



Chapter Twenty Eight
The IAF Handbook of Group Facilitation
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How to Build Your Expertise in Facilitation
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In the early days of facilitation, pioneers in the field learned from experience, practice and reflection with their peers. They spread their knowledge and skills through apprenticeships, training, reference materials, and through formal and informal networks. (For an account of early notions and development of group facilitation see Maier, 1967; Keltner, 1989).

Today, much of the foundation groundwork is already established. This book is a testament to the great thinking around facilitation that already exists. Yet facilitation is not a rote subject easily learned. Because of the diverse nature of groups, facilitation is more an intuitive art form than a science. Every situation is unique and requires a masterful facilitator to be flexible and adaptable, serving the needs of the group.

For most seasoned practitioners, “facilitation” is not just something they do; it is a state of being. They see opportunities to facilitate human interactions all the time: in the workplace, community groups, church meetings, youth organizations –anytime a group of people gets together to accomplish a specific goal.

Facilitators are on a continuing journey to expand their skills through various means, such as training, reference materials, Internet learning, observation of others, practice, feedback, teaching, and publishing their ideas within the facilitation community.

This chapter shares many strategies that seasoned practitioners use to intentionally build their facilitation expertise. These strategies are based on the answers to an informal electronic survey sent once in October 2003 to practicing facilitators from three communities: (1) those who earned the Certified Professional Facilitator (CPF) designation from the International Association of Facilitators (IAF) (see Chapter Twenty-Six), (2) those who participate in the Professional Experts Group on Facilitation through the National Speakers Association (NSA), and/or (3) those who participate in the IAF-sponsored electronic discussion group. In all, there were 250 CPFs, 132 NSA members, and 800 electronic discussion group participants. There was some duplication of names within these three communities, for an estimated total of 700 potential respondents. These communities were selected because of my personal knowledge of the quality and caliber of the respondents and easy access to the email list. The candidates were solicited only once by email, with two weeks to respond to the survey. (The complete survey text is in Appendix 28A at the end of the chapter.)

A total of 125 practicing facilitators responded to the survey, which consisted of thirty-eight questions. The survey drew extensively on Parisse, and others (2003). This chapter discusses each of the major strategies identified in the survey. Interspersed in the findings are quotations from individual respondents (primarily from North America) whose comments were particularly insightful or reflective of the comments submitted in general. The overall results can be accessed at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/Report.asp?U=29145365059>.

TRAINING

On average, seasoned facilitators attend a formal training, course, or workshop once a year. Typically, they attend formal training more frequently in the early stages of their practice and then tend to taper off as they became more experienced and comfortable in their role. After a while, they attend only sessions that are of specific interest, are geographically desirable, or complement their existing skills, often including different disciplines. One facilitator said, “I take on workshops I have never done before. I try not to use the same old approaches every time (although, trouble is, they usually work!)...and I transfer skills from other disciplines e.g. clinical psychology, family and group systems, conflict resolution.”

Many facilitators prefer “hands-on, interactive seminars that present new methods and techniques and provide useful materials.” When attending training, they come prepared to engage the instructor as well as participants and may have very specific learning objectives that may (or may not) be published in the course brochure. They do not leave until their personal objectives are fulfilled.

Many have established a practice to reinforce the learning. For example, one facilitator writes a “mini retrospective after each workshop. I note the key learning points for myself and put it in my Palm [to review later].” Another said, “I try to find ways of using them in events that I facilitate as soon after as possible.”

Classroom Training Providers

The following organizations were cited most often as offering “the best training/seminars” in facilitation (the entries in this and other lists are cited in order in which they were most often mentioned):

Community at Work (www.communityatwork.com)

Community Store (www.thecommunitystore.com)

Franklin-Covey (www.franklincovey.com)

ICA Associates (www.ica-associates.ca)

Interaction Associates (www.interactionassociates.com)

Goal/QPC (www.goalqpc.com)

Grove Consultants International (www.grove.com)

Roger Schwarz and Associates, Inc. (www.schwarzassociates.com)

H.H. Owen and Company (www.openspaceworld.com)

Participative Dynamics (www.participative-dynamics.com).

