

John: Hello everyone this is John Denton here from Denton and Associates with another one of my chat over coffee recordings and today I'm going to be talking to Andrew Huffer from Andrew Huffer and Associates. Andrew is a friend of mine and a member of one of my mentor groups and involved in a couple of businesses. Andrew has an excellent café restaurant in East Victoria Park in Perth which sells the best coffee in Perth and Andrew also has a facilitation business where he helps people to become excellent facilitators as well as providing professional facilitation services himself to businesses. In fact that's how I first met Andrew several years ago when I had my training and development business and Andrew did quite a lot of facilitating for us and did an excellent job of that. We've been friends and business colleagues ever since. So Andrew, hello how are you?

Andrew: Very well thank you John, great to be with you today and having this chat.

John: That's good and I'm drinking some of your coffee while we speak, made with your coffee beans. Andrew tell us about your background and how you got into business, I know you support a funny Melbourne based AFL team but you know there must be a bit of a story behind that as well.

Andrew: Indeed we could spend the next 58 minutes talking about the joys of being a Carlton supporter but I don't think everyone would share that passion perhaps. I guess that is one of the things that brought me into business was a passion for what I do. Interestingly when you mention the coffee shop my background is actually from an agricultural science degree. I first came into the role of facilitation from a model where I was providing initially one to one technical advice to farmers and then the department I was working for at the time decided to move away from that model into what they saw as a group based model in providing technical information, this model was known as facilitation. So moving away from telling farmers how to run their business, (which is kind of strange seeing as I was a 24 year old graduate telling a 55 year old farmer how to run his business) to then getting him to sit down with other farmers who run the same kind of business and basically providing a structure look at challenges they had in their businesses and help each other develop solutions. The change for me was to stop talking and having a structure to just ask them questions to think more about what they were doing, how they were doing it and why they were doing it. That's how I moved into that facilitation role and I was a lot better at that then I was telling a farmer 30 years older than me how to run a business.

John: Yes I've presented to a group of farmers and they are a challenging bunch of people.

Andrew: They keep you honest there's no doubt about that.

John: A bit later on I was going to ask a question but I'll ask it now seeing as though you've kind of touched on it and that is, what is the difference between facilitating and training?

Andrew: Yes absolutely, training is really trying to provide people with some set skills and it's more of a directive usually a tell-oriented focus, I'm here to tell you what you need to know. Facilitation is more about having a structured approach asking a series of questions so people can find the solution they need to find. So facilitation is really having a neutral approach, having someone who is not invested in the outcome but having someone who can keep people honest and get them to a point where they can make some decisions.

John: That's quite a distinction and difference. When you started with these farmers and started facilitating you were an employee then were you?

Andrew: I was yes, but that was quite a while ago now and after a while of doing that which was something I really enjoyed I moved outside the department of structure and started my own business doing this kind of work, a lot of it was in the regional sector of WA. I guess the reason why I did that was I liked the challenge, enjoyed the variety and I started working in a program which again was working with farmers, but the feedback we kept getting was you are helping us to have the conversations we can't. So typically they were in a family business and they were in a position where they really didn't know where to start a difficult conversation about the business. They were the real challenges these guys were having, typically in that about 13 years ago. Typically the farmer back then was still focused on the doing of the business and enjoyed that side of things but the business side of the business was the challenging part. Importantly it moved these guys from being the sceptical starers to being the thankful hand shakers at the end of the process, where 'you've been able to get us to have the conversation we haven't been able to have and get to a decision we all agree on'. To be able to do that it's rewarding work and you get paid well for it.

John: It's interesting in general business context, the comment you made about starting conversations, it's something I come across within business owners when I'm coaching them there are things that they just don't know how to bring up and raise with their teams generally to do with performance or conflict or something like that, they don't know how to start the conversation.

Andrew: That's right or won't acknowledge the problem that it needs someone from outside to come in and lay it out on the table, to start working through that process and to really be up front with everyone in terms of what's going to happen. The people involved know you are working with them not doing it to them which is probably the key thing.

