Rotary International Effective Facilitation Guide

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Introduction

The following information has been compiled to provide an overview of the role of the facilitator and working with adult learners. As a Regional Rotary International Membership Coordinator, this information will help you in your role at district training meetings and your zone level membership seminar.

The Role of a Facilitator

Facilitation is the process of making something easier, such as a meeting or discussion. Facilitators are neutral individuals who determine, guide, and monitor the structure of discussions so teams are able to function effectively and have high-quality exchanges of ideas.

Facilitation is a "helping" role

To be a truly successful trainer, you must project a positive image to participants. Their interest in the material covered and their ability to retain and follow through on what they have learned is influenced by the participants' perception of the trainer's competence, credibility, and enthusiasm. In other words, often the messenger can be as important as the message. A trainer can inspire action and commitment or encourage passivity and apathy.

Skills Required

- *Listening.* The facilitator needs to be able to listen actively and hear what every team member is saying.

- *Questioning.* The facilitator should be skilled at asking questions. The leaders' guide provides the questions – you just need to use your skills to phrase them and reword them as necessary to get involvement.

- *Sharing.* The facilitator should create an atmosphere in which team members are willing to share their feelings and opinions.

- *Problem Solving.* When presented with a problem, the facilitator should help the person or the group identify a solution, rather than focus on the negative.

- *Resolving Conflict.* Conflict among participants should not be suppressed. Indeed, it should be expected and dealt with constructively. Recognize that participants may have diverse backgrounds and opinions.

- *Using a participative style.* The facilitator should be able to encourage all team members to participate in the discussion.

- *Accepting others.* The facilitator should maintain an open mind and remain neutral. He/she should not criticize the ideas and suggestions of the participants.

- *Empathizing.* The facilitator should be able to see the issue from a variety of perspectives.

- *Leading.* The facilitator must be able to keep the group focused and the discussion on target.

- *Time Management.* The facilitator must ensure all material is equitably covered.

The following is adapted from *"The Facilitator's Fieldbook"* by Thomas Justice and David W. Jamieson. Review these affirmations before each training session to remind yourself of the role of a facilitator.

Facilitation Fundamentals

✓ Listen intensely. Be a model for listening, often paraphrasing and "mirroring" what was said.

✓ Maintain good eye contact and stay connected to the group and each of its members.

✓ Trust in the resources of the group. Keep focused on the discussion.

✓ Use people's names (first or last as appropriate in your culture.)

✓ Stay alert and involved at each moment.

✓ Organize, connect, and summarize data to achieve closure and a sense of completion.

✓ Protect each and every idea offered. Do not allow ideas to be attacked.

✓ Be a facilitator, not a performer. Be interested, not interesting.

✓ Encourage everyone to express themselves, and validate varying points of view offered. Keep track of who talks and who does not, encouraging balanced participation.

✓ Be the guide, not the group leader.

✓ Be aware of the outcomes of the session and flexible in the approach to achieve those outcomes.

Characteristics of Adult Learners

It is important for facilitators to know how people learn. Learning involves:

- Taking in information
- Processing information
- Gaining understanding or insight, and
- Retaining what has been learned.

Understanding principles of adult learning helps the facilitator fulfill his/her critical role. The purpose of adult education is to **help them to learn, not to teach them** what you want them to know. The leaders' guides for RI training meetings are based on the principle of **facilitated learning** – not teaching.

Important Considerations when Training Adult Learners

Chinese Proverb

I hear and I forget.
I see and I remember.
I do and I understand.

- Adult learners are usually self-directed.

- The trainer functions as a facilitator rather than an academic instructor.

- Learners have individual needs and learning styles.

- Create a climate conducive to learning.

- Use the learners past experiences in the learning process.

- Ensure learning activities have some relevance to the learners' circumstances.