Electronic Media

With the advent of high-speed Internet connectivity, facilitation training providers are turning to electronic media to deliver their programs remotely. They range from fairly simple technology such as teleclasses (training conducted using conference call capability), video teleconferencing (VTC), Web-based seminars (often referred to as Webinars), and live Web-based training (WBT). Regardless of the specific format, electronic media eliminate travel for participants and the facilitator, increase access beyond typical participants, consume less time away from daily activities and offer easier and less expensive follow-on sessions to increase the transfer of training.

One facilitator extols the virtues of electronic media: “Many facilitators live in remote locations and do not have the luxury of time and/or money to travel to conventions or trainings across the country. Teleclasses and Webinars offer a viable alternative.”

Because facilitators highly value face-to-face interaction, it is absolutely crucial to choose a training provider who is substantially skilled in facilitating interaction in the electronic medium.

National and Regional Conferences

Facilitators attend national and regional conferences, workshops, and sessions to enhance their professional development and learning. The respondents most often attend those sponsored by:

International Association of Facilitators (www.iaf-world.org)

Canadian Institute of Cultural Affairs (www.icacan.ca)

American Society for Training and Development (www.astd.org)

OD Network (www.odnetwork.org)

International Federation for Professional Speakers (www.iffps.org)

The Association for Quality and Participation (www.aqp.org)

American Society for Quality (www.asq.org)

Association for Conflict Resolution (www.acrnet.org).

Professional Organizations

In addition to attending these national conferences and workshops, many facilitators also participate in these professional organizations at the national, regional, and local level. Participation ranges from simply attending the meetings to holding a leadership position within the organization; presenting at a local, regional or national program; and chairing a national or regional event.

Many facilitators participate in regional professional organizations or networks as well. While this list is ever-growing and changing, some of the more steadfast North American networks are:

Arizona Association of Facilitators

Bay Area Facilitators Guild

Boston Facilitators Roundtable
Mid-Atlantic Facilitators Network
Minnesota Facilitators Network
OD Network of Ottawa
Southeast Association of Facilitators
Southern Ontario Facilitators Network
Southwest Facilitators' Network.

IAF updates this information online (www.iaf-world.org).

REFERENCE MATERIALS

Seasoned facilitators are avid readers of books, publications, magazines, articles, and other published works. They read reference materials devoted to facilitation, as well as other works in various disciplines, such as education, cognitive science, psychology, change management, and personal growth.

Most set aside some time that they commit to professional reading. For example, one facilitator reads for one hour each day while on the exercising. Another takes her professional reading with her while traveling. Several facilitators “peruse facilitation books every time I get ready for a session.”

Books

The typical facilitator reads at least one or two books on facilitation each year. They frequently review their favorites -- for inspiration or to garner new ideas for a specific session -- and have a small library of books and other reference materials. The top twelve “best books on facilitation” cited most often by survey respondents were:

Bens, Ingrid. *Facilitating with Ease!* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 2000.

Doyle, Michael, & Straus, David. *How to Make Meetings Work*. New York: The Berkley Publishing Group, 1982.

Gottesdiener, Ellen. *Requirements By Collaboration: Workshops for Defining Needs*. Boston: Addison-Wesley, 2002.

Heron, John. *The Facilitator's Handbook*. London: Kogan Page Ltd., 1990.

Hunter, Dale and others. *The Art of Facilitation*. Auckland: Tandem Press, 1992.

Justice, Tom and David W. Jamieson. *The Facilitator's Fieldbook*. New York: American Management Association, 1999.

Kaner, Sam. *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1996.

Owen, Harrison. *Open Space Technology: A User's Guide*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 1997.