John: Working with them yes. So you went off and started your own business, how long ago was that?

Andrew: That was on January 12th 2000.

John: It would have been interesting in the early days when you were starting out you would have had some interesting clients and some interesting experiences I'm sure?

Andrew: Undoubtedly yes, there was certainly some times where I was thinking 'oh my god what am I doing here'. A lot of my examples will be farmer based but I do a lot of work now in the health, retail, mining and IT sectors. An interesting early days one is being out at a place called Gascoyne Junction which is about 200 km's east of Carnarvon and working for a group of pastorals there, they weren't particularly keen on being involved in this process and probably about 7.30 that night I said are we happy to move on and this guy who would have been about 6 foot 4, 22 stone just stared at me and said I'm not even happy to be here mate so just get on with it. I thought mmm, I won't be mentioning that happy word ever again. So choose your words carefully and recognise that when you are running these sorts of processes people are often doing it under duress and sufferance unless. We made friends afterwards and a couple of beers that evening and we were all friends again. I did see my life flashing before his eyes at that stage I'd have to admit.

John: That's right, I'm sure there's lot of interesting episodes like that. There are a few misconceptions about facilitation as well particularly the usefulness of it in the work place, and to

me it's a skill that business owners and leaders should have any way and it's probably the one that most of them are the weakest at.

Andrew: Yes I find there's a couple of approaches and one is what I call having a 'facilitators approach' to their work which means not so much a formal role of having workshops and that sort of thing but having a process. I'm sure a lot of your people do this already, in thinking 'what are the key questions to ask my staff to ensure they take ownership of an issue and they'll see it as their responsibility to develop the solution and deliver on it'. Because often the deception is that leaders make all the decisions, call the shots and make sure it happens. But a facilitator leader is someone who recognises their blind spots and go to their staff to find out what the solutions are. That is how they are going to work for them and the business because at the end of the day it's all about the business.

John: Yes and not every manager or leader has the answers.

Andrew: Definitely not, that can be a lot of pressure for someone to take on too. That I have to be the one here to provide that answer and often people will be surprised by the answers they get from their staff and can be great for their business by bringing in those ideas, and that's the idea of having that what I call the 'ask approach' rather than the 'tell approach'.

John: Yes I can think of a few people who need to do a bit more asking rather than telling. Some of that's cultural and some of its conditioning as well it's just the way people have developed and brought up and done things in the past. I had some facinating experiences in Canberra when I worked there, I employed one guy that I soon moved on, he was ex-army and he just couldn't work with the guy because he told everyone what to do

Andrew: Yes did he yell at you much?

John: No we didn't get to that stage, but just the way he treated the admin staff and everyone in general, he just expected everyone to take orders and he'd never ask or request it was always telling and after a while it just gets too much and it clearly was going to take a long time to change because he was conditioned that way. You would hope that some of those people could see or quickly learn there's a difference in the rest of the world

Andrew: Yes I read an article the other day how people with military backgrounds often fail in business.

John: Interesting I can understand that. The other thing a lot of businesses won't get a facilitator in because they think they don't understand what a facilitator can do for them and then they think of it as a consultancy type of arrangement it's not like that is it?

Andrew: No not at all, it's a myth that is probably the first question for people to think about is what is it they are trying to achieve, what's the purpose of what they are trying to do, is a consultant the answer or is a facilitator the answer or am I the answer. In terms of a facilitator, a facilitator is the answer when they need someone who is independent who can bring a fresh set of eyes and who will definitely be viewed as being independent by all the people involved. If you have a tough issue that needs to be worked out in the workplace, bringing in an external facilitator means that everyone is on equal footing and it won't just be the bosses idea that counts, it'll be all ideas in the mix and then

the team decides what direction to go with. I guess that's a bit of warning if you do bring in a facilitator you have to be ready for what the team decides rather than what you think is the best way forward

John: That's right and a lot of business owners won't do that for that reason.

