Chapter 9
The Art of Facilitation

Jan Marie Fritz

Introduction

There are a number of ways to successfully facilitate (assist a group with) activities. Facilitators are expected to learn different techniques/styles/methods such as probing, reframing, positive reinforcement, design, use of resources,[1] problem analysis (Hartwig 2010, pp. 18–19), and methods of decision-making. The use of such techniques is only a part of a facilitated activity; facilitation is an art,[2] a creative undertaking in which the facilitator needs to continually act,[3] focusing on what is currently happening while taking into account a group's setting, participants, aims, relevant history, current situation and future opportunities. This chapter discusses the creative facilitation of meetings and provides a case study which points to some of the problems that can develop when not enough attention is given to effective facilitation.

[1] Nielsen (2012, p. 87) wrote about how "a range of semiotic resources (whiteboard, colored cards, speed markers, re-usable adhesive putty, body posture, gestures, gazes, pauses and talk) is used in a facilitated meeting.

[2] Shaw et al. (2010, p. 4) indicated "the true art of an effective facilitator is often not always about the methods, tools or techniques that they employ but on the internal condition of the facilitator" which allows the facilitator to "create transformation in groups."

[3] According to Shaw et al. (2010, p. 4), "as scholars and practicing facilitators have emphasized, facilitators work intuitively, and often need to act in the moment . . . deciding if, when and how to intervene . . . "

J.M. Fritz (✉)
Professor, University of Cincinnati, USA and Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Sociological Research, University of Johannesburg, South Africa
e-mail: jan.fritz@uc.edu

J.M. Fritz (ed.), *Moving Toward a Just Peace: The Mediation Continuum*,
Clinical Sociology: Research and Practice, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-2885-1_9,

Defining Facilitation

The term *facilitation* basically refers to the act of making something easy or, at least, easier. The concept is known in many countries, but not all. Japan, for instance, has no word for facilitation in Japanese, but the idea of facilitation, particularly in the areas of education and training, is "increasingly gaining attention and acceptance" (Kato 2010, p. 694).

Because facilitation is such a general term, one finds it used in different ways in many fields including neuroscience (increase in postsynaptic potential evoked by a second impulse), business (running meetings), ecology (for instance, when a plant provides shade for a seedling) as well as areas such as human trafficking (facilitators are the people who are engaged in illegal trafficking across international borders). There also are "practice facilitators" (PFs) who are health care professionals – in England, the Netherlands, Australia, Canada and the US – who assist primary care clinicians with "a variety of activities, including enhancement of documentation and delivery of clinical interventions, particularly preventive services; improvement of office systems; and implementation of Health Information Technology" (Nagykaldi et al. 2005, p. 583). There is "facilitative dialogue" (Smock and Serwer 2012, pp. 1–2), a conversation, moderated by a third-party, to help those involved in a discussion overcome any barriers to effective communication. While this approach can be used in many situations, Smock and Serwer (2012) discuss its use in conflict and post-conflict areas.[4] And "facilitative leadership," "a skilled approach to leading that's based on the core beliefs and practices of group facilitation" (Bens 2006, p. 8), is frequently discussed (e.g., Kato 2010, p. 694; Fryer 2012; Subramaniam 2011). Finally, there is "guerilla facilitation," techniques to be used by a meeting participant when a meeting is not going well and the participant is not managing the meeting (Wilkinson n.d.).

Facilitation is a concept that is frequently used by mediators and many others to characterize some or all of the work they do. Haskell and Cyr (2011, p. 5) defined facilitation, in a group facilitation journal, "as the design and management of structures and processes that help a group do its work and minimize the common problems people have working together." Amnesty International (2011, p. 20), in its training manual about facilitation, has provided a useful definition of the term that has much less of a management focus:

> Generally speaking, facilitation is defined as making things occur easily, or making something possible. Facilitation is an enabling and guiding process which creates and supports a space for purposeful engagement and participation.

Mie Femø Nielsen (2012, p. 89) indicated that a facilitator is a "content neutral" person "working to enable . . . [a group or organization] to collaborate, work more

[4] Smock and Serwer (2012, p. 2) indicate that the three components of facilitated dialogue in conflict and post-conflict situations are (1) being sensitive to situations and intervening as needed to make conversations productive, (2) focusing on underlying interests and (3) organizing topics to achieve early consensus on less-difficult topics.

effectively and achieve synergy," or to think in a deeper way about its assumptions, beliefs, values, processes, or other areas by using a rather informal, flexible alternative "to constricting formats like parliamentary procedure or *Robert's Rules of Order*."[5] Facilitators LISTEN, encourage participation, draw out the opinions of participants, ask questions, clarify communication, keep a meeting on task, guide groups through difficult discussions, test assumptions, are optimistic, give as well as receive feedback, have no substantive decision-making authority and periodically summarize progress.

In discussing facilitation, there are differences of opinion about where one usually finds facilitation being used and how it should be done. According to Nielsen (2012, p. 89), for instance, facilitators "are frequently used in innovation projects and change management projects; but usually not used in 'ordinary,' intraorganizational idea development meetings." Others would think facilitation is also valuable in idea development meetings. And according to Smock and Serwer (2012, p. 163), a skilled facilitator in conflict zones should be "actively engaged in directing the discussion and helping the participants reach consensus;" this kind of facilitator would not be a "neutral traffic cop." Others might see this as an option in many kinds of facilitation (not just in conflict zones) while some others might think that this characterization opens the door to a facilitator being directive or opinionated.

