> "Stay focused on the fact that the work you're facilitating is occurring at a minimum of four levels: the intrapersonal within each individual, the interpersonal among at least two people, the group, and the organization."

Facilitation 101

The Basics to Get You on Your Feet

By Matt Minahan, Judy Vogel, Lee Butler, and Heather Butler Taylor

OK, I've got the agenda with me. . . good. . . . Now, get the tape . . . masking or blue tape? What kind of walls do they have at that hotel? Can I even use tape there? My notes! I need to have my interview notes for the data feedback. . . . And, is this my new box of Mr. Sketch markers, or the old one. . . wish I'd thrown it away after the last time! . . . and I need the pieces for the icebreaker puzzle we're doing. . . . Do I have the index cards? And, the dot vote! I forgot to pack the colored dots! What's the client's boss's name again?

Anyone who has ever facilitated a meeting has probably had a morning like this. Between us, we've had about a thousand! And as indispensable as all of those things seem in that moment, the truly indispensable tools for facilitation can't be seen or touched. They are the theories and concepts that underlie our work, a few of which we'll review in this article.

So, if facilitation isn't just bringing the markers and tape, pretty drawing on chart paper, and good Powerpoint presentations, what is it?

We're defining facilitation as "The use of your self, grounded in a conceptual frame and theories rooted in the behavioral sciences, enabling groups to be effective and productive."

Facilitation occurs in the context of organization development, which we're defining as, "A body of knowledge and practice that enhances organizational performance and individual development, viewing the organization as a system or systems that exists within a larger system, each of which has its own attributes and degrees of alignment. OD interventions in these systems are inclusive methodologies and approaches to strategic planning, organization design, leadership development, change management, performance management, coaching, diversity, and work life balance." (Minahan, 2007)

So, while the facilitation *event* begins with the morning frenzy, the facilitation *work*—and our preparation for it—has been underway for some time, as we've been studying and building a theory base to support our *in the moment work* as facilitators.

CONFERENCE CONNECTION

Matt Minahan, Judy Vogel, Lee Butler and **Heather Butler Taylor** are presenters at the 2007 OD Network Annual Conference in Baltimore at the following sessions:

Facilitation 101:
An OD Approach to Facilitating Groups

Friday, Oct. 19, 1:00 – 5:00 PM
Saturday, Oct. 20, 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM
Sunday, Oct. 21, 8:30 AM – 1:30 PM

Figure 1

Project Model

The first thing to know, and to know that you know, is a consulting project framework. We recommend a seven phase model *(Figure 1)* because it is a hybrid, combining a solid grounding in Action Research theory, OD process, and general problem solving.

Phase 1: Enter—Getting Started

The purpose of this phase of the project is to understand the client's presenting problem or business need, communicate your understanding to the client, and establish rapport.

Theory frame and resources: The Action Research Cycle is indispensable in our work, and Arthur Freidman's chapter on it in The NTL Handbook on Organization Development and Change is a good place to start.

Phase 2: Contract

The purpose of this phase is to define a successful outcome, agree on the scope of work, establish good communication, build commitment on both sides. . . in short, construct the psychological contract for success.

Theory frame and resources: Peter Block's Flawless Consulting chapters on Entry and Contracting and Who Is the Client would probably be helpful in the Contract phase.

Phase 3: Discover

The purpose of this phase is to collect data upon which you can make your own preliminary judgments about the organization. It also helps you verify the client's perception and description of the issue and gives you data about how accurately she or he has described it to you.

Theory frame and resources: You'll want to have access to a good research methods text—and there are many good ones out there! On the quantitative side, you'll need to know basic survey design, data collection, and analysis; on the qualitative side, you'll need to know about interview protocol development, interviewing techniques, solid note taking, and qualitative data analysis. Research Methods in Organizational Behavior by Eugene Stone provides a strong, yet easy to understand, perspective, especially on surveys and statistical measures. Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods by Michael Quinn Patton is excellent in discussing qualitative designs, data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Phase 4: Decide

The purpose of this phase is to jointly construct—among you, the client, and the project team—an agreed upon picture of *what is*, and a joint commitment to *what to do about it*. This demonstrates the client group's ownership of the project.