Andrew: They'll just get the same old answer basically.

John: Yes, I was in a situation once where I was asked to do some of that kind of work with a reasonably large and very progressive business in Perth and after the first introductory session, the manager called me aside, sat me down and told me what outcomes he wanted the team to come up with. He wanted me to facilitate the workshop to end up getting the results he was after. He wanted me to lead the team to thinking it was their idea, I quit at that point. I wouldn't do it. I guess that's the danger as you say, you have to make it clear that you are independent and if you are in there to get ideas out of the team the boss has to be prepared to accept and follow them up. How do you check that out before you get involved in a facilitation exercise, how do you suss out how genuine the boss is about letting the team have a say and so on?

Andrew: We'd have a similar conversation to what you and I have just had in terms of walking through a typical process, these are the benefits of it and here are some of the things you'll need to think about as the business owner or manager. The team comes up with solutions you have to be willing to accept those solutions and in saying that it's not just about them coming up with any idea they want and throwing it into the mix, part of the process is also to make sure people are clear with what they are being asked so the solutions are in line with the issues they are trying to address. Say if the issue was they are a contractor who's role was to install underground power lines or at the moment here in East Victoria Park a contractor installing the national broadband network and he went to his team to improve work processes any solution that would come up would have to be about the work process for installation rather than making friends with the neighbours or whatever it is. That's the other thing; a facilitator will bring focus into the meeting, discussion and conversation. 'This is what we are here to talk about tell me how that's relevant' how can we improve the way we install NBN around this East Victoria park so all solutions have to be in line with that question. I think that's one of the challenges people have when they have a go at this themselves is sticking to that task, staying focused on this is the question we are here to resolve today lets work on that, and anything that is aside of that we'll note it and come back to it later, so its' really keeping the focus and not getting distracted by anything else, not suffering from the 'shiny object' syndrome as I call it.

John: Ok, that's interesting I like that idea of focus question. Just to keep everyone on track and get the outcome that you are there to get or in the area you are there to get.

Andrew: That's right, then everyone is clear there's no argument on what we are here to talk about, so that's an easy thing then have it clearly displayed in your meeting room or wherever you are going to run the workshop.

John: Do you ever find when you are sort of focusing on something like that, that you get all sorts of characters and personalities in the group but there's generally one or two in a group that want to shoot down every idea that comes up?

Andrew: Yes absolutely, so I am making sure that people are really clear on how we run the process, and I'm a fascist rather than a facilitator at times, I say to people these are the ground rules and at the moment if we are going through a process of putting ideas up, all ideas are in the mix then we go through a second round of structuring and use a filtering process. To start with all ideas are good ideas as long as they are talking about the topic, and it gives everyone the opportunity to have input. In that scenario I'd be setting up a structure so everyone has a chance to put up their idea, literally in turn so it's a structured approach because if I don't take that structured approach then the same old dominant person will take over the process, whether it be the more senior person or outspoken person or disgruntled person or whoever it may be. My job is to make sure everyone gets the chance to put up their idea, it happens in a structured way then we move from a big bunch of individual ideas to what do we think of these ideas as a team, how are we going to use it and then what action are we going to take.

John: I was just thinking I can think of instances where the dominant people in a group like that you just can't shut them up sometimes even if you go around one at a time, I guess that's where the fascism comes in, you have to get the whip out. So really the benefits of getting an external facilitator in are A) you are independent, so you are completely that independent view to things, and B) it's important that everyone involved sees you as not taking sides, you have a great role there to keep things on track and not let things wander so after four hours you haven't got any closer to a result and it's about getting an outcome and getting people to move on. Is that what you'd say?

Andrew: Absolutely, recently I worked with a medium size IT company, they were going through some significant changes, we had a one day workshop with them and it got to the point of developing action plans, so the senior managers (there was 8) I had them working two groups of four, I said right develop some strategies and actions. I sort of stood back and watched and immediately the most senior person started calling the shots and going into the interest to them and so my role was to go back in there and say right the task is strategy and action I'm seeing a lot of talking not much writing, tell me what's going on - it's really riding hard in that case to get results, and not being nasty about it but people are investing money to be there so let's get some return.