Schwarz, Roger M. *The Skilled Facilitator*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994.

Senge, Peter. *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization*. New York: Currency, 1994.
Sibbet, David. *Principles of Facilitation and Best Practices for Facilitation*. San Francisco: The Grove Consultants International, 2002.
Stanfield, R. Brian. *The Art of Focused Conversation: 100 Ways to Access Group Wisdom in the Workplace*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 2000.

Other Publications

Most facilitators tend to be voracious readers, and not just about facilitation. They tend to read widely, enjoying a variety of other publications that shed insight into the client, topic, and environment, as well as process. They typically read journals published by professional organizations such as ACR's *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, AQP's *The Journal for Quality and Participation*, ASQ's *Quality Management Journal*, ASTD's *Training & Development*, IAF's *Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications Journal*, and OD Network's *Practicing*. The periodicals most often chosen by respondents were

Training (www.trainingmag.com)
Harvard Business Review (www.hbr.com)
Harvard Management Communication Letter (www.hbr.com)
Fast Company (www.fastcompany.com)
Fortune (www.fortune.com)
Business 2.0 (www.business2.com).

Many facilitators also read journals specific to the fields in which they specialize. For example, one facilitator who works in the software development field reads technical journals appropriate for the work she is doing with her clients. An anthropologist reads "tons of theory literature and [tries] to construct tools that benefit from the latest and greatest research and theory of human interaction."

Newsletters

There were also several newsletters and e-zines that facilitators read on a regular basis:

The Facilitator (www.thefacilitator.com)
3M Meeting News (www.3m.com/meetingnetwork)
Master Facilitator Journal (www.masterfacilitatorjournal.com)
The Extraordinary Team (www.qpcteam.com)
Creative Training Techniques (www.vnulearning.com)
Effective Meetings (www.effectivemeetings.com)
Better Meetings Newsletter (www.janakemp.com)
Leadership Strategies Newsletter (www.leadstrat.com)
ThinkPeople's Monthly Workout (www.thinkpeople.com).

One facilitator said he reads “anything fun and thought provoking that stimulates ideas on how to keep my clients coming back for more and to continue to remind them the value we can bring!”

INTERNET LEARNING

With the explosion of the Internet, most facilitators use the World Wide Web for networking with colleagues and searching for best practices in facilitation.

Electronic Discussion Groups

Many professional organizations sponsor an email list -- “listserv” or “email conversation” -- for their members. Over half of the survey respondents participated in the IAF-sponsored list (www.iaf-world.org). With over eight hundred facilitators from thirty-three countries, this list provides a running commentary among facilitators all over the world. Each email can be delivered to your inbox, or you can choose to receive daily summaries. The list engages the facilitation community and provides an opportunity for facilitators to learn from each other. “I try to read the majority of the messages that come via the list as I find most of the information shared to be wise and practical. I appreciate the expertise that people so generously share.” (Refer to www.iaf-world.org/about/iaflistserv.cfm for more information about the IAF listserv and additional electronic discussion groups sponsored by other organizations).

World Wide Web Searches

Many facilitators search the World Wide Web at least quarterly for best practices in facilitation, updates, new ideas, and team activities and warm-up exercises. Ask them for their favorite sites, and they ask, “What did you have in mind?” for the field is wide and varied. Many facilitators keep a “favorites list” in their Web browser, organized by topic, in order to access these sites quickly. One facilitator says he tends to “surf the Web just before the wave breaks to try and get a little extra edge when I start or have been at it for a while with a group.”

OBSERVATION OF OTHERS

Most facilitators truly enjoy watching others in action. By seeing someone else “facilitate” a group discussion in any setting, a particular technique may be recognized and reinforced. Not only do we “observe things that are and aren’t valuable,” but we get a sense for different facilitation styles. “By being aware of human behaviors and reactions in everyday situations, we recognize our best teachers are those with styles different from our own.” As we observe others, we expand our horizons and learn more about ourselves and our possibilities.

