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CLI
**two-minute
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*A series of tips that
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Facilitation Basics

Dr. Susan Cain, Ed. D | Corporate Learning Institute

There's always room for improvement. Two-Minute Reads are a free tool you and your organization can use just for that reason.

Maximizing Your Training Power

You can create an engaging, unforgettable experience for your participants. All it takes is some detail and a personal approach.

Here are some tips to consider doing for your workshops:

- Call or email your primary contact and find out about the group you will be training. Make your session customized. By tailoring each course to your participants, you will find that your results will increase a thousand-fold.
- Use examples, case studies, and stories that are relevant to the group. Identify whether your participants are strangers or whether they work together. Tailor your approach appropriately.
- Different people learn in different ways, so use different types of activities to balance it all out. (For example, some people learn by reading, while others learn by talking about it, while still others need a hands-on approach. For more information, we suggest *Experiential Learning* by David Kolb.)
- Make it fun and interactive. Most people do not enjoy sitting and listening to someone else talk for hours at a time. Make use of the tips in this book and your own experience to keep your participants engaged.

- Mix up the activities to include individual work, small group work, large group discussions, and mini-lectures. AT CLI, we have a rule: 10 minutes on, 10 minutes off; try to limit training presentations to 10 minutes of lecture, stop and engage your audience with a question or break-out activity.
- Make it relevant. Participants are much more receptive to learning if they understand why they are learning it and how they can apply it in their daily lives. Most importantly, they want to know how it will benefit them and make their lives easier. Take every opportunity to tie what you are teaching back to real life.
- Keep an open mind. Many trainers find that they learn something each time they teach a workshop. Enjoy it, learn from it, and make the most of it in your workshops. We have found that a good workshop mixes training with facilitation to ensure that participants stay engaged.

Final Thoughts

1. Facilitation is a manner of handling group meetings in a way that takes the focus away from just one leader, and instead distributes leadership to all members of the group. There is premium on democracy, group involvement, and cooperation. The focus is not just on getting things done, but also in feeling good about it.
2. Consultant Dave Sibbet defines facilitation as *“the art of leading people through processes towards agreed-upon objectives in a manner that encourages participation, ownership, and creativity from all involved.”*
3. Facilitation is often contrasted with presentation, which is delivering information or decisions to a group. Facilitation is group-centered while presentation is leader-centered. For this reason, facilitation is incompatible with an autocratic management style. An example of the difference between facilitation and presentation:

FACILITATION: *“How do you think the company can solve this problem? Does anyone have any ideas?”*

PRESENTATION: *“This is how we will solve the problem...”*

4. A facilitator is a person who helps groups to arrive at their objective by ensuring that everyone’s contribution is heard and the processes being used are both productive and empowering to all. Facilitators work primarily through leading and blocking techniques, basically directing traffic within a group discussion.

5. Facilitation can also involve managing group member's emotions, defusing tensions and encouraging team cohesiveness. In some cases, facilitators help in setting and revising meeting structure, and managing conflicts.
6. To be effective, facilitators have to be neutral to the discussion, not partial to any members, and acceptable to everyone involved. They should not take a position in any of the issues raised, nor should they advocate a solution - or attempt to directly solve the problem.
7. Having an objective "third party" facilitator ensures that group members would feel safe about voicing out their opinions. Knowledge of group process and an appreciation of democratic management are pre-requisites to becoming an effective facilitator. Sensitivity and keen observation skills are also non-negotiable.

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