2014 ABA BAR LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

SKILLS FOR THE FACILITATOR AND CHIEF

● Role of the Facilitator

● Setting the Stage for Facilitation

● Skills needed by the Facilitator

The new leader is a facilitator, not an order giver.

John Naisbitt

4826 River Bluff Court
Rockford, IL 61111
Office Phone & Fax 815$877$5290
E-mail: nancy@nancysylvester.com

Rockford, IL 61111
Home Phone 815$877$2666
Website: www.nancysylvester.com
Role of the Facilitator – You should make your role clear to the participants early in the process, including what you will do, what you will not do, and how you will help the team.

- Out of Content, Into Process
  - Facilitator stays in process – Because the facilitator is focusing on the process, the facilitator can serve as a better judge of when to move on, when to refocus the group back on the task, when an issue needs more time, etc.
  
  - Facilitator stays out of content – One of the most difficult tasks of facilitating a meeting is staying out of content. Yet, effectiveness of the facilitator is significantly reduced each time the facilitator enters into content discussion.
  
  - Helpful questions facilitator can ask to stay in process and out of content:
    ✓ I am not here to give my opinion, what do you as team members think?
    ✓ The agenda calls for us to move on now. Are you ready to move on?
    ✓ I don't know the answer to that. Do any of you?

- Neutrality – stay neutral
  - Focus your attention on the goals of the group, not your goals.

  - Must remain neutral on all issues!!!

  - Must not be intimidated by the position of meeting attendees.

Great discoveries and achievements invariably involves the cooperation of many minds.
Alexander Graham Bell
Listening and observing – listening during facilitation is one of the most difficult, yet important skills of a facilitator. This is truly the time to remember that we have two ears and one mouth for a reason. A facilitator’s strength is in listening, not speaking.

- Actively listen to what each member of the group is saying. Pay attention to your own nonverbal responses while listening. The facilitator needs to be a model of active listening. Supportive smiles, eye contact, head nodding, and leaning forward all encourage freedom of expression. Nonjudgmental responses are very important.

- Listen with your eyes as well as your ears. While listening, look around the room at the nonverbal cues that the team members are displaying. Sometimes, those cues are more important than the words being spoken.

- While listening to the speaker, be sure to pay close attention to all of the group members.

- Use observation to help group sort out areas of agreement and areas of disagreement.

- Observe who is actively participating and who is not. Encourage the quiet members to participate.

- Listen to what the group is saying; observe what they are not saying.

To truly understand, we must listen to more than words. Words are weak compared to the richness and complexity of the ideas that we need to express; they are particularly poor at expressing feelings, for example, and yet feelings are often the thing that people most want us to understand. So when we seek to understand, we must look beyond the surface issues that the words describe, to consider how people feel.

Stephen R. Covey
Master questioner -- facilitator needs to pose the right question at the right time.

- **Purpose of question**
  - Generate a particular response – include particular person, prompt experience or knowledge from a specific person
  - Stimulate discussion by including everyone
  - Open question – invites opinions and judgment
  - Closed question – acquire specific information
  - Instead of answering question yourself, throw question out to entire group
  - Clarify content of a statement
  - Return the question to the questioner when you believe questioner has something to contribute

- **Use questions to stimulate discussion**
  - What are some other ways to approach this problem? – When the group needs to explore an idea in more detail.
  - Can you give us an example of what you mean? – When an idea needs more clarification.
  - We have heard from everyone but Sam. Sam what do you think about this? – To encourage participation.
  - It seems like we have come to an agreement on this issue. Please raise your hand if you agree that [state issue of agreement in detail]? – Good way to check for consensus or agreement.
  - I would like some suggestions on how we should get started. Let’s go around the group and each answer the question of: How would you propose we get started? – When trying to initiate action.
  - It is still not clear to me. How are you saying we should best handle this? – When need clarification.
  - Steve, I get the impression that you are not satisfied with the group’s answer. Is that correct? – When you want to reflect what you think someone is feeling.
  - I noticed that Jim has done most of the talking on this issue. Why don’t we go around the table and see how each of you feel. – when you want to get more participants involved.
  - Would help if we put the suggested list in rank order of importance before we started? – If you want to suggest a procedure.
  - Your suggestion assumes that we will not be able to meet the schedule. Is that what you believe? – When you want to question assumptions.
  - Why don’t you take the role of the client for a few minutes. As the client, how would you react to this suggestion? – when you want them to reverse roles.
  - If it doesn’t work, what have we lost? – When you want them to look into the future.
• Setting the Stage