Other Facilitators

Facilitators are exposed to myriad options and possibilities by observing other facilitators in action. They can watch others lead sessions, observe students try facilitation techniques during a role-play, or be “a participant in facilitated sessions to ensure that I understand facilitation from a participant’s perspective.” Another facilitator discovered that being a CPF assessor “allowed me opportunities to see different approaches and techniques” that CPF candidates used during the assessment process.

Other Settings

Recognizing that any time a group of people gets together presents an opportunity to observe others in action, seasoned facilitators look for facilitation techniques and nuances in other settings. One respondent noted that he makes it a point to watch the “process-interaction dynamics of someone else’s dialogue. How is the conversation initiated? What is the initial conditions-context? How do ideas move in and out of the discussion? How do participants know when they agree or disagree?” Another facilitator explained, “I remain open to alternative sources of information and skill development. I look for behavior that affects human interaction...wherever I find it. It might be a workshop, a film, a book, an article, or a dinner party.”

Films. A favorite learning activity is to watch a full-length feature film and extract lessons in team dynamics, visioning, change management, diversity, decision-making, and related areas. Although not specifically requested in the survey, a few facilitators mentioned the importance of films in developing their skills. Some of the favorite films cited in the IAF Listserv resource files are *A Few Good Men*, *Apollo 13*, *Babe*, *The Big Chill*, *Blue Collar*, *The Breakfast Club*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *The Commitments*, *The Dirty Dozen*, *The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill But Came Down a Mountain*, *Erik the Viking*, *From Earth to the Moon*, *The Hunt for the Red October*, *Lean on Me*, *Lord of the Flies*, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, *Mission Impossible*, *Norma Rae*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, *Remember the Titans*, *The Shawshank Rebellion*, *To Sir With Love*, *Twelve Angry Men* and *Whale Rider*.

One of my favorite scenes on team problem solving is from the movie *Apollo 13*. On the way to the moon, there is an explosion in the service module affecting the carbon dioxide scrubbers that chemically remove exhaled carbon dioxide from the enclosed capsule. Ground control is given the formidable task to jerry-rig a solution with only the materials onboard or the astronauts will die. With just a few hours of breathable air left, ground control concocts a makeshift solution and saves the day.

Keep in mind that if a video or film clip is used in a facilitated or training environment (regardless of whether you are profit or non-profit) it is considered a public performance and requires the consent of the original copyright holder or its agent. To obtain information and purchase rights to use movie clips,

contact ASCAP (www.ascap.com), BMI (www.bmi.com), or ACF (www.acf-film.com).

APPLICATION

While training and reading are outstanding forms to build your facilitation expertise, all respondents agreed on the importance of applying learned knowledge to real-life situations. Similar to the adage about what makes real estate valuable (location, location, location), many facilitators emphasized, “It’s all about practice, practice, practice.” The average respondent works with groups at least three to four times a month, staying fluent in the art of facilitation.

“I practice all the fundamentals of facilitation in every situation where appropriate, not just when performing professionally. In the university classroom, at Rotary meetings, on boards of directors and so on. In other words, walk the talk in everyday life.”

Be Present

A recurring theme for seasoned facilitators is to be present and transparent for the group. “When you facilitate, throw away all of your generalizations and be present to these individuals, this group, here, now.” (For another discussion of transparency and related ideas, see Chapter Thirty-Two.)

Experimentation

Most facilitators discover new methods experientially. By “splicing together pieces of different ideas from books and other people,” they pick up ideas at conferences and training sessions and from reading, discussion, and observation, and then adapt them to their specific situation. When venturing forth with a new tool or technique, many try it out in a small, safe group such as family, friends, or fellow facilitators.

