

What is Facilitation?

By Mark Samuel

Some define it as leading a meeting, while others define it as assisting others in resolving their own problem. There is even an improvement process that defines a facilitator as someone who observes a meeting and gives feedback to the leader in a coaching role.

Regardless of which definition is used, the word facilitation comes from the word “facile,” meaning “to make easy,” and this is the purpose of facilitation. In this case, it’s to make a process easy for those involved. Unfortunately, I have seen facilitators who create more problems and frustration by adding confusion to a group. Sometimes they create or amplify conflict by trying to be the perfect facilitator, one who is more concerned with getting good marks and being accommodating than assisting the group to their next level of excellence.

Facilitation can mean many things, and for most situations the traditional guidelines for being an effective facilitator applies. However, Accountability-Based facilitation is different; it is a strategy and technique used by change agents who are transforming an organization’s culture, a team’s environment, or an individual’s self-image and their work environment. This model of facilitation requires a different set of skills and guidelines to be successful.

The primary function of the Accountability-Based facilitator is to provide clarity, guidance, acceptance, and accountability choices. As an Accountability-Based Facilitator you will play many roles: organizer, devil’s advocate, advisor, cheerleader, recorder, clarifier, negotiator, problem solver, business strategist, and director. It follows that the main criteria for success include flexibility and the ability to assume several roles at once.

The Accountability-Based facilitator is one who challenges mediocrity or denial, and allows a group or person to experience the pain of their dysfunction as a means for resolving their dysfunctional patterns. This facilitator rarely saves a group or person, even though they will not be doing anything to add pain to anyone and will protect people when attacked by others. Finally, the Accountability-Based facilitator must focus on the practical, not the perfect or the ideal.