Stephen Thorpe, in an editorial for *Group Facilitation* (2011, p. 3) lovingly described the role of the facilitator:

> A facilitator "in the moment" might be likened to the metaphor of a swan that skillfully and gracefully glides on the surface of a pond: guiding the group towards their purpose, making subtle interventions, and cutting through blockages and conflict with precision. The group [members] may find that they are achieving [the group's] goals, are becoming empowered, and participants are amazed at how easy it all seemed to flow – even through those tough bits they had been avoiding. Yet, just beneath the surface of the water, that facilitator's feet are paddling away, drawing on a number of inner resources, picking up on subtle currents and bringing deeper awareness to all that is happening. This I call the *inner practice* of a group facilitator . . . There is a need now . . . to further expore and write about these subtle aspects of the group facilitator role . . . [so that others] can truly see the magic in the things we are . . . doing *while we are facilitating*.

Amnesty International (2011, p. 22) emphasized that a facilitator's qualities include "resourcefulness and creativity:"

> Each group is as different as the people who make it up. A good facilitator needs an overall programme and objectives but may also adapt these to fit changing conditions and opportunities . . .

[5] *Robert's Rules of Order* is a widely used parliamentary authority in the U.S. The first edition of the procedures was published in 1876.

Mediation and Facilitation

Mediation is a humanistic and creative process in which one or more impartial individuals help disputants discuss an issue or issues that concern one or more of the parties. This process is sometimes referred to as *facilitated* negotiation. The mediator will establish an open, trusting environment in which parties are encouraged to discuss the facts of the matter as well as their personal feelings about the issue or issues that brought them to the table. Mediation is usually problem-centered with a flexibly-structured process that can be free flowing or rather controlled or directed. If the outcome of this process is an agreement, it would be shaped by the parties and mutually satisfactory.

The U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (n.d.) indicates that mediation and facilitation "are the cornerstone of the U.S. Institute's services." The Institute indicates that mediation is a negotiation process in which "'resolution' is the goal" while facilitation is a collaborative process that aims to "seek a shared understanding of the issues at hand, and to explore how they might work together to meet their common goals." The Institute's definition tries to draw a strong line between the two processes . . . but that is actually hard to do. Both mediation and facilitation can be broadly defined and are overlapping. For instance, New Zealand's guidance note (Sefton 2009) for environmental disputes sees the role of mediator and facilitator as the same except that "outcomes of facilitated meetings are summarized at the conclusion" and "at closure, the agreement of a mediation is nailed."

Mediators, for a number of reasons, may refer to some or all of their work as facilitation. It may be that the term mediation is not understood by most or some segment of the public or it may be that some think if the term "mediation" is used that it means there is a severe problem. Facilitation may be a more acceptable term for those reasons. Also, a mediator may feel that the work she or he is doing – perhaps because it involves many people or a number of groups[6] – really is facilitation, although she or he uses many mediation skills.

Mediators in the U.S. who regularly work with large groups usually have been trained in and have experience with facilitation. However, not all mediators (particularly those working with individuals or small groups) have been trained in facilitation. Increasingly, there has been an interest in and opportunities for these mediators to have this training. For instance, some large civic discussions (e.g., about national health options or problems facing women who wish to fully participate in society) offered facilitation training to mediators and asked them to serve as table or group facilitators. Also, special education mediators in the U.S.

[6]According to The State of Queensland, Department of Justice and Attorney-General (Australia) (n.d.), "mediation doesn't usually involve large numbers of people . . . [and] facilitation is used for large-scale disputes, often involving several parties, an organization, a department or entire community."

are being trained or have been trained by a number of state education departments to serve as facilitators. These individuals are increasingly being made available to school systems to run meetings or develop models for running meetings when parents and school system representatives are trying to develop an individualized education plan for a student with special needs. The thinking is that if the initial meetings between parents and school system representatives are successful, there will be less problems in the future and less need to have mediators deal with special education disputes.

Mediators and facilitators often belong to the same professional organizations. They may be active, for instance, in the International Association of Facilitators or the Environment and Public Policy Section (or other sections) of the Association for Conflict Resolution. The US Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (n.d.) frequently uses "contracted private-sector" mediators and facilitators in addition to its own small staff in dealing with environmental disputes. The Institute maintains a national roster of dispute resolution and consensus building professionals who all are third-party professional facilitators and/or mediators.

The selection of mediators and facilitators generally should be acceptable to all the members of the groups. However, sometimes mediators and facilitators are assigned and it is only after assignment that a person or organization might question if the person is appropriate for the assignment.

Both mediation and facilitation involve creativity. The situations of groups involved in mediation and facilitation may often be unclearly defined (what have been called "ill-defined domains"). Particularly when that is the case, creativity may not just be a contribution of the mediator or facilitator; the creativity may be in the collaboration/sharing of the participants as well as the contributions of the facilitator or mediator (see Reilly 2008).

Novice, Experienced and Artisan Facilitation

Facilitators may not be needed in particular situations. The authors of a book about collaboration (Dukes and Firehock 2001, p. 29) noted that when a group has low conflict and "the meeting process is not terribly demanding," a meeting can be managed by a chair or a member of the group. And Andy Williams (2012, p. 137) studied student learning when an open facilitation approach was used regarding "solo camping" (camping on your own). He concluded (p. 153) "that soloists can and do attach important meanings to their experiences without the need for a facilitator to guide or structure the learning process on their behalf." Williams (p. 154) underlined, however, that he was not saying that "facilitator-led solo activities should become a thing of the past" but, rather, that all should be aware of the "potential of a more open mode of facilitation (a learner-centered approach in) which participants (solo campers) have more ownership of the process and outcomes of their own learning because facilitators were encouraged to take a step back."

