



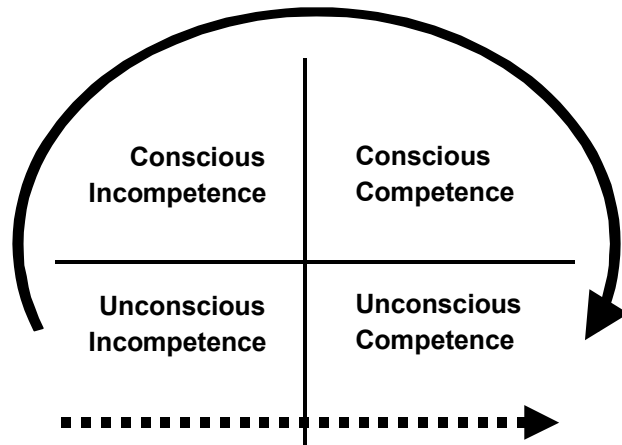
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## Prelude: Knowledge, Learning and Intuition

Facilitation of meetings demands mastery of a lot of skills. Just knowing a set of moderation tools is certainly not enough. You would not like a graduated medical student with a major in surgery to perform an operation on your heart! On the other side, you might accept his assistance under the supervision of an experienced doctor. The same refers to facilitation skills. Learning is about practise and reflection. Alfred Bandura, one of the leading researchers on learning processes, has developed a simple model which helps you to understand what happens if you start to master a new skill<sup>1</sup>. It works under the assumption that the objective of apprenticeship is to acquire unconscious competence in parts of your capabilities.

We have to be aware that we often do not know what we don't know. In German, we say: "Was ich nicht weiss, macht mich nicht heiss." (What I don't know does not make me hot.) If you don't know that something like facilitation skills exist (and, I am sure, in fact 95% of the world population does not know), you will probably not



care for it. Related to this knowledge focus, you are in the state of **unconscious incompetence**. There might come a day on which you are stuck in a complex process, for example when the group you are chairing does not make the decisions expected from them. Or you constantly are annoyed by one of your fellow group members. Or you know your group needs to deliver a result at the end of the meeting and you don't know how to get there. At that point you might start to realize that there is something you need to know and you might understand that there is a discipline called facilitation (some people also call it moderation). You have reached **conscious incompetence**, a state in which one knows that there is something else to know.

<sup>1</sup> Albert Bandura (1977) *Social Learning Theory*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Next, you start to study communication and you are acquiring new tools, like words of an unknown foreign language. Eventually, you have achieved to gain **conscious competence**, i.e. you know that you know more. For example, you know how to solve conflicts in a group; or how to visualize results. But it is a human experience that knowledge is only mastered if it is part of your bones and muscles, i.e. if you are able to apply skills intuitively. Those who drive a non-automatic car (i.e., most people outside the US) know that one or two months after you leave the driving school, you never think again about how to shift gears, you will just do it automatically. That is the stage of **unconscious competence**. Group steering techniques make up an area in which most facilitators develop unconscious competences. If you are in the middle of an argument between two factions of your group, you won't look up your textbook "Facilitation for Dummies". You just do it.

As a practising facilitator you will develop more unconscious competence in different fields the longer you experiment, test and reflect. For the reflection part, you need a mirror, somebody who gives you feed back on what you are doing. That could be a peer who is at the same level of learning like you, or a professional coach or a mentor.

Not all learning processes follow the described pattern. Certainly a big portion of what we learn does not cross the conscious mind at all. Most what small children learn is learned unintentionally – until they have developed a clear awareness of self and others. There is a growing body of evidence that implicit learning forms a major part of our knowledge generation<sup>2</sup>.

However, part of the facilitator's way will be the constant discoverage of what her unconscious competence is made of, to validate her knowledge and to decide on where additional conscious learning efforts need to be made to facilitate her own professional growth and the effectiveness of her groups. In that respect it might be necessary (and painful) to identify skills and belief systems that are dated and to de-learn them

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<sup>2</sup> Axel Cleeremans, Arnaud Destrebecqz and Maud Boyer (1998): Implicit Learning: News from the Front. Elsevier: Trends in Cognitive Science Vol. 2, No. 10.

*Don't discuss you methods – use them!*

## **What are facilitation skills?**

Say the word "meeting" and expect to hear sighs, groans, or sarcastic remarks. Yet, international conventions and global exchange requires people to come together frequently over a period of time in a word meeting. Well-planned and facilitated meetings sustain participants' energy and allow them to contribute their best thinking to the planning endeavor.



One of the most important sets of skills for leaders and members are facilitation skills. These are the "process" skills we use to guide and direct key parts of our organizing work with groups of people such as meetings, planning sessions, and training of our members and leaders.

In broad terms, facilitation is the process of making something easier or less difficult. It is often used in the context of group meetings or workshops in which a basically neutral person with no decision-making authority helps the group to be more efficient and effective when planning, implementing, and monitoring and evaluating meetings and workshops.

Whether it's a meeting (big or small) or a training session, someone has to shape and guide the process of working together so that you meet your goals and accomplish what you've set out to do. While a group of people might set the agenda and figure out the goals, one person needs to concentrate on how you are going to move through your agenda and meet those goals effectively. This is the person we call the "facilitator." As a chair of a meeting, you cannot not facilitate – the question is whether you do in way that enhances the outcome of the meeting or not, whether you make the participants feel comfortable or not.

*So, how is facilitating different than chairing a meeting?*

Well, it is and it isn't. Facilitation has three basic principles:

- A facilitator is a guide to help people move through a process together, not the seat of wisdom and knowledge. That means a facilitator isn't there to give opinions, but to draw out opinions and ideas of the group members.
- Facilitation focuses on HOW people participate in the process of learning or planning, not just on WHAT gets achieved.
- A facilitator is neutral and never takes sides.

The best meeting chairs see themselves as facilitators. While they have to get through an agenda and make sure that important issues are discussed, decisions made, and actions taken, good chairs don't feel that they have all of the answers or should talk all the time. The most important thing is what the participants in the meeting have to say. So, focus on how the meeting is structured and run to make sure that everyone can participate. This includes things like:

- Making sure everyone feels comfortable participating
- Developing a structure that allows for everyone's ideas to be heard
- Making members feel good about their contribution to the meeting
- Making sure the group feels that the ideas and decisions are theirs, not just the leader's. Supporting everyone's ideas and not criticizing anyone for what they've said.

### **The benefits of strong facilitation skills**

- Increased ability to manage diverse groups at each stage of a task oriented meeting;
- Improved skills for managing conflict;
- Better utilisation of local knowledge, resources, and capacities;
- Enhanced collaboration, co-ordination and understanding amongst project stakeholders;
- More committed and timely group action;
- Increased management capacity of partners;
- More effective meetings and workshops.

## Useful Guidance

Rogers (1969), a pioneer in learner-centred approaches to education, offers many sound ideas for effective facilitation. Although much has been researched and written since Carl Rogers developed his ideas, his guidelines (with slight modifications) are still relevant and timely:

- A main role of the facilitator is setting the initial mood or climate of the group.
- The facilitator helps to elicit and clarify the purposes of the individuals in the group as well as the more general purposes of the group.
- She or he relies upon the desire of each participant to implement those purposes that have meaning for her or him, as the motivational force behind significant learning.
- He or she organises and make accessible a wide range or resources for understanding and learning.
- The facilitator is a flexible resource to be utilised by the group.
- He or she accepts both the intellectual content and the emotionalised attitudes and tries to balance his/her emphasis or these aspects with the group's corresponding emphasis.
- The facilitator may share opinions with the group, once the acceptable climate has been established, but he or she must do so in ways which do not demand nor impose but represent simply a personal sharing which group members may take or leave.
- Throughout the group experience, the facilitator remains alert to expressions that indicate deep or strong feelings.
- In his or her functioning as a facilitator of learning, the facilitator recognises and accepts his or her own limitations.

## Roles of Facilitators

Usually, if we speak about facilitators, we have external agents in mind who are hired to orchestrate a workshop. However, this is only one model. In daily life, people might find themselves in a facilitator role beside their other role they are originally assigned to. These roles might be:

- The facilitative consultant
- The facilitative coach
- The facilitative trainer
- The facilitative leader

The following table gives an overview on the different roles<sup>3</sup>:

Facilitator	Facilitative Consultant	Facilitative Coach	Facilitative Trainer	Facilitative Leader
Third party	Third party	Third party or group member	Third party or group member	Group leader or member
Process expert	Process expert	Process expert	Process expert	Skilled in process
Content neutral	Content expert	Involved in content	Content expert	Involved in content
Not substantive decision maker	May be involved in content decision making	May be involved in content decision making	Involved in content decision making	Involved in content decision making

**In many meetings under ICPDR, the chair automatically acts as a Facilitative Leader!** This is the most difficult role to fill because the facilitative leaders need to use their facilitative skills at the same time that they have strong views on the content being discussed. As most of the chairs are elected from a position of an expert, they have to manage develop two capacities – facilitation and leadership.

<sup>3</sup> Roger Schwarz: The Skilled Facilitator. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2002.



## General Tips

A facilitator is neither a content expert nor a lecturer. A facilitator helps participants to interact with each other, gain new information, and build upon their experience. The facilitator guides a process which will help participants to reach their stated goals and objectives within the time allotted. The facilitator's key role is to help the group experience and learn together. If you are working with participants who may not understand the role of a facilitator, explain this to them.

