Moderation & Facilitation Techniques

Matt Franks
Professor, Austin Center for Design

Understanding Facilitation

Facilitation is a structured conversation. A facilitator leads a group through designed activities in order to achieve a predetermined goal.

Successful Facilitation Requires...

adequate preparation and materials, a structured goal, complete stakeholder attendance, an appropriate venue, and a passionate host.

Successful Facilitation Requires...

adequate preparation and materials, a structured goal, complete stakeholder attendance, an appropriate venue, and a passionate host.

ac4d

Successful Facilitation Requires...

adequate preparation and materials, a structured goal, complete stakeholder attendance, an appropriate venue, and a passionate host.

Successful Facilitation Requires...

adequate preparation and materials, a structured goal, complete stakeholder attendance, an appropriate venue, and a passionate host.

Successful Facilitation Requires...

adequate preparation and materials, a structured goal, complete stakeholder attendance, an appropriate venue, and a passionate host.

Successful Facilitation Requires...

adequate preparation and materials, a structured goal, complete stakeholder attendance, an appropriate venue, and a passionate host.

ac4d

Facilitation

Before:

- Understand the participants
- Develop clear and relevant focus areas with supporting activities
- Organize materials and logistics

During:

- Facilitate the session

After:

- Recap, related to expectations

ac4d

1/ Understand the participants

ac4d

Answer the following questions:

- Who will be in attendance? How many?
  Get a list of names, titles, roles and responsibilities.
- Will the decision-maker be in the room? Will they be there for the entire time or just part of the session?
  Define the critical decision points they must be a part of.
- What are their expectations? What needs to be done to meet their expectations?
- Do the participants get along? Are there political tensions between departments or divisions?

Answer the following questions:

- What are the starting and ending times of the session?
  Define the time blocks of the day – don't forget to include breaks and opportunities for causal conversation. Role-play the flow of the day.
- What is the seating arrangement and can it be changed?
- Is it a neutral, friendly, or hostile audience?
- Consider the emotional state of the audience. What do they wish for? What do they fear?

ac4d

2/ Develop clear and relevant focus areas with supporting activities

Developing a clear and relevant focus

It is important to articulate the focus and goals of your facilitated session, and select methods based on the client needs and your project needs.

“Soft” goals might include:

- **To build trust and gain respect.**
  In all client relationships, but particularly with new clients, it’s critical to establish a positive working relationship that’s built upon trust and mutual respect (both of process and people).

- **To develop a shared understanding of strategy**
  While a strategy may already exist, stakeholders may not be aligned on a trajectory.

- **To understand client personalities**
  The individual wants and needs of clients can be one of the most significant factors in describing the cadence of a project and predicting success.

ac4d

“Hard” goals might include:

- **To define scope, boundaries and methodology**
  While these are typically listed and negotiated in a statement of work, an alignment session can ensure that everyone realizes what deliverables will actually be produced, and what value these deliverables offer. An alignment session can uncover important nuances in a client’s development process that may conflict the with design process. Mitigating these risks early on is critical to the success of the project.

- **To define success criteria**
  Frequently, a client has an explicit business goal they are hoping to achieve and a company culture that may or may not support that business goal. An alignment session can ensure that everyone is using the same language to define and measure success.

ac4d

Method Selection

Once you have identified a clear focus and set of goals for you session, you can pick, create and refine methods that will support achieving your goals.

Method Selection

ALIGNMENT GOAL	POTENTIAL METHODS TO LEVERAGE
Build trust and gain respect	• Build something together, in order to foster a creative relationship based on shared ideas • Go on a field trip, to better empathize with the problems they are trying to solve and build a sense of team respect
Develop a strategy	• Build an innovation ranking to understand how much risk can be implicit in a design • Build a customer journey map to help identify obstructions to achieving a given strategy
Understand client personalities	• Build something together, in order to learn more about how the client thinks about problems
Define scope and boundaries	• Create success criteria together to ensure that everyone understands the project timeline, scope, methodology, and boundaries of engagement

Innovation Ranking

Innovation Ranking

Clients have a varying appetite for innovation, and the word itself can be difficult to define. Innovation ranking provides a step-by-step process to define expectations related to level of "risk."