When facilitation can be useful, what level of facilitation skill is needed? Facilitators do have different levels of expertise (see, for example, Bens 2000, p. 35; Rees 2005, pp. 261–283).[7] Modifying Berkvens' typology of facilitators (2012, p. 360), this chapter discusses the following levels: *novice facilitator* (little or no training in facilitation; uses more authoritarian style that she or he probably has experienced without checking the backgrounds and needs of participants; no continuing support offered to participants); *experienced facilitator* (training, some experience after training and some feedback from more experienced facilitators; has thought about background and needs of participants and sometimes has done a needs assessment; provides support for participants by asking how they are doing) and *artisan facilitator* (has training and periodically is given feedback by experienced and artisan facilitators; can use many different techniques in facilitating meetings; continually adjusts what is being done by taking into account the context and needs of participants; optimizes full participation of all participants). Holborn (2002), Hogan (2002), and Jenkins (2004) have noted the complex skills (such as clear communication, neutrality, process and participation skills) required in facilitation. All levels of facilitation require not only continuing training and/or discussion of facilitations, but also ongoing support and resources.

Amnesty International (2011, pp. 20–22) discussed experienced and particularly artisan facilitation when it described what facilitators should do:

- Promote inclusion and active participation of all members of the group.
- Promote dialogue in a constructive way.
- Emphasize process, as well as outcomes.
- Manage tensions.
- Recognize and address power imbalances.
- Inspire!

Is there any evidence that experienced and artisan facilitation is better than novice facilitation? The general expectation is that experienced or artisan facilitation is better. Dukes and Firehock (2001, p. 30), based on their experience with environmental conflicts, noted that "the more diverse the group, the greater the scope of the group's purpose and potential impact, and the more complex or conflictual the issues, then the more likely you will need a skilled and experienced facilitator or mediator who will take an active role in all elements of the group's process." Espiner and Hartnett (2011) also noted the value of a skilled facilitator. In discussing person-centered facilitation of planning with adults who have intellectual disabilities, they (Espiner and Hartnett 2011, p. 63) wrote that "the facilitation of a person's aspirations requires a skilled facilitator who is a clear communicator giving priority to the aspirations and choices expressed by the person." The researchers

[7] Shaw and his colleagues (2010, p. 5) have defined intentional facilitator in the following way: "we use the label 'intentional' to distinguish a purposeful (or formal or professional) facilitator from one who facilitates a group meeting with only a tacit awareness of the reasons or motives behind actions or with limited knowledge of facilitation tools and techniques."

(Espiner and Hartnett 2011, p. 69) concluded that "skilled facilitation in the planning process will be essential to honour the adult's voice and to promote a greater sense of ownership and control." This study, however, did not discuss the different levels of skilled facilitation.

Two studies are mentioned here because of their interest in both effectiveness and different levels of facilitation. One study of electronic meetings – by Wong and Aiken (2003, p. 125) – concluded that "automated facilitation was as good as expert-human and better than novice-human facilitation for simple idea generation and ranking tasks." One of the big limitations of this study was that "no attempt was made to automate more cognitively complex facilitation tasks such as ensuring that parties are heard, that one 'faction' does not take over the meeting, that all ideas are discussed fairly, intimidating or derisive comments are discouraged, and that new ideas are considered."

The other study – by Kolfschoten et al. (2007) – compared facilitators who had different levels of experience. For their research (Kolfschoten et al. 2007, p. 353) *novice* facilitators were those who had facilitated less than 25 workshops, *experienced* facilitators had facilitated between 25 and 100 workshops and *expert* facilitators had conducted over 100 workshops. The researchers (Kolfschoten et al. 2007, p. 347, 354, 359) concluded that "generally, the time to prepare diminishes when experience increases," novices and experienced facilitators regularly use less (facilitation) techniques than experts," "novices have less access to a consulting team" and novices "are more likely to encounter surprises (e.g., unexpected outcomes or conflict) yet they are less equipped to handle (by adapting their facilitation designs) these surprises."[8] These findings lend support to the value of experienced and artisan facilitation and also provide some suggestions about how facilitation can be improved.

Steps to a Better Meeting

Facilitators, whether external (outside of the group making decisions) or internal (a member of the group making decisions who is taking on the role of a facilitator), are expected to improve the processes and outcomes of group meetings.[9] The meetings may differ in substantial ways such as the emotional connection of some or all participants to issues being discussed, different power of participants, or

[8]Dukes and Firehock (2001, p. 32) noted that "a volunteer facilitator, or even a paid agency staff person with minimum training, may not have the skills required to help parties negotiate the twists and turns of a highly political and/or highly technical issue . . . Innocent mistakes by an untrained person may result in parties leaving the group or other adverse outcomes."

[9]Nielsen (2012, p. 89) indicates that "a workshop facilitator is often an external consultant, working to organize and lead events like meetings, seminars, workshops and group sessions in order to help their participants reach a certain goal or conclusion defined in advance (by the participants or the management)."

group traditions including usual approaches to making decisions. The purpose for the meeting also can be quite different. Retreats,[10] for instance, may be for developing a strategic plan, changing organizational culture, building relationships or encouraging creativity/innovation. Because of these differences, no one set way of facilitating a meeting is the only way to do things.

