

Facilitation

August 31, 2011

What you will learn

- ▶ This presentations answers the questions
 - What is facilitation?
 - Why is it needed?
 - What are common meeting problems?
 - What is a good facilitator?
 - How do groups develop?
 - How do we keep meetings on track?
 - What are some of the pitfalls and time savers?
 - Diffusing destructive dialog
 - Other common problems and remedial action

What is Facilitation?



▶ fa · cil · i · tate

- To make easier or less difficult; help forward (an action, a process, etc.): Careful planning facilitates any kind of work
- To assist the progress of (a person)

▶ fa · cil · i · ta · tion

- The act or process of facilitating
- The lowering of resistance in a neural pathway to an impulse, resulting from previous or simultaneous stimulation

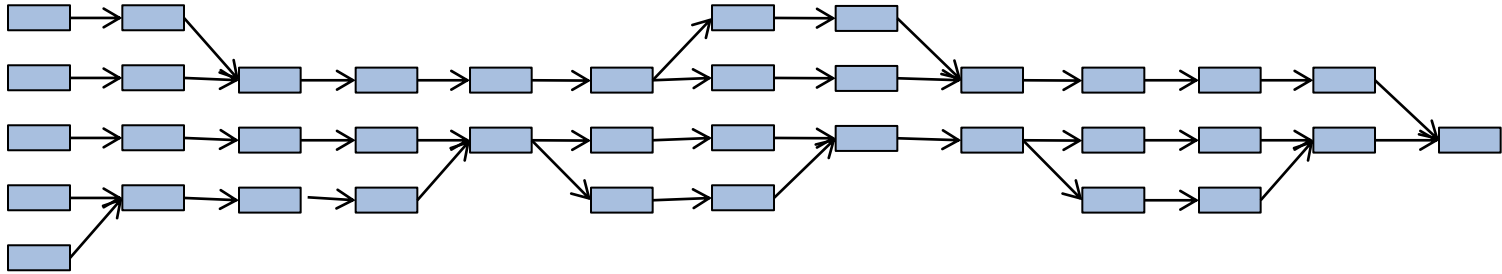
What is Facilitation?

- ▶ A facilitator is "...a person who... intervenes to help a group improve the way it identifies and solves problems and makes decisions...."
 - Roger Schwartz, The Skilled Facilitator

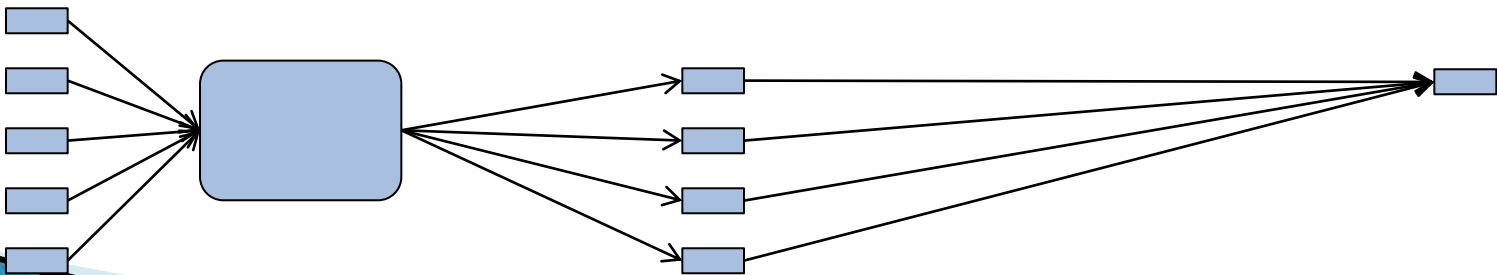


Why Is It Needed?

- ▶ Which decision making paradigm would you rather use on your project?



Gather Information.....Review.....Agree.....



Why is it Needed?

▶ Tangible Benefits

- Reduces scope creep
- Accelerates early learning
- Reduces the overall time of the project

▶ Intangible Benefits

- Team has improved working relationships
- Team has ownership of the results
- Team ownership of results improves implementation



Why is it Needed?

“You can do a project without facilitation. But, you can also cut your own hair, do your own dentistry... it just takes longer, is more painful, and you probably won’t get the best results.

Project Managers can get results without facilitation, but they are taking a risk that it will take longer and will involve a learning curve they may not have time for.”

Mary Wayne Bush,
Organization Change Specialist
Lockheed Martin Corporation’s Space
Systems Company

What are Common Meeting Problems?

- ▶ What common meeting problems have you seen?

Agree with different definitions

Keeping on topic

Wrestling control back

Too much talk
Too little deciding



Violent agreement

What is a Good Facilitator?

- ▶ Takes nothing personally
- ▶ Remains objective throughout the life of the meeting
- ▶ Asks questions to foster clarity
- ▶ Does not suggest solutions
- ▶ Guides the group, instead of dictating to the group
- ▶ Remains objective during the meeting
- ▶ Allow the group to make decisions contrary to your opinion
- ▶ Manages group politics without fear of reprisal

The Facilitator focuses on the meeting process, not contributing to the discussion.

How do Groups Develop?

- ▶ **Forming**
 - Team emphasizes procedural matters
 - Interaction is tentative and polite
 - Leader dominates decision-making process
- ▶ **Storming**
 - Conflict between group members
 - Group members question authority
 - Group resists facilitator leadership
- ▶ **Norming**
 - Group takes responsibility/ownership of goals and behavior
 - Focus is on working together efficiently
- ▶ **Performing**
 - Group has a sense of pride in their accomplishments
 - Confident in their ability to contribute to the group
 - Feel free to ask for and give assistance

How do we Keep the Meeting on Track?

