

Facilitation: getting the best out of working with people and organisations

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Facilitation

- *Facilis* (Latin) = Easy (English)
- This is about making work by a group of people **easy**
- Because sometimes it's difficult!

Some first key points:

- **Listen!**
- You are there for 'them': their successful working is your main objective
- Know who 'they' are – get as much information as possible in advance
- Be clear on the purpose (the desired aims and outcomes) of any facilitation work in advance

Today's course...

... is about:

- Facilitation
- The tools you may want to use
- How you use tools and techniques
- How you deal with problems
- How you work towards success (and how you know the work is successful)

So why facilitate (and what can go wrong)?

Let's consider:

- The good things that can come from a good process
- The problems that may arise
- The confusions and questions that you may have

REVIEW 1!

We just used a technique –

‘One minute wonders’

It’s a focused form of ‘brain-storming’

So:

- Was it useful?
- What are the good points / problems?
- Where’s it useful?

But hang on a minute!

Before we start....

‘Ways of working’ and ‘Ground rules’

- What should they be?
- What are the advantages?
- When might you not use them?

My advice: short and simple!

But hang on a minute!
(Again!) Before we start....

Getting to know each other: 'breaking the ice'

There are many techniques...

One key question?

Where does the 'ice' come from?

Let's try one!

So....

What should we consider when using any exercise or technique?

- What are the advantages?
- When might you not use them?

Be aware of 'cultural' issues!

Who are we facilitating?

The people we work with come in many different groupings:

Small

Unorganised

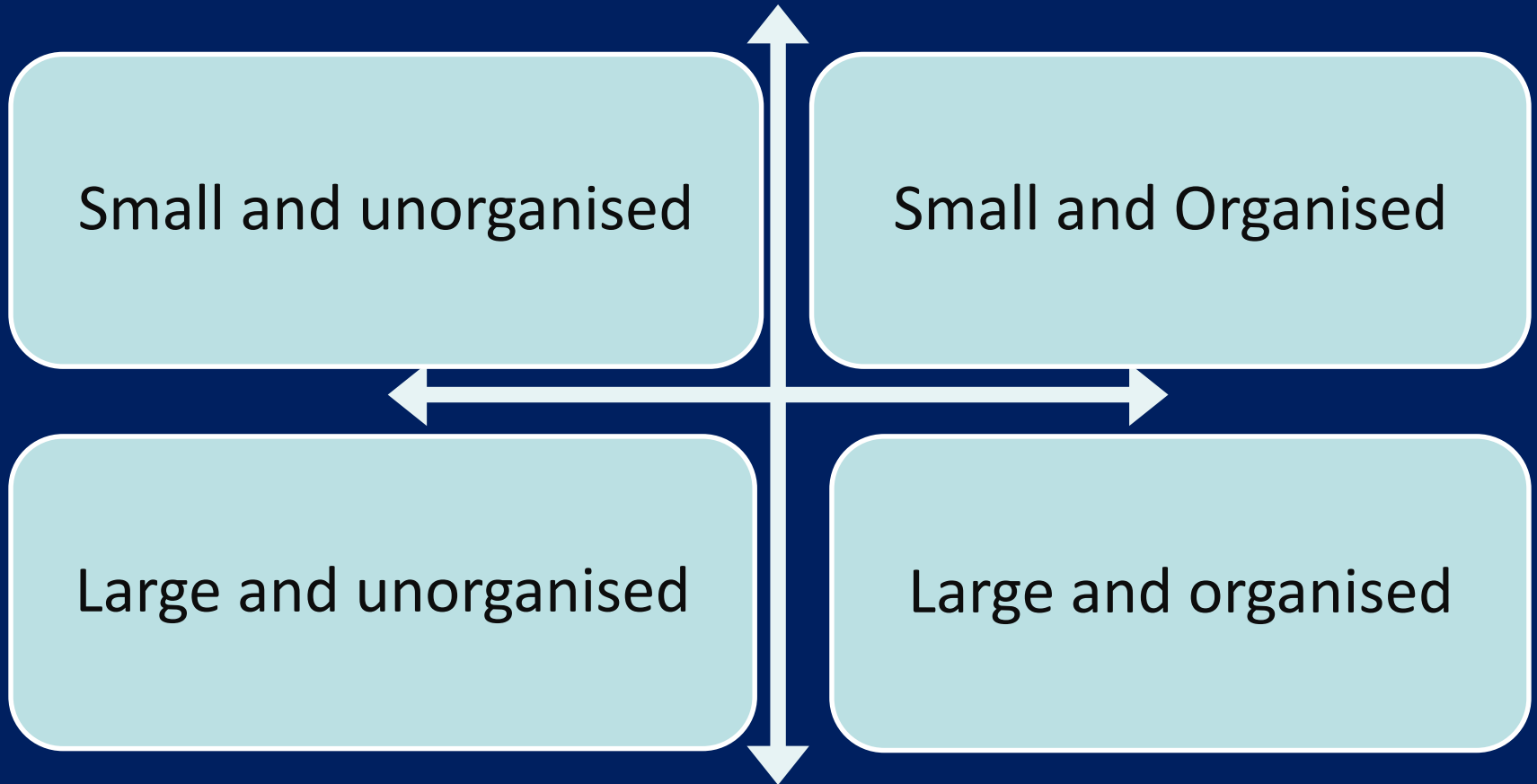
Organised

Large

Each has its' own opportunities and problems

So let's consider...

... What are the issues for:



Come up with:

Examples, good points, potential problems

REVIEW 3!

We just used a technique –

‘The Carousel’

It enables everyone to add their opinions and to learn from each other

So:

- Was it useful?
- What are the good points / problems?
- Where's it useful?

Carousel variations

This technique can be very adaptable

- ‘Accompanied carousel’ – one person moves with the sheet to explain it
- ‘World cafe’ - sheets stay on a table and people move around
- ‘Progressive world cafe’ – as people move so new questions are asked.
- Walking carousel – posters on the wall

Active facilitation

– keeping the process moving

One key issue for the success of any facilitation is the performance of the facilitator

This is about what you and I do!

What roles does a facilitator take on?

One person – many roles

Referee?

Teacher?

Advisor?

Entertainer?

Ringmaster?

Conductor?

Coach?

Chair?

When facilitation goes bad!

The problems that can develop during a session might include...

What would worry you?

Your personal practice

- Listening and responding
- Being inclusive
- Stimulating responses
- Not ignoring dissent
- Empowering

Stay within limits – know what you can deliver and don't build false expectations

Planning your work

- Know the audience and everyone else involved
- Check the publicity – know what people are expecting
- Know the timeframe and plan work to fit in (allow for over runs and 'under runs')
- Be clear on how you finish (and achieve the aims)

Facilitation and energy

Keep moving! If you put out energy other people (probably) will as well.

- Don't let the silences stretch
(know when to move on)
- Use humour (carefully) – self-deprecation can be useful but don't overplay it
- You've got an agenda
(but don't be afraid to deviate)
- Keep people moving
(when feasible / appropriate)

Getting people working together

So... How big is your group? We can work:

- As one group
- In small groups
- In pairs
- Individually

So, in pairs, suggest one case for each of the above.

Problems?

Here's a list I made earlier...

- Boredom
- Lack of engagement
- The local 'expert'
- The local bore
- Hostility from the group to a speaker / authority
- Hostility from the group to you
- Hostility from one person
- Running out of ideas
- Tiredness (yours!)

