DiSC® Classic Facilitation System

Facilitation Tips and Checklists

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ENHANCING YOUR TRAINING

Once you have the resources needed for your training session, it's important to create a supportive training environment that will keep participants involved, motivated, and interested. This section includes information on the following:

- Setting the ground rules
- Handling difficult participant behaviors
- Working with groups
- Setting up the training room

Setting the Ground Rules

Communicating the ground rules to participants will go a long way in creating an open environment where people feel safe sharing their opinions and experiences.

1. Individual and Group Expectations
   It is important to encourage participants to discuss individual and group expectations for the learning process and desired outcomes. Be sure to allow enough time to capture participants' comments on poster paper that you can reference throughout the seminar.

2. Confidentiality
   People have various levels of comfort with sharing in a group setting. Encourage people to share if they are comfortable and willing, while respecting people who don't want to share their thoughts, feelings, experiences, or action plans.

3. Developing Trust
   The process of establishing trust is important in any classroom-facilitated session. It's helpful to structure curriculum so that activities evolve from being "safe" interactions at first (e.g. a partner discussion) to less "safe" activities (e.g. large group sharing). This will help to ease people into a establishing a safe and trusting environment.

4. Encouraging Open Communication
   During the seminar, participants will have many opportunities to talk about their thoughts and feelings—which sometimes can be uncomfortable. To encourage honest and open communications, encourage participants to bring up ideas or concerns that might cause tension in the group.

5. Attending to questions and concerns
   At the beginning of your session, encourage participants to ask questions and express concerns throughout the training. This will establish an environment where participants feel acknowledged and safe. Create a "parking lot" flipchart where any ideas or concerns not relevant to the current topic can be posted and answered at a later time.

6. Building respect through respect
   The successful facilitator knows that modeling thoughtful listening encourages similar behavior in the group and builds trust in the learning process. It's important to value all

contributions, and never allow others to minimize an individual's thoughts and ideas. Remember to keep group conversations focused on issues and not on individuals.

After discussing the ground rules for confidentiality, respect, and trust, ask participants to help you create guidelines for appropriate behavior during the seminar. Then remind participants that they are responsible for upholding and enforcing these guidelines. This encourages participants to be accountable to themselves and each another.

Handling Difficult Participant Behavior

In any seminar, there may be times when you have to deal with disruptive or difficult behavior, such as participants who like to share a lot, side conversations, interruptions, off-subject conversations, personal attacks, or negativity.

As facilitator, you may need to intervene on occasion. Referencing to the ground rules and guidelines may be all that is needed. Something as simple as eye contact or asking for input from another participant may stop an undesirable behavior.

Below are a few typical difficult participant behaviors that you may experience in your seminar.

- **The Arguer**. A disagreement among participants can be constructive or damaging, depending on the issue and how the disagreement is handled. At all costs, you should avoid letting someone cause you to lose your temper.

  As the facilitator, you can set an example of how to argue. You can reduce tension if you disagree with the statement rather than with the person making the statement. Consider this retort: "Alan, I totally disagree with you." Would this reduce tension?

  A more constructive response would be "Alan, you present an interesting argument. There is one part that is still difficult for me to understand. Could you elaborate on….."

- **The Quiet One**. Some people are naturally quiet, and others become quiet in a seminar setting. While you should not expect these people to change dramatically, you may be able to help them participate more than they would otherwise. As we mentioned earlier, watching for nonverbal clues is one method. For other people, you may have to use your judgment to gauge how comfortable they are with participating.

- **The Talker**. As a facilitator, you have to strike a balance between giving the participants freedom and staying on schedule with your seminar topics. Once in a while, you may encounter a participant who tries to monopolize the group's time. After allowing this individual enough time to make his or her point, firmly but courteously move along to the next topic. For example:

  - "Alisha, I'm sorry to interrupt you. We still have a great deal to cover. Perhaps we could continue this discussion after the session."

  - "Dale, you may not have realized that we still need to hear from Jordan and Marla. If we have time, we'll come back to you and hear more."

- **The Bored One**. Boredom is usually expressed through people's behavior and comments. Some people actually are bored, and others pretend to be bored to set themselves apart from the rest of the group.

  Too many participants acting this way can have a negative effect on the morale and enthusiasm of the group. The best way to reduce this kind of behavior is to draw these people into the group by recognizing them and asking for their contributions.