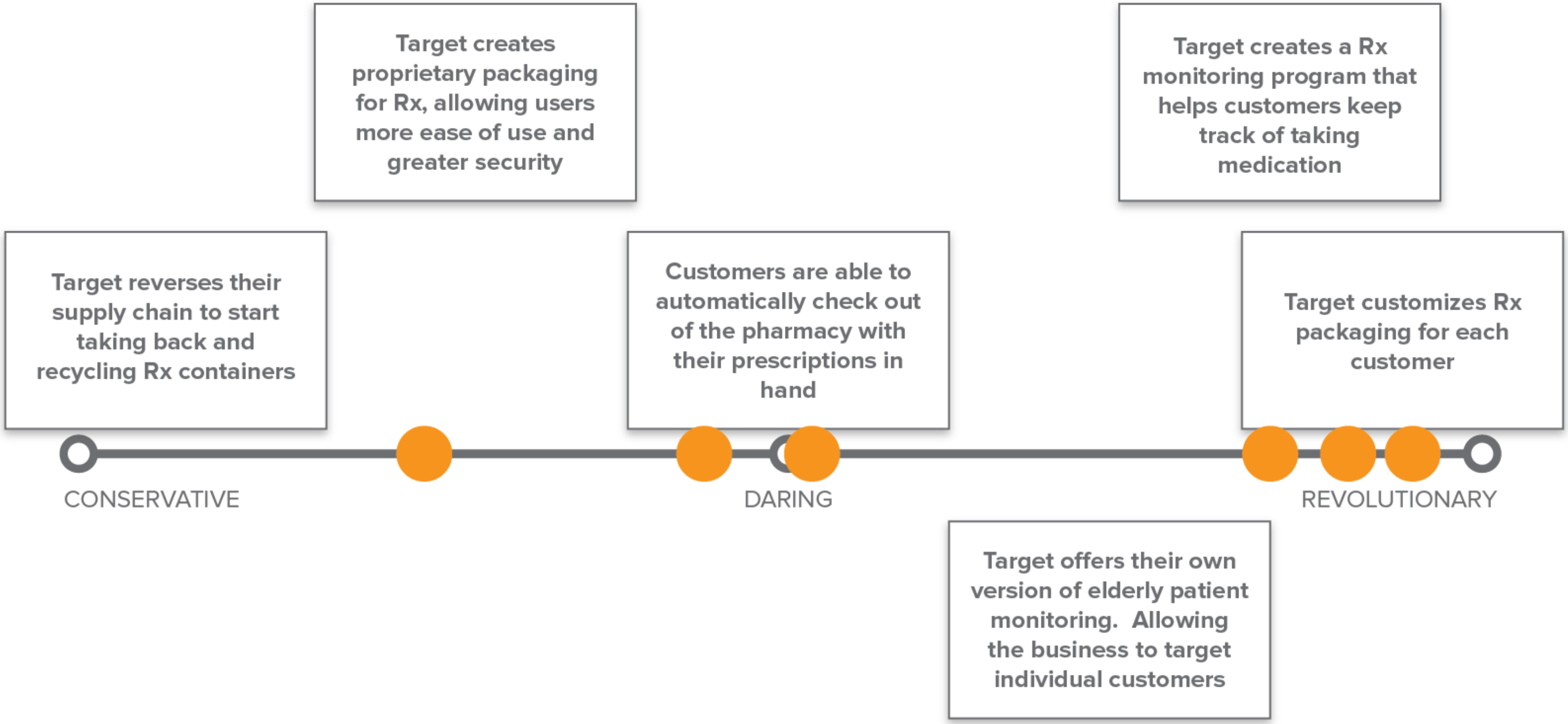
Why should I use it?

- To create an innovation profile of key client stakeholders
- To understand better the perception of current ideas / concepts (if concepts already exist, or a range of concepts have been created for the client to reflect on)
- To define specific expectations around the current design challenge

When should I use it?

- During program kick off before research begins (this exercises is most helpful for programs involving design research)

Innovation Ranking



Innovation Ranking

Target creates proprietary packaging for Rx, allowing users more ease of use and greater security

Target creates a Rx monitoring program that helps customers keep track of taking medication

Individual notes, pre-printed, are placed on the continuum by the group

Target reverses their supply chain to start taking back and recycling Rx containers

Customers are able to automatically check out of the pharmacy with their prescriptions in hand

Target customizes Rx packaging for each customer

Continuum offers relative positioning

CONSERVATIVE DARING REVOLUTIONARY

Target offers their own version of elderly patient monitoring. Allowing the business to target

The client collectively defines the range of innovation from which ideas/concepts would be acceptable.

