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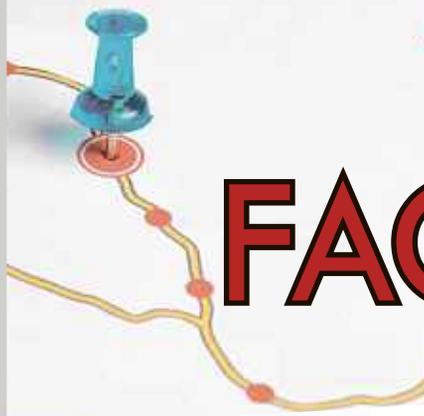
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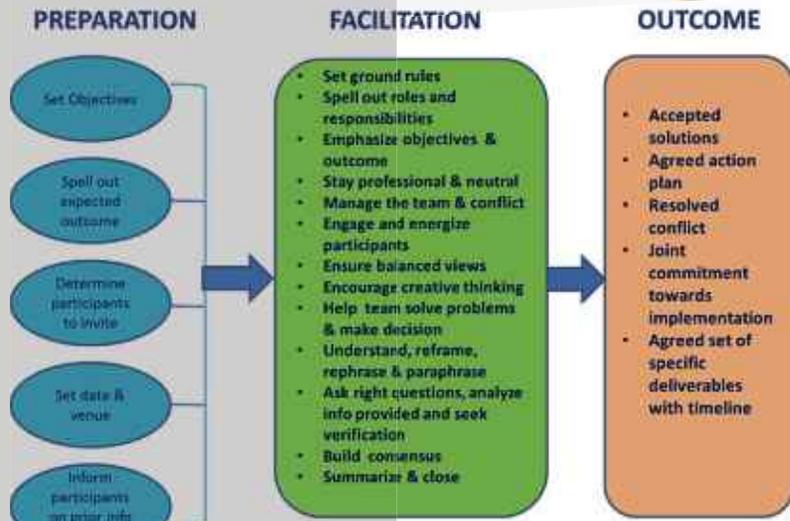
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A ROAD MAP FOR EFFECTIVE FACILITATION



THE corporate world is full of stories of lesser ideas being adopted and poor decisions made every day. One key reason is because leaders have poor facilitation skills. They fail to bring out the best ideas from their people to enable quality decisions to be made. Over the years, our company, KL Strategic Change Consulting Group, has developed a road map to enable leaders to facilitate a meeting, discussion or workshop to get the best outcome from their team. We will use the word, "meeting" which can include discussion, retreat or workshop. Below is our road map for effective facilitation.



KLSCC'S EFFECTIVE FACILITATION ROADMAP

In essence, there are 3 key areas to focus on preparation, facilitation and outcome.

PREPARATION

To achieve the best outcome from a meeting, one must prepare in advance all the things that are required to ensure its success. It is good to begin with the objectives of the meeting with a clear agenda of items with specific timeline. This is followed up with a clear expression of expected outcome. To ensure relevant input, identify who the stakeholders are and decide on who should participate in the meeting. The date and venue need to be communicated to the participants in advance. Too often, people come to a meeting unprepared and, hence, would not be able to contribute productively. Therefore, communicate in advance the kind of information they should gather or materials to read up on. The organiser of the meeting, apart from circulating the agenda, could also send them some background information or research

materials such as industry analysis or competitor information that will be useful for discussion at the meeting.

FACILITATION

Besides communicating the objectives, agenda and the expected outcome, the facilitator should also spell out the roles and responsibilities of the participants. He or she next sets the ground rules for the meeting. This is to enable the smooth running of the facilitation session. The ground rules could be on punctuality, mutual respect, taking turns to speak, a spirit of openness and, of course, phone etiquette.

The role of the facilitator is to engage the participants so that they can contribute great ideas. He should spark their creativity to solve problems and make quality decisions. To ensure that the session is not hijacked by dominant characters, he should play a proactive role of balancing the views and participation. In cases of difficult characters and

conflicts, he should resolve or control the situation. To ensure his credibility, the facilitator should maintain his professionalism and stay neutral during the discussion. To add value to the discussion, he should reframe, rephrase or paraphrase the points put forward and understanding them. To seek great answers, the facilitator often needs to ask the right questions, analyse the information or points provided and seek verification of the ideas or views put forward. The facilitator should summarise the key points and build a consensus based on them.

OUTCOME

There are two ironic challenges in our lives today. One is making ends meet in our domestic lives and the other is making meetings end in our corporate lives. There have always been complaints by staff that there are too many meetings in organisations. Actually, the number of meetings could be due to the poor quality of output or outcome from these meetings. Often, companies hold one meeting after another in the hope that actions can be taken to resolve specific issues. When the results are not achieved, they continue to hold meetings. The key is to focus on the outcome of the meetings and how we can get the team to take action to achieve the desired results. There should be a dedicated person to take note of key discussion points, agreed solutions and action plans with specific measures and timeline.

From the experience of our consulting projects, we would like to share some strategies to make meetings more effective or productive by focusing on the expected outcome:

- Overcoming resistance and winning the agreement to the proposed solutions is key.
- To overcome resistance, we need to address the issues and concerns faced by stakeholders.

- There is a need to address the W.I.I.F.M (What's In It For Me) for these stakeholders. Focus on the proposed solutions and how they can help them in their work.
- Once the participants are convinced of the benefits of the solution or change, they will accept it wholeheartedly and hence committed to taking actions to bring about the desired results.
- To ensure that there is no bitter feelings towards one another, it is good to resolve the conflicts arising from individuals or groups in the meeting.
- The more specific and clearer the expected outcome is spelled out, the easier it is for everyone to achieve the results.
- Clear Key Performance Indicators with specific deliverable and time frames with names of individuals or groups tied to them will be more effective compared to leaving it open for anyone to take action.

In essence, company meetings, workshops or retreats should be sessions of productive engagement of ideas that lead to quality decisions. And, quality decisions should drive actions to produce the desirable results, which should directly or indirectly improve the company. Only then are such meetings justified.

In your next meeting, discussion or workshop, remember to use the road map above to facilitate your session productively and profitably!



Dr Victor S.L. Tan is the chief executive officer of KL Strategic Change Consulting Group. He undertakes change management consulting and training. He is also the author of 10 management books. His latest programme is on Effective Facilitating Skills For Leaders. For feedback for this article email him at victorsltan@klsc.com or contact him at 012 3903168.

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