A good facilitator:

- Keeps the group focused on task and process;
- Remains as objective as possible;
- Is an informed guide helping the group to chart its course and accomplish its goals;
- Listens more than talks;
- Adopts to various learning styles;
- Encourages everyone to participate while remembering that individuals participate in different ways. Some may talk only in small groups, but they are still participating. Others may wish to talk constantly and may be contributing little;
- Protects members of the group from attack by others;
- Is gender and culturally sensitive;
- Energises a group or slows it down, as needed;
- Recaps, occasionally, what has happened in the workshop and helps group to make connections between the sessions.

## Preparation: THINK BEFORE YOU MEET

It is not unusual to spend as much time planning a meeting as running it. Preparation begins with asking these questions:

*What outcome do we want to achieve by the end of this particular meeting?*

The first step in planning a workshop should be the definition of its objectives and the means of verification of these objectives. Without

predefined objectives, there is no justification for organizing a meeting, and without success indicators, there is no possibility of measuring achievements of it. We distinguish short and medium term objectives.

Short term objectives are measured at the end of the meeting and mainly describe whether

- the predefined agenda has been accomplished,
- participants have understood the central messages,
- agreements have been reached,
- plans have been elaborated,
- etc.

They can be described by specific milestones, which could be documents elaborated, certain tasks/assignments completed, etc.

Medium term objectives are measured some time after the workshop (generally, 6 months later) and describe whether

- participants apply new skills,
- participants have changed specific behaviour,
- agreed actions are taken,
- plans are implemented,
- etc.

Objectives are generally worded in present or perfect tense, e.g.

#### Short term

“After completion of the workshop, participants have gained skills to elaborate a concept of cost-recovery in municipal water services”, or

“At the end of the workshop, a plan for implementation of new policy guidelines on XYZ has been elaborated.”

#### Medium term

“Selected communities start to implement new cost-recovery schemes in municipal water service.”

“New policy guidelines on XYZ are put into practice in the member countries of ICPDR.”

Indicators for medium-term objectives could be of quantitative or qualitative nature, e.g.

“The use of the DANUBIS Information System has increased by 25% from November 2002 to April 2003, measured by the logins.”

“National focal points have discussed the implementation of the WFD and designed plans for implementation of first steps.”

Objectives should be SMART, e.g.

### Simple

- A good objective identifies a single, simple, goal, in language that others find easy to understand.

### Measurable

- It should be possible to measure the extent to which the objective has been achieved.

### Achievable

- It should be possible to achieve the goal in the time available and with the resources at disposal.

### Relevant

- The goal should be directly related to the DRP project.

### Time-constrained

- It should be when you intend to achieve it (short term – at the end of the workshop, or medium term, after a certain, specified time).

While for medium term objectives you will need qualitative or quantitative indicators, short term objectives are mainly verified by milestones, e.g.

- draft implementation plan
- minutes of group discussions, etc.

The workshop organizer is principally responsible for monitoring the short and medium term objectives of the workshop. However, the responsibility for monitoring medium term objectives can be delegated to other persons.

*To achieve the desired meeting outcome, what must we do during the meeting? And how much time will each item realistically require?*

Knowing the purpose of the meeting is a first step in structuring the agenda. Having a firm idea of where you want to be by the end of the meeting suggests what must be covered during the meeting.

Each step in reaching the desired meeting outcome is thought through carefully to determine the amount of time needed.

- Establish how long the meeting is to last
- List the agenda items that need to be covered or process steps that need to occur
- Estimate how long each item will take factoring in time for dialogue
- Leave about 15 minutes minimum at the end for summary and agreement on what comes next.

If, after following the above exercise, the agenda clearly requires more time, revise accordingly. Adjust the length of the meeting (and let participants know), or cut back on what you expect to accomplish. Keep in mind that critical thinking requires more time than typically allowed for in meetings, especially if there is controversy. Opportunities to voice an opinion, ask questions, and explain reasons behind positions are key to developing and achieving consensus on a plan. Shortcuts at this point could cause looping back or gridlock farther down the line.

*Who needs to attend the meetings?*

After the workshop or meeting objectives have been defined, the target group needs to be clearly described as a base (but not the final selection) for the invitation list. The selection is based on a more profound analysis of the predefined objectives. In particular this analysis deals with the following questions:

- Decisions and agreements: Who needs to participate in order to consent to certain agreements? If the final decision-makers can not participate, who has the mandate to prepare decisions?

- Planning procedures: Who needs to be involved in the planning procedure? Who can obstruct plans if not consulted? Are there any legal provisions for participation, e.g. in the European Water Framework Directive?
- Who is supposed to take specific actions or steps after the workshop?
- Will the workshop directly work with the final target group (=those who are supposed to act)? If not, you will be working with mediators, e.g. trainers, elected or mandated representatives or NGO staff. Who exactly are they? What is their mandate? How are they supposed to pass on the workshop messages to the final target group?

At this step, you should make an estimation of the size of the target group of the workshop. This will help you to select the appropriate workshop methodology.

*What should we send participants in advance? And, what information should we have available at the meeting (i.e., maps, flow charts, the old report, proposals, etc.)?*

Sending out an agenda before the meeting allows participants to ask questions about it, prepare if necessary, and in general sets a businesslike tone. If participants are going to be asked to read or edit documents, send the material in advance. (Even when material has been sent ahead, time for review at the meeting might be wise.)

*What's the best way to set up the meeting?*

Depending on your expected outcomes and the number of participants you want to invite, you need to choose the appropriate methodology. The issues to be addressed vary depending on the type of the meeting or workshop.

The choice of methodology will reflect on the following aspects:

**Participation.** Stakeholder participation is essential, whether the aim is consultation or training. Without active participation of a majority of workshop participants, the chance of successful implementation of the workshop results or the training content goes to zero. This is particularly true for workshops in which agreements are to be made or plans to be

devised. The importance of active learning has already been mentioned. There are several methods and tools which help to increase the participation in a workshop. Some of them are summarized in this handouts and describe a set of facilitation/visualization tools and principles. The principle of active participation must be considered in all DRP workshops.

**Workshop size.** The number of participants is a major influence factor for the success of a workshop. Often, it is predetermined by the type of the meeting, but in other cases it is an open question. There is no general rule for a minimum or maximum participation. However, consultation workshops need a critical number of stakeholders, usually at least 12, to provide the necessary diversity of opinions. As a rule of the thumb, groups of more than 7 participants need to be moderated or split up into sub-groups to achieve equal participation. Groups of more than 20 participants are difficult to moderate, a higher number than that will endanger the principle of equal participation. However, there are certain workshop methods which allow much bigger groups to interact (e.g., Open Space Technology, Future Search, Rapid Time Strategic Change, etc.). They require particular preparation and management and can only be applied with a trained facilitator.

**Consensus building methods.** To guarantee implementation of agreements after the workshop, as many decisions as possible should be taken unanimously. Workshop subjects that are expected to meet a high diversity of opinions should be discussed under application of certain negotiation techniques and consensus building tools. They will be discussed in more detail below.

*What equipment will make the meeting run more smoothly?*

The flip chart is standard equipment in planning meetings. Make sure there is wall space nearby for posting the chart paper as the meeting progresses. (In other words, flipping the paper over does not provide participants the benefit of having their work product spread out on the walls before them.)

For larger groups, overhead projectors work better than flip charts, but only for presenting information. The group's work product should be recorded on flip chart paper and posted, even if not easily visible by all participants. At

least the information is readily available to refer to or review before leaving the meeting.

Computers that project text onto the wall can be very useful when the group is developing a carefully worded document.

### **How do you plan a good facilitation process?**

A good facilitator is concerned with both the outcome of the meeting or planning session, with how the people in the meeting participate and interact, and also with the process. While achieving the goals and outcomes that everyone wants is of course important, a facilitator also wants to make sure that the process is sound, that everyone is engaged, and that the experience is the best it can be for the participants.

In planning a good meeting process, a facilitator focuses on:

- Climate and Environment
- Logistics and Room Arrangements
- Ground Rules

A good facilitator will make plans in each of these areas in advance. Let's look at some of the specifics:

#### *Climate and Environment*

There are many factors that impact how safe and comfortable people feel about interacting with each other and participating. The environment and general "climate" of a meeting or planning session sets an important tone for participation. For example, key questions you would ask yourself as a facilitator include:

- Is the location a familiar place, one where people feel comfortable? Face it, if you're planning to have an interactive meeting sitting around a conference table in the Mayor's office, some of your folks might feel intimidated and out of their environment. A comfortable and familiar location is key.

- Is the space the right size? Too large? Too small? If you're wanting to make a group feel that it's a team, a large meeting hall for only 10 or 15 people can feel intimidating and make people feel self-conscious and quiet. On the other hand, if you're taking a group of 30 folks through a meeting, a small conference room where people are uncomfortably crunched together can make for disruption: folks shifting in their seats, getting up to stretch and get some air. This can cause a real break in the mood and feeling of your meeting or planning session. You want folks to stay focused and relaxed. Moral: choose a room size that matches the size of your group.



**"And should there be a sudden loss of consciousness during this meeting, oxygen masks will drop from the ceiling."**

### *Logistics and Room Arrangements*

Believe it or not: how people sit, whether they are hungry and whether they can hear can make or break your planning process. As a facilitator, the logistics of the meeting should be of great concern to you, whether you're responsible for them or not. Some things to consider are:

- Chair arrangements: Having chairs in a circle or around a table encourages discussion, equality, and familiarity. Speaker's podiums and lecture style seating make people feel intimidated and formal. Avoid them at all costs.
- Places to hang newsprint: You may be using a lot of newsprint or other board space during your meeting. Can you use tape without damaging the walls? Is there enough space so that you can keep important material visible instead of removing it?
- Sign-In sheet: Is there a table for folks to use?







facilitate, which is called the "primary client". The contact client, however, might have a different agenda than your primary client.