John: How do you prevent people from the end of those sessions, they come up with so many actions and things to do that they become overwhelmed and nothing ever gets done?

Andrew: The process I take them through is making sure that they get the simple structure of the goals, strategies and actions so right from the start the goals they are working on are the high impact goals, the ones that'll make the major change for the business and then high capacity goals are the ones they are ready for and they have the resources, the people and the money to run this now. They are the ones I get people to really focus on first and leave anything else they've developed on the board for the moment and focus on where they can have high impact and the capacity to implement it and to work on those. I recently ran a workshop with an organisation where we worked on that and there was still a lot of strategies and actions that came out of that next step in the planning process, the next filters are where are the areas and commonalities across here we seem to have a lot of actions that repeat themselves across a lot of goals, so that showed to me perhaps we were going to get multiple value from implementing a couple of the critical actions so working through that approach as well. It's a multi-step filtering approach I guess you could call it.

John: A lot of business owners can feel overwhelmed at the end of these sessions because there are many ideas and things to follow up and they feel the staff are too busy doing production and stuff like that so everything falls back on the Owner/Manager/Leader to do the stuff and they just don't have the time either. I mean that filtering process you talk about high impact high capacity the crucial way to get things worked on but it's a time thing.

Andrew: Throughout that process that's also about assigning responsibilities and timeframes for this to happen and whether it's a 3 or 6 month timeframe and making sure the responsibilities aren't just the boss. My expectation which is made clear when we get into that part of the process is that if you guys are developing on working strategies and actions expect to be the one who help implement it.

John: The thing with business owners as well is that I think a lot of them, as a facilitator's role one where you would be brought into an organisation to help deal with conflict or difficult employees do you get involved in that?

Andrew: Yes there are certainly instances where that is brought in, and it's often something that's bubbling away underneath. My job is to help the team get back on track to talk through some of the issues they may be dealing with and what we are going to do from here on. For example, I worked with a really large department where they'd had a restructure and a relocation and a splitting up of teams and there was a lot of businesses that had been there for quite a while, so a lot of people who had been there for quite a while who really dug their heels in and didn't want to see any change, so my job was to get people to acknowledge the challenges they've been through to discuss them and articulate them and to really help them move through about what the future may hold for them. So to get all the corridor conversations out on the table as early as possible and if they aren't willing to talk about them then there'd be no change. If you have an issue you put it out here otherwise nothing changes so that's what will happen from here.

John: What are some other situations where a business could use a facilitator?

Andrew: I guess an independent person to come in and help them move from a current situation to some solutions where the staff have an involvement in that, they will be part of making the solution occur.

John: What about performance management, that's an area again I find a lot of business owners really struggle with. Is there a role for a facilitator in that, at least to get the manager/leader/owner trained up to understand how to do performance management properly, because it goes back to what you said earlier about starting that difficult conversation with someone, a lot of managers and leaders really freak out at the thought of having to do a performance review on someone and give them bad news.

Andrew: I think, that's a matter of you could either use someone like yourself that either is in a facilitator or coaching role or bring in a facilitator to help a manager with the types of questions they need to ask and what they want to see as a result. To me, it's getting them to think about what's the purpose of this conversation, what outcomes do we need to result in and I'm not saying manufacture it but the outcomes may be the staff needs to take greater responsibility for their performance and commits to delivering certain outcomes for the business. Then we can talk about how that is going to happen. In that case it could be really getting the business owner to think

through a simple structure of what I call the 'what', which is what is the current situation, what does that mean to the business, what does that mean to the person and the colleagues and now what are we going to do about it. Simple three stage conversation, what, so what, now what. People can hold that in their mind it's a really good model to follow. Because often we keep going in that circle of what, this is a problem but never gets to so what does this mean and in terms of implications and impacts, now what are we going to do about it.

