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Leadership Development Initiative (LDI) Curriculum

Facilitation Skills

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Overview

Effective facilitation requires a complex set of behaviors; presentation skills, leading and giving direction and working with diverse kinds of people. A good facilitator involves everyone, moves a project from step-to-step, provides feedback and builds teamwork in order to achieve a shared goal.

The definition of 'facilitation' is "to make easier". Making things 'easier', enabling others to act, is a clear leadership behavior. A perfectly planned event may not be productive without thoughtful and skillful facilitation. The facilitator focuses more on the group process, and ideally works without a personal agenda, 'managing' conversations within a group to highlight ideas and develop consensus.

One key skill for a good facilitator to develop is proficiency in listening, and a participatory exercise is used to model the importance of this skill.

A facilitator needs constantly apply presentation skills, e.g., use eye contact, gestures and increased energy in order to be an effective leader. Asking questions is the key to engaging others. In addition, effective facilitators should move around the space to engage everyone, smile and color the voice, hold eye contact, make open gestures that invite participatory discussion.

Mindful of the group dynamics, skills are modeled to engage quiet members of the group, or 'settle down' a member who is dominating the group conversation.

Facilitation is a high-level skill; practice these skills to empower leadership in groups large and small.

Objectives

After this presentation, participants will:

1. Model behaviors of effective facilitation.
2. Describe small group facilitation behaviors that lead to success.

Important Teaching Points

- For effective facilitation, it is important to set ground rules at the beginning.
- Have an agenda and a clear topic.
- Consider assigning roles of timekeeper and/or recorder.
- Listening skills are key skills for a facilitator.
- Be sensitive to people's individual needs when facilitating groups.
- Guidelines for effective facilitators:
 - Ask questions.

- Let everyone express their opinion.
- Repeat what is said and slightly change the wording, if necessary, but check with the speaker.
- Watch time.
- Encourage participation by sustaining eye contact, using movement, body language, gestures, open questions, and by appearing interested in what is being said.
- Be generous with praise and encouragement.
- Find a polite way to deal with problems.

Resources / References

1. The Role of a Facilitator. www.mindtools.com/pages/article/RoleofaFacilitator.htm
2. The 20 People Skills You Need To Succeed At Work. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynsmith/2013/11/15/the-20-people-skills-you-need-to-succeed-at-work/#>.
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