- **The "Know-It-All."** People may appear to have a lot of information because they are, in fact, knowledgeable or because they want to win attention or gain approval. Seminar participants will react to "know-it-alls" according to their own needs. Some will be grateful for the information, while others may feel threatened by a display of knowledge they do not have themselves.

  People who have a lot of useful knowledge on the subject can be very helpful to the group as long as they do not use that information to monopolize the time. If necessary, thank these people for the information they have provided; then ask for additional comments from other people in the group.

- **The Glum One**. Have you ever noticed the kind of expression people have when sitting in a group listening to someone talk? You will notice when you are the one talking. Look around and you will notice that some participants have rather glum, unsmiling expressions on their faces. This is important only when you happen to be the one toward whom the glum expression is directed.

It's natural to take the dour expressions personally. But remember that everyone has a mask they wear under certain conditions. That mask may not necessarily reflect how people are feeling at the moment. Accept that glum expressions are normal for many people in a seminar setting.

The previous descriptions are not intended to cover the full range of behaviors you may come into contact with in a seminar setting. They will help alert you, however, to the wide variety of behaviors you may experience from seminar participants.

As facilitator, use your flexibility to adapt to each person in the group according to his or her behavior. The participants will appreciate your sensitivity, and the sessions will run more smoothly.

Know Yourself

Each participant has a certain style of behavior. You also have a particular way of behaving. Like others, you have been conditioned to react to your environment in certain characteristic ways. Your style will be one factor in determining the training methods you are most comfortable using.

You cannot totally change your style, but you can modify your behavior for limited periods of time when necessary. To be an effective facilitator, you may have to "flex" your behavior so that you can meet the needs of a broad range of individuals.

WORKING WITH GROUPS

Below are some points that are helpful to keep in mind as you work with your group. Anything you can do to make the atmosphere in the seminar more informal will increase your effectiveness. Here are several techniques that may help:

- **Call on people by name**. Whenever possible, use participants' first names. If you don't know someone's name, ask. Most people are flattered when someone shows an interest in their name.

- **Use eye contact**. Good eye contact is extremely important. It goes a long way toward establishing a personal, informal atmosphere where you are talking to people rather than at them.

- **Avoid barriers**. Instead of always standing in front of the group, try to get down to the participants' eye level. You can do this by sitting in a chair without a desk or table in front of you. You may find that a more informal position will help you and members of the group relax.

- **Use humor**. Humor is a great icebreaker, but when misused, it can backfire. It is usually better to direct your humor at yourself, rather than at others. If you can laugh at yourself without appearing to be overly self-critical, you have a very useful tool for relaxing members of the group.

- **Don't play "Expert."** You'll be heading for failure if you try to be the expert when you're not. Some participants will take every opportunity to challenge the facilitator who acts as though he or she has all the answers. Tell the participants you need their help and cooperation and you do not claim to have all the answers.

  Sometimes seminar participants will try to cast you in the role of expert and expect you to answer questions they cannot or will not answer, or to resolve problems they cannot resolve. Don't take the bait. Instead, throw the question back to the group. For example, say, "That's a good question, Joe. I'd like to hear what the group has to say about that. Would anyone like to answer it?" This technique fosters group participation in the learning process and forces members to come up with their own answers. Remember that a quick answer from you could stifle discussion and independent thinking.

- **Illustrate**. If the attention of your group seems to be drifting, use a story or anecdote to make an important point. You may be surprised at how quickly the participants' attention returns. Effective stories are usually real, vital, timely, specific, and about people. Whenever possible, draw the stories from your own professional or personal experiences and tailor them to meet the needs of the group. You can also use stories about other people, but be careful not to put anyone down or break any confidences.

- **Keep on schedule**. You will find that the seminar runs more smoothly if you maintain control of the time. Tell participants how much time is allotted for activities. Be gentle but firm in adhering to your schedule. Some strategies for remaining on schedule are:
  - **Ask people to turn off their cell phones**. Assure them they'll have time to check their messages and return calls during the breaks.

o **Start on time, end on time**. Make sure the seminar starts on time, breaks on time, and ends on time. If you get off to an unavoidable late start, stay on schedule by eliminating or modifying an activity or lecture. If some participants do not return from break or lunch on time, begin without them.

o **Keep the discussion within intended time limits**. Watch the time during discussions. If you don't, the seminar may get bogged down and you won't complete the activities in the allotted time. Of course, if a discussion is particularly lively, you may want to extend the time for that topic. You will need to adjust the length of other activities to compensate. Examples of how to curtail discussions include:

- "I'm sorry, but we'll have to limit the discussion at this point. Let's continue this later during the break."

