

Group Facilitation

In our world of increasing complexity, it is more important than ever that Leaders tap into the creative potential of their people and group/team based decisions are becoming more prevalent as a result. While there are many discussions that can be effectively facilitated by the leader of the group, there are occasions where the leader needs to be part of the group (e.g. to provide input on strategic planning) or step outside of the group (e.g. to encourage openness on contentious issues) for problems to be resolved and for quality decisions to be made.

What does a Group Facilitator do?

The role of the Group Facilitator is to help the group to:

- agree on the goals and agenda of their meeting
- set the culture for the meeting, i.e. what is ok and what is not ok
- apply facilitation processes that will help the group to tap into the resources they have and reach consensus, make decisions and agree actions in the most efficient way
- value each other and each other's thinking
- say or draw out the unexpressed
- consider issues from all angles (e.g. whole brain thinking)
- resolve conflicts as they arise
- maintain a safe environment and strengthen relationships in the group



In a Nutshell

Group Facilitation is a process where a facilitator, who has been selected with the agreement and acceptance of a group's members, intervenes to assist the group in solving problems, making decisions, and tap into their creativity and energy. The facilitator has no authority to make decisions, acting as an unbiased conductor of the group process.

Group Facilitation works well for:

- Executive/ Senior leadership teams
- Programme/Project teams
- Groups, communities, and organisations needing to discuss significant matters

that want to (1 or more of):

- improve productivity and effectiveness of meetings
- explore and create new ideas and approaches
- understand and grapple with complex problems
- develop better dynamics within the group
- develop and establish plans
- develop capacity as a high performing team

especially when:

- group time is precious
- everyone, including the leader, needs to contribute to the dialogue
- fairness and balance across the whole group matters.

A Facilitator DOES

- act as a guide to support and enable the group through the discussion process
- encourage everyone to participate and contribute
- intervene to build group cohesion, develop creativity and keep the group process on track
- develop ownership by the group of the products of the group
- remain neutral and impartial
- address mechanics of the meeting such as climate and environment, ground rules, and logistics and room arrangements
- work with energy and warm-up of the group

A Facilitator DOES NOT

- Make decisions
- Take sides
- Voice their own opinion on the subject under discussion

Is using a Group Facilitator right for my team/working group?

You may want to consider engaging Stephen Harrison as your Group Facilitator if:

- you are planning a group discussion which requires participation from everyone, including yourself
- the group has a lot to get through and efficiency is essential
- you suspect that conflict and other non-productive behaviours in the group may derail or slow down the group process
- you want to free yourself and your team to focus on the discussion, with the knowledge the process is being managed
- you want to improve your team's functioning so they can act as a high performing team.

Some purposes or goals of a facilitation engagement may include:

- clarifying and articulating the group purpose or vision
- planning, reviewing, assessing activities related to projects, programmes and strategies
- collectively/consensually make a decision
- developing a group code of conduct
- developing a strategic plan (3 – 5 years) or operating plan (current/upcoming year)
- developing a team score card
- agreeing roles and responsibilities for key deliverables
- creating or improving a product, service or process
- gathering feedback from stakeholders, employees, teams or customers
- solving a problem, resolving team conflict or making a tough team-based decision
- planning a change

You may also want to consider engaging Stephen to assist you to develop a high performing team through Team Coaching.

What Can I Expect?

Preparation

Preparation for your group session(s) will commence once you have engaged Stephen. During the preparation phase Stephen will:

- clarify your measures of success and desired outcomes of the facilitation activity
- work with you to establish the agenda
- define and assign responsibilities to prepare for and conduct the meeting(s)
- complete the tasks they are responsible for
- check with the Group Leader, Group Members and Logistical Support Person to ensure that preparation activities for the group session(s) are on track.

Facilitate Session(s)

As your Group Facilitator, Stephen will select and combine a number of facilitation processes to create a safe, but challenging environment for your team/group to do their work. His processes are based on a number of tried and tested disciplines including group/team development, adult learning principles, experiential learning, positive psychology, action methods, neuroscience, complexity leadership, strategic planning, operational planning, project management, change management, change leadership, continuous improvement, customer-centric design, systems thinking and whole-brain thinking.

Follow-up

Your outcomes are Stephen's measure of success. He will follow-up with you after the group session to review the extent to which the team/group goals have been achieved. You will also have the opportunity to complete an evaluation survey of the service.