  o Purpose Clear Before Session
    - State purpose in a sentence – a complete thought
    - Communicate purpose to all participants
    - Determine what is to be accomplished during this meeting and specific steps to accomplish it

  o Pre Planning the Meeting
    - Room set up – the physical layout of the room can have a major impact on the flow and amount of discussion.
      ✓ Examples of layout that encourage discussion
      ✓ Examples of room layout that discourage discussion
    - What equipment is needed?

  o Ice breaker – Remember the brain is not engaged until the mouth has become engaged!

  o Ground Rules/Code of Conduct – Research, directed by John E. Tropman from the University of Michigan, concludes that meeting participants are unaware of the rules that are used to guide a specific meeting. Even when attendees believe there are no rules, rules existed. Therefore, to be fair to all team members, a team should establish its governing rules.
    - The governing rules are referred to as Ground Rules or a Code of Conduct.
    - Ground Rules MUST be determined by the team members themselves, early in the process. It is essential that all team members agree on the rules, or the rules will not be followed. Throughout the process of determining the Code of Conduct, the facilitator should frequently check for buy in. Ask: “Does anyone on the team have any problem with that rule? . . . You all agree to it? . . .” If any member shows a sign of non-agreement with a rule, stop, and ask. Be careful to do so in a non-threatening manner.
    - Determine in advance some possible subjects for the rules. If the group has not discussed one of those subjects, address the subject as a question. E.g. “What about taking phone calls or answering pages during the meeting? Do you want a rule covering that?” If the group does not want a rule on that subject, let it go. Remember these are their rules!
    - Be specific in writing the rules. E.g. If a rule is included about starting the meeting on time, then indicate who is to start the meeting if the team leader is late.
    - Number each rule and post the rules in the meeting room. This makes them easier to use during the meeting.
Sample ground rules

- Agenda items will be sent to the facilitator by noon on Monday. The meeting agenda will be distributed to team members by the end of the day on Monday. We will follow the agenda.

- Meetings will be on Wednesdays from 9:00 am to 10:00 am with no outside interruptions permitted.

- All team members will attend all weekly meetings either in person or by phone. Exceptions will be cleared with team leaders.

- At least two team members must be in favor of discussing an issue before we will spend team time on the issue.

- I will address all issues with affected team member first.

- I will not listen to complaints made by other team members, without first checking to make sure the previous rule was followed.

- Discussion focuses on issues, not personalities.

- During our meetings, we are all on a level playing field. All ideas are of equal value.

- All team members have equal rights and responsibilities to openly contribute to team decisions and must support those decisions.

- I will address issues and specific solutions rather than questioning motives of individual team members.

- I will work to talk with my team members, rather than talk at them.

- I will suspend my assumptions when another team member is speaking.

There’s a law of administration which I’d suggest holds true in almost every situation. That is, if the boss presents his solution first and asks for opinions about it, a vote of approval will follow almost every time.

George S. Odiorne
• Facilitation Skills

○ Life Cycle. All teams or groups will follow a life cycle. Each stage is unique. The length of each stage will vary according to task and group. Understanding of these stages will keep members from overreacting to normal problems and having unrealistic expectations for the group.