Theory frame and resources: Patton's Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods cited has an excellent section on qualitative data presentation, and for statistical information, a breakthrough book is The Visual Display of Quantitative Information by Edward Tufte.

Phase 5: Implement

The purpose of this phase is to move the system toward the desired outcome. They may take this action without you, or use your help.

Theory frame and resources: This work involves visioning, brainstorming, problem solving, and project management, and Carter McNamara's Field Guide to Consulting and Organizational Development is an excellent resource.

Phase 6: Evaluate

The purpose of this phase is to evaluate the results of the project against its original goals.

Theory frame and resources: There is a whole body of knowledge and writing on evaluation, but for OD facilitation, we recommend Chapter 11, Evaluating and Institutionalizing Organization Development Interventions, in Worley and Cummins' Organization Development and Change (8th edition).

Phase 7: Re-Contract, Closure, Exit

The purpose of this phase is to build on your existing knowledge of the organization, leverage the contacts and relationships you've built during the first 6 phases of the project, and develop additional follow on projects that address important organizational issues.

Theory frame and resources: This is an area that is typically underexplored in our field, but Ann Van Eron and Warner Burke have done a nice job in Chapter 12, called Separation, in Practicing Organization Development: A Guide for Consultants by Rothwell, Sullivan, and McLean.

Useful Theories and Models for Facilitation

Now, what do you need to know to do the work of these stages? It helps to have a few theories, models and tools handy to cover the major elements of the work.

Four Levels of Intervention

Stay focused on the fact that the work you're facilitating is occurring at a minimum of four levels: the intrapersonal within each individual, the interpersonal among at least two people, the group, and the organization. Different tools work better, depending upon the level of your intervention, and it is important to be aware of the level on which you are working and intervening.

Change Models

A well-known and well-used model for individual change is William Bridges' (1993) three stage Transition Model *(Figure 2)*. The Ending is where we begin, as we accept, let go, and mourn losses; the Neutral Zone is where we experience confusion and insecurity, as depicted by the trapeze artist between swings, but also creativity, as new possibilities emerge; and the New Beginning is where we experience renewed energy, purpose, direction, and a new identity.

Another favorite can be used at the individual, group, and organizational levels. It's by well-known family systems

Figure 2: Bridges Transition Model

ENDINGS

- Define:
  - Who is losing what
  - What is over and what isn't
  - Areas over which we have control
- Provide information again and again
- Acknowledge losses
- Mark the ending
- Treat the past with respect

NEUTRAL ZONE

- Reflect on
  - Differences and continuities
  - Losses and opportunities
  - Feelings
- Make temporary arrangements
- Find quiet times and stable places
- Explore and experiment
- Be present to the situation

NEW BEGINNING

- Clarify expectations
- Communicate purpose
- Identify roles and procedures
- Maintain consistency
- Ensure quick success
- Symbolize the new identity
- Celebrate the success

THE FOUR Ps

In coping with Transitions, remember the 4 Ps:

- Provide a *purpose* for the change
- Paint a *picture* of how the new outcome looks and feels
- Lay out a step-by-step *plan* for phasing in the outcome
- Give each person a *part to play* in the process

Adapted from *Managing Transitions, Bridges,* W., Addison-Wesley, 1991]

Figure 3: Satir Perturbation Model

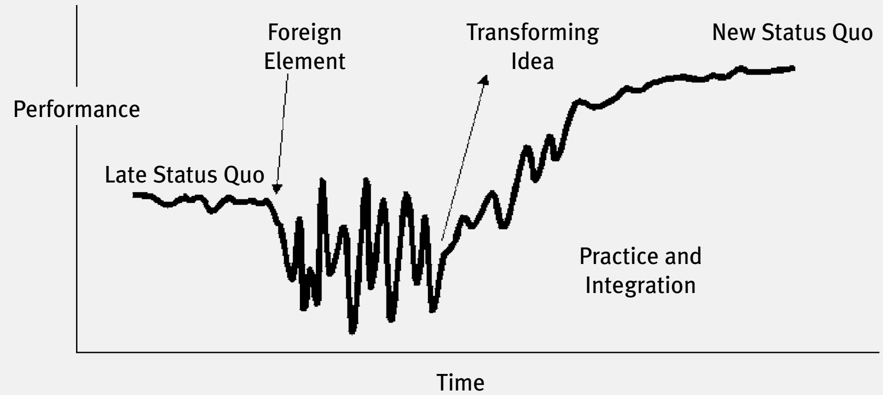


Figure 4: The FIRO-B Six Cell Model Behaviors

INCLUSION

Expressed Inclusion:

- Talking and joking with others
- Taking a personal interest in others
- Involving others in projects and meetings
- Recognizing the accomplishments of others
- Incorporating everyone's ideas and suggestions
- Offering helpful information or "tips" to new colleagues

Wanted Inclusion:

- Frequenting heavily trafficked areas (e.g., the water cooler)
- Wearing distinctive clothing
- Decorating the workspace with personal keepsakes
- Seeking recognition or responsibility
- Getting involved in high priority projects and activities
- Going along with the majority opinion

CONTROL

Expressed Control:

- Assuming positions of authority
- Advancing ideas within the group
- Taking a competitive stance and making winning a priority
- Managing the conversation
- Influencing others' opinions
- Establishing structured tasks, procedures, policies

Wanted Control:

- Asking for help on the job
- Involving others in decision-making
- Requesting precise instructions or clarification
- Deferring to the wishes, needs, and requests of others
- Asking for permission and circulating progress details
- Raising issues for others to consider

AFFECTION

Expressed Affection:

- Reassuring and supporting colleagues, both verbally and physically
- Exhibiting concern about the personal lives of others
- Being trustworthy and loyal
- Sharing personal opinions or private feelings about issues
- Coaching and developing others

Wanted Affection:

- Being flexible and accommodating
- Listening carefully to others
- Displaying an open body posture
- Sharing feelings of anxiety
- Trying to please others
- Giving others more than they want/need

expert, Dr. Virginia Satir (1991), and it describes what happens to people when there is perturbation, such as that which comes from change *(Figure 3)*.

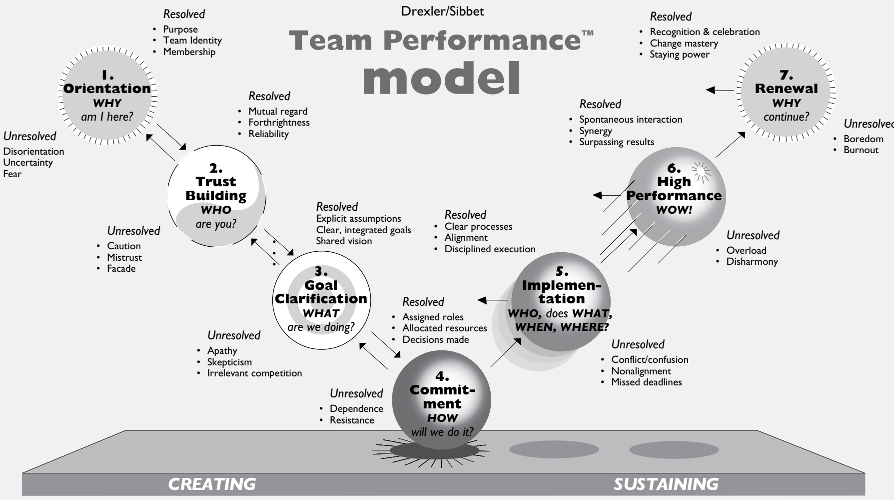
Group Model

You'll need to have a model that helps you understand what's going on in any group that you're facilitating. One of the simplest, and best, is Will Schutz's FIRO-B model *(Figure 4),* in which groups go through three predictable stages. The first stage is inclusion, addressing the question of who is in and who is out of this group. The second stage is control, addressing the question of who has influence, or who is up and who is down in this group. The third stage is affection or openness, or who is close and who is far. Groups cycle through these three stages over the life of the group, and every time the group convenes.