Innovation Ranking

Innovation Ranking requires a pre-generated set of ideas and concepts. These should be created prior to beginning.

1. Generate a list of ideas/concepts that range from conservative to revolutionary. Place each idea on a large Post-it.
2. Create an Innovation Continuum on the wall – a line anchored by “Conservative” on one end, and “Revolutionary” on the other.
3. Schedule 1 – 2 hours for this exercise depending on the number of items and the size of the group.
4. Read out each idea/concept and have the group collectively define where the idea should be plotted on an innovation continuum. Facilitate discussion around each item.
5. Once all ideas/concepts are plotted, have each member of the client team plot their acceptable innovation range using stick dots. Have them verbalize this process.
6. Finally, have the group establish an acceptable range of innovation for the project.

Success Criteria

Success Criteria

Metrics and criteria that define success have subtle, often unspoken nuances. A focused activity on defining success criteria can help to ensure that clients understand what will be achieved in the program – and ensure accountability across the project team.

Why should I use it?

- To understand how the program impacts the broader client's business
- To define broad program objectives, and better understand business drivers behind the program
- To define specific evaluation criteria around the design challenge
- To set a prioritized focus for the program – potential tradeoffs can be identified by having the client prioritize the list of program objects and concept criteria

When should I use it?

- Success Criteria should be facilitated at the beginning of a program
- Results of this exercise will be used during the concept evaluation phase of the program

ac4d

Program Objectives

A concept that...

- Delivers a differentiating consumer experier
- Reflects the GM brand
- Is feasible for a 2015 product launch
- Seeds the PLM product road map

A process that...

- Utilizes the same logistic chain for existing Direct to consumer products

A 2015 product that...

- Drives global market share
- Maintains the GM brand ima
- Is scalable for multiple GM li

Concept Evaluation Criteria

Immersion phase success factors

- Delivers a differentiating consumer experience
- Is feasible for a 2015 product launch
- Seeds the PLM product road map
- Utilizes the same logistic chain for existing direct to Consumer products