Before you start facilitating a group, your role and the ground rules must be defined. If the people you work with do not accept your role, your approach and your methods, it is not worthwhile to start with facilitation. This initial agreement is called "contracting" and needs to be renewed if conditions change.

### **Ground Rules**

An essential task for the facilitator is to agree with the group on ground rules. Ground rules are logistical agreements a group makes to improve its ability to work as a group. They are the standards of operating that determine how people conduct their discussions and how they will make their decisions. The value of ground rules lies in their very creation. Any preordained rule such as, "We should respect each other" will garner minimal commitment. Only through dialogue will a rule achieve its maximum self-enforcing potential. The discussion can be initiated with the question: "What operating principles should we adopt in order to make our work more efficient and of higher quality?" Or, simply: "What are some important guidelines we should all keep in mind as we work together in these meetings?"

The discussion prompted by asking for ground rules not only elicits the rules; just as importantly, it allows potentially derailing sensitivities to surface. The facilitator can normalize strongly held values and emotional issues. The participants will feel better about themselves as group members and appreciate a greater sense of safety. Some participants may discount the importance of establishing these guidelines up front. The facilitator must be prepared to assert the value of the discussion and negotiate for the participants' indulgence. If the group has polarized around issues, spending time on establishing ground rules becomes all the more important. Ground rules generally take the form of agreements on certain topics.

Typically **ground rules** center around these issues:

- The purpose of the meetings (what people expect to have at the end of the series of meetings)

- Significant or ambiguous definitions
- Time lines for meetings length of meetings, when they are held, and for how long
- Meeting leadership and other roles
- Participation and attendance
- How decisions will be made (consensus or voting)
- The value of expressing different perspectives how disagreements should be expressed and handled ("Discuss the undiscussable" or "How to disagree without being disagreeable")
- Communication with those outside the planning process

When you want the participation to flow and for folks to really feel invested in following the rules, the best way to go is to have the group develop them as one of the first steps in the process. This builds a sense of power in the participants and a much greater sense of investment in following the rules. Common ground rules are:

- One person speaks at a time
- Raise your hand if you have something to say
- Listen to what other people are saying
- No mocking or attacking other people's ideas
- Be on time coming back from breaks (if it's a long meeting)
- Respect each other.

A process to develop ground rules is:

- Begin by telling folks that you want to set up some ground rules that everyone will follow as we go through our meeting. Put a blank sheet of newsprint on the wall with the heading "Ground Rules."
- Ask for any suggestions from the group. If no one says anything, start by putting one up yourself. That usually starts people off.
- Write any suggestions up on the newsprint. It's usually most effective to "check -in" with the whole group before you write up an idea ("Sue suggested raising our hands if we have something to say. Is that O.K.

with everyone?") Once you have gotten 5 or 6 good rules up, check to see if anyone else has other suggestions.

- When you are finished, ask the group if they agree with these Ground Rules and are willing to follow them. Make sure you get folks to actually say "Yes" out loud. It makes a difference!

### **Making Decisions in a Group**

*Decisionmaking by vote.* Traditionally, groups made decisions by voting, and allowed the "majority to rule." Voting makes sense when:

- Many people are involved
- The population is diverse
- Moving forward is more important than settlement
- Before votes are cast there is ample time for dialogue
- The dialogue includes looking at and evaluating a number of options



**"Now we've reached the important part of the meeting. Those in favor of pretzels for our snack, raise your hands."**

The disadvantage of voting is that it leads to an all or nothing, win/lose outcome. What happens to those who voted "nay" and were outnumbered? How committed are they to supporting the outcome? And, what happens to the concerns driving the no-vote. Were those concerns addressed, or will they come back to haunt the yeasayers? Ample discussion with analysis of alternative courses of action can counteract the

disadvantages of voting. Even then, voting might be reserved as a last resort. Clearly, in a small group convened for the purpose of planning, consensus is possible and more desirable.

*Decisionmaking by Consensus.* Over the past 15 years, making decisions by consensus has gained acceptance, yet a number of misconceptions remain. Consensus is the cooperative development of a decision that is acceptable

enough so that all members of the group agree to support the decision. Consensus means that each and every person involved in decisionmaking has veto power. Keep in mind, though, that members of the planning group are team members, not adversaries. Responsible team members use power only to achieve the best results vis a vis the group's purpose, not for their own personal gain. In other words, if a team member objects, it behooves the others to find out why and give considerable thought to the concerns expressed by the dissenting member.

The remarkable result of giving individuals veto power is that they rarely use it! If participants are reassured nothing can go forward without their approval, they tend to relax, contributing more to the content and worrying less about procedural matters.

Consensus does not mean there is an absence of conflict. It does mean there is a commitment of time and energy to work through the conflict. Consensus requires taking all concerns into consideration and attempting to find the most universal decision possible. Groups able to make decisions by consensus usually demonstrate:

- Unity of purpose, a basic agreement shared by all in the group regarding goals and purpose of the group
- Commitment to the group, a belief that the group needs have priority over individual needs
- Participation, ideally no formal hierarchy equal access to
- power and to some degree, the group's autonomy from
- external hierarchic structures
- Recognition that process is as important as outcome
- Underlying attitudes of cooperation, support, trust, respect, and good communication
- Understanding and tolerance of differences, acceptance of conflicting views
- TIME willingness and capability to devote time to the process

Factors working against consensus include: competition, individualism, passivity and solution-orientation

There are many **techniques to facilitating consensus**:

- Frame the dilemma so participants see the big picture and recognize their interdependence: "What decision do we need to make and why do we need to make it?"
- Remove insecurity and make sure all participants have the same key information and have the opportunity to discuss that information together.
- Build little agreements along the way: "So we agree that this is a good way to state the problem we are trying to solve." Or, "At least you do all agree that something has to be done, that things are unacceptable as they are now."
- Motivate creativity by asking "Isn't there anything else you can suggest?" and then allow for a long pregnant pause.
- Summarize and fractionate: "This is what we agree on, and this is still in question. What are the specific causes for concern?" Or, "How can we get the benefit from doing this, but not the detriment?"
- Refer to the mission and purpose of the group for guidance: "If we do this, are we in line with what we are all about?"
- Finally, ask: "What will happen if we can't all agree?" Or, "Do you really need to make a decision on this issue?"

Voting and consensus are the "how" of decisionmaking. Decisions, themselves, seem to come in three shapes:

1. Some decisions have to be answered "yes" or "no." Either we close the theater for inclement weather, or we go on with the show. The outcomes are mutually exclusive and a choice is imperative for the good of the organization.
2. Other decisions require finding a solution to a problem. "How shall we solve for X?" "What shall we do about lack of attendance at our performances?" Or, reframing the problem in the affirmative: "How can we ensure record attendance?"
3. A third type of decision is even more open-ended. "Which way shall we go?" Or, "What goal shall we attain?"

Try out different ways of framing the decision using the above three formats. The way in which the decision is framed sets the stage for the solutions generated. Different framing of the same topical issue elicits very different solutions. For example, a decision regarding regulation of outdoor advertising can be framed, "Who is going to control outdoor advertising local municipalities or the state?" Responses will be very different from those prompted by the question: "How can local government determine the character of its land use without eliminating outdoor advertising?"

The important rule of thumb about good decisionmaking is "Do Not Decide Prematurely." Ultimately, the **thinking process for any type of decision** is the same:

- Gathering and analyzing relevant information
- Careful framing of the question you want answered
- Discussing values and criteria
- Envisioning various scenarios
- Evaluating consequences of those scenarios
- Making the decision
- Refining specific aspects of the decision and ensuring its implementation

### **Encouraging dialogue**

Senge (1990) writes of the importance of 'dialogue' for team learning within the learning organisation. Facilitation is essential to this process. Senge suggests that through dialogue, the group benefits from a 'larger intelligence.' Senge identifies three basic conditions for dialogue:

- All participants must 'suspend' their assumptions, literally to hold them 'as if suspended before us';
- All participants must regard one another as colleagues;
- There must be a 'facilitator' who 'holds the context' of dialogue.

Without a facilitator to guide the dialogue, meeting or workshop participants tend to revert to old habits and the 'dialogue' quickly digresses to discussion or debate.



### **Guiding the group's process**

If a facilitator's main purpose is guiding the group's process, they are often called a 'process facilitator.' Senge points out that the facilitator walks a fine line between guiding the process and drawing too much attention to herself/himself and taking away from group members' ownership and responsibility for the group. The facilitator can also guide the process by asking critical, open-ended questions. For example, if someone makes a statement, the facilitator may say, 'In what other ways could we explain this?' or 'Does anyone else have another perspective?'

### **Mirroring the group's process**

Groups often become so engrossed in what they are doing that they lose sight of what is happening in the group. The facilitator is in the excellent position of standing back and 'reflecting back' to the group what he or she can see happening. This function is especially important during times of crisis. The facilitator can express his observation and then guide the group in taking its own actions to return to the course. For example, if lots of ideas are flying around he may point out that several people seem to be saying the same thing, yet appear to be disagreeing with each other. In this case he/she is not saying what the group 'should' do, but merely making an observation.

### **Increasing participation and inclusion**

An important function of the facilitator is to regulate the group's dialogue and discussion. The facilitator helps to balance contributions made within groups. He or she can do this through group process intervention skills as well as changing methods within the group context, such as using more small group discussions.

### **Basic and developmental facilitation: problem-solving and skill development**

Schwarz (1994) makes the distinction between 'basic' and 'developmental' facilitation.

In basic facilitation, a facilitator works with a group at a specific time to solve a specific process. In developmental facilitation, a facilitator consciously works with the group to improve its processes. They may also solve a particular problem, but more importantly, they have improved the way they work together so that they will be better able to solve other problems in the future.