Team Model

The Drexler-Sibbet Team Performance Model *(Figure 5)* is the best researched, best documented, and best supported team model. It's a seven stage model

Figure 5: Drexler-Sibbet Team Performance Model



Reprinted with permission of The Grove *(www.grove.com)*

10.1 TPModel ©1993–2000 Allan Drexler & David Sibbet

Figure 7: RASCI Chart

Name	Responsible	Approves	Supports	Consulted	Informed
Charlie, the Communications Director	X				
Anne, the Communications VP		X			
Al, the Admin Assistant			X		
Functional VPs				X	
Internal Print Shop					X

Figure 6: Differences Between Team and Group Functions

CRITERIA	GROUPS	TEAMS
What is the purpose?	Support and develop the principles, skills and abilities of members in a chosen domain.	Accomplish a project plan that supports organization objectives.
Who belongs?	Members from one or many organizations, or not affiliated with any organization	Members of the organization.
What makes members come together?	Self-selection based on expertise or passion.	Selected and assigned by management.
What is the glue holding it together?	The passion, commitment, and identification to the chosen cause or knowledge domain.	The organization plan or the project charter.
What is the nature of the activities?	Goals are more self-generated-best if aligned with organization.	Tasks should be aligned with organizational interests. Specific goals from organization, establishing deliverables and deadlines.
How long does it last?	As long as the members have interest in building the practice and sustaining the community.	Until the project or work is completed.
What are the resources?	Information, knowledge, experience, member commitment and collaboration, etc.	People hours and work resources.

Minahan, 2005, as originally published in *Practicing OD* (2005).

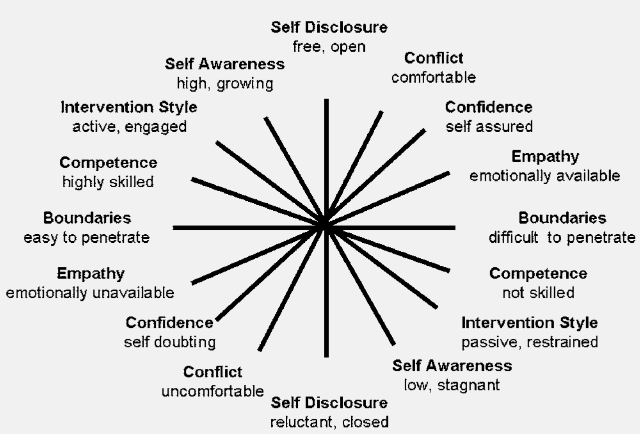
that outlines the issues that teams must confront, and how they get resolved.

It's also helpful to have a solid grasp of the differences between groups and teams, especially as you prepare to facilitate either or both. The central difference is that the members of teams are inherently highly interdependent, and the members of groups are less interdependent. Groups can often function quite well without some, many, or even most of their members because roles are often not well differentiated. Teams, on the other hand, often have differentiated roles, and the members are dependent upon each other to get things done, which greatly increases the risk—and the potential rewards!—from working with teams. Some of the other differences are described in *Figure 6*.

Diversity Models

An important, and too often avoided dimension of group life, is the diversity of its members and the facilitator. Diversity includes many attributes, characteristics and identity group memberships, such as the following: gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, race, age, language, nationality, ethnicity, class, etc. These dimensions add both potential complexity and richness to the group's work and, if ignored, reduce the group's effectiveness by creating tensions in the communications and reducing access to its members' resources.

Figure 8: Self as Instrument of Change: A Self Assessment



Given this potential value to the group, why is it that such discussion is left unexplored? One reason is that facilitators are often uncomfortable and unable to explore diversity because they lack the awareness, the skills, the models or the vocabulary to guide such learning conversations in the group. The effectiveness with which we are able to recognize, name and discuss difference, work diversity issues, and use diversity models in our facilitation is directly linked to the powerful outcomes of the work we do. When worked effectively, differences in the room can be the substance of profound learning for all present.

There are several models that highlight various elements of diversity, including Quadrant Theory, Dimensions of Diversity, Path to Competence, and Dominant/Subordinated Group Dynamics.

Group Dynamics

This topic is so large that there are several academic journals dedicated to it, but there are a few things for the facilitator to keep in mind. Wilfried Bion's work with shell-shocked soldiers revealed that there are often three "basic assumption" groups at play, and often simultaneously, behaving as if their purpose was: a) to fight with each other, or to flee; b) to rebel against the group leader; and c) to collude to anoint a new leader whom the group will ultimately remove (Rioch, 1970). These are often taken as signs of dysfunction in workplace groups, but they are normal and natural, especially when the group is lacking a clear purpose or connection to its work. When your groups start to exhibit these basic assumption group behaviors, it's a sign that it's time to revisit the group's goal, its operating procedures, and its communication patterns.