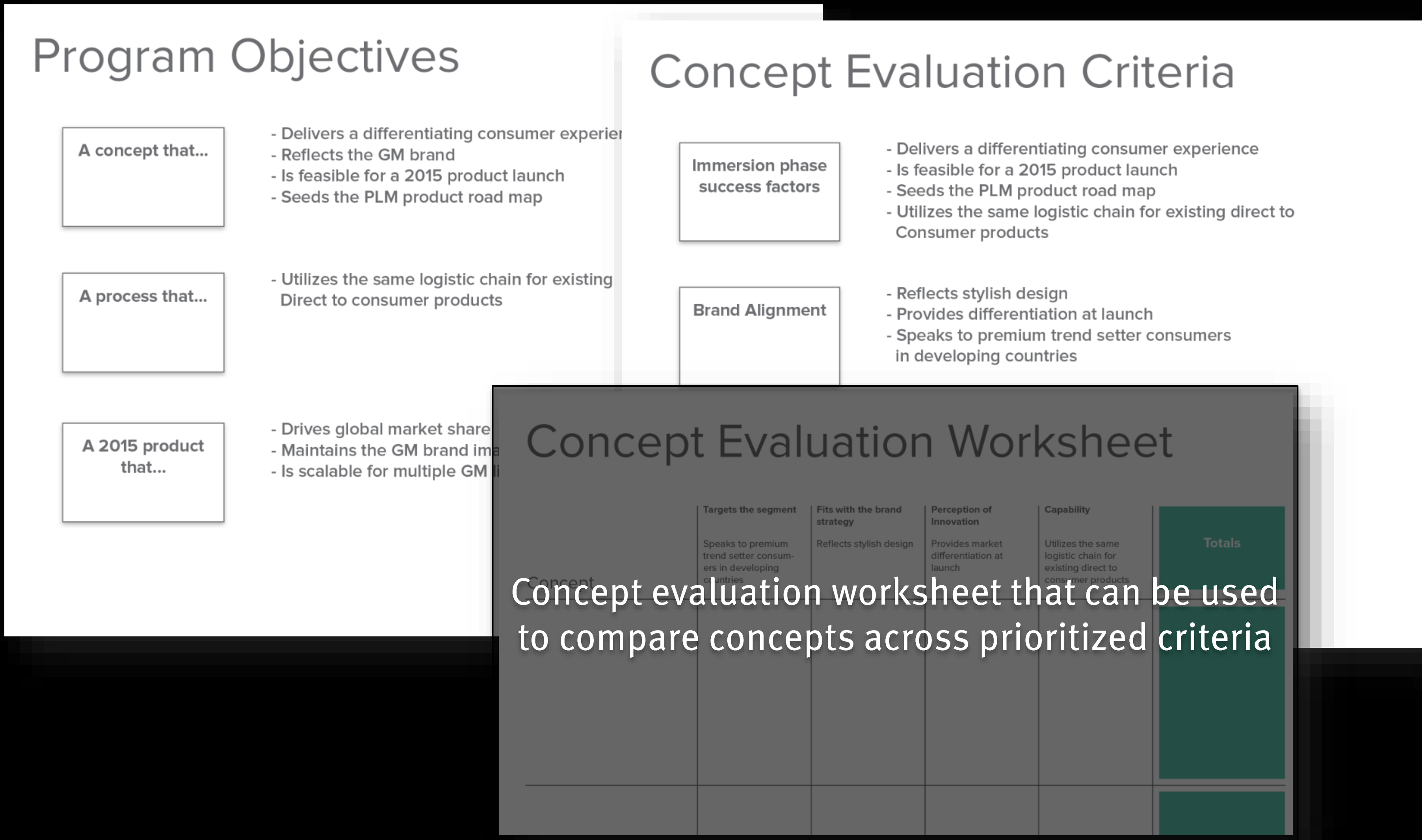
Brand Alignment

- Reflects stylish design
- Provides differentiation at launch
- Speaks to premium trend setter consumers in developing countries

Concept Evaluation Worksheet

Concept	**Targets the segment** Speaks to premium trend setter consum-ers in developing countries	**Fits with the brand strategy** Reflects stylish design	**Perception of Innovation** Provides market differentiation at launch	**Capability** Utilizes the same logistic chain for existing direct to consumer products	**Totals**

ac4d



Concept evaluation worksheet that can be used to compare concepts across prioritized criteria

ac4d

Success Criteria

Steps to defining success criteria:

1. Gather initial success criteria that were established during the business development process (if any).
2. Provide each stakeholder with a homework assignment prior to the kickoff meeting: "Please come to the meeting ready to share three items related to the following points:
   a) What are the long term Program Objectives?
   b) What are the specific Constraints that are limiting our ability to execute?
3. Create a large axis on the wall, describing priority (from low to high).
4. Go around the room, and have the participants position their success criteria on the axis.

ac4d

Success Criteria

Steps to defining success criteria:

5. Facilitate the conversation by identifying conflicts and hosting a brief discussion about them.
6. As categories of success criteria emerge, define them using a different color post it note.
7. After the meeting is over, formalize and distribute the list of categorized and ranked success criteria to the group.
8. Ensure the success criteria is used later in the program as an evaluation tool.

Competitive Landscape

Competitive Landscape

During an alignment meeting or kickoff session, it can be energizing and provocative to explore how the competition might try and steal market share. Competitive Landscape is a method for describing how key competitors might approach a problem and the advantages the client may have in the space.

Why should I use it?

- To discover how the client approaches and thinks about an opportunity
- To learn about internal, latent perceptions surrounding competitive advantage

When should I use it?

- When kicking off a project with a new client or new group of stakeholders
- When arriving at a point of conflict related to features, functions, or services

ac4d

Competitive Landscape

Competitor: ____________________

If <<Competitor>> does not offer <<product>>, how could this competitor steal market share from <<Client's>> existing business?

How would <<Competitor>> approach solving this problem. What might <<Competitor's>> product be like?

What unique differentiator does <<Client>> have that the competitor does not?

