

Developments In Business Simulation & Experiential Exercises, Volume 22, 1995

UNDERSTANDING FACILITATION FOR DEVELOPMENT AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING: A MICRO-WORKSHOP

Judith F. Vogt, Incarnate Word College

ABSTRACT

- *To experience participation in an experiential learning activity.
- *To systematically examine the experience of participation.
- *To systematically examine the skills and process of facilitation.
- *To enhance participants' understanding of the essential elements of group work.
- *To recognize the impact of group composition on the learning process.
- *To review the conditions which promote adult learning.

INTRODUCTION

This design promotes many learnings about groups, facilitation, learning theory, and work dynamics. Participants often find it a "light bulb" experience. It is relevant to self-directed work teams, training, management, leadership, TQM and its company-specific variations, continuous learning, organizational structure, and participative management and/or decision making. Of most importance to guiding this activity is that the facilitator not force specific learnings but allow for the recognition, development and divergence of the potential learnings which it offers.

Materials

Participants: One copy of "Four Corners Theory Sheet", p. 54-5 for each participant; one copy "Dimensions of Learning" for each participant; and flipchart paper, large tip multi-colored markers, masking tape.

Facilitator: One copy of "Four Corners Design and Materials", 1988 Annual for Human Resources Development, pp. 51-55; one copy for reference of the "Four Corners Theory Sheet", p. 54-5; easel for flipchart paper, large tip multi-colored markers; tape the signs posted as described in "Four Corners" for each corner of the room.

Logistics

A room large enough to accommodate 30 participants

and to allow some freedom of movement with wall space for posting flipchart pages. This exercise will take approximately 1 1/2 to 2 hours.

Exercise

Step 1: The facilitator describes the goals of the activities. Participants are then asked to stand up and converge at the middle of the room. The facilitator gives very brief input about the elements of groups (refer to the "Four Corners" design and materials, 1988 Annual: Developing Human Resources, Pfeiffer and Company). The facilitator will urge participants to move to their corners of preference rapidly (refer to process steps I and II in "Four Corners Design").

Step 2: Follow process steps III and IV, p. 52 of "Four Corners Design" in the 1988 annual.

Step 3: The facilitator then draws a blank organizational pyramid and points out that the four elements of group work are parallel to the traditional roles of organizational levels. Participants are asked to "guess" which corner (structure, action or caring) goes with which level. The facilitator fills in the pyramid as shown in figure 1.

Step 4: The participants then discuss their observations, personal choices, implications of distribution in terms of total group strengths and needs, and so forth.

**FIGURE 1
ORGANIZATIONAL PYRAMID**



Step 5: Participants remain in their groups and

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brainstorm their reactions to this participative experience. After two to five minutes, the facilitator asks group members to focus on their own participation in terms of the “beginning”, “middle”, and “to this point” time periods of the session. Each group generates three lists (one list per flipchart paper).

Step 6: The facilitator then instructs the groups to break in to new groups of four or six which have representatives from each of the corners, or as many as possible. For example, there may be only three people who go to the “meaning” corner and thus, there are not enough “meaning people” to join each group. Participants are asked to list as many facilitative and non-facilitative behaviors (non-verbals, verbals, etc.) of the facilitator as they can. These should be brainstormed on flipchart paper in two columns, one facilitative and the other non-facilitative. After five to eight minutes, the groups are instructed to broaden their perspectives beyond the facilitator to any aspect of the experience “to that point” of the session. Each group is then to create a model, list, or statement(s) of facilitator capabilities and facilitative dimensions that enhance experiential learning.

Step 7: After bringing all participants into one large circle, each group presents its model, list, or statement(s). The facilitator then invites dialogue about facilitation and facilitators intended to promote understanding of both the skills and the process of this emerging requisite for the work place. Participants also draw conclusions about the relationship of participant reactions (refer to Step 6) and facilitator behaviors.

Step 8: Finally, each participant will receive a copy of the “Dimensions of Learning” handout which describes conditions that promote adult learning. Examples are drawn from the “Four Corners” activity, group outputs, and total group discussions about how participation and facilitation, as they were experienced during the session, are congruent with these conditions.