Relying on a solid base of facilitation skill and understanding, many just “make it up by using what’s necessary in the room.” One facilitator found that “when I try something new ‘on the fly’ during facilitation exercises, participants are more willing to ‘work without a net’ if you create a proper context and support for the group’s work.” A different facilitator noted that he “creates solutions on a regular basis for clients. They drive my innovations by stretching my capabilities.” Another facilitator encourages others to “Try new things as often as possible – while honouring your group’s needs. Also take some risks. Sometimes challenging yourself with a new method can help the group take some risks as well.” Yet another cautioned, “Different groups have different needs. To work with them you will need to try different activities. Once tried, these activities may work in many areas you wouldn’t have expected.”

When experimenting, one respondent found it useful to tap into the wisdom of individual participants: “Develop relationships with group

participants that have some level of facilitation skill and discuss what they observe. I use them as a sounding board.” It is always helpful to get another person’s perspective.

One caveat to remember when trying out new material with groups is this: “Put yourself in challenging situations regularly but remember people are not your lab. Observe the code of ethics for human experimentation.” The *IAF Statement of Values and Code of Ethics* echoes these sentiments: “We avoid using processes, methods, or tools with which we are insufficiently skilled, or which are poorly matched to the needs of the group.” (See also Chapter Thirty.)

Self-Awareness and Reflection

All facilitators engage in “continual reflection on what’s working and what’s not working,” what happened and why. The seasoned facilitator is on a journey, continually exploring “why we approach group activities as we do and what underlies the choices we make.”

This self-reflection is an internal process: “I am very critical after any facilitation, noting what I could have done differently and storing that last session in my memory bank for the future.” Another facilitator states he goes through “much personal soul-searching to re-evaluate the session and what might have gone differently or been a more helpful way to address an issue.” Another facilitator asks herself, “Did I stay in role? Did I deal effectively with conflict? Did I use tools effectively? Review what I could have done differently.”

Said another, “I reflect deeply on every single session that I facilitate, both by myself and with others who will de-brief with me. I ponder the feedback, and I take notes on what happened. I write up each process as a case so that the reflection and design is captured for future use.”

Best Practices

Several facilitators commented that they intuitively learn what works and what does not and rely on their memories to keep track of best practices. A few reported that they have a process to capture participant feedback and lessons learned, captured in a personal journal, diary, or log. By documenting each session, seasoned facilitators discern patterns in the responses and make small improvements. For example, I developed a “log book” to capture lessons learned (as well as document required information for a professional certification). After each session, I note the feedback and write my thoughts in the log (for an example, see www.qpcteam.com/nsa/log.pdf). Over time, I can see trends that show my strengths and areas for improvement.

One facilitator writes a short, but insightful “Lessons Learned” paper each year that reinforces key learnings from her facilitation projects.

Another way to capture best practices is to keep paper or computer files of team activities, process models, tools, and techniques (noting the origins, so to be able to credit the source). The files are organized for easy access and retrieval of information (which varies from facilitator to facilitator).

FEEDBACK

Seasoned facilitators deliberately search for opportunities to receive feedback from others within both the facilitated group and the larger facilitation community. In the survey, a facilitator acknowledged, “Receiving valuable feedback is one of the weakest spots in my practice and an area that needs improvement.” Another facilitator added, “An often-used throw-away line is to ‘treat feedback as a gift.’ The real trick is to actually do that – no defensiveness – just acceptance, exploration of alternatives and developmental planning.”

Group Feedback

Throughout the process, facilitators continually seek feedback from the group and change direction as needed. One respondent advises to “listen hard to what is being said, observing and picking up on group dynamics and body language...Listen to what participants tell you or each other during the session breaks and after the session...Listen for asides and throw-away comments and jokes that might tell you something more than first indicated...Look at their faces, their eyes, listen for sighs or frustrations...They are giving constant feedback – you just have to look and listen for it.”

