follow-Up

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- Document and publish Meeting Notes and Action Items, ideally within 24 hours.
- Follow up on the Action Items
  - Design and implement a process to track and report progress on the Action Items
- Handle the Parking Lot Items
  - Ensure that Parking Lot items have owners, and that the owners understand that they are responsible for pursuing resolution of the item.

# Appendix A: Sample Action Items Chart

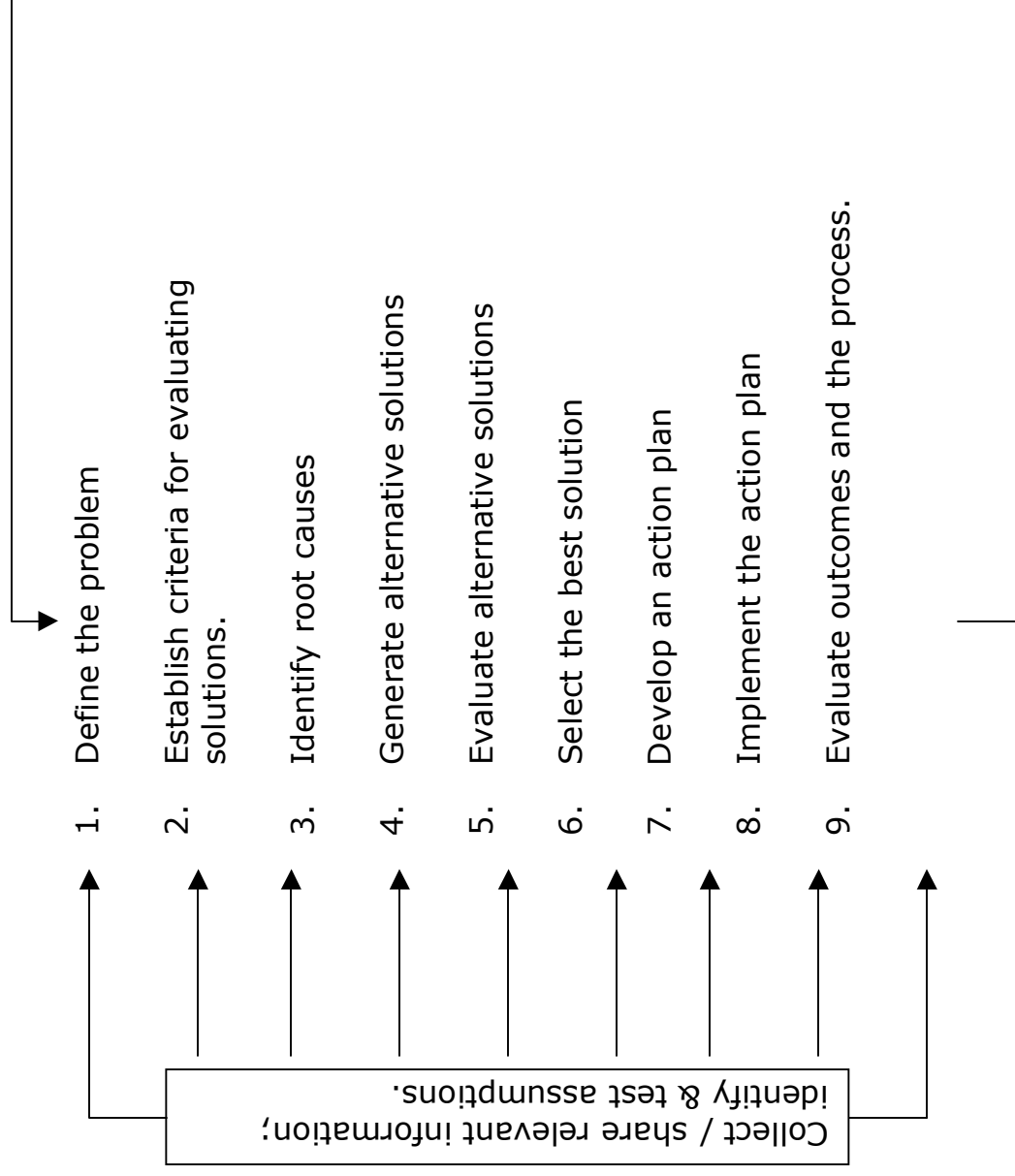
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#	Task	Date		Original Target Date	Current Target Date	Responsibility	Resources	Status*	Comments
		Assigned							

\*Status Values: Open, On Hold, Ongoing, Deleted, Complete

## Appendix B: Problem-Solving Model

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## Appendix C: Moving from Traditional Leadership to Facilitative Leadership