- "At this point, we'd better get back to our schedule so we don't miss any of the important topics that are ahead of us."

- "Pat, would you summarize what's been said before we go on?"

- "Let me summarize our discussion before we move on."

- "This has been a really good discussion, and I think we should continue it during the break."

If you get behind schedule, feel free to skim over the activities you highlighted as optional during your preparation. If you have time later on, you can refer back to the concepts you skimmed over and discuss them in greater depth.

Always remember, however, to control the schedule. It is more important to end on time than to cover every single concept in the seminar.

- **Encourage participation**. Being able to encourage participation is an important skill. One way to encourage participant involvement is by asking questions, but try to avoid asking questions with obvious answers. Such questions tend to give the impression that the facilitator is simply going through the motions. Instead, ask questions that are challenging and may have a number of responses.

Many facilitators fear that they will ask a question and nobody will volunteer an answer. This happens to all facilitators from time to time. It's important to allow enough time for participants to formulate answers. Through our social experiences, we have been conditioned to immediately fill any conversational gaps. Therefore, when a facilitator has five seconds of silence after asking a question, he or she is inclined to start talking. To avoid this problem, after you have asked a question, mentally count to 10 before doing anything else. Usually someone will respond before you finish counting.

Knowing how to ask for volunteers to answer a question is an important training skill. Naturally, some people are more outgoing than others, but even quiet individuals may benefit from engaging in the class. Watch for nonverbal signs such as a raised eyebrow, a look of interest, or a movement toward raising a hand. These signals often indicate that someone wants to be called on.

If you continually have problems getting people to participate, ask yourself why. Are they bored? Is more information needed? Are the questions interesting enough to be worth answering? In short, try to put yourself in the place of the participants.

SETTING UP THE TRAINING ROOM

The physical environment and arrangement of the tables and chairs play an important role in the effectiveness of training. If you have any control over the environment and seating arrangements, specify your preferences.

Environmental conditions to control include the following:

- **Lighting**. Diffused lighting is best. Avoid glare or dim lighting.
- **Temperature**. If possible, use a temperature-controlled environment, especially if the outside temperature or humidity is beyond the comfortable range.
- **Acoustics**. If the size of the group warrants, use a microphone. If people are spread out, encourage them to move to the front of the room.
- **Work space**. Each individual should have a comfortable amount of work space.

Below are common seating arrangements:

- Arrange **several small tables** for small-group discussion. During lectures and large-group discussions, some participants will need to rotate their chairs to participate.
- Arrange **long tables in rows** for seminars that are primarily lecture-based and/or large-group discussions. This arrangement is not conducive to small-group discussions, however.
- Arrange tables in a single **horseshoe shape** that allows everyone to see the facilitator and provides the facilitator with the flexibility to move closer to any participant while conversing. Small-group activities may be more difficult to facilitate in this arrangement, however.

ADDITIONAL TRAINING TIPS

- Arrive early to the session and allow plenty of time to set-up.
- Be ready to greet participants without any distractions.
- Allow participants to introduce themselves and share their desired outcomes or expectations of the session with the group.
- Include yourself in the introduction to build rapport with the group.
- Use positive reinforcement as a learning tool. Genuinely praise individuals for becoming involved. Thank and compliment individuals for their contributions.
- Speak clearly and distinctly.
- Admit your mistakes.
- Avoid competition with group members about who is right and wrong.
- Avoid abrupt commands like "Start " or "Stop." Instead, use more informal commands such as "Let's begin," "Take 30 seconds to finish your thought," and "Thank you for your attention." Make your conduct persuasive rather than directive.
- During small-group activities, let each group function alone. Avoid involving yourself in a group's discussion.
- Be enthusiastic, cheerful, positive, and considerate.
- Be aware of your behavioral strengths as well as your limitations in your role as facilitator.
- Keep in mind that participants' needs differ. Flexibility and responsiveness are critical to your success.

Final Note

The guidelines in this section can help you become a more effective facilitator. However, no one can instantly put all of these suggestions into practice. As mentioned earlier, a major part of learning comes from doing. You, too, will learn by actually conducting the training sessions. An effective facilitator does not need to be perfect in every way. You do not need to be a speech major, psychologist, or an expert on personality and behavior. What you do have to be is sensitive to the requirements of participants in your group. Prepare yourself for the session and focus on the strengths and capabilities of the participants. Have confidence in yourself.