In basic facilitation, the facilitator shoulders more of the responsibility for the group's success, while with developmental facilitation the responsibility is shared.

The developmental approach to facilitation emphasises capacity building for long-term improvements in groups' efficiency and effectiveness. Although the approach is more in line with development philosophy it requires more time to facilitate groups using this approach.

## **The meeting process**

As we've already said, the facilitator is responsible for providing a "safe" climate and working atmosphere for the meeting. But you're probably wondering, "What do I actually do DURING the meeting to guide the process along?" Here are the basic steps that can be your facilitator's guide:

### *1. Start the meeting on time*

Few of us start our meetings on time. The result? Those who come on time feel cheated that they rushed to get there! Start no more than five minutes late, ten at the maximum and thank everyone who came on time. When latecomers straggle in, don't stop your process to acknowledge them. Wait until after a break or another appropriate time to have them introduce themselves.

### *2. Welcome everyone*

Make a point to welcome everyone who comes. Don't complain about the size of a group if the turnout is small! Nothing will turn the folks off who DID come out faster. Thank all of those who are there for coming and analyze the turnout attendance later. Go with who you have.

### *3. Make introductions*

There are lots of ways for people to introduce themselves to each other that are better than just going around the room. The kinds of introductions you do should depend on what kind of meeting you are having, the number of people, the overall goals of the meeting, and what kind of information it would be useful to know.

Sometimes, we combine introductions with something called an "ice breaker." Ice breakers can:

- Break down feelings of unfamiliarity and shyness
- Help people shift roles--from their "work" selves to their "more human" selves
- Build a sense of being part of a team
- Create networking opportunities
- Help share participants' skills and experiences

Some ways to do introductions and icebreakers are:





### *7. Avoid detailed decision-making*

Sometimes, it's easier for groups to discuss the color of napkins than the real issues they are facing. Help the group not to get immersed in details. Suggest instead, "Perhaps the committee could resolve the matter." Do you really want to be involved in that level of detail?

### *8. Seek commitments*

Getting commitments for future involvement is often a meeting goal. You want leaders to commit to certain tasks, people to volunteer to help on a campaign, or organizations to support your group. Make sure adequate time is allocated for seeking commitment. For small meetings, write people's names down on newsprint next to the tasks they agreed to undertake.

One important rule of thumb is that no one should leave a meeting without something to do. Don't ever close a meeting by saying "We'll get back to you to confirm how you might like to get involved." Seize the moment! Sign them up!

### *9. Bring closure to each item*

Many groups will discuss things ten times longer than they need to unless a facilitator helps them to recognize they're basically in agreement. Summarize a consensus position, or ask someone in the group to summarize the points of agreement, and then move forward. If one or two people disagree, state the situation as clearly as you can: "Tom and Levonia seem to have other feelings on this matter, but everyone else seems to go in this direction. Perhaps we can decide to go in the direction that most of the group wants, and maybe Tom and Levonia can get back to us on other ways to accommodate their concerns." You may even suggest taking a break so Tom and Levonia can caucus to come up with some options.

Some groups feel strongly about reaching consensus on issues before moving ahead. If your group is one of them, be sure to read a good manual or book on consensus decision making. Many groups, however, find that voting is a fine way to make decisions. A good rule of thumb is that a vote must pass by a two-thirds majority for it to be a valid decision. For most groups to work well, they should seek consensus where possible, but take votes when needed in order to move the process forward.

### *10. Respect everyone's rights*

The facilitator protects the shy and quiet folks in a meeting and encourages them to speak out. There is also the important job of keeping domineering people from monopolizing the meeting or ridiculing the ideas of others.

Sometimes, people dominate a discussion because they are really passionate about an issue and have lots of things to say. One way to channel their interest is to suggest that they consider serving on a committee or task force on that issue. Other people, however, talk to hear themselves talk. If someone like that shows up at your meeting, look further ahead in this chapter for some tips on dealing with "disrupters."

### *11. Be flexible*

Sometimes issues will arise in the meeting that are so important, they will take much more time than you thought. Sometimes, nobody will have thought of them at all. You may run over time or have to alter your agenda to discuss them. Be sure to check with group about whether this is O.K. before going ahead with the revised agenda. If necessary, ask for a five-minute break to confer with key leaders or participants on how to handle the issue and how to restructure the agenda. Be prepared to recommend an alternate agenda, dropping some items if necessary.

### *12. Summarize the meeting results and needed follow-ups*

Before ending the meeting, summarize the key decisions that were made and what else happened. Be sure also to summarize the follow-up actions that were agreed to and need to take place. Remind folks how much good work was done and how effective the meeting hopefully was. Refer back to the objectives or outcomes to show how much you accomplished.

### *13. Thank the participants*

Take a minute to thank people who prepared things for the meeting, set up the room, brought refreshments, or did any work towards making the meeting happen. Thank all of the participants for their input and energy and for making the meeting a success.

### *14. Close the meeting*

People appreciate nothing more than a meeting that ends on time! It's usually a good idea to have some "closure" in a meeting, especially if it was

long, if there were any sticky situations that caused tension, or if folks worked especially hard to come to decisions or make plans.

A nice way to close a meeting is to go around the room and have people say one word that describes how they are feeling now that all of this work has been done. You'll usually get answers from "exhausted" to "energized!" If it's been a good meeting, even the "exhausted" ones will stick around before leaving.

### **Facilitator skills and tips**

Here are a few more points to remember that will help to maximize your role as a facilitator:

#### *1. Watch the group's body language*

Are people shifting in their seats? Are they bored? Tired? Looking confused? If folks seem restless or in a haze, you may need to take a break, or speed up or slow down the pace of the meeting. And if you see confused looks on too many faces, you may need to stop and check in with the group, to make sure that everyone knows where you are in the agenda and that the group is with you.

#### *2. Always check back with the group*

Be careful about deciding where the meeting should go. Check back after each major part of the process to see if there are questions and that everyone understands and agrees with decisions that were made.

#### *3. Summarize and pause*

When you finish a point or a part of the meeting process, sum up what was done and decided, and pause for questions and comments before moving on. Learn to "feel out" how long to pause -- too short, and people don't really have time to ask questions; too long, and folks will start to get uncomfortable from the silence.

#### *4. Be aware of your own behavior*

Take a break to calm down if you feel nervous or are losing control. Watch that you're not repeating yourself, saying "ah" between each word, or speaking too fast. Watch your voice and physical manner. (Are you standing





## Communication Basics

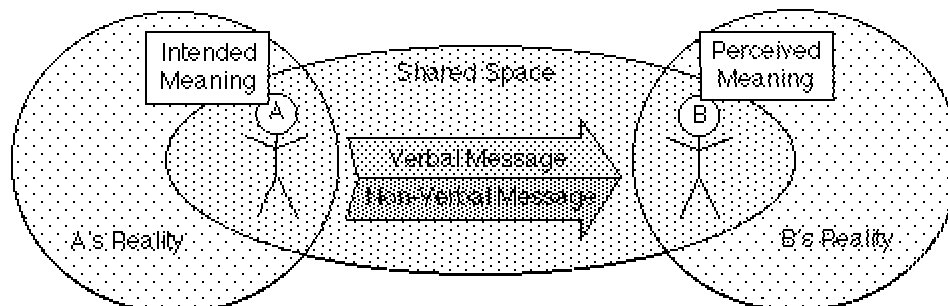
As we all know, human communication is a complex subject, but it is the most important subject facilitators should master. The following chapters are intended to give an idea on three basic concepts of communication and group dynamics:

- a) the sender-receiver model,
- b) the theme centered interaction (TCI), and
- c) the concept of mental models.

### The Sender-Receiver-Model

In a simple model communication happens between sender and receiver (or at least, an intended receiver). Furthermore different levels/areas can be distinguished in every communication act:

- there are at least a sender and a receiver,
- a message to be shared,
- a context of the sharing (most often where the subject of the communication is chosen),
- a channel through which the message is shared,
- a code which makes that sharing possible.

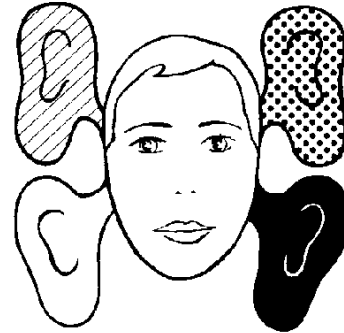


It can never be guaranteed that the message understood equals the message sent. It is the duty of the sender to look for feed back whether his message has been well received. The spoken word is only a small part of communication. A simple sentence usually contains several verbal, and non-verbal messages. Just to remain with the verbal messages; a sentence has:

- a) the objective content,
- b) the relationship between sender and receiver,
- c) the self-revelation, and
- d) the appeal.

When human beings communicate, they tell always something about themselves and their model of the receiver.

*A message is spoken with 4 mouths and received with 4 ears.*



### **Theme Centered Interaction**

Theme-Centered Interaction (TCI) is a concept of running groups based on the idea of learning as an active, creative and discovering activity - "Living-Learning" - and working.