Even though meetings can be quite different, there are some general considerations (e.g., Frediani 2009; Bens 2000, pp. 39–44; Doyle and Straus 1976) that can be put forward as basic for most business-type meetings in the United States (with varying applications in other countries). The following section of this chapter is divided into five parts – before, beginning, during, ending and after the meeting.

Before the Meeting

1. ***Plan the meeting carefully***. *Meetings often require a great deal of advance work. Among the questions to be answered: Who should attend? What will be discussed? When will the meeting be held? (In some situations, the timing of when a meeting will be held is extremely important.) Where will the meeting be held? What will be the best seating arrangement for the meeting room? Will there be refreshments? Why is the meeting being held? What is the desired outcome or outcomes of the meeting? If a series of meetings might be needed, how many will there be? Will the meeting be a safe environment? Will guests or the public be invited/allowed/encouraged to attend the meeting? How much notice needs to be provided before the meeting? Will a quorum be needed? Will Robert's Rules of Order (Robert 2011) or some other format need to be followed? Management representatives (at the highest level) should be involved in the planning meeting or meetings to make sure that there is agreement about the process, content and goals.*
2. ***Collect needed background information***. *This may involve interviews. (Sometimes you learn surprising information in individual interviews. In advance of a small meeting, I learned that two participants had not spoken to each other in 10 years and that junior members of the work group were afraid to say anything in front of senior people.) A review of documents (including records and accounts of previous meetings) also may need to be undertaken. Some documents may need to be distributed at and/or in advance of the meeting.*
3. ***Prepare and send out a tentative agenda in advance of the meeting***. *The tentative agenda should identify the kind of meeting that will be held, the proposed topics for discussion and the tentative amount of time that will be devoted to each item. (The facilitator's copy of the draft agenda also should include process notes indicating how each agenda item will be handled* – e.g., *each person will give one story, brief report from three people, or establish*

[10] See, for instance, *Retreats that Work* (2006) by Liteman, Campbell and Liteman.

evaluation criteria.) Comments/suggestions should be invited about the topics, the order of the topics and amount of time required for discussion. Depending on responses, a revised agenda may need to be sent out in advance of the meeting.

4. ***Arrive early at the meeting site and set up the meeting room**. Make sure that there is sufficient time to set up your room before your meeting begins. I have found that sometimes arrangements made in advance do not result in what is expected. Be prepared, for example, to move tables and locate extra seating.*
5. ***Plan and check all technical aspects of the meeting**. This should be done well in advance of the meeting and again just before the meeting. Have plans in place about what will be done in the event that some equipment is not there or does not function.*
6. ***Have a troubleshooter poised and in position**. If you are greeting those attending the meeting or are the facilitator, you probably will not have the possibility of dealing with a security issue (*e.g.*, threatening person) or other problem. It always is best to have one or two people identified as troubleshooters who know it is their job (if you indicate) to solve any problem that develops.*

At the Beginning of the Meeting

7. ***Greet those attending the meeting**. Make people feel welcome when entering the meeting room and ask if they have any questions. This might be done just before or at the beginning of the formal meeting or, if people are attending who are not known to the facilitator, as each person enters the room. This might be a point to ask what people are expecting from the meeting or why they are attending. This gives the facilitator some sense of who is in the room and why people are attending the meeting.*
8. ***Identify the type of meeting**. Indicate if the meeting will be, for instance, all or in part informational, planning, advisory, relationship-building or decision-making. This is good to do at a beginning of a meeting and also may need to be done during the meeting.*
9. ***Establish ground rules?** Some meetings can progress very nicely without establishing any ground rules. If ground rules or stated principles (*e.g.*, confidentiality) are needed, they can be developed (with the help of the participants) at the beginning of the meeting or at any point during the meeting.*
10. ***Start on time**. The announcement of the meeting and the agenda indicate the starting and ending times for the meeting. Those attending generally expect that these times are accurate.*
11. ***Have participants introduce themselves and perhaps state their expectations for the meeting**. Don't assume everyone knows everyone else. Set a process in place that lets everyone hear what is being said but doesn't let anyone monopolize the introduction process. The last two meetings I attended were problematic from the very beginning. In one a rather large number of people were asked by the novice facilitator to introduce themselves (without a*

microphone) and nobody heard or understood the information because most of the names and affiliations were mumbled. One of the meetings had people introducing themselves with a microphone but the novice facilitator also asked each person to say a little something about her or his project. Many of the people talked for a rather long time about their projects while the novice facilitator did nothing (but wring his hands and look pained) while this was going on. Introductions can be a very good idea at the beginning of the meeting but the approach that is used, the directions that are given and the handling of this process by the facilitator are very important. (In a large meeting, it may be that only small numbers of people can be given the opportunity to introduce themselves to each other and/or people can introduce themselves as they contribute to the meeting.)

