

Member's Quarterly

Summer 2023 Edition

Feature

Facilitation Tips for Managers

Review this checklist for success



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Understand who you are as a facilitator. Think about your values, beliefs and assumptions at play when facilitating. How do these influence your style? Understand your preferences for process, group size and structure and think about how these might affect people in your audience.

Consult Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisors and Adult Education Design Experts. Seek help to learn how your style and preferences might affect participation. Where are your blind spots? What professional development could you participate in to grow new knowledge, skill and facilitation ability?

Identify your favourite 'go-to' tools and discover how they help or hinder individual participation. Facilitators need various methods and tools to ensure that all voices get heard. Conduct an inventory of your tool kit and identify the ones you reach for the most. Review evaluation forms for clues as to what participants preferred. Learn new tools that support participants' processing and learning styles.

Learn about participant preferences. Before facilitating, find out about the ways participants process and learn. Ask about learning styles and preferences for tools that assist with individual participation. Make sure to ask inclusively so as not to single anyone out.

Design the agenda to allow for variety. According to the Cleveland Clinic, "Neurodiversity" is a word used to explain the unique ways people's brains work. While everyone's brain develops similarly, no two brains function just alike. Being neurodivergent means having a brain that works differently from the average or "neurotypical" person. This may be differences in social preferences, ways of learning, ways of communicating and/or ways of perceiving the environment. Check out <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/symptoms/23154-neurodivergent>. Some individuals excel at communicating electronically. Allowing them to share in a group setting using technology facilitates participation and access to an individual's ideas that might otherwise be missed.

Manage the logistics considering size, space, physical setup, technology, visual and other sensory needs. Make sure the physical design is conducive to ease of participation. Allow for two or three different physical arrangements so participants can choose the best one for them. For example, maybe a U shape for sharing information with larger groups and round tables that allow for breakout and smaller group dialogue on the central questions. Ensure the equipment necessary for gathering electronic input is available.

Consider various ways of soliciting input before the gathering. Not everything needs to happen in the room on the day of the session. Once you understand the central questions to be addressed, offer individual interviews to gather input from people who prefer one-on-one contact. Use auditory or visual recordings to share information on what will be addressed, inviting participants to provide input in a way that supports their voices being heard. Allow people time to respond in writing. Don't depend on gathering all information in the room on the day of the gathering.

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Provide data in a variety of forms. Rather than relying solely on print material, use a variety of ways to enable participants to access information relative to the topic being explored. If necessary, send this material before the meeting in sufficient time to be reviewed.

Manage your expectations regarding participation. Understand that some people prefer to work one-on-one or in small groups and are not comfortable being singled out or called upon. Whereas extroverts often thrive in social settings and can effectively manage larger groups, it can be draining for people who identify as introverts. Extroverts prefer to think out loud and mull it over, considering the ideas of many, whereas introverts generally prefer to process information by themselves before weighing in. It's essential to ensure ways to hear from introverts. Being quiet does not mean they do not have anything to offer.

Evaluate your approach. It's not over until you understand what participants thought of the opportunity. Design an evaluation form that will give comprehensive information about what worked well and what might need to be changed for next time.

No two people are alike, nor do we think alike. When the uniqueness of how we receive, process and work with information is welcomed and celebrated, the workplace benefits from the richness of everyone's ideas.

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