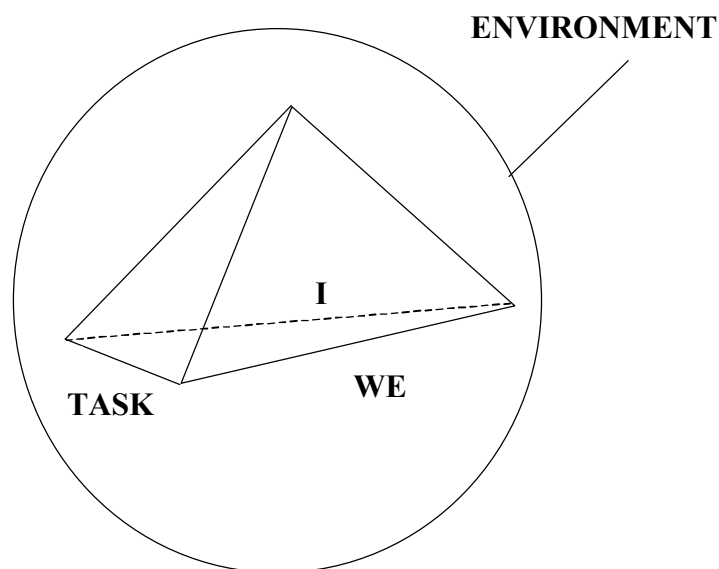
TCI emerged out of the experiences and knowledge of psychoanalysis and was influenced by the work in group and experiential therapies. Basic concepts were formulated by Dr. Ruth C. Cohn in the 1960's and were further developed by her and her colleagues in the organization Workshop Institute for Living Learning (WILL) in the USA and later in Europe.

TCI emphasizes

- the attentive awareness of oneself and others in personal and in professional contexts
- the strengthening of independence and autonomy in relationships
- imparting knowledge in a lively way and involving participants in this process
- integrating the demands of the working task with a regard for the individual and for interpersonal relationships (in profit as well as in non-profit groups).
- leading discussions at work, at conferences, congresses, etc., in a spirit of lively communication, thereby promoting cooperation rather than rivalry.

TCI provides structures for steering the group process to achieve a dynamic balance among the varying needs of the individual, the interaction in the group and the realization of the "work task" (I-WE-IT balance) within the environment (GLOBE, from its narrowest to its broadest context).

### Theme-Centred Interaction



Each individual member of the group has his own identity ("I"), his own values, capabilities and typical behaviors. He has a personal motivation to be present. Besides, he might have other priorities than the ones that are on the agenda (i.e., he has a hidden agenda). The "WE" is the team, consisting of individuals, but bound together by predefined rules and unconscious values and taboos. The members of a team develop relationships (positive or negative), which have a strong influence on the dynamic of the meeting. There is also a "TASK" which is predetermined – the justification of why people meet and work together (usually the customer), often combined with a set of objectives (sometimes the development of the objectives is the first step of a workshop).

There are also outside conditions which are defined by the social, economic or political framework ("ENVIRONMENT") of the project. These factors might influence the groups composition, its voluntary nature, place and time, and the relevance of the outputs to the project's goals.

The facilitator has the delicate task to balance the different sides of the triangle. If the personality of the individual team members is not respected, they will stop contributing or even try to obstruct the work. On the other side: too much dominance of one person might also disturb effective team work.

It is important to look for a healthy group feeling, but too much of weight on it might also be counterproductive for individual solution finding. Task orientation without keeping the other components in mind might yield results for which at the end will take over responsibility. Concentrating too much on the limiting external conditions inevitably kills creativity.

TCI is founded on certain basic assumptions without which the system would disintegrate into disconnected techniques. They are:

- The more consciously we recognize and activate our social and universal interdependence, the greater our autonomy.
- Actions based on values are indispensable; decisions for such action should be made in a spirit of respect for life and its enfolding.
- Decisions are taken within internal and external limitations. The boundaries of these limitations can be expanded. TCI aids in achieving such expansion by providing a systematic approach to guiding psychodynamic and educational group processes.

Existential Postulates of TCI: (Consciousness-raisers)

1. You are your own Chairperson.
2. Speak for "I." (Not "we" or "you.")
3. Disturbances take precedence.
4. Make the statement behind the question.
5. Give to and get from this \_\_\_\_\_ what you want to give and get.  
(In the blank, put: session, day, week, month, year, life)

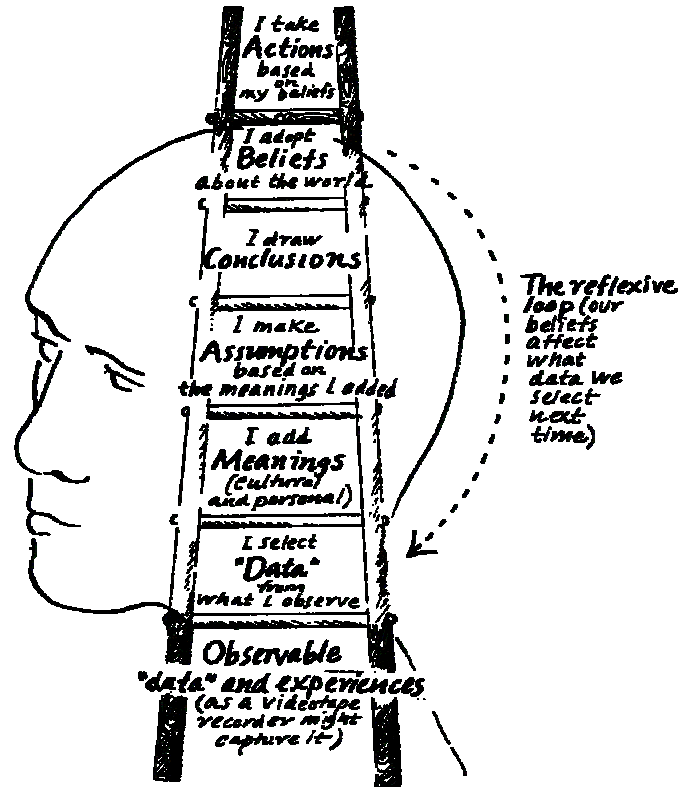
### **Mental Maps – how the Individual Perceives Reality**

When individuals or social systems are confronted with new experiences, they need to bring these experiences in line with their concept of self (identity). They might



the basic principles in understanding the successful management of knowledge and change.

**How we shape our mental maps (from Senge, 1994)**



The books of Paul Watzlawick are full of anecdotal evidence for the process of mental mapping. In his book 'How Real Is Real? : Confusion, Disinformation, Communication' he describes a phenomenon which occurred in Seattle at the end of the 1950ies. Many owners of vehicles realized, that their windscreens were full of small scratches. A commission sent by President Eisenhower investigated the phenomenon and found out that among the citizens of Seattle there were two persisting theories about the causes of that phenomenon: one part attributed the damage to a suspected Russian nuclear test, and the other to a chemical reaction of the fresh tarmac which had been put on the State of Washington's highways. After the investigation was completed, the commission concluded that there was no significant increase of scratched windscreens in Seattle<sup>6</sup>.


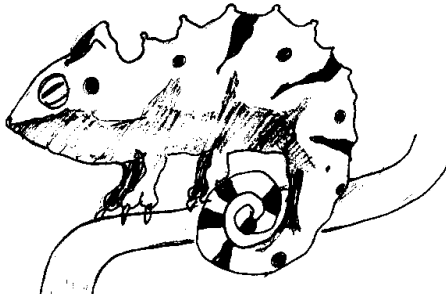

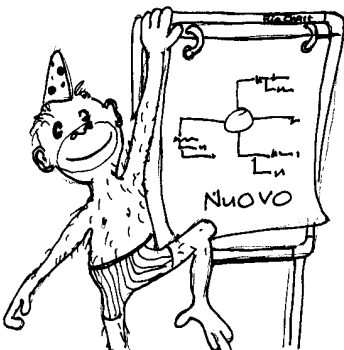
<sup>6</sup> Paul Watzlawick: How Real Is Real? : Confusion, Disinformation, Communication'.

### Informal Roles in the Participant Group

Neuland (1995) describes the following typical rules a facilitator encounters and has to deal with:

	<p><u>The Ringleader or Informal Leader (Lion):</u></p> <p>Has a decisive effect through personality. Formal leaders seldom play the part of "informal leaders".</p>
<p><u>The Spokesman (Elephant)</u></p> <p>Represents the group to the outside. Is not the head of the group, but rather its "megaphone". Can often be confused with the leader.</p>	
	<p><u>The "sacrificial lamb"</u></p> <p>Is "sacrificed" by the group on crisis situations.</p>
<p><u>The Cynic (Hyena)</u></p> <p>The critical one who sees only the negative and questions everything</p>	



	<p><u>The Doer (Horse)</u></p> <p>Is the one who gets things done. This role changes often</p>
<p><u>The Fellow Traveler (Chameleon)</u></p> <p>Latches onto the groups that are currently "in". Always know which way the wind is blowing and therefore changes groups often</p>	
	<p><u>The Reticent One (Mouse)</u></p> <p>The introvert in the group who prefers to observe. Doesn't like to express things to the outside, but thinks intensively. Such people usually concentrate deeply on the material.</p>
<p><u>The Clown (Ape)</u></p> <p>Takes on the function of an "internal lightning rod", to reduce tension in the group. Uses jokes, gags, and silliness, Through these antics, disguises the seriousness of the group's opinion towards those outside it.</p>	

## **Dealing with disrupters: Preventions and interventions**

Along with these tips on facilitation, there are some things you can do both to prevent disruption before it occurs to stop it when it's happening in the meeting. The most common kinds of disrupters are people who try to dominate, keep going off the agenda, have side conversations with the person sitting next to them, or folks who think they are right and ridicule and attack other's ideas.

Try using these "*Preventions*" when you set up your meeting to try to rule out disruption:

### *1. Get agreement on the agenda, ground rules and outcomes*

In other words, agree on the process. These process agreements create a sense of shared accountability and ownership of the meeting, joint responsibility for how the meeting is run, and group investment in whether the outcomes and goals are achieved.

### *2. Listen carefully*

Don't just pretend to listen to what someone in the meeting is saying. People can tell. Listen closely to understand a point someone is making. And check back if you are summarizing, always asking the person if you understood their idea correctly.