How We Learn[1]

We learn:
- 1% through taste
- 1.5% through touch
- 3.5% through smell
- 11% through hearing
- 83% through sight

We remember:
- 10% of what we read
- 20% of what we hear
- 30% of what we see
- 50% of what we see and hear
- 80% of what we say
- 90% of what we say as we act

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[1] From the National Safety Council, Itasca, Illinois.

Successful Global Training

As the facilitator, it is your responsibility to foster cultural and linguistic considerations for all participants. Follow these guidelines yourself and encourage participants to do the same.

- **Speak slowly and clearly.** You may be speaking to individuals who are not speaking in their first language. Speak slowly and clearly without raising your voice. Be sure to pause at the end of your sentences, to give listeners time to hear and process what was said.

- **Use visual aids**. Some may be able to read the language better than they understand the spoken language. Regional accents can affect this. Use overheads or flipcharts for key points or questions.

- **Do not use colloquialisms.** Use objective descriptions instead of casual forms of the spoken word, idioms, etc. You must very conscious of your language, as you will not even realize how frequently you use idioms or colloquialisms.

- **Avoid sentences or questions with negatives.** The person may answer with an affirmative answer, meaning that you are correct that an event has not occurred. (Ex: "You haven't had your meeting yet, have you?" Instead, ask, "Have you had your meeting today?")

- **Re-phrase** if your comments are not understood.

- **Put important information at the end of a sentence.** Placing the important content at the end of a sentence can help increase comprehension.

- **Provide specific examples.** It is easier for non-native language speakers to relate to theoretical concepts or statements that pertain to their own specific situations.

- **Avoid interrupting.** Interrupting a speaker or responding before the speaker has finished can be considered quite rude in some cultures.

- **Don't respond immediately.** In some cultures, it is respectful to silently consider a comment before offering an immediate response.

- **Avoid jokes.** You may be tempted to start your sessions with a joke to ease tension (usually your own!) Humor differs widely from culture to culture. Be conscious and considerate of the fact that some people are insulted by humor. Some cultures are much less likely to act spontaneously. They will carefully

consider all possible implications of a decision. A friendly joke made in public about another person may cause serious damage to a relationship or friendship.

- **Gender sensitivity.** Some Regional RI Membership Coordinators may be from countries where women are still not part of the majority of Rotary clubs. As a trainer, however, you must remain neutral and respect the differences of all cultures. Women today are involved in Rotary as members, club presidents, district governors, and regional leaders. They are also members of Rotaract and Interact, participants in Rotary educational and humanitarian programs, and recipients of services provided by Rotary clubs. Avoid gender specific language.

Nonverbal Communication

Albert Mehrabian, who spent a career in nonverbal research, wrote that 7% of one's perceived attitude is conveyed verbally and 93% nonverbally. Of the 93%, 38% was attributed to vocal cues and 55% to facial cues.

It is important to note that there is no universal nonverbal language. Different gestures may mean different things in different cultures.

There are several categories of nonverbal languages.

- *Human body.* The size, shape, sex, age, physique, and special characteristics all convey messages to the receiver. How these are interpreted varies with the receiver.

- *Body position and movement.* By greeting people at the door and standing in the front of the room at the beginning of the discussion period, the trainer sends a message of control without words. Some movements can distract participants, for example: playing with jewelry, paper or a pen, continually adjusting glasses, touching hair, or leaning against a wall or podium for support.

  If using a projector screen, white board, or flipchart, do not turn your back to participants. When referring to a visual, do so at 45-degree angle. While using gestures to emphasize various points can be effective, making too many can easily divert participant's attention away from a session's content.

- *Use of space to communicate.* As the space between the message sender and the receiver becomes less, the communication tends to become more personal and intense. Backing away and creating more space can have the opposite effect. "Cross talk" and the flow of communication can be affected by the position of the Facilitator, i.e., stand between participants to block cross talk with your body.

- *Eyes.* From the Facilitator perspective, use of the eyes may help in controlling who is speaking and who may speak next as you move around the room. The way you use your eyes may also impact the way you are perceived by the discussion participants. A study found that speakers who were judged sincere looked at the audience 63.4 % of the time, while speakers who were judged insincere looked at the audience 20.8% of the time.