12. ***Clearly define roles***.[11] *The facilitator should use an approach that makes clear the expectations for all those participating in a meeting. It may be that each person is expected to speak and also that each person should encourage others to contribute. Participants should understand the role of the facilitator and whether a recorder (writing a public display of notes) will be used rather than a secretary (with private notes). Who will be acting as the timekeeper? Will roles possibly change (*e.g.*, people sharing the recorder role) during the meeting? If a top manager or official is there, what will be her or his role during the meeting?*
13. ***Review, revise, and order the agenda (including times)***. *The agenda already has been through at least one review and may have been resubmitted to those attending the meeting. This would be a final review, even though topics and times still may be changed during the meeting.*
14. ***Review action items, if any, from previous meetings***. *This can bring participants up-to-date, note accomplishments or progress, identify problems and help bring closure on some issues.*
15. ***Explain the process that will be used***. *In addition to explaining the roles of those participating in the meeting, explain (or discuss) the process that will be used for any discussion and decision-making (*e.g.*, ranking and evaluating, multi-voting, ranking/prioritizing, nominal group, force-field analysis).*

During the Meeting

16. ***Focus on an issue (all in the same way and the same time)***. *The facilitator, with the help of all participants, has to keep the meeting on track. The process that has been explained at the beginning of the meeting will help the facilitator do this and also to handle new topics or difficult points that may emerge during the discussion.*

[11] Those who want more information about defining roles in meetings will find it useful to look at *How to Make Meetings Work* (1976) by Michael Doyle and David Straus.

17. ***Consider using small groups***. *This approach can bring involvement/energy or renewed energy to a discussion. Groups need concrete directions and a time limit.*
18. ***Consider having one or more breaks***. *Breaks can be an excellent way to get people to talk or caucus with each other, change the seating arrangements and/or have the meeting easily go in a different direction. Participants do need to know when the meeting will reconvene. While this can be a very effective tool, I have seen meetings where participants did not return on time and some used the break as an opportunity/invitation to leave.*

At the End of the Meeting

19. ***Review the group memory***. *This is easily done if there is a public version (*e.g.*, overhead or poster sheets on walls) rather than a private record (personal notes). It is most important that* ***action items are established or confirmed*** *including who will take an action, what will be done and when it will be done.*
20. ***Set the date, time and place of the next meeting (if one is needed) and develop a preliminary agenda***. *It may be that only suggestions for dates, times and places can be mentioned if one also has to consider the preferences of those who were not able to attend this meeting.*
21. ***Evaluate the meeting***. *This can be done casually or in a formal way. Information obtained at the end of a meeting can be helpful to those who may put another meeting in place.*
22. ***Close the meeting on time – crisply and positively***. *Unless the whole group has agreed to extend the meeting, it is best to close the meeting at the announced time. After this formal ending, a group or groups may be given encouragement to meet.*
23. ***Clean up and rearrange the room***. *People in charge of a space appreciate some help in getting a room ready for the next meeting. The amount of help that is appreciated will vary depending on the administrators (*e.g.*, hotel manager, school principal) and/or the regular set-up people for the space.*

After the Meeting

24. ***Evaluate the meeting/write and file a report***. *Review any comments given orally or in writing by participants and add your own comments. Even if there will be no additional meetings, at least a brief report (including the agenda, any action items and evaluations) should be developed based on the meeting as well as the preparatory and evaluation sessions. This will serve as guidance to others who may eventually hold a meeting of these participants or run a meeting dealing with the same or similar topics.*

25. ***Follow-up on any action items and, if there will be a next meeting, begin to plan it***. *A plan needs to be put in place dealing with the completion of action items.*
26. ***Give praise (as deserved) for those who helped develop and run the meeting***. *It is important to thank people by name for their assistance. It also may be a good idea, in some cases, to write notes of thanks that will be included in personnel files.*

Two examples of facilitated meetings might be useful at this point. The first, an initiative in a Minnesota county (CR Planning, Inc. n.d.), required a permanent stakeholder advisory commission be established for decisions involving parks, trails and open space. A consulting group, CR Planning, used a facilitated public participation process (during a one-year period) to "engage citizens, landowners and public officials in a respectful dialogue" at the start of the planning process and then facilitated discussion of the Park Advisory Committee. A policy plan was adopted by the County Board and this was followed by an implementation plan.[12]

As a second example, I facilitated a series of meetings (every two weeks for several months) for a "blue ribbon" citizen advisory group that had been put in place by a large city's school board. The school board had been "encouraged" by community groups to get input from civic and business organizations representing minorities (as well as unions) regarding inclusive, local hiring in connection with new construction that the school system was going to undertake over a 10-year period. The facilitator, in this case, was involved in the process after the participants already had been selected, helped design the process that would be used for each meeting, facilitated each session, provided research and perspective for the head of the advisory group and assisted in developing the Committee's report to the board.

Mediators also serve as advisers or mentors about facilitation processes. For example, SwissPeace (n.d.), which describes itself as a "practice-oriented peace research institute," has a coaching program (2012–2013) for women in Myanmar who are engaged in peace processes. In another instance, I advised the head of a chapter of a national NGO in developing a process for bringing together parts of a community that was deeply divided. I also helped a community organization revise its process for a public forum that would bring together members of the community to discuss a multi-service center that was proposed by a religious organization based outside of the community. The religious group thought that the center was an excellent idea but had not collaborated with community organizations in developing its project. Many community organizations (and many members of the community organization sponsoring the forum) were skeptical or opposed to the project. The

[12]Full implementation did not happen. According to Brian Ross (2012) of CR Planning, the implementation work was to be managed by an employee of the small parks department and not the consultants. Most of the plan was not implemented because the parks department employee who was to manage the implementation was hired away by another organization and county officials disbanded the parks department and shifted the responsibility for parks to another county department that had a different focus.

community room in which the meeting was held was packed and included local residents as well as sign-carrying members of the outside church.