Dealing with hostility

You are likely to meet some hostility at some time, so

Watch for it and spot it early



Let people 'vent'



Change pace or format (small groups)



Get the people on your side on your side



Take a break

Finally: end the session if the risks increase

But.... before we start any process

Two key tasks

- Understanding the context
 - Who are you facilitating?
 - What kind of activity are you facilitating?
- Planning the session

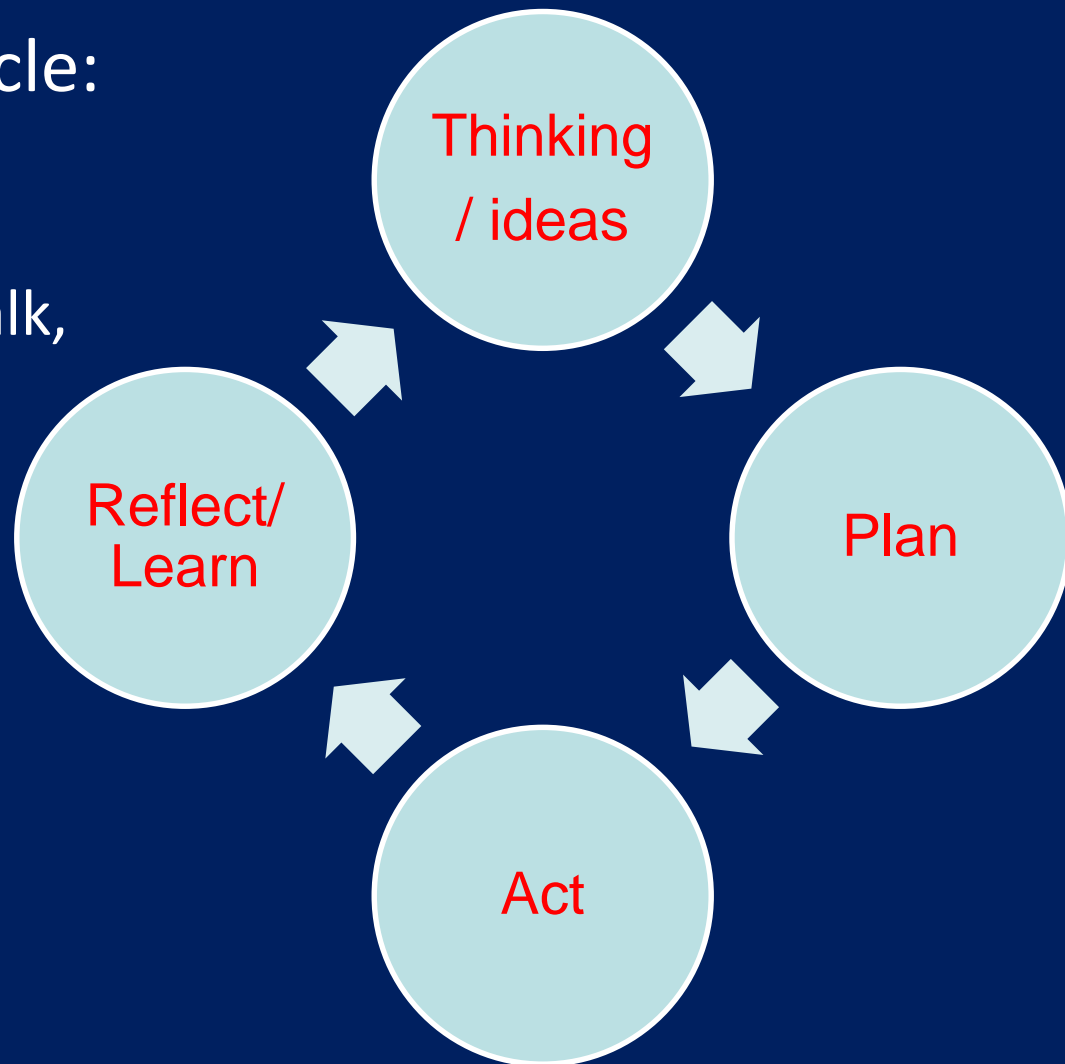
1. Who are you facilitating?

The Questions to ask:

- Who will be the 'audience' / attendees?
- Why do they want a facilitator?
- What do those asking you expect from this session?
- Are there any 'Unexploded bombs' – major problems?

2. What kind of activity are you facilitating?

Consider this project cycle:
Most facilitation work may be at the planning stage but it might be a guided walk, an activity day or similar event, or a group of people reflecting or an overview session that may lead to new plans.



Planning the session

Always be clear on: *What are the specific objectives?*

- What is the session meant to achieve?