John: Consequences is the word I always like to use. I think you hit the nail on the head with the 'what', it's about asking questions and asking the right questions, so if the facilitator provides the manager and leader with that thought process of producing the questions to ask, then as you said before it's about asking not challenging and quite often when managing people's performance if you ask questions they will give themselves the bad feedback that they need without you having to say a word. I like that approach, that's very good. If we talk a bit more now about actually training people to be good facilitators whether they are managers and leaders and they just want to learn new skills to be better, or whether they want to do facilitation as a profession where would you suggest they start, how do they learn some of these skills?

Andrew: In terms of learning these skills, we've put together a series of facilitation tips, so we call it the tip of the week. It's not overall arduous it's probably fifteen minutes a week for people to look over and think about how they can use it in their business, and you can sign up for that and read it in your own time and map out a plan on how to use it. Then at least you can get an idea of some of the facilitation basics. If you have a pen handy if you go to facilitatorsinnercircle.com that website will have the tip of the week plus a host of other resources for people to get a handle on what facilitation is about. That's targeted specifically at people who are either new to facilitation or who are occasional facilitators, people who use it occasionally but need to brush up so there's a host of resources people can tap into to help them get started and if people are wanting some high levels of support there we have a membership package as well which provides them with basically 24/7 access and resources to build their confidence as a facilitator and build their skills.

John: Talking about some more of the skills that managers/leaders/facilitators need to have I mean we've talked a fair bit about questions and getting conversations and that started, there's two sides, talking and listening.

Andrew: Yes that's correct. That is the real challenge for people undertaking that facilitator role is managing where the group is in terms of the group dynamics, making sure you are keeping your eye on who's involved and who's not, who may not be engaged at all and trying to work out where you are in the process, where you need to be, what timing you have left and then think about now what did I just say. So that listening skill is quite a challenge and some of the manager's struggle with. Probably the key things are to really put aside your own assumptions, ideas, thoughts and opinions and empty them to a different part of your brain so your mind is effectively empty and waiting for those answers. Then working through those a bit further to ask a question about an answer someone gives, so they can give you more information a simple one on that is 'tell me more about that' so it gives a person a chance to expand and you to understand what they are trying to tell you. There are those sorts of things that really I guess, having a clear mind, putting aside your own assumptions and opinions and trying to find out what that person is really trying to tell you because sometimes the first answer is not the answer they are really trying to tell you.

John: People will tell you what they think you want to hear.

Andrew: Yes so 'tell me more', or 'why is that' is another good question. It's always an open question.

John: Is there a place for closed questions as well? An open question being a way that people can't give a yes or no answer if anyone is wondering what that means.

Andrew: Yes, I think the closed question is probably when the conversation is done and dusted and to make sure people are committed to a solution.

John: So you would focus them down a bit more.

Andrew: Yes

John: How do you train people, or can you train people to just going back to the listening thing, that is one of the biggest challenges I think I have with any group process or even sales process, when I'm training people on how to sell face to face, I think about some of my situations in face to face selling you tend to sell through what you would want to buy yourself, and you sell it on the basis for why you would want to buy it which could be totally irrelevant to the person you are trying to sell it to and in a facilitation type situation I mean you are saying empty your mind it's pretty difficult isn't it sometimes because you do have beliefs and attitudes about certain things, so it can be hard to neutralise your brain.

Andrew: There are a range of exercises, and we run some facilitation training that would take people through and just to get them understanding all the things they need to have lined up to make sure that they are doing this well and that is to. I run through the Chinese whisper exercise where they have to pass on a message from one person to another without having to ask any questions or repeat the message, and if you do that it shows how extraordinarily difficult listening can be when you aren't allowed to ask people to clarify or you aren't allowed yourself to repeat the message or frame it in a different way. That is a good way to get people thinking, oh it's really hard this listening thing, so I get people to go into a different environment where they are challenged, it really highlights this is much different to what I thought it would be, and then take them back to so if you were able to listen really well what are the things you need to be able to focus on and if you can put yourself in that scenario where you are in a room full of people one person at the far of the room and 15 people down the room, and you pass the message through the 15 people how difficult it is to get that message right and for them to think about ok how do we make sure that the message gets through correctly and you are sure you are listening for the right message.