Some mediators and facilitators, run meetings dealing with environmental, community or public policy issues. Frequently such meetings are part of a series of meetings that may take place over a long period of time (e.g., months or years). Depending, in part, on the importance and urgency of the issue to those attending the meeting, the need to agree on a process, the level of controversy and the number of sectors and groups involved, the facilitator (or facilitation team) may organize a set of planning meetings to arrange the actual decision-making meetings. Those planning meetings could cover topics such as number of organizations that will be represented in the meetings; how many representatives each group will have; how decisions will be communicated to the public (if needed); who will facilitate the actual meetings; how representatives will communicate and get the involvement of the organizations they represent; how absences will be handled; what topics will be covered and how decisions will be made.

Some mediators facilitate sessions in conflict zones or post-conflict situations (see Asuni 2012, pp. 113–126; Smock and Serwer 2012, pp. 163–169). Smock and Serwer (2012) provide advice about a number of difficult issues including getting minority representation in meetings and getting minority representatives to have full and accepted participation from those with more power. They also caution that if discussions involve national policies, that there need to be links to Track One (official) diplomacy. And they discuss that frequently participants want to represent themselves rather than their organizations which can have consequences in moving things forward in a country or region. While Smock and Serwer's advice is based on working in conflict zones, the points are true (or can be adapted) for many other kinds of mediation and facilitation settings.

Dealing with Facilitation Difficulties: The Well City Experience

The hearings described below were held in Well City,[13] a medium-sized community in the U.S. The first hearing was in a court room and run by the elected mayor. The second hearing was in a university building and run by an experienced facilitator.

Aurora Punch, Well City's Health Commissioner, knew that tobacco use was a preventable cause of disease and death. She also knew the American Cancer Society and the American Lung Association were encouraging communities to put tobacco use prevention regulations in place and she wanted to do that in Well City.

[13]The example described here is based on an actual case that is discussed at length in "The Bumpy Road to a Tobacco-Free Community: Lessons from Well City" (Fritz et al. 2000). Pseudonyms are used here and in the original article for the names of the city and individuals.

In September, Commissioner Punch sent letters to selected organizations, including the city council, indicating that she was forming a "task force of community leaders" to study the tobacco problem. She wanted representatives from each group to "actively participate" in the work of the task force.

The task force first met eight months later (in May) with 18 representatives, including the mayor, two city council members, the clerk of court, three city board of health members, a county health department employee, a representative from the hospital, an employee of the county commissioner' office, and a member of the business community. One of the task force members, a representative of the American Cancer Society, was a retired regulatory technologist and familiar with the indoor air standard accepted by the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE). The American Cancer Society representative along with the city health commissioner and two other task force members formed a smaller working group – the Clean-Air Regulation Subcommittee. In July, the subcommittee recommended a clean air regulation to the city board of health that incorporated the ASHRAE standard of ventilation.

The proposed regulation stated that "lighted smoking materials in public places is declared a public nuisance and hazardous to the public health." It prohibited the possession of lighted smoking material in any form in any commercial establishment (including bars, restaurants, and bowling alleys), public vehicles, restrooms, elevators, and selected public facilities (libraries, educational facilities, museums, auditoriums, and art galleries). The proposed regulation did allow an owner of a facility to permit smoking if the owner installed a ventilation system based on the ASHRAE standard or have a hearing if the owner wanted a variance.

It was anticipated that owners would not attempt to meet the ASHRAE standard, as this would be an expensive undertaking, and also that few variances would be given. Any owner or operation that failed to comply with the regulation could be charged with a minor misdemeanor and fined up to $100. Essentially what was being proposed was a total smoking ban for public places.

The city health commissioner proposed the regulation at a city board of health meeting in October and the city's first public hearing (meeting) was held in November. That hearing, by all accounts, was bedlam. About 250 people jammed a small courtroom and the group heard more than 50 speakers. The meeting lasted more than four hours. While no smoking was allowed in the courtroom, smoking was allowed in the hall just outside the courtroom. Tobacco smoke from the packed corridor poured into the hall every time the court's doors opened.

The mayor, who served as head of the city's health board, facilitated the public hearing. The mayor indicated that anyone who wanted to speak could do so. He allowed speakers to go beyond the prescribed time limits and speakers frequently repeated what others had said. Hecklers were not controlled. Most of those opposing the proposed regulation were bar, restaurant, or small business owners.

One of the speakers was Marge Can, a well-known, realtor in the community, who had owned her own business for more than 10 years. She was smart and energetic. While not frequently active in the public life of the community, she had headed the

committee (whose members all were smokers) that organized the American Cancer Society's annual (fundraising) golf tournaments for the two years prior to Well City's tobacco-control initiative.

Each morning Marge went for coffee at P.T.'s, a local restaurant, and joined the regulars for a discussion of local events. One morning the talk turned to the story on the front page of the local paper, the city and county's proposed tobacco control regulations. After considerable discussion, Marge, who smoked two to four packs of cigarettes a day, and a farmer decided to form an organization, BADLAW, to fight the proposed regulations. The core group of organizers also included the owner of a restaurant and the non-smoking owner of a travel agency. They spoke at the public hearing and Marge gave interviews to the city newspaper.