Competitive Landscape

Steps to creating a competitive landscape:

1. Schedule 1 – 2 hours to complete this activity.
2. As a group, create a list of both direct (obvious) and indirect competitors.
3. Divide into small groups, splitting the list of direct and indirect competitors.
4. Provide a competitive landscape worksheet to each group.
5. Give groups 5 – 10 minutes to complete the worksheets for each of their competitors
6. Have each group present the worksheet. Pin the sheets to a board for other participants to see.
7. Hold a retrospective conversation to extract the main implications, and list them.

Go to Market

Go To Market

During an alignment meeting, kickoff session or ideation session, it can be effective to explore alternative go to market strategies. This highlights shortcomings in the clients process or capabilities, and can help build strategy.

Why should I use it?

- To extract success criteria from the client
- To discover how the client approaches a problem
- To begin planning a strategic approach to product or service rollout

When should I use it?

- When kicking off a project with a new client or new group of stakeholders
- When the client is considering a product, system, or service that is outside of their current set of offerings / capabilities.

ac4d

Go To Market

Which channel will be the most successful in selling this solution? (Arrange post-its by priority)	What are the minimum capabilities to go to market? (Arrange post-its by priority)	What are potential road-blocks or considerations that could impact the top 2 - 3 market channels? (Arrange post-its by priority)

Go To Market

Steps to creating a go to market list:

1. Schedule 2-3 hours to complete this activity.
2. As a group, create a list of current and possible go to market channels for a given product or service.
3. As a group, define the minimum go to market capabilities for each channel that has been listed. There will likely be a common core of functions and features across channels, and then unique capabilities per channel.
4. Stack-rank the list of channels, based on likely success.
5. Starting with the least-likely to be successful, define and discuss the roadblocks and challenges that stand in the way of execution.

3/ Organize materials and logistics

Create an Agenda

Your agenda should include an overview of the session goals, in addition to:

- **A schedule of the activities that support the goal**
  Try to create a cohesive plan for each day of facilitation. List one day per page.

- **Expectations of participation**
  Define the critical decision points participants must be a part of and the guidelines for participation (should they be vocal? withhold judgment? etc..).

- **Homework or other preparations**
  Identify things you need the participant to do prior to the facilitated session. Note that they may not actually do it. Simple work sheets are a great way to encourage participation.

ac4d

Space

Facilitation is an energetic process that requires room to move around and wall space to pin up artifacts.

- Find a room that is large enough for people to move
- Get 4x8 sheets of foam core to pin up materials
  Sometimes you can't adhere materials to the client's walls. Bring your own!

Materials

A blank canvas is intimidating. Provide the participants with a starting point for each activity and exercise.

- Print out and organize worksheets and activities
- Make sure you also have plenty of pens, markers, post-its and stickers

Practice

Conduct a pilot test of your facilitated session, and encourage your teammates to role-play.

Provide Ground Rules

- Don’t judge ideas
- Build on the ideas of others
- Stay focused on the topic
- One conversation at a time
- Encourage wild ideas
- Be visual
- Go for quantity

4/ Facilitate the session

Facilitation Requires Focus

Focus your facilitation on one key purpose. Worksheets and activities are a great tool to contain the focus of your participants.

Make sure you clearly outline the goal of each activity, expectations for participation, and the steps of the activity before beginning.

Constantly verbalize the relationship between the activity and the goal.

Help participants understand why you are asking them to do various things.

Facilitation Requires Connection

Connect with your audience. The facilitator's focus should be on the participants; the participant's focus should be on the activities.

Be sure to include a simplified set of instructions on each of your activities.

Check the "emotional temperature" of the room constantly. Are people engaged? Are they checking email? Do they look tired?

ac4d

Facilitation Requires Passion

You feed the energy in the room.
Your participants consume it.

Great facilitation comes from passion. You are taking the participants on an emotional journey. You need to give just as much thought to preparing an emotional story line as an intellectual one.

Facilitation

The process needs to be emotionally supportive, offering participants places for "sanity checks."

5/ Recap, related to expectations

Recap the day

Create and distribute a recap of each day that was facilitated. This helps your client reflect on what just happened and reinforces the value of participating.

- Consider adding photos of anything you built together
- Include memorable quotes or moments from the day
- Include a brief synopsis of where you are in the process and what they can expect in the upcoming days / weeks

ac4d

Matt Franks
Professor, Austin Center for Design
Mfranks@ac4d.com

Download our free book,
Wicked Problems: Problems Worth Solving,
at http://www.wickedproblems.com