

# Facilitating



## WHAT IS FACILITATING?

... it is the process of “working face to face with individuals and small groups in a learning environment”. This small group method works well, as it gives greater opportunity for constructive discussion than larger meetings, allowing more chance to understand the new materials which are being presented.

## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE FACILITATOR IN THE MANAGING CHANGE PROCESS?

The facilitator's job is to assist the group through the learning process. The facilitator needs to make sure the purpose of the meeting is clear, allow discussion to take place, and give all group members the opportunity to comment.

Any change can be difficult for people to adjust to, so the key role of the facilitator is to make sure that the discussion is positive and comes up with an agenda for action.

## PUTTING THIS INTO PRACTICE

Each individual and group of people are different, so it is important to plan how you will deal with them.

### 1. KNOW THE PEOPLE

Spend a few minutes thinking about each group member. This helps you to work out how best to deal with each person when you hold the discussion. Think about how they are likely to react to change.

- Are they very vocal? - You may need to give them something active to do during the meeting, such as writing notes to keep them involved in this, rather than talking too much!
- Are they very quiet? - Make sure you ask their opinion and give them the opportunity to speak if they want to.

- Are they a positive person? Use them to help enhance the mood of the whole group by inviting them to comment.
- Or, are they a negative person? You will need to keep them on track during the meeting and keep their input short.

The main difficulty in any meeting about ‘change’ is negativity, so in this first stage highlight anyone who will stop the meeting from being positive. Ideally, contact them as an individual beforehand, to explain the purpose of the meeting and to ask for their help – perhaps you could ask them to make sure the meeting keeps to time, help you to set up beforehand, write the action plan or take notes of the meeting. By approaching them beforehand and asking them to use one of their skills, this may help them to start the meeting in a more positive way.

### 2. EXPLAINING YOUR JOB

Having thought about each individual and if necessary approached them beforehand, think about the meeting itself. It is important to remember that as a facilitator, you are not there to come up with “the answers” and you won't know everything. You need to make sure this is stated at the start of the meeting, so that the rest of the group is clear about your role. It is a learning process for you all to work through together. Your job is to help keep the focus on how the changes can be put into practice in your area.

### 3. AGENDA

Suggest an agenda for the meeting as a three stage process ...

- i) go through any information you may have on the subject under discussion
- ii) check that all the group members understand the information, and then discuss it
- iii) create an action plan for how we can put the new changes into practice

#### 4. ACTION PLANNING

The action plan needs to focus on the key areas of what needs to be done, by whom and by when, who else needs to know, and if any help is needed. This could be drawn on a wipe board, on a flip chart or large paper, and filled in as the discussion takes place. After the meeting it is important that you, or a group member makes sure all the other group members has this information, highlighting their individual action points. You also need to make sure that this information reaches anyone else who will be involved in carrying out the action plan. This may be, for example, briefing all Group Scout Leaders, Section Leaders, Assistants and Helpers in a District.

It is not necessarily the role of the facilitator to take the action plan forward, it is more likely to be an "appropriate commissioner", but as the facilitator, you do need to prompt the appropriate person into action, and make sure that the momentum continues.

#### 5. ASK FOR HELP

Finally, if there is anything you or the people you are working with are unsure of anything, then do ask for help from other facilitators, commissioners, or from the Information Centre.

#### USEFUL RESOURCES ....

More information on facilitating can be found in the following factsheets available from the Scout Information Centre (0845 300 1818).

FS625033 The Purpose of Facilitators

**This factsheet was originally written as part of a series on Managing Change for the PRI Autumn 2000 Briefing events, but can also be used independently.**