Critiques. In our survey, over 80 percent of respondents either always or frequently conduct a “critique” where the participants are asked to evaluate the facilitated session. The critique can occur anytime and can range from a casual check-in to a full, formal debriefing either during or after the session. One facilitator noted, “Critiques are for the group, not me, usually trying to bring consciousness to the changes in what they do and how they work together.” (For alternative views of evaluation, see Chapters Twenty-Four and Twenty-Five.) Others use the group feedback and their own intuition to reflect and improve their craft.

Formal Debriefs. Many practitioners facilitate a dialogue at the end of a session, using a flip chart to capture “plus/deltas, (what went well/what to do differently) or charting the mood and effectiveness across the time frame of the event.”

Several respondents indicated that more formal debriefing meetings were also held with their groups, clients and/or other stakeholders at key intervals in the process (for example, midway, before entering a key phase, or when the project is finished). A formal debrief typically measures and compares project or session objectives. The debrief also evaluates what worked well and what could have worked better and the degree to which the group dealt with difficult issues, managed conflict, built consensus, solved problems, shared visions, developed synergy, and honored its culture.

Debriefs may also probe into more affectual issues, asking the participants if they felt they had an opportunity to contribute their talents and

ideas, as well as express everything they felt necessary; if they felt valued; whether they appreciated the process; made free and informed choices; took ownership of their decisions and actions; and a sensed forward movement. One facilitator creates a “group barometer at the beginning of a session where progress is tracked throughout the session.”

After Action Reviews. One facilitator borrowed the U.S. Army’s “after-action review” process that debriefs the success of an engagement by asking specific questions: “(1) What did we plan to do? (2) What actually happened? (3) How did that vary from our plans? (4) What might have been the cause for this? (5) How did we alter our plans and adapt? (6) What can we learn from this situation or event ?” (For a more thorough description of the US Army’s After Action Review process, see Garvin, 2000 or www.mvr.usace.army.mil/PublicAffairsOffice/2003AnnualReport/DistrictHighlights/AAR%20Guide.doc.)

Follow Ups. Many facilitators also follow up “a day or two later and check if the bloom is still on the rose and to see if there’s something that came to them that I might need to know and to find out how they plan to move forward.” Others follow up “a few weeks later to discuss the impact of the intervention on the group/organization.” Another facilitator sends out a “simple post-workshop evaluation form or survey about four to eight weeks after each session to get additional feedback from the sponsors and to determine if group outcomes were achieved.”

Peer Feedback

Between fellow facilitators, feedback is a mutually beneficial exchange of information that can also inspire brainstorming, problem solving, and mutual support. When the relationship is between different skill levels, it is more of a mentoring relationship. And when money or something else of value exchanges hands, it is a professional coaching relationship.

Several seasoned facilitators commented that they tend to be discriminating about whom they seek feedback from. Ultimately they select someone they trust and respect to give specific, candid feedback. One respondent declared, “I receive feedback at this point only from co-facilitators and clients. I’m nearly 60 years old and want collaborative learning rather than critiquing at this point in my career.”

Cofacilitation. Occasionally, seasoned facilitators will work with partners (not necessarily facilitators) who have different approaches or skills that can complement and expand their learning. One facilitator explained, “Co-facilitating draws on all your skills as a facilitator *and* as a member of a small, interdependent group. It’s a microcosm of the world we practice in.” Another facilitator cautions, “Co-facilitation works best when it is in the client’s interest, not when the only goal is to expand your learning.”

Critiques by Another Facilitator. “When I first started, I practiced facilitation skills in front of the mirror, in front of my wife, kids, and anyone who would sit

and give me any kind of feedback. Now I ask people I know are good facilitators to regularly give me a tough critique on everything I am doing in front of groups.”

One of the best formal methods to obtain substantive feedback is during the CPF process where candidates facilitate a twenty to thirty minute session. At the end of the session, the candidates and assessors provide immediate verbal feedback. In addition, the assessors provide written and verbal feedback on the candidate’s strengths and areas for improvement.