Write them out:

By the end of the session those involved will have:

- (ideally four or five)

An example (from a year planning full-day session)

By the end of the session those involved will have:

- Identified the major successes and problems faced over the last year
- Discussed and agreed priority areas for development in the coming year
- Devised a range of possible activities to take these areas forward and prioritised a small number
- Identified who will lead on what and any resources that will be needed

Achieving group objectives

Many workshops / seminars follow a common process:

1. Confirm the starting point
2. Generate relevant ideas
3. Develop the ideas and prioritise
4. Identify / prioritise points to take forward
5. Plan the actions / next steps

Opening up, broadening out, focusing in

- Confirm? *Information, introductions*
- Generate? *Open session, brainstorm*
- Develop? *Small groups - details*
- Prioritise? *Groups / plenary (sticky dots!)*
- Plan? *Who does what? Resources?*

An action point can often be starting point for repeating this process at a 'micro' level

Team building

You may be less worried about the outputs – more about the process. So let's look at a **team exercise**

We're all going on a coach trip to the seaside – about 20 of us. When you get off the coach do you :

A. Head off to the beach or a café with a couple of friends?

B. Find the tourist info centre and make sure you know all the things that you and others could do

C. Check that everyone is happy and that no-one's left anything behind and knows the return time

D. Suggest a great thing for people to do and encourage them to take part



What would you do?

What ever you say, you're one part of a team. Get together with those like you.

- What is good about being an A B C or D person? (whatever our group is);
- Which of the other types challenge us? How?
- Which of the other types are good to work with? Why?

The types:

- **A:** The do-er! (energetic, individualist, but may feel held back by the team)
- **B:** The investigator (good at finding things out, but may not be such a doer)
- **C:** The monitor (focusing on the process is important, but may lose sight of the goal)
- **D:** The shaper (creative and positive, but may not listen to other people)

We're all a bit of each!

Check 'Belbin Team Roles' for more on this

If people get stuck: Ask why!

- A very simple way to get to the root of a problem
- Ask why something is or isn't happening and then ask why when you get the answer.
- And then ask why again (and three more times)....

So what could possibly go wrong?

Another way to approach projects:

You are a group of people planning a big meeting to kick off a community improvement project that involves upgrading a neighbourhood centre (with some disruption for users)

How can you make sure the meeting is a complete failure?

Active facilitation

Facilitation is active and energetic work.

It's about

- Getting started
- Keeping the process moving

AND

- Moving towards a close: reviewing what has been said, finding common ground, acknowledging disagreement and finishing off.

The nuts and bolts


- Room layout
- The flip chart
- Visual aids / Power point

Empowerment: Towards a 'new professionalism'

- **The Institutional Challenge:** words like “participation” and “empowerment”, by and for communities demand change by us. Participation will not work unless we too are participatory.
- **The Professional Challenge:** Normal professional values, methods and behaviour reinforce the dominance of the ‘expert’. The challenge is to learn to see things the other way round, to appreciate and grasp the reality of local people.
- **The Personal Challenge:** The personal challenge is to give up power! It is to enjoy handing over the initiative to others, enabling them to do more and to do it more in their way, for their objectives.

(Read Robert Chambers' work for information)

Facilitation – long-term skill building



**Much of this is
about your own
personal practice**

**Everyone
facilitates in
slightly different
ways**

**The best way to
build your skills is to
learn from your own
work (and from
pretty much every
other meeting!)**

**There are many
web sources of
further
information**

Make it easy on yourself!

- Be clear on why they want a facilitator
- Get there early (map, transport plan, venue)
- Set the event as you'd like it
- A local chair / introducer
- Talk to people beforehand
- Check the technicals (flip charts etc.)
- W I W O...

Evaluating facilitation

- The feedback form (in your pack!)
- The feedback flipchart
- Moving around (vote with your hands or feet)
- A closing statement by everyone

I have just three things to teach:
simplicity, patience, compassion.
These three are your greatest
treasures.

Lao Tzu

Thank you!

- Please fill in your feedback form – your comments matter!
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