- *Voice qualities and characteristics.* The use of tone, inflection, pace and volume all have an impact on the words that that we are using. Providing variety can help convey the appropriate messages at the appropriate time.

- *Silence.* Silence can provide effective communication. As a Facilitator, standing in front of the discussion group at the beginning of the session and saying nothing may be an effective way of conveying the message that it is time to start. You may also want to use silence after asking a question in order to allow discussion participants to mentally prepare a response. It may also be that in some cultures, if seminar participants know the subject being discussed, it is proper to remain silent.

- *Touch.* In the context of the Facilitator, a handshake and greeting at the door provides communication without a single word being spoken.

- *Time.* Time is viewed differently in various cultures and by diverse individuals. This is something to be aware of as a Facilitator. Some participants may want to take time to think through an answer because that may be an expectation in their culture.

- *Color.* Color can provide nonverbal communication. The red, yellow, and green colors of traffic lights, for example, have a nearly universal understanding. Facilitators may wish to consider use of color when using the flip charts.

- *Facial Expression.* Using and interpreting facial expressions can aid the Facilitator. Frequently, facial expression will identify someone who does not agree with a statement or who does not understand what is being said. It can also be used by the Facilitator to express interest or concern.

- *Pace.* A fast speaker may frustrate participants. Participants tend to view such speakers as anxious. Be sure to speak slowly enough for participants (many of whom may be taking notes or who may not be native speakers of the language) to follow.

Effective Questioning Techniques

The leaders' guides produced by RI for each training meeting are based upon facilitated discussion and use questions that guide participants to cover key topics during the sessions Asking participants questions can help to:

- Encourage systematic analysis
- Introduce topics not yet discussed
- Evoke participants' stories and experience
- Broaden participation
- Review a difficult concept (or concepts)
- Redirect a discussion.

Leaders' guides typically include open-ended, overhead questions (see definitions below). However, you will want to modify the questions depending on the focus and dynamics of the group. Facilitators can ask a wide range of questions:

- Open-ended questions
- Closed-ended questions
- Overhead questions
- Relay questions
- Directed questions
- Reverse questions
- Redirected questions

Open-ended Questions. Open-ended questions cannot be answered by a "yes" or "no" response. Since they stimulate thinking and encourage greater discussion, facilitators use open-ended questions to increase a team's participation.

Closed-ended Questions. Unlike open-ended questions, closed-ended questions solicit a one-word response. Typically, you would avoid asking closed ended questions, unless you are working to clarify the group's perspectives or narrow down ideas to a workable number.

Overhead Questions. Addressed to the entire group to encourage discussion, overhead questions channel group thinking, or are used to bring out different opinions. If a lively discussion has suddenly stopped, you might revive it by asking, "What are some of the other items we could consider under this heading?" "What other remedies for this situation have you found?"

Relay Questions. These questions are returned to the group as in the following example: "That's a good question. How have some of the rest of you handled that problem?"

Directed Questions. Asked to specific individuals, directed questions initiate discussion, redirect the conversation, or draw out the participant. Be careful not to overuse this technique or the group will expect your questions and the meeting will become a question/answer session. Present the question before directing it to an individual to ensure that others in the group also consider possible responses.

Reverse Questions. These questions are used to suggest that the person posing the question give his or her own answer. This method calls for tact. If it is apparent that the participant has his or her own opinion, it is helpful to elicit additional comments. Even if the questioner obviously has no answer, you might want to reverse the question to encourage the participant. On the other hand, be alert to group members who fall into the habit of asking many questions on topics about which they have strong viewpoints, even to the point of usurping your role.

Redirected Questions. This technique encourages further discussion and at the same time relates the question back to previous discussion. A question may also be redirected to a member known to have special knowledge. Example: A participant asks you a question and you redirect the question to another this way. "Thank you for the question. Perhaps <NAME> could respond as he/she may have some knowledge of that topic."

