



Group Facilitation

The Learning Key® Approach

Benefits and Outcomes

- Strengthen teams to function productively.
- Produce innovative results faster in team meetings.
- Increase team member satisfaction.
- Create a trusting environment with open lines of communication and joint problem-solving.
- Provide assistance to help teams or groups achieve their goals and objectives within budget and on time.

Background

With the emergence of cross-functional teams, many companies have found employees ready, willing, but not necessarily able, to participate effectively in teams. Successfully leading a group or team requires the skills to facilitate groups. It is the unusual team or group leader who has the combined experience and knowledge of both project content and group dynamics. Understanding team dynamics, helping the team reach its goals, and focusing the team on its business objectives are the strengths of a skilled facilitator.

There is a difference between facilitating and managing groups or teams. A facilitator is an expert in group process, a troubleshooter who does what needs to be done to get the team moving. A facilitator is a diagnostician with intervention skills appropriate for the stage of the group's development. A facilitator is a neutral associate of the team or group who brings objectivity. Objectivity is extremely important since it is the bridge to building trusting relationships. Many organizations prefer to use an external facilitator to maintain an objective viewpoint.

A facilitator helps groups improve upon their group processes and moves them toward

greater efficiency and effectiveness. A skilled facilitator takes responsibility for guiding a group so that synergy is created. A facilitator is a change agent or catalyst who is able to challenge old approaches and move a group ahead.

A team leader plays a different role which focuses on the mechanics of tasks, resources and budgets and schedules. Team leaders are often content experts with experience in similar projects but not necessarily skilled at facilitation.

Facilitator Roles

There are many roles for a facilitator. They are masters at conducting effective meetings and are skilled in:

- making sure all members of the team are clear about goals, roles and procedures;
- drawing out all members of the team;
- keeping the meeting on track;
- guiding the group to reach consensus;
- providing feedback and resolving conflicts;
- analyzing and diagnosing group problems;
- creating a safe environment for all to participate.

An experienced facilitator frees the team manager to do what he or she does best: focus on the details of the team's task while leaving the process issues for the facilitator.

Facilitators are often coaches and mentors. Groups go through a series of four stages: forming, storming, norming, and performing. Often the passage through each of these group stages is frustrating and time consuming. A team facilitator can ease the group through these stages and help the group learn to function smoothly on its own.

In some situations, the facilitator acts as a mediator or peacemaker. Effective teams experience conflict and should learn to manage it wisely. The facilitator helps the team see how conflict leads to creativity and innovation and presents approaches to resolve conflicts and break deadlocks.

The Approach

Our initial step is to gather data from the team leader and team members and determine the strengths and weaknesses of the current team dynamics. We develop a report and make recommendations based upon our findings. Our facilitator then works directly with the team leader and attends meetings with the team. Training group members to manage the facilitation process takes from four to six team meetings. Facilitation skills training modules can be provided as well.

We also offer one-on-one team leader coaching to strengthen the team leader's ability to manage a high performing team.

For more information call 1-800-465-7005 or e-mail: info@thelearningkey.com.

