

What Is An Effective MPI Facilitator?

Introduction

While volumes have been written and graduate degrees offered in facilitation, the basic duties of a facilitator are to make sure everyone is working on the same challenge with the same approach, make sure everyone participates, and protects participants from verbal abuse. This document will provide the rudiments of doing this in a variety of ways, hopefully providing a foundation on which more advanced facilitation learning and skills can be built.

Definition of an Effective MPI Facilitator

1. A facilitator is someone who helps a Chapter leadership team understand their common objectives and assists them to plan to achieve them without taking a particular position in the discussion.
2. An individual who enables Chapter leadership teams to work more effectively; to collaborate and achieve synergy. She or he is a 'content neutral' party who by not taking sides or expressing or advocating a point of view during the meeting, can advocate for fair, open, and inclusive procedures to accomplish the group's work.
3. One who contributes structure and process to interactions so Chapter leadership teams are able to function effectively and make high-quality, well-informed decisions on behalf of their membership.
4. They are a helper and enabler whose goal is to support others as they achieve exceptional performance in the planning process.

The facilitator's job is to support everyone to do their best thinking. To do this, the facilitator encourages full participation, promotes mutual understanding and cultivates shared responsibility.

By supporting everyone to do their best thinking, a facilitator enables Chapter leadership to search for inclusive solutions and build sustainable agreements.

Skills of an Effective MPI Facilitator

The basic skills of a facilitator are also about following good meeting practices:

- Good Timekeeping
- Following an agreed-upon agenda
- Keeping a clear record

The higher-order skills involve watching the group and its individuals in light of group dynamics and being able to be flexible in delivery style and timing to meet the needs of the group in the moment.

In addition, facilitators also need a variety of listening skills including ability to:

- Paraphrase
- Stack a conversation
- Draw people out
- Balance participation
- Make "space" for more reticent group members

It is critical to the facilitator's role to have the knowledge and skill to be able to intervene in a way that adds to the group's creativity rather than taking away from it.

A successful facilitator embodies respect for others and a watchful awareness of the many layers of reality in a human group.

In the event that a consensus cannot be reached then the facilitator would assist the group in understanding the differences that divide it.

The Do's & Don'ts of an Effective MPI Facilitator

Some of the things MPI facilitators **do** to assist a meeting:

1. They clarify the purpose, scope, and deliverables of the retreat
2. They keep the group on track to achieve its goals in the time allotted
3. They either provide the group or help the group decide what ground rules it should follow and remind them of these when they are not followed
4. They remind the group of the objectives or deliverables of the meeting or setting
5. They set up a safe environment where Chapter leaders feel comfortable contributing
6. They guide the team through processes designed to help them listen to each other and create solutions together
7. They ask open-ended questions that stimulate thinking
8. They paraphrase or repeat verbatim individual contributions to confirm understanding and ensure they are heard by the whole team
9. They tentatively summarize a recent part of the discussion
10. They offer a possible wording for an unspoken question that may beset the team
11. They offer opportunities for less forceful members to come forward with contributions
12. They ensure that actions agreed by the group to carry out its decisions are written up and appropriate actions are assigned to individuals (where applicable)
13. They evaluate the performance of the meeting to assist in continuous improvement

Some of the things MPI facilitators **don't do** to assist a meeting:

1. They do not back a particular opinion voiced in the group
2. They do not offer their own opinions
3. They do not let the team unconsciously shy away from a difficult area
4. They do not lead the group towards what he/she thinks is the right direction