



Exploration and Discovery in Facilitation and Community Engagement

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The inside running...

- Community engagement - Dealing with tense situations
- Building your team - Managing colleague relationships
- Facilitation - Shiny object syndrome
- Effective promotion - The tomato sauce story

Got News? Need Answers?..

If you have any special requests for topics you want covered or questions you need answered, just drop me a line:

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and we'll make it a learning opportunity for everyone.



NEWS TO PUT TO USE

- ✓ Facilitation
- ✓ Building Your Team
- ✓ Community Engagement
- ✓ Effective Promotion

What's going on?

Well...plenty!

I've been clocking up the miles of late. I love the travel, diversity and making new connections. Next week I'm off to the International Association of Facilitators Conference in Singapore, so there'll be plenty to talk about in your next newsletter. So where have I been and what has this involved? The design and facilitation of:

- A roadshow of 10 workshops throughout Australia and New Zealand, helping participants to 'Design Effective Events.'
- More TV programs (seriously!) on 'Governance' as well as 'Succession Planning' for not-for-profit organisations
- A program to assist the establishment of biosecurity groups throughout regional Western Australia
- The national Soil Biology Symposium in Melbourne for GRDC

Remember, I don't do this to brag! It's to show that the information you get in this newsletter isn't outsourced, grabbed from books or discussion papers. It's the real thing.

Now it's time to grab a cuppa and get ready to apply the lessons from the last few months...Looking forward to your comments and ideas!

Andrew

Community Engagement

Dealing with tense stakeholder engagement situations

I get yelled at a bit. Maybe it's something to do with being a skinhead – maybe not.

Sometimes I get paid for this – usually when it involves stakeholder engagement workshops around controversial issues.

A few recent workshops have been real stand outs. One was in relation to the redevelopment of a local park to include residential use, as a means of funding the reclamation of an adjacent contaminated site. Sort of like two controversies for the price of one!

The client had commissioned a planning consultant to identify a range of options for the redevelopment of the site and community planning workshops were held to get local input.

I became involved when it was time to take the options back to local stakeholders for further feedback. We held three focus group workshops that involved me, a colleague to take notes and the planning consultant. We knew it was going to tense as the client had received lots of negative feedback and there was active community opposition to the proposal.

Here's how we handled it and what we learnt along the way...

Prior to the workshops, participants were sent an information pack outlining each option and how it was identified. At the workshop, we came prepared with BIG maps to help people clearly identify what was being suggested.

We maintained a calm, friendly and welcoming environment as people arrived. I started out by clearly outlining the intended purpose, outcomes and process for the workshop. I also requested that we operate to agreed ground-rules, the ROPES.

Respect each other

Open your mind to others opinions

Participate – say what you're thinking

Experience – if you have it, offer it

Share the air – let everyone have their say

The workshops consisted mainly of local residents - angry about the proposal. They didn't want any redevelopment, nor more traffic or the demise of their view of their parkland.

Highlight independence

There was some serious tension in the room at the start of each workshop. What worked was each of us outlining our role and that we were not employees of the client. Our role was to run the feedback process and ensure participants views were heard and fed back to the client. It was critical to say that we were independent facilitators with no stake in the outcome.

Look for agreement

After some introductions, the planning consultant went through the process to date and reiterated how the options were developed.

Prior to getting participant feedback on each option, we asked people what they *valued* about the site in order to try and elicit some areas of agreement.

People want to be heard

When people are angry, it's best that this can be expressed. We were ready for some forthright conversations and they came forth. That's OK – we had to remember that they were angry with the client, *not us*. If they did start getting personal, we went back to explaining what we were there to achieve and our role in doing it. We made it clear that all views expressed would go back to the client.

Clarify the facts

When there's a lot of community opposition to a proposal, facts can sometimes be hidden by emotion. This was a classic case. Think community websites with pictures of barren parkland and traffic jams as a portrayal of this proposal. Our job was to provide the *facts* about the proposal. This was well received, as it helped to clear the air on several issues.

Opposition galvanises action

We were naïve to expect any support for the proposals. If an issue has minimal effect on someone, it's unlikely that we'll see them at a workshop about it. This also meant we had to work really hard to see if there were any areas of agreement with what was on the table.

Building Your Team

Managing relationships with colleagues

Introduction

“Everyone works in a political organization.” This is a classic quote from facilitator Rollo Browne, reflecting the nature of our workplaces.

The content for this article came directly from a recent Facilitators Inner Circle ‘Hour of Power’ group coaching call. It shows just how much value the calls deliver. See www.facilitatorsinnercircle.com for membership details.

The workplace scenario

The coaching call starts with Olivia describing a workplace meeting with a colleague. They’ve had some challenges in the past. I’ll hand over to Olivia to describe what’s going on.

“Today I am catching up with someone for a meeting at work. I guess my biggest challenge is my personal relationship with him and that seeps through into the way we work together.

“The challenge is not to take the emotional baggage with me into the room and to try and stay neutral. I’m trying to take every meeting I have with him as a completely new and different one without thinking about the things that have happened in the past.

“His ways annoy me I guess and affect me, so I’m looking for tips on how to address that.”

The response

Olivia has been fantastically honest in describing this situation. Especially for making it clear that part of the issue could be her own attitudes and responses.

Here’s some tips from the coaching call that helped her – and will help you too!

Tip #1 – Identify what’s important now

Try to work out some sort of currency of the relationships and what the opportunities are in the future. Work to avoid getting caught on where things didn’t work so well in the past.