John: Ok so again with being a good facilitator/manager/leader it's about asking good questions but then being able to listen and listen through neutral sort of ears, not filtering things out in your own paradigm and then I guess the next part or something else that comes up as well is giving feedback, are there any tips or tricks to giving good feedback?

Andrew: I guess as a facilitator it's probably taking that neutral stance again and checking your assumptions and for me I see a fair bit of conflict in the group or restlessness I just reflect my observation and I'll say to a group I think I'm seeing a fair bit of unease with this at the moment can you tell me if I'm correct in my observation and they could say no we're all good we just need a

break or it could be no we are really unhappy with this thing and the issue we are talking about isn't the real issue anyway it's going to be the new staff pay structure that we really want to talk about today. So it can be where you can actually open things up a bit more that way.

John: Excellent, I like that. You simply make your observations and reflect and ask for confirmation or denial of what you are seeing.

Andrew: That's right so it doesn't come across as judgmental but as a colleague of mine said always be testing your assumptions, are they running through your mind test it and in this case it's to test it with the team you are working with.

John: You get situations where you think there's an elephant in the room how do I get the room to bring it out. Can you explain what an elephant in a room is?

Andrew: The elephant in the room is usually a big issue that they are quite unhappy about but haven't been willing to talk about it or have the conversation, a business I worked with recently the elephant in the room was one of the managing directors who was also part of an operational team and he sounded a bit like your army guy in terms of people skills were pretty minimalistic he was very task focused but he was pretty reasonable at his job technically but tearing the team apart, so the conversation had to be about how do we address this

John: Was he in the group?

Andrew: Yes.

John: Ok, so he is the elephant in the room and he's in the room. How did you go about dealing with that one? Did you know that he was the issue to start with?

Andrew: Yes I make sure prior to any workshop I sit down with the client and ask about all the things I need to know about and what are the surprises that will come up and why do you really need me here. We really talked about, started with how do we improve the way we function as a team and then talked about what are the real barriers holding us back at the moment the things making us unhappy, so it's really just bringing it out. I wasn't directing it to say is it Michael making us unhappy but we got to the point where we talked about behaviours and what is acceptable and getting people to think about what times do I exhibit these, what causes it and what strategies could I put in place to either preventing or managing it. Again a facilitator can provide people with the structure so they can have the conversation that they often wouldn't.

John: Anything else you want to tell us about or tips you want to give us about facilitating?

Andrew: I guess in terms of tips, if you are thinking about doing some work in this way with your team, my tip is think about using a facilitator to use them when you don't know the answer so you need to use your team to help provide answers and solutions and also when you need to add your own opinion to the process, so as a team leader if you are facilitating a process and you are continually throwing in your own ideas then it's going to be perceived as you are basically running it to your own agenda rather than trying to find out what we really think. Just to reiterate the two good assessments questions to use are whether or not to use a facilitator is 1. When you don't know the answer or 2. When you want to input your opinion. If you are looking to engage a

facilitator some good selection questions are if the person you talk to asks good questions about you and your business and they want an understanding of how it operates, where the key plays are and the industry trends that sort of thing. Check they have some kind of understanding of your sector, because otherwise they can be constantly asking what does this mean, what does that mean and obviously their track record, who have they worked with before, and feedback, what have they delivered etc.

John: Do your homework and see how they perform when they are in front of you.

Andrew: Yes and you can out facilitate the facilitator, see how many questions they ask and how many things they tell you to do.

John: Do you think it's better to get a facilitator who is familiar with your industry or would you get someone who is neutral on the basis they are going to ask the dumb questions that need to be asked?

