



Study Notes For Group Facilitation

This section forms part of
The NCEF in Association with the IHF

Fit For Life Lifestyle Management Specialist Module

This Module is accredited by the University of Limerick and carries 15 ECTC Credits



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Communication Skills

There are four general objectives of communication

- To be received (heard or read)
- To be understood
- To be accepted
- To get action (Change of behaviour or attitude)

When we fail to achieve any one of these we have failed to communicate. This can often lead to frustration and resentment
(Stanton, '96)

Verbal Communication

Encouragement: Be positive and create a comfortable rapport with the class. Use small words/ phrases that will encourage your class members to continue speaking e.g. "yes " "well done " "Go on " etc.

Clarification: Check with the class at various points , ensure that they fully understand your presentation, tasks and questions etc.

Should a class member make a point or ask a question, make sure you fully understand what he /she is saying. You might want to ask him /her to explain to you again or in more detail

Avoid Interruption: Be courteous, allow speakers to finish each sentence, don't jump ahead assuming you know their point or dismiss them because you feel they are incorrect in what they are saying.

If they are incorrect, allow them to finish and then gently but firmly point out where and why their point is incorrect.

Paraphrase: Paraphrase at the end of sections you have facilitated picking out the main points ensuring all are understood.

If class members make a long contribution, paraphrase at the end of it to ensure you have understood exactly what they are saying and also to ensure that the remainder of the participants understand the point.

Non Verbal Communication

Gestures: Movements of the hands or body which help to explain or emphasise the verbal message.

When a member of the group is speaking active listening gestures such as nodding and saying 'yes' or 'ok' will help to communicate that you are interested in what they have to say.

Eye Contact: An individual who never makes eye contact with his/her listeners may be conveying a message *I don't like you or I'm not very sure of myself or what I am saying.*

When talking to a group move your eyes around the room treating your audience as individuals.

Don't keep your eyes on the desk or your presentation

Appearance: Your appearance reflects how you see yourself (self image) and listeners cannot help notice your appearance and will take messages from your dress and general grooming. In most cases audiences see the speaker and will make judgments about them before they even speak!

The two key elements are

1. Personal cleanliness and tidiness
2. Dress and appearance appropriate to the situation

Posture: Good posture is important. A speaker who slouches in a chair or leans against a wall or is hunched over hands in pockets may convey a message that they are tired, bored or careless or all three!

Poor posture can also effect the quality of your voice

Skills & Qualities of a good Facilitator

The FFL Specialist needs a variety of skills and qualities to become an effective facilitator.

Empathy: You need to be able to see things from the viewpoint of your audience and see the difficulties they might encounter when changing their lifestyles

Rapport: Ability to build a rapport

Encourage: Ability to influence and encourage others

Confidence: Confidence in your own ability and a knowledge of the areas that you need to improve.

Facilitation Methods/ Tools

There are a number of different tools or methods for communicating your message to the group of participants. They may be used independently or mixed and matched. The tool / method(s) you choose will depend mainly on factors such as

- The size of the group
- Level of maturity and interest in the topic
- The groups background knowledge in the area
- The topic you are covering
- The type of room in which the session will take place

This section will briefly examine 3 common facilitation tools; when best to use each tool and the advantages and disadvantages of each one.

The Lecture

A lecture is an oral presentation intended to present information or teach people about a particular subject

“A carefully prepared oral presentation of a particular subject by a highly qualified individual” (Bergevin et al., '63)

“Lecturing is informative speaking”(Cooper '85)

When to use

Time is limited

- Clarify, explain difficult concepts, technical information
- The speaker has good content knowledge
- The speaker has good public speaking skills
- Learners have a good to above average education and intelligence

Galbraith '98

Advantages

Economical in terms of time if dealing with moderate to large groups

- Orderly, precise, clear presentation
- Well known, most adults are comfortable with it
- Useful for participants who may not be comfortable with printed materials

Limitations

Learners exposed to only one view

- No verbal interaction between learner and speaker
- Difficult to determine the assimilation of the material
- May discourage learner involvement and they may switch off and become bored

Preparing more effective lectures

Give a handout with key points that encourages note taking

- Use a minimum of font 20 and no more than 4 points per slide/acetate

- Invite colleagues or video tape yourself to identify annoying mannerisms or overuse of 'pet' words
- Rehearse content and time limits

Group-work

Developed by Andre Delbecq & Andrew Van de Ven in the 1960's as a problem solving technique

"Its strength is derived from the power of individuals each generating, exploring, and communicating ideas"

(Galbraith '98)

The whole point of group work is for everyone in the group to work as a team to accomplish a task or solve a problem. Groups generally consist of individuals with lots of different backgrounds and life experiences. Pooling all of these resources together with common objectives can lead to well rounded and objective solutions to problems.