Flip Chart Suggestions

You don't need to have perfect handwriting or be an artist to use flip charts successfully in your group discussion room. Here are some suggestions:

1. Print in large capital letters if you have difficulty with your handwriting.
2. Use two colors at a minimum on each page, but never more than three. Use bold, darker colors such as black, purple, green, and blue to make the chart legible. Use lighter colors like yellow or pink to highlight a key concept, word or phrase.
3. Clip your flip chart to the easel **at the top**. Do not just rest the flip chart on the easel; it will fall down during your session.
4. Ask for assistance. Request a volunteer to help write responses on the flip chart or help post the flip chart on the wall. This will free you to facilitate. Involve different people to avoid overburdening one participant.
5. Help the person you have chosen to take notes by repeating answers.
6. Use flip charts to augment the sessions by writing some discussion questions from the leaders' guide at the top and write the participant responses on the sheet during the session.
7. If you intend to write on the flip chart while it is posted on the wall, be sure to put one blank sheet under the page. This will prevent the ink from bleeding onto the wall.

Use of Overhead Projectors

Projector Position:
- Decide on the position of the projector and screen taking into consideration the size of the room, the seating arrangements, the location of the power supply, and the placement of your training materials.
- Position your materials so that you do not have to walk in front of the projector to reach for a new transparency.

Practical Matters:
- Keep the projector, especially the lenses and glass plate, free of dust and finger marks.
- Check focus and distortion by projecting your first slide when setting up your room.
- Ensure that the lens head is parallel with glass plate to help avoid blue fringing.
- Each projector has two bulbs. If the first one burns out, switch to the second one.

Use of LCD Projectors

Projector Position:
- Decide on the position of the projector and screen taking into consideration the size of the room, the seating arrangements, the location of the power supply, and the placement of your training materials.
- Position your materials so that you do not have to walk in front of the projector.

Creating PowerPoint slides to Support Discussion
Using PowerPoint for a group discussion is much different than using it for a presentation. If you are using PowerPoint for a discussion, a few guidelines to keep in mind:

- It is recommended that you have no more than 15 slides total for any one-hour group discussion session.
- Do not use cartoons or complex graphics. The visuals are to enforce the discussion, not distract and call attention to the screen. Particularly if you have an international audience, some images may not be appropriate for all in the group.
- Do not include "builds" in your presentation. Participants will not give you the answers to discussion questions in the order they appear on your slide. You should use the slides to review after participants have answered the question.
- Do not use sound or distracting animation. Again, the focus should be on discussion, not on the screen.
- Headings should be 44 point font, text should be 32 point font. Use consistent font size and style throughout on all slides. Check spelling, punctuation and grammar carefully. These variations and errors are distracting to the training and reflect on your credibility.

Practical Matters:

- Always test the equipment before the session begins.
- Check power connection. If cord is connected, try another outlet.
- Try "rebooting" your computer. If the session is beginning, start while this is happening. Try not to let this be a disruption to your session.
- If you still have not been able to resolve the situation, either quickly switch to the overhead projector or abandon the use of visuals and rely instead on flip charts. Stay calm. The session is about DISCUSSION, not visuals.

Training Activities

The ability of the person facilitating to use a variety of training techniques can dramatically improve the quality of a group discussion session. The list below contains some interactive training techniques that could be incorporated in your group sessions to provide some variety in the learning experience.

- **Pair and Share** - Have learners turn to the person next to them and discuss the question.

- **Action Plan**. Learners are given time to think about what was learned, assess its applicability, and write down how to make it work in their setting.

- **Action Items**. Ask each person what idea they heard that they will be able to use when they return to their district. Or, ask the participants to write down ideas or actions in their workbook.

- **Follow up Support**. On a piece of paper, participants write down:
    - Name
    - Daytime telephone number or e-mail address
    - Something he/she wants to accomplish
    - Something that would provide encouragement/support

    Participants also write the date and set time 2 weeks in the future as a reminder. Participants exchange information. On that date and time, participants call or e-mail the people whose papers they have to offer whatever support/encouragement was requested.