Finally, remember that you are not responsible for how much a particular individual chooses to learn from the seminar. Each person is responsible for their behavior. If you provide an environment where learning can occur and where participants feel comfortable considering, questioning, and discussing the topics, you have performed your function.

PLANNING YOUR SEMINAR

Checking the Details

Every facilitator hopes for a successful session, but success depends on preparation. It's often the smallest forgotten detail that significantly impacts your session. It's important to consider all of the details before any session.

Checklists

Below is a checklist outlining details to ensure your seminar is a success.

DiSC Classic Facilitation System Materials
- ❏ DiSC® Classic Validation Report
- ❏ Leader's Guide
- ❏ PowerPoint® presentations with video (customized for your audience)
- ❏ Handouts
- ❏ Consider Issues that are critical to your audience and training objectives.
- ❏ Your notes on any personal comments or anecdotes that you want to share. Whenever possible use personal stories to emphasize a point.

Content
Have you:
- ❏ Taken the profile you're training on?
- ❏ Reviewed the Leader's Guide?
- ❏ Planned for each activity?
- ❏ Printed enough handouts or manuals?
- ❏ Reviewed and customized your PowerPoint presentation?
- ❏ Presorted and laid out the handouts in the order you will use them?
- ❏ Printed the reports for all participants?

Supplies
- ❏ Paper
- ❏ Pens
- ❏ Flipchart markers
- ❏ Masking tape or pins to post flipcharts
- ❏ Extension cord
- ❏ Timer
- ❏ Review activities for other required supplies

Lights
- ❏ Do you know where the light switches are?
- ❏ Do you know if they are on/off only, or if there are dimmer controls?
- ❏ Can lights that glare on the projection screen be turned off?

Water
- ❏ Is drinking water readily available?
- ❏ Do you know where it is or will be?

Board
- ❑ Is there a whiteboard or blackboard?
- ❑ Do you have to slide panels or open doors to reveal the board?
- ❑ Do you have whiteboard markers and an eraser?

Ventilation
- ❑ Is the ventilation adequate?
- ❑ Do the fans work? Are they noisy?
- ❑ Do you know where the thermostat is?
- ❑ Do you know how to adjust the room temperature?

Set-Up
- ❑ Is the room set up properly?
- ❑ Are enough places set?
- ❑ Will the room be locked during lunch or breaks?
- ❑ Can people leave materials in the room overnight?
- ❑ Will the room be locked overnight?

Services
- ❑ Do you know where the restrooms are?
- ❑ Do you know where the telephones are?
- ❑ Do you know where people can smoke?
- ❑ Do you know whom to call if any problems develop?

Equipment
- ❑ Do you have an LCD Projector?
- ❑ Do you know how it works?
- ❑ Does it work properly?
- ❑ Is it focused to fill the screen?
- ❑ Do you know where spare bulbs are?
- ❑ Do you know how to change the bulb?
- ❑ Is the lens clean?
- ❑ Are all parts of the image in focus?
- ❑ Are all the electrical cords taped down to the floor?

Screen
- ❑ Is the screen for overhead projection set up properly?
- ❑ Does it retract into the ceiling?
- ❑ Do you know where the switch is to raise or lower the screen?
- ❑ Is the screen large enough for the audience size?

Flipcharts
- ❑ Are two separate flipcharts available?
- ❑ Are the flipchart stands sturdy?
- ❑ Is there enough paper on the pads?
- ❑ Are there extra pads?
- ❑ Do you know where flipchart sheets can be hung?
- ❑ Do you have tape or pins to hang posters or flipcharts?
- ❑ Do you have markers?

Microphone/Speakers
- ❑ Will you be using a microphone? Consider using a microphone for groups of 40 or more, or any time you are unsure about the acoustics in the room or your voice.
- ❑ Do you know what kind of microphone you will be using?
- ❑ Is the cord long enough?
- ❑ If it is cordless, do you have extra batteries?
- ❑ Is the sound level properly adjusted?
- ❑ Do you know where the controls are?
- ❑ Do you know how to adjust the controls?
- ❑ Are there any feedback squeals?
- ❑ Do you know how to turn the microphone on and off?
- ❑ Do you know how to set up your speakers accurately?

Procedures
- ❑ What time is lunch?
- ❑ Where will lunch be served?
- ❑ How long is lunch?
- ❑ What time will breaks occur?
- ❑ How long will breaks be?
- ❑ When are refreshments scheduled to arrive?