Marge said the main issue was one of freedom. She pointed out that the health boards were not elected and had no right to be making tobacco-control rules. Marge felt that if she and a client wanted to smoke in the conference room of her office, they should be able to do so without government interference.[14]

After the shock of the chaotic public hearing, the city health department began licking its wounds, and four months later, in January, the city and county health boards started working together on revising the proposed regulation. The new proposal dropped the term "clean air" and the list of exemptions and variances began to grow to include (1) bars, bowling alleys, and pool halls (if they have signs stating that a no-smoking area is not available; (2) an employee vehicle where the driver and all the passengers consent to smoking; and (3) retail tobacco stores.

More than one year after the first hearing, in October, the city and county boards of health held a joint public hearing at the Well City campus of a state university to collect feedback on the revised proposal. The university building was chosen because it was removed from city departments and offices and no smoking was allowed in the whole building. This time there would be no smoke coming in from the corridors.

This public hearing was held in a large auditorium, much larger than the expected number of participants, and it was run by a trained facilitator. The facilitator gave a rather complete informational presentation that began the meeting. After the presentation, audience members were able to speak, but they had to follow guidelines. Speakers had to sign up in advance and no more than one speaker was allowed from an organization. Length of speaking time and heckling were now

[14]Five years after Marge's group (BADLAW) lost its last court battle against the city, Marge Can, 52, died of lung cancer. During the 20 years she had lived in Well City, Marge unsuccessfully tried many methods to quit smoking, including acupuncture, hypnosis, and the patch. She did not try to quit smoking while she was the spokesperson for BADLAW. One year before she died, Marge learned she had lung cancer and would have to have surgery. She stopped smoking. During her last year, she established a website to let others follow her progress in dealing with cancer. When she became too weak to type her own website entries, family members made the entries for her. The obituary that appeared in the local paper noted Marge's community service, particularly her volunteer work on behalf of the American Cancer Society.

under control. Security personnel were available if needed, and the organizers of the hearing had agreed in advance that if the event got out of control in some way, it would be ended early. The meeting ended at the announced time.

The facilitator has to be in control of a meeting, in this case, a community hearing. Well City's first public hearing was a disaster. It was led by an elected official who did not want to upset any of his constituents; he allowed people to speak too long and repetitively, did not control heckling, and held the hearing in a place where tobacco smoke could pour into the hearing room. By the time of the second hearing, Well City public health officials had learned a lesson. The hearing was held in a building that was smoke-free on a college campus (neutral territory). The meeting room was much larger than the number people that would be in attendance. This setting – a large room with many empty seats rather than a crowded court room – means that the setting will not easily add fuel to any controversy. There was visible security and the hand-picked, experienced facilitator had a long, thorough, informative introduction about the main topic and established a speaking process that was inclusive, orderly and calm. The second hearing gave the public the opportunity to take part in the discussion, but, unlike the first hearing, there was no chaos.

Conclusion

Mediation and facilitation often are broadly defined and the definitions can be quite similar. This certainly is seen when mediation is described as "facilitated negotiation." And when Hampson and Zartman (2012, p. 35, 51) refer to "triple talk" (when a mediator becomes involved with parties who have been negotiating) as "mediated negotiation" or say a mediator is "by any other name [a] facilitator, good offices, third party, etc." While there are some differences between mediation and facilitation, sometimes the definitions don't reflect these differences because the definitions are not detailed enough or the differences are differences in emphasis (rather than absolute differences).

One general difference between mediation and facilitation is that facilitators need to be able to work with large meetings (as well as small ones) and mediators, based on their special area of work, may not have to work with large groups. Also, mediators have to be able to write formal agreements while facilitations often do not have such an outcome. Some think that a facilitator's main task is to improve the process or structure of a group while a mediator most frequently is working on resolving an issue. (While this may generally be true, there are many exceptions.) Finally, facilitators, because they are expected to have the capacity to work with large groups of people, may have exposure to many different techniques (particularly ones that encourage participation) as part of their training while some mediators, depending on the area of practice, may not have this training or experience. Professional mediators who work with large groups

usually also are facilitators; some mediators who work with individuals and small groups are facilitators, and, increasingly, the others are being trained in the art of facilitation.

Business-type meetings need to be prepared carefully and, if a mediator/facilitator or facilitator team is involved, the mediators/facilitators need to be part of the planning as well as the implementation effort. As noted in the Well City case, meetings that are not well-prepared may not accomplish goals, can reinforce initial positions and anger as well as lose participants.

There is evidence that facilitated processes can be very effective. Shaw and his colleagues (2010, p. 9), based on their research of facilitator impact during a quality improvement process, concluded that external facilitators, who are experienced or artisan, "are able to ask critical questions, hold people accountable, and even 'see' processes or dynamics that the insider may not." The art of facilitation can help meeting participants work through difficult issues; really involve people in their organizations and communities; help people who have had difficulty participating in groups as well as those who think that others should not be full participants; and develop creative, inclusive long-range plans. All groups do not need professional facilitators, but experienced and artisan facilitation often can make a central contribution to a group's progress.

References

Amnesty International. (2011). *Facilitation manual: A guide to using participatory methodologies for human rights education*. London: Amnesty International.

Asuni, J. B. (2012). Nigeria: Dialogue in the delta. In D. R. Smock & D. Serwer (Eds.), *Facilitating dialogue: USIP's work in conflict zones* (pp. 113–126). Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.