### *3. Show respect for experience*

We can't say it enough. Encourage folks to share strategies, stories from the field, and lessons they've learned. Value the experience and wisdom in the room.

### *4. Find out the group's expectations*

Make sure that you uncover at the start what participants think they are meeting for. When you find out, be clear about what will and won't be covered in this meeting. Make plans for how to cover issues that won't be dealt with: Write them down on newsprint and agree to deal with them at the end of the meeting, or have the group agree on a follow-up meeting to cover unfinished issues.

There are lots of ways to find out what the group's expectations of the meeting are: Try asking everyone to finish this sentence: "I want to leave here today knowing...." You don't want people sitting through the meeting

feeling angry that they're in the wrong place and no one bothered to ask them what they wanted to achieve here. These folks may act out their frustration during the meeting and become your biggest disrupters.

#### *5. Stay in your facilitator role*

You cannot be an effective facilitator and a participant at the same time. When you cross the line, you risk alienating participants, causing resentment, and losing control of the meeting. Offer strategies, resources, and ideas for the group to work with, but NOT opinions.

#### *6. Don't be defensive*

If you are attacked or criticized, take a "mental step" backwards before responding. Once you become defensive, you risk losing the group's respect and trust, and might cause folks to feel they can't be honest with you.

#### *7. "Buy-in" power players*

These folks can turn your meeting into a nightmare if they don't feel that their influence and role are acknowledged and respected. If possible, give them acknowledgment up front at the start of the meeting. Try giving them roles to play during the meeting such as a "sounding board" for you at breaks, to check in with about how the meeting is going.

Try using these "*Interventions*" when disruption is happening during the meeting:

##### *1. Have the group decide*

If someone is dominating the meeting, refuses to stick to the agenda, keeps bringing up the same point again and again, or challenges how you are handling the meeting:

First try to remind them about the agreed-on agenda. If that doesn't work, throw it back to the group and ask them how they feel about that person's participation. Let the group support you.

##### *2. Use the agenda and ground rules*

If someone keeps going off the agenda, has side conversations through the whole meeting, verbally attacks others:

Go back to that agenda and those ground rules and remind folks of the agreements made at the beginning of the meeting.

### *3. Be honest: Say what's going on*

If someone is trying to intimidate you, if you feel upset or undermined, if you need to pull the group behind you:

It's better to say what's going on than try to cover it up. Everyone will be aware of the dynamic in the room. The group will get behind you if you are honest and up -front about the situation.

### *4. Use humor*

If there is a lot of tension in the room, if you have people at the meeting who didn't want to be there, if folks are scared/shy about participating, if you are an outsider:

Try a humorous comment or a joke. If it's self-deprecating, so much the better. Humor almost always lightens the mood. It's one of the best tension-relievers we have.

### *5. Accept or legitimize the point or deal:*

If there is someone who keeps expressing doubts about the group's ability to accomplish anything, is bitter and puts down others' suggestions, keeps bringing up the same point over and over, seems to have power issues:

Try one or more of these approaches: Show that you understand their issue by making it clear that you hear how important it is to them. Legitimize the issue by saying, "It's a very important point and one I'm sure we all feel is critical." Make a bargain to deal with their issue for a short period of time ("O.K., let's deal with your issue for 5 minutes and then we ought to move on.") If that doesn't work, agree to defer the issue to the end of the meeting, or set up a committee to explore it further.

### *6. Use body language*

If side conversations keep occurring, if quiet people need to participate, if attention needs to be re-focused:

Use body language. Move closer to conversers, or to the quiet ones. Make eye contact with them to get their attention and convey your intent.

### *7. Take a break*

If less confrontational tactics haven't worked, someone keeps verbally attacking others, shuffling papers, cutting others off:

In case you've tried all of the above suggestions and nothing has worked, it's time to take a break, invite the disruptive person outside the room and politely but firmly state your feelings about how disruptive their behavior is to the group. Make it clear that the disruption needs to end. But also try to find out what's going on, and see if there are other ways to address that person's concerns.

#### *8. Confront in the room*

If all else has failed, if you're sure it won't create backlash, if the group will support you, and if you've tried everything else:

Confront the disruptive person politely but very firmly in the room. Tell the person very explicitly that the disruption needs to stop now. Use body language to encourage other group members to support you. This is absolutely the last resort when action must be taken and no alternatives remain!

*Handling conflict in a meeting.* If meetings are well-planned and orchestrated, conflict is less likely to surface. If it does, it probably needs to. The most common reaction to conflict is avoidance. Repressing conflict, pretending it doesn't exist, hoping it will go away, or admonishing participants for disagreeing are all forms of avoidance. Generally the conflict does not disappear, and often times, the situation worsens.

The facilitator is in a good position to help participants engage in constructive conflict. Understanding the nature of conflict, its sources and patterns helps the facilitator remain centered when participants begin to develop oppositional stances on goals or strategies in the planning process.

Social scientists make a distinction between objective and subjective conflict. The source of subjective conflict stems from poor relationships, personality clashes, and differences in values. This type of conflict is difficult to handle because values and preferences cannot be negotiated. Rather, participants agree implicitly or explicitly work around fundamental differences either because those differences do not interfere with getting the job done, or because getting the job done is more important than expending energy on fighting.

If relationship conflicts have been allowed to fester in an organization, members of that organization may not be able to work together as a

planning team. The group may benefit from a team development program, sensitivity training, or application of Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicators to enhance their ability to interact constructively before embarking on a planning process. On the other hand, when participants come together frequently for a significant purpose and experience success on joint goals, often relationships improve. There is no litmus test to determine which of these two routes to follow. The choice may be best left to the participants themselves.

The source of objective conflict lies in the allocation of resources salaries, vacation time, office space, supplies, respect. Objective conflicts can be negotiated. The conflict is framed in the same way a problem would be framed, and the negotiations would resemble problem solving. What makes resolving conflict more difficult than solving a problem is the pervasiveness of strong emotions and lack of trust. The facilitator has to move more slowly, spending time talking with participants individually, finding out from each individual or faction what it would take to be able to work together productively again.

Here too, the planning process itself may provide the group with the opportunity to improve to rethink job descriptions, performance objectives, incentives, and working conditions. Or, the group may decide to put the planning on hold and focus on settling a specific, exacerbated conflict first. When it appears addressing a specific conflict takes precedence over planning, there are a few principles to keep in mind:

- Allocate sufficient time
- Help the participants clarify what the conflict is about
- Do not take sides
- Affirm the validity of all viewpoints
- Frame the conflict in terms of a problem to be solved
- Create space for problem solving to occur
- Help participants save face
- Discuss what happens if no agreement is reached
- Ask if the group can proceed with what they do agree on and hold back on areas of disagreement



*Writing Cards.* Writing cards is the one of the fundamentals of moderation for identifying topics, defining problems, analyzing causes, and planning measures. The goal is to collect the spontaneous ideas, thoughts, opinions, and standpoints of the individual group members and offer them to the whole group for further work. The advantages of this procedure are:

- There is no possibility of one person's opinion being influenced by another. Everyone contributes individual opinions and all are integrated
- The participants have time to reflect and summarize their thoughts.
- Answering on cards can be anonymous, if the facilitator collects them.
- If something is mentioned more than once, this is visible.
- Results can be reached in a short time.
- The results can be structured and documented in minutes.
- The results can be displayed in the room for further considerations.
- They can be easily documented with a digital camera.

Disadvantage of writing cards:

- You need the moderation material, which is not always available (However, Post-Its might do it™).
- People need some training in doing it properly, else most of the cards are not legible.
- With more than 15 participants, reading and clustering all the cards becomes a major exercise.
- Some statements might be ambiguous.
- Some weeks after the meeting, the meaning of some cards might have become unclear to others than the author.
- Sometimes people object heavily against writing cards because either they are unaware of the advantages and fear to loose time, or they consider writing cards as childish.





- *Call Out Questions:* This is a variation to basic the card principle, where participants write their own cards. Here, participants call out answers to a question and the moderator records the answers on paper cards. However, with many participants, this procedure might become very time consuming, unless there is a co-facilitator.

A remark on using cards in bi-lingual workshops: The card technique can also be used in workshops with consecutive translation, e.g. English-Romanian. It has the advantage that participants who only speak one of either language, can recapitulate the main discussion points. However, as all the cards have to be duplicated and translated, you need one extra interpreter and lots of pinboard space. In order not to waste too much time for the facilitation process, this translation might be done during a coffee break. When participants return to the convention room, all their statements are translated.

*Flip Charts.* Flip charts are an essential tool. The facilitator can use chart writing to:

1. Create a record of the work product. Participants can see the notes and make corrections or ask for clarification as the conversation progresses.
2. Organize thinking i.e., draft wording, pose options, connect ideas, depict consequences, narrow choices, summarize decisions, organize tasks.
3. Keep the participants on track by referring to the topic on the flip chart, or specific agenda items.

The information on the flip chart must be "user friendly." Use large letters, space between concepts (so ideas can be added), alternating colors, and make sure the paper can be posted rather than just flipped over.

*Bin Issues.* A useful tool for moving participants through the agenda is to create a separate flip chart page for issues raised, important, but either tangential or too complex to deal with during the meeting. Noting these

issues on a separate sheet, also referred to as the "parking lot," respects participants' concerns and assures them that the issues will be addressed. (Make sure they are addressed eventually, or that participants no longer want to address them; otherwise the bin issue sheet soon will lose its efficacy.

