

Facili-what?

Depending on your experiences, you likely have a healthy appreciation for, or skepticism about, third-party facilitation. Either way, we'd like to clarify a few things. Let's start with a definition.

fa·ci·li·tāte: to make easier, to help bring about

As facilitators, we don't achieve the goal; other people do. We make the goal easier to achieve. We apply our skills, tools and methods in **service to others** and **their goals**.

"Facilitate" is a transitive verb, so it is meaningless standing alone. What comes after the word facilitate? What can we "help bring about?" That's up to you. Things like...

Engagement

Learning, Confidence and Mastery

Problem-resolution / Innovation

Strategic Plan / Goals

Measurable Performance Improvement

Collaboration and Trust

Agreement / Conflict Resolution

Group Decisions and Commitment to Change

Follow-through



Facilitators are **focused on the process** as it is unfolding before them. To be specific, the cognitive and human interaction processes involved in group meetings and achieving team goals. They design a meeting or workshop to elicit these processes and then guide them along the way for maximum results, as well as **capturing results** as they emerge.

Facilitators stay **neutral**. They are not invested in the content of the outcome, because they trust the outcome will be strong if the quality and integrity of the process is maintained at a high level.

This is well-expressed in the [Statement of Values](#) of The International Association of Facilitators (IAF)...

As group facilitators, we believe in the inherent value of the individual and the collective wisdom of the group. We strive to help the group make the best use of the contributions of each of its members. We set aside our personal opinions and support the group's right to make its own choices. We believe that collaborative and cooperative interaction builds consensus and produces meaningful outcomes.

Facilitators, in partnership with leaders, set the tone and create a **safe environment** in which to try new things and explore outside of our comfort zones.

Facilitators **design a meeting** using tools and approaches to stimulate and structure the various types of thinking and dialogue that will best achieve the desired results. Some examples:

Strategic Thinking Processes - force field analysis, SWOT, trend spotting, SMART goal setting, balanced scorecard, prioritization

Creative Thinking Processes – CPSI®, brainstorming, lateral thinking, parallel thinking ala Six Thinking Hats®

Critical Thinking Processes – root cause analysis, fish-bone diagram, Gilbert’s Six-Box Model®, evaluation, decision matrices, Sort decision-making model, WRAP® decision-making model

Research and Analysis – interviews, focus groups, surveys, KPIs, Kirkpatrick’s Four Levels of Evaluation®

Collaboration and Discussion Processes - Two-way Dialogue: assertive expression and active listening, personality profiles and interpretation, trust-building exercises, conflict resolution, win-win negotiation, Open Space Meeting Technology

Other Supporting Processes - Appreciative Inquiry, visual mapping of ideas and data, storytelling, team building, simulation, role play, improvisation, experiential learning strategies, performance support tools



During the meeting, the leader can set expectations, give context and **fully participate** in the process. Then observe as their team becomes engaged and empowered in creating results.

When results matter, employ a skilled, neutral facilitator to design and steward your development processes.