- **Group mixing** - Count off (2's, 3's) and create new groups.

- **"Parking Lot"** – Use a separate flip chart or corner of a board to list issues to cover later or research further.

Intervention Techniques for Disruptive Behavior Scenarios

As a trainer, you may encounter several of the following scenarios. .

The side bar conversationalist

A participant starts a quiet discussion with a neighbor while the trainer is facilitating discussion among the rest of the group.

Possible Solution(s):

- Walk near the talking participants.
- Use silence and look at the participant to get his/her attention.
- If the participant does not respond to these intervention techniques and it appears he/she is disrupting other participants, you may want to ask if they need help or have a question for the group. Some people are shy about sharing a comment with the entire group unless they are called upon. Some may have lost something or have a personal distraction that can be alleviated by telling the participant you will report the issue to a Sergeant-at-Arms, or help them after the session.
- If the person is still not responsive, you may approach him/her after the session to ask that they be considerate of their neighbors who may wish to participate in the discussion.

The know-it-all participant

Each time the trainer asks a question, one participant is always the first to answer and gives his/her answer in a way that makes it appear as though his/her district is superior to others.

Possible Solution(s):

- Use a directed question (rather than an overhead question) to ask another participant to answer the next question.
- Say "Thank You" to the participant who is monopolizing the conversation and say, "Let's hear from some others in the group who have yet to participate."

The long answer lecturer

A participant volunteers to answer a question and then takes control of the discussion as though she is now instructing everyone in the room.

Possible Solution(s):

- Before you call on individuals to answer a question, "queue" them in advance by saying "Let's hear from <NAME>, then <NAME>, and then <NAME>." That way the speaker knows two people are waiting their turn to speak.
- Walk within the U near the talking participant, effectively blocking the participant's view of his/her "audience."

Disagree with the Rotary position
A participant disagrees with "the Rotary position" and states that his way of thinking is clearly better based on his/her experience.
Possible Solution(s):
- Turn this statement to the group, by asking "Does everyone agree with this position?"

The insensitive comment or joke
A participant makes a mildly insensitive comment that may be offensive to others in the room.
Possible Solution(s):
- Address the situation in person with the participant, immediately following the session.
- Gauge the reaction of the group – if it is visibly offensive to the group, stop the conversation to remind everyone that Rotary is an international organization with a very diverse membership and that when sharing ideas everyone should keep this in mind.

Challenge the trainer
A participant challenges the way the trainer presents information. He or she says, "You are not clear - you must say it this way so that we understand."
Possible Solution(s):
- The first time this happens, say "Thank You" and "Let me repeat." Sometimes we forget to speak slowly and clearly; it is crucial to be accommodating and to make sure everyone understands.
- If the participant is personally challenging you, you might ask the group, "Is everyone having difficulty with this concept?" or "Can anyone else help explain this to <NAME>?"

Question the facilitator's credentials
A participant asks you how you were selected as a trainer and asks about your practical experience with the discussion topic.
Possible Solution(s):
- Preemptive strike – begin session by stating that the cumulative experiences of the group are greater than your own personal experiences.

I do not believe the answer my colleague provided is correct
A participant challenges the answer that was provided by a colleague.
Possible Solution(s):

- If it is a matter of fact, ask the group if anyone has expert knowledge of the subject.
- If it is a matter of opinion, recognize that opinions may vary and practices around the world are different.
- If the correct information does not come forward give the information if you know it

The bored participant
One participant is visibly uninterested in the discussion (i.e. flips through the handout book, rummages in his/her bag, reorganizes materials, etc.).
Possible Solution(s):
- Walk near the participant.
- Ask them a directed question.
- If using a flipchart, ask them to help and be the recorder.