How to use

The steps below are only a guideline. They may vary in order and all might be used or only some of them depending on the group and task.

1. Introductions
2. Ice-breaker
3. For larger groups, appoint a leader, a spokesperson and a recorder
4. Set the task or generate the problem for the group
5. Each group member takes a few minutes to write down their own opinions or suggested solution to the problem
6. Individual members disclose their ideas to the group and the leader writes them on a flip-chart
7. Open discussion of all the ideas by the group
8. The group votes or comes to general agreement on the solution to the task / question

When to use

- Information required from the group is tentatively /possibly known or is in the public domain
- Mature interested group
- Time permits!

Advantages

- Restricts influence of a dominant or loud person within the group
- Keeps participants active and interested
- Combines opinions from many backgrounds and experiences

Limitations

- Some participants may feel threatened or shy about engaging with others
- An amount of general knowledge about the task or question is required by the group
- Can be very time consuming

- May not work well with immature or only mildly interested participants as they may start chatting about 'the match last night' etc

Tips for using Group-work

- Careful with time management
- You may need to step in and move on the discussion
- Ensure group stick to the task

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a useful and popular tool that you can use to develop highly creative solutions to a problem. During brainstorming sessions there should be no criticism of ideas... judgments and analysis at this stage will stunt idea generation.

It is also a very useful interactive method of facilitation as all the participants are expected to contribute.

Why use

Group brainstorming can be very effective as it uses the experience and creativity of all members of the group. When individual members reach their limit on an idea, another member's creativity and experience can take the idea to the next stage. Therefore, group brainstorming tends to develop ideas in more depth than individual brainstorming.

How to use

- Define the problem you want solved clearly
- Keep the session focused on the problem
- Ensure that no one criticizes or evaluates ideas during the session. Criticism introduces an element of risk for group members when putting forward an idea.
- Encourage an enthusiastic, uncritical attitude among members of the group. Try to get everyone to contribute and develop ideas, including the quietest members of the group;
- Encourage people to develop other people's ideas, or to use other ideas to create new ones.

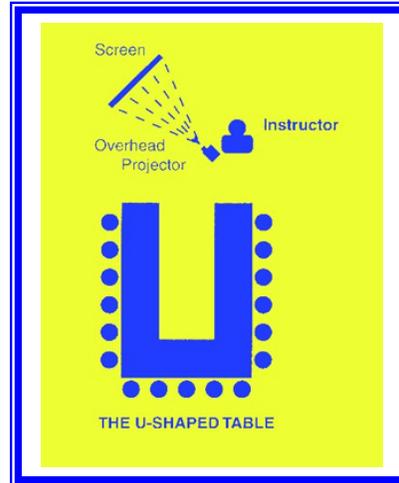
Note down ideas that come out of the session. A good way of doing this is to use a flip chart. This should be evaluated and summarised after the session.

Tips for good Brainstorming

- Set the rules from the beginning and don't allow criticism of ideas
- Gently encourage quieter members of the group to offer some input
- Drop hints or ideas for development if there are 'silent spots' where the group get stuck.

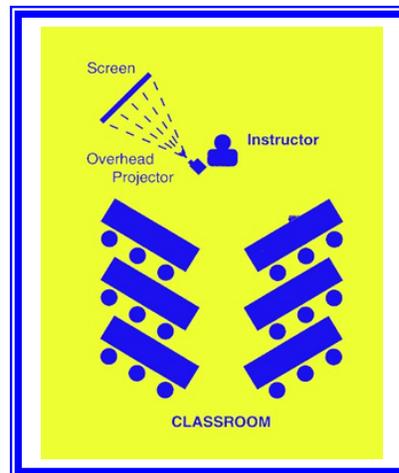
Seating Arrangements

U Shaped Table: Best when you want participation and verbal discussion, Ideal for 10-20 participants.



Classroom Layout:

- Suitable for most size groups.
- Pattern allows participants to see each other
- Movable chairs can be used for interaction



Theatre or large hall:

Suitable for large groups but expect little participation. Ensure projection screen is large and visible to all