*Next Steps.* The facilitator should have a good sense of what is going to happen in meeting #2 when planning meeting #1. That sense is confirmed by taking about 15 minutes at the end of the meeting to ask "Where do we go from here?" or, "What do you need to do so that you can move forward in this process?" There may be a number of tasks participants must accomplish before the next meeting convenes. Make sure to summarize who is going to do what, with whom, and by when. Rough-out major agenda items for the next meeting before adjourning.

When participants reach decisions, the facilitator will need to devote time to how they will implement those decisions. Thinking they are done, euphoria sets in, and participants fail to convert the decision to an action plan (see action planning worksheet in the attachments). Before participants leave the meeting, the facilitator should pin down action steps: Who is responsible for taking what action by when?

*Evaluation.* Planning requires a willingness to look critically at how the group is performing. Honest reflection can be difficult. One way to help participants become more comfortable with self-critique in a work setting is to ask them to evaluate the meeting. "What aspect of the meeting did you particularly like? Any insights? What didn't go well? What would you do differently next time?" On a written evaluation, leave room for "suggestions." If participants offer their critique orally, the facilitator will need to encourage them to be critical, that the evaluation is an important part of the facilitator's learning and improvement. (See attachment.)

## **In Closing**

Following a process structure for thinking and dialogue, sharpening facilitation skills such as listening, reframing, and asking searching questions, planning meetings ahead of time are the basics of meeting effectiveness. Two additional ingredients cannot come from a book (or a computer). The first is a mindset that: believes in the wisdom of the





## Capturing What People Say: Tips for Recording a Meeting

Contributed by Jenette Nagy and Bill Berkowitz  
Edited by Jerry Schultz

Main Section

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Have you ever left a meeting saying to yourself, "Wow, that was a great meeting! I heard some excellent ideas," only to find, a week later, that you have forgotten what those ideas were? Unfortunately, so did everyone else. Opportunity is lost, and the issues you met to take care of are left unfinished.

Solving problems is always a challenge, especially when a group is working together to puzzle out the best solution. Trying to remember all of the important points that have been mentioned during a lengthy meeting makes it even more difficult. So particularly when you are trying to work out all of those details, you will want to record, and later review, what is said at your meeting.

That's what this section will focus on--making records of meetings that will help your group get better at solving problems. We will begin by discussing the benefits of recording a meeting. Then, we'll talk about different ways to record, and which might be best for your particular circumstances. We'll continue with how to choose the best person to record. Then, we'll discuss the "how-tos" of recording a problem -solving meeting, including the tools you will need; how to work with the group; what to record; how to record effectively; and finally, what to do with what you have recorded.

### Why should the meeting be recorded?

No matter how you decide to record your meeting (and we'll discuss the different possibilities below), there are a lot of advantages to recording in general. They include:

1. Recording a meeting lets people know that they've been listened to and really heard.

2. It provides a historical record that can be used at future meetings for verification of decisions, and as a reminder of past events and actions.
3. It can provide important information to people who were not invited to or able to attend the meeting.
4. It helps keep everyone on track. If everything is written down, the group is more likely to stick to the agenda, or to pull itself back onto it. For example, it's quite easy to note that things are off track if the recorder is no longer writing things down, or if he is writing about things unrelated to the day's agenda.

And for visible recording, where the eye can see what's happening, there are these added advantages:

5. It provides a visible running record--everyone can see what has happened, and what is happening, as you go along.
6. When you are involved in brainstorming, having ideas in front of everyone often help people come up with even more good ideas.
7. It can increase people's attention to, and interest in, the meeting.
8. People are less likely to repeat themselves if they can see their words right in front of them--and everyone else--in black and white. They might also think more carefully before they speak!

**Warning:** This last advantage can be a double-edged sword. Some people may be less likely to speak candidly if they know that what they say is going to be recorded. If members of the group you are working with don't know each other well, or are uncomfortable with each other in any way, you might think about doing some icebreakers before the meeting starts, to make everyone more comfortable.

People may also be less likely to speak if they know their remarks will be attributed to them. It's one thing to make an offhand comment, quite another if that comment shows up as a quote in the local newspaper.

In short, be sure everyone knows in advance--and agrees upon--the intended use of the material that is recorded. Is it just for the future use of committee members? Or will it be made public? In order for everyone to be at ease, this should be decided on collectively at the outset.

### **Options for recording a meeting**

Before going further, let's look at the different types of recording most readily available. You can:

1. decide not to record the meeting at all;
2. take written notes and minutes;
3. record key points visibly, such as on newsprint or a chalkboard; or
4. tape--usually by audiotape, but occasionally by videotape as well.

These are the most common approaches, and will most likely continue to be frequently used in the future.

Although these approaches overlap, and more than one can be used at a time, this section will focus primarily on visible recording--that is, writing so everyone can see, such as on butcher paper or newsprint in front of the group.

### **Coming soon to a meeting near you...**

We'd be remiss, however, if we didn't mention some additional, more technologically -oriented variations of those options listed above. Many of these may be out of reach for groups right now, but could become more possible and desirable in the not-too -distant future. They include:

- Recording the meeting directly over a laptop, and distributing printed written minutes at periodic intervals by use of a portable copier
- Digital whiteboards: You write on the board with an electronic pen; the board itself is pressure sensitive, electronically activates an attached personal computer, and stores what is written in a file
- Phone conferences (conference calls) with telephone recording





- When the problem or discussion topic is new or unfamiliar to the group
- When the topic is complex
- When the topic is controversial
- When stakes are high; when the decision to be made is important
- When the group members do not know each other well
- When there is low trust among the members, and/or a history of conflict

Conditions favoring tape-recording:

- When no skilled recorder is available
- When the discussion moves faster than a recorder can keep up
- When the terminology used in group discussion is technical or complex
- When it is important to capture the exact language used
- When it is important to listen to vocal tone, as well as verbal content
- When other group members, who will be making decisions on the topic, cannot be physically present at the meeting

**Finding the best person for the job**

So, whom should you choose to record the meeting? (Again, we're talking about visible recording here.) There really is an art to it (think of all of the shorthand secretaries learn!), so usually it's not a good idea to simply designate a recorder. Some qualities to look for when choosing a recorder include:

- Experience doing recording
- Knowledge of your group's affairs
- Clear handwriting
- The ability to work well with the facilitator

We'll talk more about this under "Working effectively with the group" below.

Should the facilitator be the recorder?

The short answer is, it depends. Especially for a meeting where you are trying to solve a particularly difficult problem, it's a good idea not to combine the roles. That way, the facilitator can concentrate on what she does best, and leave recording for a second person.

However, in the following conditions, the two roles may merge quite nicely:

- The material is relatively simple
- The discussion moves slowly enough that the facilitator has time to encourage it, suggest things, and write it all down
- There is no skilled recorder available to do the job

Regardless of whether the recorder is pulling "double duty" as the facilitator or not, he or she will want to do the ensuing steps to get the job done.

### **How to record meetings effectively**

To effectively record the meeting, the recorder should pay attention to four things:

- Having the proper tools
- Working effectively with the group
- Deciding what to record
- How to record most effectively

Let's look at these one by one.

#### **1. Having the proper tools**

In the last section of this chapter, on running effective meetings, we talked about the importance of logistics: making sure you have the room key; that there is water for the coffee pot, and there are napkins for the brownies; that there are comfortable chairs to sit in and tables to write on that don't wiggle.

As a recorder, it's even more important to have the proper tools. Generally, these will include the following things:

- Markers. Use several different colors, and be sure they are water-based --they won't bleed through the paper.



sure quiet comments don't go unheard, and that points briefly made don't go unnoticed.

- Remain neutral. Generally, the recorder doesn't interject his opinions into the conversation. Like the facilitator, he remains "sponge-like," soaking up the opinions of those around him.
- Asks the group to repeat or slow down, as necessary. Don't be shy here. If the group is going too fast to write everything down, or you are unclear about what someone has said, it's perfectly all right for the recorder to step in, and say, "Excuse me. I didn't quite catch that." Or, you can say what you think you heard, and ask, "Is that right?" If the recorder didn't understand something, or didn't have time to write everything down, it's a good bet other members of the group are a few steps behind as well.
- Accept corrections graciously. The recorder may have heard something wrong, or made a spelling mistake that someone feels compelled to point out. He shouldn't lose his cool. The recorder can simply thank the person and go on; no one is perfect, but being perfectly poised when corrected is certainly impressive, and will contribute to a smooth meeting.
- Works with the facilitator. From Abbott and Costello to Rodgers and Hammerstein, the value of teamwork is clear. The facilitator and recorder working in tandem can result in a much better meeting.

Example: The facilitator can repeat or check the speaker's statement before the recorder writes it down. Not only does that clarify what has been said for the recorder; the rest of the audience is now sure to have heard the statement as well.

### **3. Deciding what to record**

Now, we've come to the real "meat" of recording. The recorder is up there in front of the group, marker in hand, and everyone's talking. What is important to write down, and what isn't?

In general, the recorder will write down what is often called the "group memory." The "group memory" is nothing more than a fancy term for what's being said. If you think about it, though, it's really quite apt. What



- Don't try to write every word; your hand will just cramp, and you'll never keep up. Paraphrase what's been said. If you have changed the speaker's words considerably, check to be sure you have captured the idea correctly.
- Use high-energy words, such as active verbs and nouns. Adjectives can sometimes be accurately and more swiftly indicated by underlining, color, etc.
- Write large, legibly, and fast. This isn't the time to worry about saving paper; comprehension should be most important.
- Don't worry about spelling. You'll still get the point across.
- Leave out words like "the" and "a"
- Label and number your sheets. This will help make your job a lot easier if you have a lot of pages to condense at the end of the meeting!
- Use color, symbols, and underlining to highlight your points. Check all of the colors you are going to use before the meeting, to decide which are most legible.
- Separate thoughts and topics with symbols, such as stars. Don't number different thoughts on the same topic, though, as numbers may establish a priority, or suggest that one idea is better than another. Save the use of numbers for larger things, such as agenda items, new topics, or, as mentioned above, for ordering pages.

