

QUESTIONS FOR FACILITATORS WHEN THEY HAVE COMPLETED A COUPLE OF SESSIONS

1. Are you allowing your participants to be active learners?
2. Do you articulate a clear purpose for learning?
3. Do your lessons and activities connect with the groups experience and shared responsibilities? Can you articulate this?
4. Have you included a vehicle for participants to express their concerns?
5. Have you allowed for different learning styles?
6. Do you draw upon the expertise of the group?
7. Have you clarified how the learning will help the participants in their jobs?
8. Does your material challenge their thinking and encourage them to envision new ways of seeing things?
9. Have you built in time for reflection and self-assessment?
10. Have you allowed adequate time for participants to share their learning with each other?
11. Are you sure that you and the participants share a common language that defines and delineates the topic at hand?
12. Do you use strategies to include all participants in the learning?

CHECKLIST FOR EFFECTIVE TRAINING

1. Research based and rooted in adult learning theory
2. Integrated into the organisation's goals and values
3. Includes a high level of new content
4. The learning has clear outcomes
5. Focuses on the real-work needs of participants
6. Participants see the training as a means to strengthen their effectiveness
7. Involves collaborative problem solving
8. The material connects with participant experience
9. The participants feel they are part of a learning community
10. The participants understand that they are valued for their learning efforts
11. Involves shared learning where the participants can talk directly and meaningfully to one another
12. Structured so that participants have adequate time to assimilate the material and then apply it
13. Participants have ongoing updates, support and practice
14. Participants can see how the new learning has an impact on what they do

WHAT THE FACILITATOR SHOULD DO IN ADVANCE

1. Survey The location before the session to ensure there is adequate lighting, disability access, parking, bathrooms, etc
2. Check to make sure that both the space and lighting are adequate
3. Be certain that all supplies are ready to go

4. Check equipment to make sure everything is working and correctly placed
5. Arrange the room to maximise learning
6. Be certain that all participants receive pre-training notification and reminders (this includes an agenda)
7. Know your participants before the training begins. Know their educational backgrounds, school context, age spread, system involvement etc

UPFRONT TASKS

Early in your training session the facilitator must clarify basic housekeeping concerns as identified below:

1. Establish ground rules or working agreements so that all participants know the group norms and expectations. It is best just to ask the group to identify three to five for themselves.
2. Ask the participants to articulate their expectations for the session. Ask them to tell the others what they would like to learn or get out of the session.
3. If participants don't know everyone, provide time for introductions. Note however that a common facilitator mistake is to let introductions go on too long. It not only slows down the training, but it also burns up prime learning time when the participants are at their freshest. Don't forget to introduce yourself (keep it arm, brief, personal and humble).
4. Give the group your facilitation framework. This includes two basic items:
 - a. The **goals** of the session
 - b. A **road map** indicating how you will achieve those goals – your outline or agenda.
5. Define terms if necessary. To save time, you may want terms defined in a handout or printed on newsprint and pasted around the room.
6. Check for agreement. 'Is this a good way for us to spend our time together?'

TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

(Good facilitators share common characteristics)

- Be prepared
- Have clear objectives and goals
- Clarify meeting expectations
- Allow participants to learn from one another
- Expect participants to be engaged
- Enforce positive and respectful interaction
- Summarise and clarify difficult content or discussions
- Ask open-ended questions and listen carefully
- Be aware of pacing: keep an eye on the clock; keep it moving
- Clarify with examples but don't overuse stories
- Be positive, enthusiastic and focussed
- Trust your participants to have good ideas

- Maintain a balance of content and process
- Include a variety of activities
- Offer encouragement, praise and recognition
- Be sure that your content has a beginning, middle and end
- Gear your material for your audience – challenge them
- Understand that people like to learn in different ways
- Have a sense of closure or a call to action
- Solicit 'real' evaluations
- Solicit ideas, new perspective and fresh points of view
- Encourage constructive differences of opinion
- Keep participation balanced
- Park or table topics that will derail the focus of the session
- Get agreement on group actions
- Work toward consensus whenever possible
- Pay attention to participant reactions, moods and attentiveness
- Listen, listen, listen

SESSION CLOSING

There are many ways to close a learning event or meeting. The key is to think of the session as a journey that has a beginning, middle and end. Indeed, when the participants walk out the door, they should feel that it is their journey now to carry forward. Below are a few reminders about closing a session;

- Restate the general direction of the session – ground covered
- Highlight key points
- Summarise discussion
- Highlight a vital point or lesson that emerged out of the session
- Clarify proposed actions
- Emphasise what the group has learned or accomplished
- Tell the group how much you enjoyed their involvement
- Congratulate the group for a job well done
- Offer some ideas that they can take with them
- Encourage them to act or use what they have learned
- Ask for feedback and give participants a chance to evaluate the session

PEOPLE CONCERNS

There are times when a facilitator has to quiet or redirect individuals who are derailing the learning or disrupting participation. As you handle these challenging people be certain that you don't allow your own frustration to become personally negative. Always address the unwanted behaviour and not the person. If it feels

like retaliatory strike, you run the risk of losing the whole group. Below are just a few strategies that you might use;

- Remind the group how important it is to say on the agenda
- Tell the person that you would like to continue his/her line of reasoning during the break (not now)
- Ask if you can move his/her questions to lunch as a discussion topic
- Speak with the person during a break and ask him/her to give others an opportunity to participate
- Compliment him/her on his insights and move on
- Express an awareness of his issue and get back on track
- Say 'I hear your concerns and I will make adjustments at our next session/'
- Say 'Perhaps I wasn't clear when I made that point, let me try saying it a different way'
- Ask the group if there is anyone who can summarise the issues (and end it)
- Say 'thanks for sharing' and move on
- Encourage balanced participation and get someone to take the discussion in another direction

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ADULT LEARNER

Workplace training experiences are more likely to be successful if they are built upon the needs of adult learners. Researcher Malcom Knowles identifies some vital principles of adult learning.

- Adults need to be actively involved in the learning
- Adult learners are self-directed
- Adult learning is generally more problem centred rather than subject centred
- Portions of the learning must be self-directed
- The learning must be practicably connected life experiences
- The learning must be relevant to everyday work needs
- It must be structured so that participants can see where they are going and why
- It must be well organised
- Adult participants must have time to voice opinions and personal experiences
- They must feel that they are helping to shape the direction of the learning
- They need room in the training to reflect and speculate
- Adults learn best when challenged
- Adults need time to practise new skills
- Adults like to tell their story

- Adult groups like to find common ground and shared meaning
- They must have ample time to discuss
- Part of the learning should be experiential
- Learning should be ongoing where concepts can be reinforced and expanded
- Adults are more internally motivated rather than externally motivated

<http://www.workshopexercises.com/Failitator.htm#FacilitatorsGuide>

