MEETING FACILIATION SKILLS

Facilitators guide members of a team to understand common goals and to assist them with achieving those goals through collaboration, commitment, and consensus. Facilitators balance process and content so that meeting participants can work together to achieve a desired outcome. Process is the structure of a meeting, which includes helping people interact productively to make decisions and to ensure that everyone is heard; content focuses on subjects or topics of discussion. By managing process and content, facilitators drive the meeting forward through effective and creative means.

Preparation and Planning:

* Consider techniques/tools, how decisions will be made, how all will have a voice
* Identify overall goal; review background information
* Determine essential participants, make certain of their attendance, assign roles—Timekeeper, Recorder, Reporter, “But” Buster, Door Keeper
* Determine time and place
* Consider group dynamics; potential problems

Essential Techniques and Tools:

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| Agenda | Clearly states meeting objective, date, time, location, list of tasks with allotted time, expected outcome; keep a parking lot for issues not on the agenda |
| Meeting Norms | Establishes appropriate ways to interact, ensures participants understand how decisions are made—voting, majority rule, consensus |
| Attention to Task | Provides purposeful direction, refocusing,  ensures that problems are recognized and responded to |
| Running Memory | Ensures that data, discussion, ideas, votes, etc. are recorded for all to see on a flip chart, posters, etc. |

Roadblocks:

If this try this

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| Side-Bar Conversations | * Friendly Reminder * Direct Reminder * Personalize * Direct Request * Talk at break |
| Staying on Time | * Invoke ground rule, e.g. “stay focused” * Refocus on the specific agenda item * Attempt closure of item; remind group of time allotted to item * Offer choice; when will team address other items |
| Never Ending Discussion | * Invoke ground rule to “stay focused”, refocus, attempt closure * Gentle interruption—“Help me understand how this fits into the discussion.” * Direct inquiry; make eye contact with the person * Personalize * Talk privately; give specific feedback to the person |
| Conflict | * Gentle humor * Restate ground rules * Direct statement to person using both a firm and supportive tone * Gentle public reprimand * Address problem directly with person at a break |
| Returning from Breaks | * Gentle reminder * Ask for input—“-What do we need to do to make this work?”   “Do you need more time for a break?” |

Meetings By Design—Vista Consulting Team Limited

Basic Facilitation Skills—The Human Leadership and Development Division of the American Society for Quality, The Association for Quality and Participation, The International Association of Facilitators