### **Following up: What to do with what you have recorded**

After the meeting is over and the crumbs swept up, then, there will probably be quite a few oversized pieces of paper. What to do with them?

Generally speaking, you, or someone else, will want to type up what has been written for your files, and possibly distribute them to all meeting participants. Don't forget, here, to write down what has been decided, as well as future actions of all participants. (e.g., Chris agreed to ask downtown business owners to invite area youth to spend a day learning what it means to run a company, and will tell us the results at the next meeting).

These minutes are an important part of the recording process, and shouldn't be forgotten. Generally, they should follow and parallel the items on the meeting agenda, providing there is one.

These minutes will usually include:

- The name of the group that is meeting
- The date
- The time and place
- The names of those present (unless it's a very large meeting)
- The key points made for each agenda item
- Specific decisions that were made. These might be underlined, or highlighted in another way, for easier reference.
- In more formal meetings, the minutes also note any motions made, with the name of the mover, and the results of any votes taken on those motions.

The minutes then get distributed to those present at the meeting, together with an agenda for the next meeting, as well as other relevant materials. Ideally, this should be accomplished sufficiently in advance of the next meeting (commonly, within one to two weeks) so that members can review the minutes and, more importantly, get ready for that meeting. Remember that many more formal meetings start with review and approval of the previous meeting's minutes; so for that reason alone, it's not good practice to hand out the minutes right at the next meeting.

After the minutes are distributed and approved, they should be filed, but not filed -and-forgotten. They are there to be referred to and used. They are part of your organization's "group memory." More than that, at some point some outside group--funders, lawyers, auditors, interested outsiders--may wish to see them. So it's to your advantage to keep them readily available, up-to-date, and in good shape.

In general, the preparation and timely distribution of accurate minutes can add professionalism to your group, provide a historical record, serve as a source for fact-checking, increase the fairness of its proceedings, and perhaps also lead to better decisions, as well as more effective follow-up to those decisions.

So, the group should adopt its own policy regarding minutes, and stick to it. Not every group needs detailed minutes, and not every meeting may need minutes at all. But the points mentioned above here can be adapted to one's own situation.

And again, it's important that action be taken on the basis of the notes and decisions made. Handing out such minutes serves as a not-so-subtle reminder for group members to follow through on what they agreed to do. Much of the point of recording in the first place is to help ensure that clearer and better decisions do get made and implemented. In the end, that's probably the best sign of all that your meeting was effective.

To sum it up:

Recording is one of the most important tasks to be done at a meeting. In doing so, you take a lot of individual comments, capture them, and build on them. This will help your group clarify its thinking, and make better decisions. And by having a clear, complete record of the meeting's events, you can be sure that these decisions won't just be forgotten when you turn out the lights and lock the door.



## **A Note on Copyright**

The following texts on facilitation skills are compiled from different sources: some of them from the Internet, some are summaries or citations of books on the issue, and some are written by myself. Some of the original authors explicitly grant the right for multiplication, but some do not. Therefore, these texts must not be distributed on a large scale, or put on the Web, without consulting the original authors.

The original texts are often more elaborate and if you want to use them, it might be a good idea to go to the original sources, which are:

DFIF: Tools for Development (<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/FOI/tools/>)

The Community Toolbox: Developing Facilitation Skills.

[http://ctb.ukans.edu/tools/EN/sub\\_section\\_main\\_1154.htm](http://ctb.ukans.edu/tools/EN/sub_section_main_1154.htm) and  
[http://ctb.ukans.edu/tools/EN/sub\\_section\\_main\\_1155.htm](http://ctb.ukans.edu/tools/EN/sub_section_main_1155.htm)

Miranda Duncan: Effective Meeting Facilitation: The *Sine Qua Non* of Planning (<http://arts.endow.gov/pub/Lessons/Lessons/DUNCAN1.HTML>)

Michèle Neuland: The World of Moderation. Künzell, Neuland Verlag 1998.

Roger Schwarz: The Skilled Facilitator. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2002.



**Template 1: General Information and Workshop Objectives**

Status: mandatory, to be submitted to DRP for endorsement of workshop	
Intended workshop title	
Choose any 4-letter/number acronym	
Consulting (C) or Training Workshop (T)?	
Intended date of workshop	from            to
Intended place of workshop	
Name of organizer	
What are the short term objectives of the workshop? At the end of the workshop, what will be achieved?	
How will you measure the achievement of the short term objectives? Please specify at least one milestone/indicator for each short term objective.	
What is the medium term objective? What do you expect to happen after the workshop completion?	
When do you want to achieve your medium term objective?	in            months
What will be indicators for measuring the medium term objectives (please specify for each medium term objective)? Please specify who exactly is involved in the achievement and where do you want to achieve it (basin-wide or in specific countries/regions/cities)	
Who will be responsible for the measurement of the indicators for medium term objectives?	

**Template 2: The Workshop's Direct and Indirect Target Groups**

Status: mandatory, to be submitted to DRP for endorsement of workshop	
Workshop acronym	
Who needs to be involved and why? Who are the end beneficiaries of the expected medium term outcome?	
How big is the final target group (e.g., those who are supposed to agree to something, to benefit, or to learn)?	
If you can not invite the final target group because of size, who are potential mediators? On which base will you choose them? Do they have this mediating role already, or will it be created through the workshop (e.g. in the case of new trainers)?	
If you invite mediators, what are the institutional arrangements which insure that they will execute their role after the workshop (e.g., act as multipliers, facilitate decisions, assure participation in planning processes, act as trainers for the final target group)?	

**Template 3a: Methodology (Consultation Workshops)**

<p>Status: mandatory, to be submitted to DRP before the start of the workshop          This template might be filled together with the external moderator</p>	
Workshop acronym	
By which means will you assure full participation of all participants?	
For which subjects do you expect disagreement among the participants? What negotiation techniques / consensus building tools will be applied?	
Will you work in working groups? If yes, how many working groups of which size?	
Will you need an external moderator to assure equal participation?	
How will the results be visualized / documented?	

**Template 4: Objectives of Exercises (complete one form for each exercise)**

*Not applicable for consultation workshops*

Status: obligatory, not to be submitted to DRP							
Workshop acronym							
Name of exercise							
Name of trainer							
What are the learning objectives for this exercise?							
How are this learning objectives related to the short term objectives of the training course?							
What are participants supposed to do in this exercise? Please give a short outline.							
How many participants do you expect to work together on this exercise (group size / individual exercise / plenary)							
What is the time provision for this exercise?	<table> <tr> <td>introduction</td> <td>minutes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>exercise</td> <td>minutes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>debriefing</td> <td>minutes</td> </tr> </table>	introduction	minutes	exercise	minutes	debriefing	minutes
introduction	minutes						
exercise	minutes						
debriefing	minutes						







**Template 7a: Evaluation of the Workshop – Consulting Workshop  
(to be handed out to participants)**

Please fill out and return to workshop organizer or trainer								
Workshop title								
Date of workshop		from            to						
How long before the workshop start did you receive the invitation?					weeks			
With the invitation, did you receive the agenda, the objectives and related background material?		agenda objectives		<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no			
		background material		<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no			
Were the objectives spelled out at the beginning of the workshop?				<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no				
Did the workshop fully meet its predefined objectives?			<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> partly <input type="checkbox"/> no					
If not, please tell us, why.								
Please score the following criteria with 5 being the best and 1 being the lowest mark			5	4	3	2	1	
Did the workshop achieve all its objectives?		Fully	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	not at all
How was the level of participation?		very high	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	very low
How was the moderation of the workshop?		excellent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	very poor
How would you rank the quality of results?		very good	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	very poor
What is the applicability of the results to your working context?		very applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	not at all applicable
Please give us some recommendations of what could be improved next time such a workshop is held.								

**Template 8: Workshop report**

Status: mandatory, to be filled by the organizer and submitted to DRP together with participants' workshop evaluation								
Workshop title								
Workshop acronym								
Date and Place of workshop		Date			Place			
Name and address of venue								
Number of participants invited / present		invited			present			
Did you have external moderators or trainers?		yes <input type="checkbox"/>			no <input type="checkbox"/>			
Please score the following criteria with 5 being the best and 1 being the lowest mark			5	4	3	2	1	
Achievement of objectives		fully	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	not at all
Quality of moderators / trainers		excellent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	very poor
Quality of training venue		excellent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	very poor
Lessons Learned (1): What did you like in particular about the workshop?								
Lessons Learned (2): What needs to be improved in the future?								

## Template 9: Checklist

Template	Status	checked
<b>Template 1: General Information and Workshop Objectives</b>	<b>mandatory submission to DRP</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Template 2: The Workshop's Direct and Indirect Target Groups</b>	<b>mandatory submission to DRP</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Template 3: Methodology</b>	<b>mandatory submission to DRP</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Invitation list</b>	<b>mandatory submission to DRP</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Template 4: Objectives of Exercises (not applicable for consultation workshops)</b>	<b>obligatory, no submission</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Template 5: Internal Workshop Plan</b>	<b>obligatory, no submission</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Template 6: Workshop Material</b>	<b>obligatory, no submission</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Template 7: Evaluation of the Workshop</b>	<b>mandatory submission of participants' evaluation to DRP</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Template 8: Workshop Report</b>	<b>mandatory submission to DRP, inclusion in DANUBIS database</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Minutes of workshop, including list of participants</b>	<b>inclusion in DANUBIS database</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>