Bens, I. (2000). *Facilitating with ease! A step-by-step guidebook with customizable worksheets on CD/Rom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bens, I. (2006). *Facilitating to lead! Leadership strategies for a networked world*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Berkvens, J. (2012). What international aid organizations can learn from international adult learning: Experiences from Cambodia. *The Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension, 18*(4), 347–368.

CR Planning Inc. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.crplanning.com and www.crplanning.com/pdfs/crowwingparks.pdf. Accessed 15 Oct 2012.

Doyle, M., & Straus, D. (1976). *How to make meetings work*. New York: Jove Books.

Dukes, E. F., & Firehock, K. (2001). *Collaboration: A guide for environmental advocates*. Charlottesville: Institute for Environmental Negotiation.

Espiner, D., & Hartnett, F. M. (2011). 'I felt I was in control of the meeting': Facilitating planning with adults with an intellectual disability. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities, 40*, 62–70.

Frediani, J. A. (2009). *Sharing the floor: Some strategies for effective group facilitation*. Unitarian Universalist, Association of Congregations. Retrieved from www.uua.org/re/adults/151805. Accessed 15 Jan 2013.

Fritz, J. M., Bistak, P., & Auffrey, C. (2000). The bumpy road to a tobacco-free community: Lessons from Well City. *Sociological Practice: A Journal of Clinical and Applied Sociology, 2*(2), 113–126.

Fryer, M. (2012). Facilitative leadership: Drawing on Jürgen Habermas' model of ideal speech to propose a less impositional way to lead. *Organization, 19*(1), 25–43.
Hampson, F. O., & Zartman, I. W. (2012). *The global power of talk: Negotiating America's interests*. Boulder/London: Paradigm Publishers.
Hartwig, R. T. (2010). Facilitating problem solving: A case study using the devil's advocacy technique. *Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications Journal, 10*, 17–31.
Haskell, J. E., & Cyr, L. F. (2011). Community facilitator education: How training can lead to positive impacts at the community level. *Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications Journal, 11*, 5–14.
Hogan, C. (2002). *Understanding facilitation: Theory and principles*. London: Kogan Page.
Holborn, S. (2002). The value of measuring person-centered planning. In J. O'Brien & C. O'Brien (Eds.), *Implementing person-centered planning: Voice of experience* (pp. 79–97). Toronto: Inclusion Press.
Jenkins, J. (2004). *Facilitation, training, consultation or do it yourself? Handout for ADR institute meeting 5 November 2004*. Retrieved from masterplan.co.za/resources/documents/facilitationis.pdf. Accessed 15 Jan 2013.
Kato, F. (2010). How we think and talk about facilitation. *Simulation & Gaming, 41*(5), 694–704.
Kolfschoten, G. L., den Hengst-Bruggeling, M., & de Vreede, G. J. (2007). Issues in the design of facilitated collaboration processes. *Group Decision and Negotiation, 16*, 347–361.
Liteman, M., Campbell, S., & Liteman, J. (2006). *Retreats that work: Everything you need to know about planning and leading great offsites* (Expandedth ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
Nagykaldi, Z., Mold, J. W., & Aspy, C. B. (2005). Practice facilitators: A review of the literature. *Family Medicine, 37*(8), 581–588.
Nielsen, M. F. (2012). Using artifacts in brainstorming sessions to secure participation and decouple sequentiality. *Discourse Studies, 14*(1), 87–109.
Rees, F. (2005). *The facilitator excellence handbook* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Pfeiffer.
Reilly, C. R. (2008). Is expertise a necessary precondition for creativity? A case of four novice learning group facilitators. *Thinking Skills and Creativity, 3*, 59–76.
Robert, H. M. (2011). *Robert's rules of order. Newly revised*. Philadelphia: Da Capo Press.
Ross, B. (2012). *Telephone interview*. November 27.
Sefton, E. (2009). *Resource Management Act Amendment 2009 Guidance*. New Zealand. October.
Shaw, E., Looney, A., Chase, S., Navalekar, R., Stello, B., Lontok, O., & Crabtree, B. (2010). 'In the moment': An analysis of facilitator impact during a quality improvement process. *Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications Journal, 10*, 4–16.
Smock, D. R., & Serwer, D. (Eds.). (2012). *Facilitating dialogue: USIP's work in conflict zones*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.
SwissPeace. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.swisspeace.ch. Accessed 16 Oct 2012.
Subramaniam, M. (2011). Grassroots groups and poor women's empowerment in rural India. *International Sociology, 27*(1), 72–95.
The State of Queensland, Department of Justice and Attorney-General (2010–2012). (n.d.). Dispute resolution: Facilitation. Brisbane: The State of Queensland. Retrieved from http://www.justice.qld.gov.au/justice-services/dispute-resolution/facilitation. Accessed 16 Oct 2012.
Thorpe, S. (2011). Editorial introduction. *Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications Journal, 11*, 3–4.
U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.ecr.gov/HowWeWork/Services.aspx. Accessed 16 Oct 2012.
Williams, A. (2012). Taking a step back: Learning without the facilitator on solo activities. *Journal of Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning, 12*(2), 137–155.
Wilkinson, M. (n.d.). *Guerilla facilitation: What to do if the meeting leader is not leading*. Retrieved from www.inifac.org/articles/arGuerillaFacilitation.pdf. Accessed 18 Oct 2012.
Wong, Z., & Aiken, M. (2003). Automated facilitation of electronic meetings. *Information & Management, 41*, 125–134.