Accountability Charting

One last tool to have handy is an accountability, or RASCI chart, which identifies who is responsible for what in a project or implementation plan. RASCI is an acronym, standing for "Responsible, Approves, Supports, Consulted, Informed." The Responsible person owns the problem or project. The Approval person signs off and must approve the work before it can take effect. The Supportive person(s) can provide resources. The Consulted person(s) has information or capacity necessary to complete the work. The Informed person(s) must be notified of results, but need not be consulted. Using this tool with a group can greatly clarify their roles and support effective work on their task. For example, if the task were to publish the organization's newsletter, you might see a RASCI chart such as *Figure 7*.

Use of Self

In the end, your success as a facilitator is going to be based on you, and how well you use your self to connect with others, model desired behaviors, and influence people to change. That's really what our job is all about when you think about it. We establish emotional connections with people, and hopefully create an environment in which others feel comfortable connecting emotionally with each other. We have some beliefs about, and hopefully we model, how people should be treated in the workplace—that they should be given a voice in their own futures, listened to with care and grace, and respected for the differences in their backgrounds and perspectives. We bring theory and knowledge to the work, which hopefully participants find relevant and useful. Ideally, the whole package of "us" is interesting and appealing, and invites participants to consider new ways to see their worlds, change their behaviors, and accomplish important goals.

We've developed an assessment for the use of self *(Figure 8)* which identifies eight variables which determine who we are, and how we use our "self" in facilitation.

Ask yourself, to what extent. . .

» Are my **boundaries** easy or difficult to penetrate, and what should they be, given the situation and the work that I'm doing?
» Am I free and open with **self disclosure**, or reluctant and closed and how should I be, given the situation and the work that I'm doing?
» Is my **intervention style** active and engaged, or passive and restrained, and what should it be, given the situation and the work that I'm doing?
» Am I **confident** and self assured, or self-doubting, and how should I be, given the situation and the work that I'm doing?
» Am I highly skilled and **competent**, or not well skilled in the context of the work that I'm doing?
» Am I comfortable or uncomfortable with **conflict**, and how well does that serve me, given the situation and the work that I'm doing?
» Is my **self-awareness** high and growing, or low and stagnant, and is there anything I need to do about that? Are my group memberships helping or hindering my ability to manage the group dynamics in the work I'm doing?
» Am I emotionally available and **empathic**, or emotionally distant and unavailable, and how should I be, given the situation and the work that I'm doing?

There are a thousand other questions related to facilitation, such as what to say and when and to whom when facilitating group work, and what to write on chart paper, and what to put on slides, and when to intervene, and when to call time, and when to question the process, and when to confront the leader, and when to say "yes" and when to say "no." There's no one-best answer or solution to any of them. The best way to learn how to intervene in a group is to get lots of practice, especially working in partnership with a well-seasoned facilitator.

There is a huge risk—maybe even a bit of arrogance!—involved in saying that this is the body of knowledge needed for good facilitation. And, there are dozens of essential theories that we love and use every day, but could not include here, among them The JoHari Window, the Ladder of Inference, Exchange Theory, a good communications model, Difficult Conversations, the Requisite Organization, an integrative world view model such as Ken Wilber's, a good conflict resolution model, a power model, and graphic facilitation techniques. Knowing a broad range of theories gives us more options in making facilitation decisions, and we've tried to present the handful that we think are at the core of good facilitation.

For as hectic and crazy-making as facilitation mornings are, handling them well is just a small fraction of what makes us good as facilitators. The morning frenzy represents just the sizzle of our field. . . hot, frenetic, endorphin-releasing, but not very sustaining or satisfying; it is quite far from the real work that we do in facilitation. In fact, you've been collecting the truly important items for your facilitation work all of your life—a few theories, a few models, a few handy techniques, and life-long learning about yourself and your impact on others. In the end, what makes us successful at facilitation is a good strong theory base, being curious about ourselves and the world, having the patience to practice, and to practice some more, bringing our best "self" to the work, the client, and the team, always with the goal of making a contribution to a better world.

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