The tired participant
A participant is clearly falling asleep during the session.
Possible Solution(s):
- Walk near the participant.
- Ask them a directed question.
- Tell the whole group to stand up and stretch.

The late participant
A participant arrives 1 or 2 minutes after the session started and tries to find out what he/she has missed from neighbors.
Possible Solution(s):
- Always start on time.
- Walk near them to encourage them to stop talking.
- After the session, ask them to arrive on time in the future to avoid disruptions for the group.

Language difficulty
When asked a question, the participant does not respond or indicates that he/she does not understand the question.
Possible Solution(s):
- Make an effort to speak slowly and clearly and repeat your questions.
- Turn the question to the group to "help" the participant.
- After the session, ask if they are having difficulty and how we can help (pair them with another participant).

The fast talker
One participant speaks so fast that it is difficult for non-native language speakers to understand.
Possible Solution(s):
- Restate the response or question
- Remind the participants to speak slowly and clearly.

Questions and answers off the topic
A participant provides answers that do not pertain to the topic at hand.
Possible Solution(s):
- Offer to place their question/issue on a flip chart so that it can be addressed during the open forum.

Continue to pursue an issue
A participant continues to pursue an issue when you need to continue to another topic.
Possible Solution(s):
- If the group is interested in the discussion and if you have sufficient time it is ok to continue the discussion.
- After a point, offer to post the issue on the flip chart so that it can addressed later.

Equipment failure
After welcoming everyone at the door, you return to the front of the room to find that your projector is not working.
Possible Solution(s) for Overhead Projectors:
- Always test the equipment before the session begins.
- Check power connection. If cord is connected, try the other outlet.
- If a bulb is out, switch to the spare bulb.
- If the session is beginning, abandon the use of visuals and rely instead on flip charts. Stay calm. The session is about DISCUSSION, not visuals.

Possible Solution(s) for LCD:
- Always test the equipment before the session begins.
- Check power connection. If cord is connected, try the other outlet.
- Try "rebooting" your computer. If the session is beginning, start while this is happening. Try not to let this be a disruption to your session.
- If you still have not been able to resolve the situation, either quickly switch to the overhead projector or abandon the use of visuals and rely instead on flip charts. Stay calm. The session is about DISCUSSION, not visuals.

The interrupter
One participant continually interrupts others who are speaking.
Possible Solution(s):
- Walk in front of the talking participant, effectively blocking the participant's view of his/her "audience."
- "Excuse me. Before you continue, may I ask <NAME> to finish with his point?"
- "Thank you, you've made a number of points. May we hear now from some who have not expressed an opinion?"

No participation from the whole group
You ask a question and no one answers.
Possible Solution(s):
- Be patient with the silence. Immediate response is not appropriate in every culture. Give participants time to think.
- Restate or rephrase the question.
- If one person looks like he/she has a response, but is hesitant to share, ask a directed question.
- "What is your opinion of ………, <NAME>?
- "<NAME>, from your experience on this general subject, would you...?

Too much participation
There is too much "cross talk" at the same time.
Possible Solution(s):
- Some "cross talk" is good; it shows enthusiasm and interest in the subject.
- If it gets too loud or seems to only involve a few participants, walk between the participants to block the cross talk with your body.
- "Excuse me. Before you continue, may I ask if anyone has a comment on the point you have just made?"

Expecting answers
The group asks you to answer the questions instead of participating in the discussion.
Possible Solution(s):
- Remind them of the role of the facilitator. Be humble. Recognize that you don't have all the answers, but that the experience in the room will ensure that all questions are answered.
- When a participant asks you a specific question, resist the urge to answer it. Try using a "relay question" to ask the group for an answer. Or use a "reverse question" and ask the person who raised the question (see Effective Questioning Techniques,

page 11.)

Incorrect information
A number of participants have the wrong information on an issue and they are certain they are correct.
Possible Solution(s):
- Ask the group if anyone has a conflicting opinion on the matter. "How many others would agree with the point just raised?"
- If there are reference publications available, ask a participant to look up the information.