Tip #2 – Forget the past

Don’t give in to the behavior that you don’t like - don’t give it any airtime at all. Don’t even acknowledge it, but really celebrate the behavior that you enjoy. It sounds simple but it’s actually quite a useful technique if you are trying to forget the past.

Tip #3 – Reinforce the positive

Over time the person you are dealing with get so much positive reinforcement that it will become the way they predominately behave towards you. You totally need to ignore the bad behavior and celebrate the good behavior.

Tip #4 – Agree on agreement

Identify ‘what you both want’ from the interaction and what would be a successful outcome from the professional relationship. Work towards the bits you actually agree on and enjoy that.

Tip #5 – Look for closure

If the areas of disagreement or the other person’s behavior really upsets you, then you may not have the opportunity for closure. Give some thought to the short term and long term value from naming that behavior and having a discussion about it so you can actually get some form of resolution either in yourself or with the other person. Sometimes it can be deliberate type behaviors and sometimes it can be unconscious behavior that needs to be addressed

Tip #6 – Explore the positive outcome

If you’re being told that your colleague or manager isn’t happy with your work, find out more. Get absolute clarity on what a positive outcome would look like. Explain that you’ll still do the work ‘your way’ as long as there’s agreement on the *result* you need to deliver. Continue to work with them to define what the outcome look like and ask, “what would an enjoyable outcome be?” This moves your colleague towards a more positive approach, to change the dynamics of your meetings.

Facilitation

Beware of the Shiny Object!

I've really enjoyed partnering with APEN to run the 2014 Roadshow, delivering ten workshops on 'Designing Effective Events' throughout Australia and New Zealand.

The workshop helped participants to get their message to 'stick' through understanding the basic Adult Learning principles to successfully engage people.

A key section focused on the different types of learning modalities...

In summary, there are three main forms of communication and learning - Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic. We all use each form to some extent but, for each of us, one is often dominant and used more automatically.

Why do you need to know this?

If you're facilitating a session it's important to stay focused. A key part of our role is to keep participants on track. Hence we need to minimise distractions.

In a typical population, the proportion of the styles is V = 35%, A = 25%, K = 40%. So it's worthwhile being aware of the different styles, what stimulates their learning and involvement and importantly, what distracts them.

Here's a guide to help you.

Visual style

- Like reading
- Appreciate drama and art
- Good at reading facial expressions and body language.
- Use terms like: "I see that" and "That looks right"
- When spelling they try to 'see' the word.

Distracted by:

- Excessive movement and activity.

Natural enemies:

- People or activity outside windows or walking past

Auditory style

- Like to listen and talk
- Prefer to learn from lectures, talks and audio recordings
- Use terms like: "It sounds right" and "Listen to this."
- When spelling they try to 'sound out' words phonetically.

Distracted by:

- Background noise

Natural enemies:

- Side conversations, garden blowers, phones

Kinaesthetic style

- Like movement and action.
- Prefer to learn by writing, acting out, pacing and gesture.
- Use terms like: "I feel that is the case" and "I get it".
- When spelling they try to write the word mentally to see if it feels right.

Distracted by:

- Sitting still and being stuck inside

Natural enemies

- Boredom, not being able to move

The key message:

Be aware of your preferred style and what distracts you most. Work hard to stay focused. Once you become distracted, so do your participants – distraction becomes magnetic.



Effective Promotion

Shock as truth comes out on milk

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 Yep it was a moment of stunned amazement as the truth dawned.

Picture the scene on a Saturday night...

Six year old Joel was at our kitchen bench eagerly awaiting his barbequed sausage for tea.

He was excited, he was expectant, he was hungry!

Then came the earth shattering question..."Do you have sauce?"

My eyeballs widened. "Well we do - but it's home-made sauce - you may not like it."

"Can I try some?"

"Sure, let's give it a go. But don't say I didn't warn you!"

The room of 14 dinner party guests went silent and turned as one when Joel gasped, "Who made this? Where did it come from? It tastes *awesome!*"

I confessed, "Well my Mum did."

"Your *Mum* made this sauce? *People* make sauce? WOW!"

We figured Joel wasn't ready to hear where things like eggs come from, but we did ease him in on the origins of milk.

It was a lot for a young visitor to come to terms with in one hit. I can only imagine that this has since led to a major deluge of other whacky revelations on Twitter...

(I'm yet to hear a 'show and tell' report from young Joel's day at school the following Monday, but my Mum has been getting some strange phone calls.)

What's the lesson in this?

There are many...from a marketing perspective one of the lessons is to think about your own version of home-made 'tomato sauce.'

What's something unique that you can offer your clients that will really WOW them? Something they may not have experienced before. Something that they'll go out and tell others about?

Remember, just like home-made tomato sauce, what you take for granted could be a totally new experience for others.

PS – Mum also makes a mean fruitcake. If you're passing through Trafalgar, drop in for a cuppa and cake, she'll add it to my bill!

Wrapping it up...

Make sure you get the most of my experience from this newsletter - keep firing through the questions.

And if you'd like an ongoing dose of facilitation insights, head to www.facilitatorsinnercircle.com and grab our weekly facilitation tip. It'll give you practical, ready to apply information that'll give you confidence in your role.

PS – I'll be travelling a fair bit for the remainder of the year. If you're based in SA, TAS, Victoria or NSW and want a hand with a workshop or a catch up for a coffee, let me know.

Regards,

Andrew



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