- ▶ Define the objectives for the meeting
 - What is the goal?
 - What is the purpose?
 - Everything else goes on the parking lot
- ▶ Action Items
 - Capture action items as they occur
 - Cut off discussion on that topic after the action item is documented
- ▶ Parking Lot
 - Use it to document items you don't want to talk about now
 - Items important but not directly related to the goal and purpose
 - Thoughts that are tangential to the conversation
 - Items you want to discuss later

How do we Keep the Meeting on Track?

- ▶ Use an agenda
 - This is your checklist for progress
 - Defer side conversations until the agenda items are complete
- ▶ Define ground rules
 - These define how the group will interact during the meeting
 - Provide boundaries or guardrails when the group loses focus
- ▶ Time Box
 - Use this when the team cannot reach closure on a topic
 - Team has X minutes to discuss this, then they must make a decision
 - If they still can't decide, assign an action item and move on

How do we Keep the Meeting on Track?

- ▶ Make sure all participants are engaged
- ▶ Use the language of the business
- ▶ If there are Phone participants, remember to:
 - Ask all attendees to state their name when speaking
 - Make sure conversation is verbalized – not “head-nods” or nonverbal communication
 - Use meeting software when possible (Live Meeting)
- ▶ Confirm meeting results and “next steps” prior to closing the meeting, and ask participants to indicate their agreement



Defusing Destructive Dialog

- ▶ Recognize destructive dialog as it occurs
- ▶ **1. Generalizing.**
 - Team Member: “No one cares a bit how I feel about things.”
 - Facilitator: “Please tell us more specifically about who doesn’t care about how you feel about things”, or “Please give us a specific example so we can understand clearly what you are referring to.”
- ▶ **2. Blaming.** Strong ‘you’ or ‘they’ focus:
 - Team Member: “They did this and they did that and they’re always...”
 - Facilitator: “Tell us what you would like to see happen in future, or Tell us about the impact of these events on you personally.”
- ▶ **3. Statements in question form.**
 - Team Member: “Wouldn’t you agree it’s just downright irresponsible to do something like that without group approval?”
 - Facilitator: “Sounds like you really feel it was inappropriate”, or “Tell us how you feel about it”, or “My job is to help you express your viewpoint to others here; please help us understand what your thinking is on this.”

From Defusing Destructive Dialog, Ron Kraybill

Defusing Destructive Dialog

▶ 4. Speaking for others.

- Team Member: “I happen to know that a lot of other people in the group feel the same way I do about this.”
- Facilitator: “Just speaking for yourself, tell us how you feel about things.”

▶ 5. Poor me.

- Team Member: “I just get so depressed and discouraged when I see what they’re doing to our fine group. They don’t care what they do to the rest of us and I’ve lost all hope for change.”
- Facilitator: “You really feel helpless about things. Tell us about the point at which you really began feeling the most discouraged ... Tell us about what you would like to see happen in the group in the next year.”

▶ 6. Super parenting.

- Team Member: “I think what Mary is really trying to say is that the situation is just intolerable for anyone who really cares about the future of the community.”
- Facilitator: “I’d like to let Mary express for herself what she’s trying to say to us.”

From Defusing Destructive Dialog, Ron Kraybill

Defusing Destructive Dialog

▶ 7. Interrupting.

- Facilitator ignores interrupter or simply says: “I’d like to hear your thoughts on this, but for now I’d rather not interrupt Mary’s comments.”

▶ 8. Withdrawing.

- Team Member sits silently without participating, and sometimes orients body away from the group.
- Facilitator: “I’d like to offer a special invitation to those who haven’t yet had the opportunity to speak,” or “Mr/Mrs X, are there any thoughts or comments that you would like to share with us?”

From Defusing Destructive Dialog, Ron Kraybill

Defusing Destructive Dialog

▶ 9. Challenging the facilitator

- Facilitator: Stay cool, focus on hearing and understanding. “So your main concern is that I haven’t ...”. Then explain, or clarify, if appropriate, without defending.
- Recognize the urge to fight back and choose against it.
- Model self-disclosure:
 - “I feel quite uncomfortable with your comments and I’m not sure exactly how to respond.
 - I’d like to approach things in a way that everyone respects so I don’t wish to simply ignore your remarks. How do others feel about this?”
 - Ask for input from others in the group.

From Defusing Destructive Dialog, Ron Kraybill

Other Common Problems and Remedial Action

Problem	Action
Floundering	Review the plan Develop a new plan for movement
The expert	Talk to the offending party in private Let the data do the talking Insist on consensus decisions
Dominating participants	Structure and balance participation Act as the gate keeper
Reluctant participants	Structure and balance participation Act as the gate keeper
Uses opinion instead of facts	Insist on data
Rushing to a decision	Insist on data Provide constructive feedback
Wandering off topic	Follow a written agenda Restate the topic of discussion
Feuds	Talk offline, restate ground rules

From The Six Sigma Handbook, Thomas Pyzdek

Takeaways

- ▶ Good facilitation takes planning and effort.
- ▶ Simple Basic Rules
 - Keep on Topic
 - Manage the process
 - Clarify Communications

Good facilitation makes all the difference with acceptance.
Solution = Project X Quality of Solution X Acceptance

Questions?

References

- ▶ The Skilled Facilitator, Roger Schwartz
- ▶ The Six Sigma Handbook, Thomas Pyzdek
- ▶ Defusing Destructive Dialog, Ron Kraybill website