  ▪ Forming
    ✓ Orientation
    ✓ Members explore boundaries of acceptable behavior
    ✓ Transition from individual to member status
    ✓ Learn strengths and weaknesses of team members

  ▪ Storming
    ✓ Discontentment
    ✓ Members begin to realize the difficulty of the task and become impatient and frustrated
    ✓ Most difficult stage
    ✓ Argue about what actions the group should take

  ▪ Norming
    ✓ Resolution
    ✓ Members accept the group
    ✓ The emotional conflict and competitiveness within the group reduces
    ✓ The ground rules for the group are clear, understood and accepted
    ✓ Avoidance of conflict: groupthink

  ▪ Performing
    ✓ Production
    ✓ Quantity and quality of work is high
    ✓ Member relationships are positive and productive

  ▪ Mourning
    ✓ Closure
    ✓ May be result of completion of task or change in make up of group
    ✓ Members may delay completion of task
    ✓ Impatience to get going on new team
    ✓ New members may be target of discontent

*Often you have to rely on your intuition*

Bill Gates
Brainstorming – brainstorming is a technique to creatively generate ideas using a non-evaluative and uncritical approach. It is used any time in the group process when a list of ideas (problems, solutions, causes, etc.) is needed.

- **Generate ideas**
  - Call out ideas freely or take turns giving suggestions. Don't hold back ideas, even if they seem silly at the time.
  - Hitchhike—build upon ideas generated by others in the group.
  - Use pauses to allow time for generation of ideas; don't conclude too quickly. The more suggestions, the better.
  - Allow no judgmental statements, discussion, or criticism during this step of brainstorming.
  - Record suggestions on a media (flipchart, overhead, board, etc.) so all attendees can see.

- **Clarify ideas**
  - The goal is for everyone to understand the ideas clearly.
  - This step should not include argumentation or editorialization.

- **Consolidate ideas**
  - Discuss the strength and weaknesses of each idea.
  - Combine ideas, where appropriate.
  - Avoid over consolidation

- **Select idea(s)**
  - Narrow down and prioritize the remaining ideas.
  - Evaluate again each idea.
  - Decide on the best idea(s).

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**Coming together is a beginning;**
**Keeping together is progress;**
**Working together is success.**

Henry Ford
Time Management

- A major role the facilitator serves is as time manager for the meeting.

- Determine the priorities of this meeting and organize the meeting time around those priorities.

- Because of the facilitator's focus on process, the facilitator is in a better position to indicate when it is time to move on or stay a little longer than planned with a specific issue.

- When making time management judgments keep a close focus on the purpose of the team in general, and the purpose of this specific meeting in particular. No matter how important the issue is, measure it against the purpose of this meeting when determining whether to spend time on it.

- When an issue appears to be urgent, stop, ask yourself how important it is to the overall purpose of this meeting. If it does not pass that test, it may be urgent, but it is not important enough to disrupt the flow of the meeting.

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The Ninety-Ninety Rules of Project Schedules: The first ninety percent of the task takes ninety percent of the time, and the last ten percent takes the other ninety percent.

Arthur Bloch
Conflict Management — Conflict is inevitable and natural. It is usually best to handle it openly.

- Kinds of conflict
  - Disagreement over substance (issues)
  - Disagreement over procedures (how things are done)
  - Disagreement between people (interpersonal conflict)

- Potentially positive aspects of conflict
  - Inspiring alternatives
  - Changing the minds of some group members and, therefore, modifying the decision made by the group
  - Enhancing the quality of decisions by calling attention to weaknesses and encouraging corrections to be made
  - Improving the group’s ability to defend the decision outside of the group environment
  - Confirming beliefs brought about by better understanding of them
  - Enhancing the group’s cohesion
  - Encouraging freedom of expression in a climate where people openly disagree

- Suggestions for reducing the negative effects of conflict
  - Always keep conflict on issues or the subject, never on personalities
  - Treat conflict as a group problem, not an individual problem. Keep everyone group-centered
  - Keep communication channels open because conflict management is dependent upon communication
  - Keep the group on track by following the agenda and avoiding tangents
  - Encourage the group participants to use open and frank discussion to iron out differences of opinion, to share ideas, and to keep one another informed
  - Discourage the attendees from using defensive behavior and being judgmental

Conflict is inevitable. Combat is optional.

Max Lucardo