Informal Collegial Network. Almost all (95 percent) of the respondents said that they “get new ideas from conversations with half a dozen close peers.” In this informal network, colleagues ask each other questions, brainstorm ideas, share best practices, and “try out new techniques before using them live and in person.”

“Getting feedback can be difficult in a one-person operation. Thus, the informal group is critical to sharing, analyzing, and digging into the real usefulness (or not) of various approaches.”

In addition to meeting face to face, some informal, geographically dispersed networks use conference calls, establish email lists, and coordinate an annual gathering among respected colleagues.

Master Mind. Napoleon Hill coined the concept of the “Master Mind” alliance in his book, *Think and Grow Rich* (1937). He believed that a group of like-minded, achievement-oriented individuals could dramatically leverage each other’s success. It is all about creating the synergy of like-minded professionals to have a safe place to celebrate success, solve pressing issues, offer support and encouragement, unleash creativity, gain valuable insights and expand and grow their businesses.

A quarter (28 percent) of respondents indicated that they belong to a master mind group or formal peer advisory group. These groups differ from the informal networks in that they are far more structured. They tend to have a broader charter with members, roles and responsibilities, and ground rules as well as agendas, meeting minutes, and structures that support accountability and follow through. “I am part of a local facilitator mastermind that meets four to five times a year to share best practices, educate one another, support and refer work to each other.”

Mentoring. An overwhelming majority (over 80 percent) of respondents have mentored another facilitator and half have been mentored themselves. Most of these relationships were informal in nature, formed by bonds of friendship, geography, common interest, or shared values. These relationships were primarily centered around learning and reflection. (For more information on how to mentor and be a good mentor, see Sjodin and Wickman, 1996.)

Professional Coaching. A few facilitators “found professional coaching sessions were very helpful when I seemed stuck.” One facilitator suggested using a “skilled psychotherapist to help deal with counter-projections [and to] decide if you are in the field to facilitate or become famous – they are different tracks.” Ultimately, the use of a coach or other professional is about understanding who you are and how you show up in the world and with your groups. (See Chapter Thirty-Two.)

TEACH OTHERS

At a certain point, a seasoned facilitator has enough experience to be able to teach others. Over 75 percent of respondents teach facilitation skills at educational institutions, public seminars, corporate seminars, and community groups. In addition to mastering the learning objectives and materials, the instructors “learn a great deal from the participants in my programs.” “I find the course participants an endless source of new perspectives...Students’ questions are a great way for me to gain greater understanding of what I do.” Being an instructor also allows the opportunity to “develop new resources for facilitation and testing in the field.”

BE A THOUGHT LEADER

Fifty percent of the surveyed facilitators have contributed “original thought” to the facilitation field. Usually these ideas are a refinement, a new model, framework, perspective, rationale, approach, tool, technique, or experiential exercise. Some facilitators have exchanged facilitation and group process skills with individuals in other countries, helped to design and build the CPF process, and contributed to the development of the IAF professional competencies (see Chapter Twenty-Six) and ethics (see Chapter Thirty). These thought leaders have been published in academic and professional journals, books, internal publications, newsletters, published books, pamphlets, and white papers, and they have compiled papers from international peers.

Most facilitators approach idea development in a collaborative mode “so my original thought gets kind of lost!” There is also a healthy skepticism that nothing is truly “original” and newly discovered, “but rather re-applications and/or revisions of others’ thinking.” Regardless, thought leaders take the time to write these ideas down to share them with the larger facilitation community.

PROFESSIONAL STANDING

Every profession has its own credentials and facilitation is no different. The most prevalent is the CPF designation bestowed by the IAF. Half of the surveyed facilitators earned the CPF as well as several other credentials that complement their practices. Following is a list of the various types of credentials and some examples offered from the survey results:

Educational. Almost all respondents have at least an undergraduate degree. Around half have graduate degrees, and 13 percent have earned doctoral degrees.

