

Facilitation Techniques and Responsibilities

Audio Descriptive Text

Title: Professional Development 201: From Basic to Dynamic. During the Webinar; Facilitation Techniques and Responsibilities. Image of PD practices: Sustain, Design, Promote, Deliver, Follow Up, and Evaluate. CDC logo.

Video Summary

Effective facilitation includes the ability to create an atmosphere of learning, spark excitement, encourage involvement, and transfer responsibility of learning to participants.

Audio Script

In PD101, facilitation was differentiated from training in this way: Training involves moving from unknowns to knowns to meet objectives that were established beforehand. It focuses on a specific set of skills or knowledge that can be applied in the workplace. Facilitation is a process where participants start with information about a topic or problem and work toward an outcome. The outcome is not set when the facilitation process begins. A facilitator leads this process. For webinars, the leader acts more as a facilitator than a trainer.

A facilitator is often referred to as "a guide on the side, not a sage on the stage." Like tour guides, facilitators have an audience consisting of members who have their own interests, who participate for knowledge and context. Audiences don't want to spend the day looking at the tour guide or focusing on irrelevant material.

Facilitation skills include the ability to:

- Create an atmosphere where meaningful learning can take place,
- Spark excitement and anticipation,
- Encourage active involvement, and
- Transfer the responsibility of learning into the hands of the participants.

Facilitators have a number of responsibilities that tie into effective learning. In particular, they should

- Be prepared and punctual in starting and executing activities,
- Set a climate of openness and learning,
- Encourage participation and provide opportunities to apply learning,
- Establish and maintain positive interactions, and
- Evaluate the climate of the group, making tweaks to the delivery of content style, as needed.

To optimize delivery, facilitators can reflect on these questions based on adult learning theory:

- **Self-concept** — Am I responsive to audience and time? Do I have options to deliver content with engagement as time and responsiveness allows? Do I manage interactive activities so participants can participate fully?
- **Experience** — Am I creating opportunities for audience feedback? Do I use effective facilitation techniques to draw out audience insights?
- **Orientation of Learning** — Do I kick off the training by highlighting how the content will assist with real-world problems? Is this based on audience pre-assessment data?
- **Readiness to Learn** — Am I engaging the audience to create teachable moments? Am I demonstrating the lesson is relevant?

Leveraging these concepts will better prepare you to engage audience members and increase participation.

Now, let's look at some other tips for audience engagement as a facilitator.

Being an effective facilitator is not just about understanding your role, it is also about playing it. Here are tips for how to give your best performance during the webinar.

- **Pay attention to the audio.** Audio is a vital element of a webinar. To make sure that everything goes smoothly, pick the right location for the setup. Find a quiet room to record. Consider using a landline instead of a wireless Internet connection to avoid any potential Wi-Fi "dropouts."
- **Use a superior microphone.** Use a headset instead of relying on the built-in microphone on your laptop or desktop computer. If the webinar includes multiple speakers in the same location, equip yourself with a high-quality speakerphone.
- **Speak clearly and fluently.** To make sure that voice-overs are effective, avoid fillers such as "uhm" or "err." Use vocal variety to captivate your audience.
- **Use short stories to introduce yourself.** Explaining what brought you to the topic will establish trust and develop an emotional connection between facilitator and audience.
- **Speak with authority, but maintain a welcoming, conversational tone.** Be enthusiastic. You are talking to people, not to the computer. Address the audience by using the pronoun "you" in sentences.
- **Use humor.** Don't be afraid to throw in a funny comment, but be sure it is politically and culturally correct and relevant.
- **Orient participants.** Always lay out the ground rules for participants. This includes courtesies such as muting phones when not speaking and speaking one at a time. This also includes instructions on how to use the webinar platform.
- **Dress professionally.** If using a webcam, make sure you dress professionally and have proper lighting and neutral office background. Also, look directly into the camera.

These are some of the "do's" of facilitation. Some of the "don'ts" will be reviewed in the next section.