Group Element	Traditional Leader	Facilitative Leader
<b>Group Process</b> Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader controls who communicates with whom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader teaches group members how to communicate effectively, using the ground rules</li> <li>• Group members initiate communication with anyone who has valid information or has an interest in the situation.</li> <li>• Leader teaches group members how to manage their own conflicts.</li> </ul>
Conflict Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader manages conflicts among group members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader teaches group members the problem-solving model.</li> <li>• Leader ensures that group members have access to relevant information to solve problems.</li> <li>• Group members take responsibility for identifying and solving problems they encounter</li> </ul>
Problem Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader solves problems that group members present.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group members make many decisions on their own or as a group.</li> <li>• Leader and group members jointly make appropriate decisions by consensus.</li> </ul>
Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader either makes decisions alone or after consultation with group members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader teaches members how to communicate, coordinate, and solve problems with people outside the group.</li> <li>• Leader and members jointly determine the boundary-management approach.</li> <li>• Leader manages boundaries largely to facilitate group problem solving rather than to solve the problem.</li> </ul>
<b>Group Structure</b> Group Norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader is largely responsible for communicating, coordinating, and solving problems with people outside the group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader shares core values, principles, and ground rules with group members as potential bases for group norms.</li> <li>• Leader and group members explicitly discuss and agree on group norms.</li> </ul>
Group Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader attempts to establish norms implicitly with group.</li> <li>• Leader attempts to influence culture implicitly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader shares core values, principles, and ground rules as potential bases for group culture.</li> <li>• Leader and group members explicitly discuss the current and desired culture and agree on steps to shape it.</li> </ul>

## Appendix C: Moving from Traditional Leadership to Facilitative Leadership

<b>Group Element</b>	<b>Traditional Leader</b>	<b>Facilitative Leader</b>
Sufficient Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leader decides how much time tasks should take and sets deadlines in consultation with group members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leader teaches group members how to plan and manage time.</li> <li>Group members use relevant information and support from leader to set deadlines for their tasks.</li> </ul>
Clearly Defined Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leader defines employees' roles with or without participation from group members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group members use relevant information and support from leader to define and agree on their roles.</li> </ul>
Appropriate Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leader or leader's supervisor decides who will join and leave the group with or without consulting group members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leader ensures that group has information and skills necessary to select (and remove group members).</li> <li>Group members use relevant information and support from leader to discuss and decide what kinds of members they need.</li> </ul>
Motivating Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leader or leader's supervisor designs group members' jobs, sometimes in consultation with group members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leader helps members understand what makes a job motivating.</li> <li>Group members use relevant information and support from leader to redesign their jobs.</li> </ul>
Clear Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leader sets goals based on direction from leader's supervisor and sometimes in consultation with group members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leader helps group members learn how to set clear goals.</li> <li>Group members use relevant information and support from leader to discuss and set goals.</li> </ul>
<b>Organizational Context</b>		
Physical Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leader takes responsibility for trying to change the physical work environment, sometimes using information from group members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group members take responsibility for trying to change the physical work environment with relevant information and support from leader.</li> </ul>
Technological and Material Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leader takes responsibility for obtaining resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group members take responsibility for obtaining resources with relevant information and support from leader.</li> </ul>
Training and Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leader takes responsibility for identifying and obtaining training and consultation needed by group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leader ensures that group members have knowledge and skills to assess their training and consultation needs.</li> <li>Group members take responsibility for identifying and obtaining training and consultation needed by group.</li> </ul>

## Appendix C: Moving from Traditional Leadership to Facilitative Leadership

Group Element	Traditional Leader	Facilitative Leader
Information and Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader decides what information, including feedback, group members need and provides it, sometimes with participation from group members.</li> <li>• Leader provides feedback to group members about their performance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group members decide what information they need and obtain it.</li> <li>• Leader helps group members learn how to provide and seek feedback effectively.</li> <li>• Leader and group members provide feedback to each other and critique their own performances jointly through self-critiques.</li> </ul>
Rewards Consistent with Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader (or supervisor above leader's level) designs reward system and decides who receives rewards.</li> <li>• Leader focuses primarily on individual extrinsic rewards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader ensures that group members understand the elements of effective reward systems.</li> <li>• Group members design reward system and decide who receives rewards.</li> <li>• Reward systems include intrinsic and extrinsic rewards and focus on group and individual rewards.</li> </ul>
Supportive Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader and group members attempt to influence culture implicitly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader and group members are models of the core values, principles, and ground rules and simultaneously advocate and encourage others to inquire about using them as bases for group culture.</li> <li>• Leader and group members explicitly discuss the current and desired culture and agree on steps to shape it.</li> </ul>

Source: Schwarz, Roger M. The Skilled Facilitator. Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994, pp 257-260.