Certifications from professional organizations in a complementary field.

Most professional organizations and societies provide some accredited certification for their profession or standard of practice. Examples are Certified Six Sigma Black Belt (www.asq.org), Certified Management Consultant (www.imcusa.org), Certified Speaking Professional (www.nsaspeaker.org), and Certified Human Resource Professional (www.hria.org).

Certifications from educational institutions in a complementary field.

Many colleges and universities offer certification programs in facilitation skills and other diverse programs such as creativity and innovation and creative problem-solving.

Certification or qualification from an independent organization to perform a specific task/training course.

Many organizations offer certifications or qualifications in conjunction with the successful completion of a training program. These titles include Certified Quality Facilitator, Certified Master Facilitator, Certified Training Consultant, Certified Mediator, Master Facilitator, and Certified Team Leader. In addition, many of these certification organizations license the use a defined, proprietary process such as Franklin-Covey Certified Trainer and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

Certifications/Qualifications from professional associations within their chosen industry.

A few facilitators hold certifications such as Certified Systems Professional (www.microsoft.com), Certified Computing Professional (www.iccp.org), Professional Engineer (www.nspe.org), Certified Association Executive (www.asaenet.org), Advanced Certified Fundraising Executive (www.afpnet.org).

Examiners. Not only are seasoned facilitators certified in their particular field, but a few respondents also served on the examining board to evaluate candidates for individual or organizational certification. For example, some respondents were CPF Assessors, Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) Examiners, and State Productivity Award Examiners.

THE INTENTIONAL PLAN

When collecting the results of the survey, the one theme that distinguishes a master facilitator is the intentionality of his or her actions to build personal expertise. Master facilitators take their craft seriously and strive to improve their ability to effectively facilitate group process.

To develop your own intentional plan, use Exhibit 28.1. The first column lists the strategies presented in this chapter. Place a check mark in the second column if you have *ever used* that strategy as a part of your improving your skills. Place a check mark in the third column if you *currently use* that strategy. Place a check mark in the fourth column if you *intend to use* that strategy in the near future.

After you complete this checklist, reflect on what has been working well for you and focus on one or two strategies (column 4) you think will make difference in mastering your craft.

Exhibit 28.1. Strategies to maintain and enhance your professional knowledge as a group facilitator

Strategy	Ever?	Currently?	Future?
Training			
Attend On-Site Training			
Use Electronic Media			
Teleclasses			
Video TeleConferencing (VTC)			
Webinars			
Web-based Training			
Attend National/Regional Conferences			
Participate in Professional Organizations			
Attend Meetings			
Hold Leadership Position			
Present a Program			
Chair a National/Regional Event			
Reference Materials			
Read Books			
Read Publications			
Read Newsletters and E-Zines			
Internet Learning			
Participate in Electronic Discussion Groups			
Search the Internet			
Observation of Others			
Other Facilitators			
Other Settings			
Films			
Application			
Be Present			
Experimentation			
Self-Awareness/Reflection			
Capture Best Practices			
Feedback			
Solicit Group Feedback			
Conduct Group Critiques			
Obtain Peer Feedback			
Facilitate with Others			
Be Critiqued by Another Facilitator			
Participate in an Informal Network			
Belong to a Mastermind Group			
Mentor Another Facilitator			
Be Mentored by Another Facilitator			
Be Professionally Coached			
Teaching			
Teach Others How to Facilitate			
Be A Thought Leader			
Publish/Share Ideas			

Professional Standing			
Education			
Certifications			
Examiner of a Certification Process			

CONCLUSION

This chapter shares several strategies that seasoned facilitators use to build their facilitation expertise. As you strive to improve your ability to facilitate group process effectively, stand on the shoulders of others who have gone before you. Using the strategies and examples presented here, assess your current state, and develop an intentional plan to improve your facilitation expertise.

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