Andrew: I've sort of gone in both areas, I think at the end of the day the facilitator isn't there to give you technical advice they are there to help your team develop solutions so I think from that perspective most facilitators with a good structure should be able to work with most sectors. A lot of the time it's about working with the people rather than the actual issues themselves, having said that I always try to get a reasonable understanding the issues that the business is facing and some of the technical type things they'll be dealing with so I have a basic understanding.

John: I know there's two elements to your business in terms of you are obviously provide facilitation services but you also work with want to be facilitators and people who want to learn the skills. What are some of the things you can do, you mentioned the facilitators innercircle.com website, are there other things that you can do for people in terms of helping them?

Andrew: With that website, what we mentioned the resources are sitting there but we also offer a membership solution for people where they'll get access to a members only section which has a lot of how to type templates, there's some expert interviews in there, there are resources if they are doing a specific type process they need to do that it basically steps them through that, they also get what I call a power call so a 20 minute call with either myself or one of my colleagues, and we also have an hour of power each month where they get together online to talk about some of the challenges they are having and we develop some solutions for them and we also have a bi-monthly newsletter which is very retro it comes on a thing called paper and it arrives in your post. It doesn't come through your computer at all, you can read it in your time and you'll find it's an effective median to use. That has a national presence so you can get some really interesting ideas right across Australia and even into Singapore, so people with a whole different host of businesses.

John: The resources and materials has been put together by a group of facilitators not just yourself?

Andrew: Correct

John: You mentioned Singapore there which raises one of my last questions, dealing with other cultures as well because we are a very mixed cultural demographic in WA and in Australia generally, do you have to take that into account when you are facilitating?

Andrew: Yes absolutely, an example for me recently was running a program a strategic planning program with a group of Vietnamese horticulturalists where they were all had very limited English as I had very limited Vietnamese, so we definitely had to make some alterations to that program in terms of being realistic about what we could and couldn't cover throughout the program, how much the language barriers would make a difference and how we structured a process. We had all the materials translated into Vietnamese we also had a translator with us as well. But it meant that the people there went away with a good understanding of what to do next and how to go about it rather than sitting there thinking what the hell is he talking about and becoming disengaged straight away. In fact we did a recent newsletter on the whole cross cultural facilitation stuff. Same as anything it's really just getting yourself, you mentioned earlier from a sales perspective it's about putting yourself in someone else's shoes and thinking how would they be looking at it, and what would be important to them and to make sure we can give them the opportunity to work through that, so is it going to be about the types of materials we use, the timing, the location are there some people who I need to pay particular attention to. If you are working with Chinese it may mean some of the more senior people in the room have to be paid a bit more respect and in other Asian cultures you might need to tone your voice down a bit because speaking loud can be seen to be a sign of disrespect, so there's a whole host of nuances like that. Same in aboriginal culture if you are looking someone in the eye it starts to freak them out a bit it's not something they usually do. It's really something to avoid. There's a couple of those things that probably need a bit of homework.

John: Yes there's a lot more to facilitation thing than a lot of people give credit to. That's why need experts like yourself. To train them or do the job for them.

Andrew: And to make sure that people understand what their role is as a facilitator and then develop structures and processes around it and that role is to remain neutral and help teams to get the answers.

John: Anything else you want to add before we wrap up Andrew?

Andrew: I think this has been a fantastic chat, thanks John. Certainly if people are interested in wanting to ask questions about a facilitator or what they should be looking for, please contact me through my website www.andrewhuffer.com.au and if you are looking for resources to help you and want to understand the whole facilitation thing then certainly have a look at www.facilitatorsinnercircle.com to pick up those resources.

John: Appreciate your time and opportunity to have a chat and if anyone wants an excellent cup of coffee and great food then 'Food for Me' in East Victoria Park. www.foodforme.com.au . If anyone is interested in my mentoring groups which Andrew is a member of those or wants consulting then its johnbenson.com.au. Thank you for your time always great to chat and catch up and for your insight into how to facilitate professionally and well and there's a lot of good tips there for business owners, managers and leaders.