

“How to Be a Great Facilitator”

(mere minutes to share 30 years of practice lol)

For: Apolitical (making govts smarter)

By: Vince Verlaan, M.A.
vince.verlaan@engagefor2030.org
WhatsApp # 12368801618

On: Thursday, July 23rd, 2026

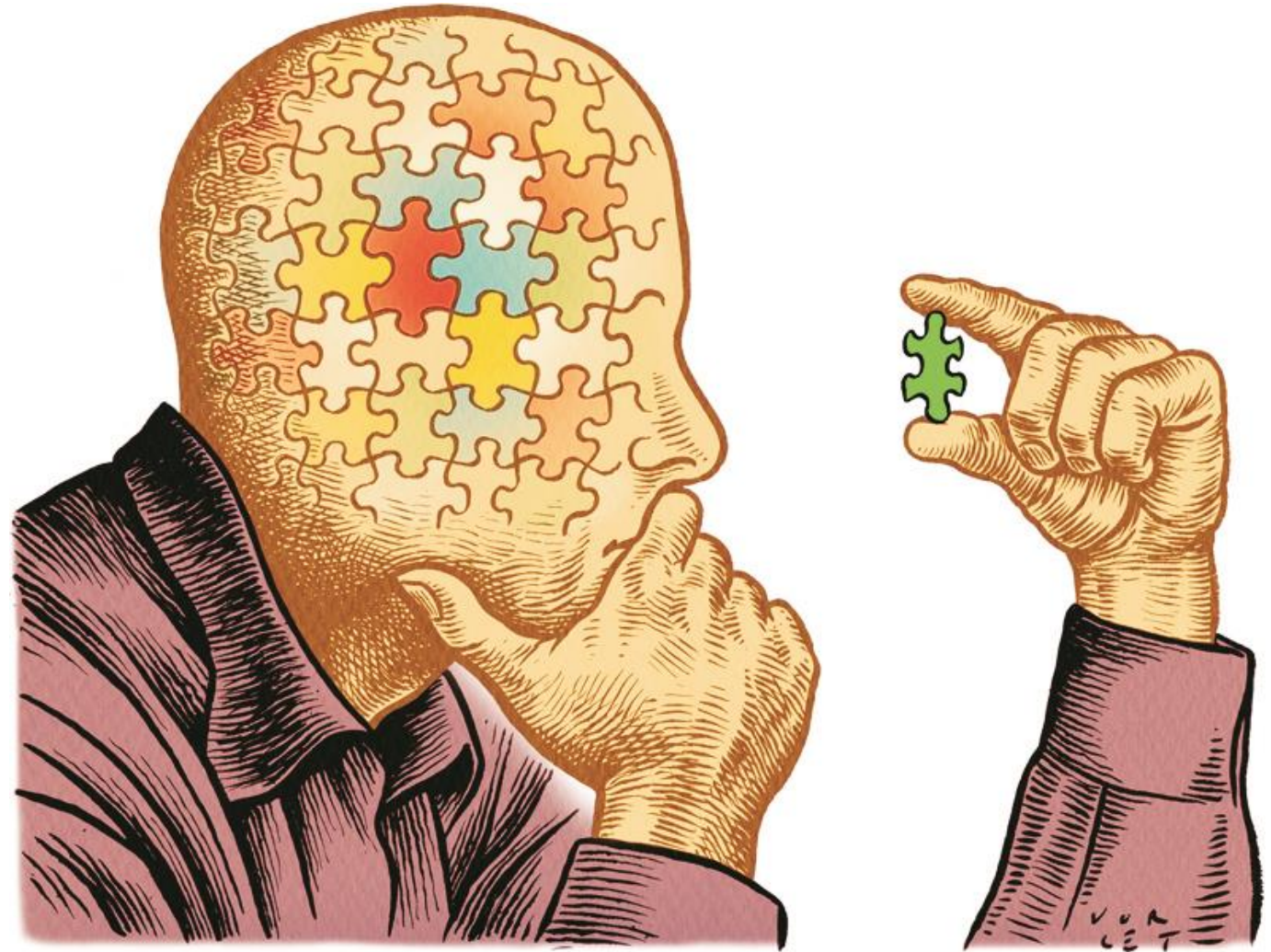


**ENGAGE
FOR 2030**

Adult learning depends on
reflective practice (Schon).

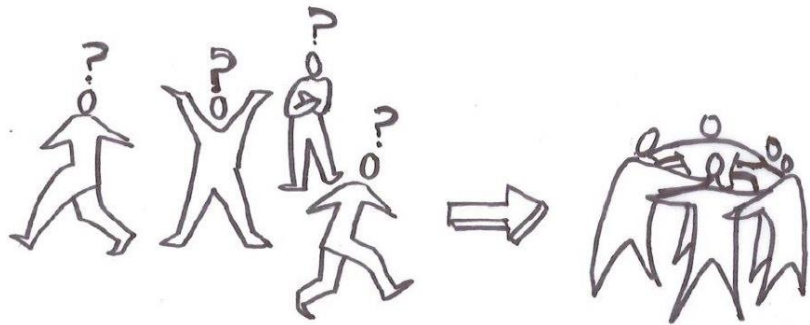
So please consider...

“WHY do YOU want/need
to facilitate
with YOUR
team/org/network?”



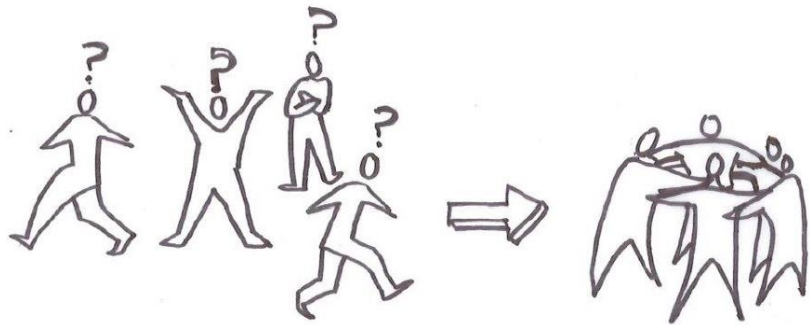
VINCE VERLAAN, MA

Facilitation & Engagement Specialist



VINCE VERLAAN, MA

Facilitation & Engagement Specialist



VINCE VERLAAN, MA
Facilitation & Engagement Specialist



Have you ever painted a
bedroom in your home?





LEARNING OBJECTIVES

“How to be a great facilitator”

- ☐ The **WHY** of group/team facilitation in orgs/govt (purpose)
- ☐ Explain some **fundamentals** of the practice (e.g. agenda)
- ☐ Discuss **participatory leadership** (e.g. all voices)



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

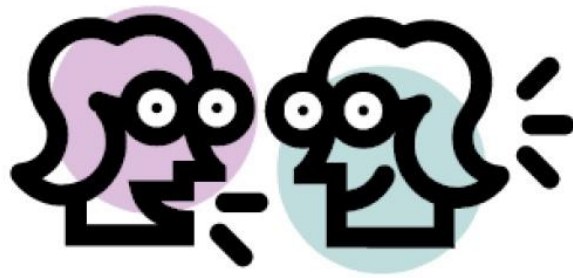
“How to be a great facilitator”

- ☐ Summarize four key things a facilitator does
- ☐ Present 10 main tasks of a small group facilitator

Answer your questions/challenges

Share deeper/longer resources





Good Definitions

Essentially, a facilitator helps a new, temporary or long-standing group of people work more easily and effectively on an issue of some importance to every attendee or group member. A facilitator's main tasks are thus to focus the conversation (provide a "container") people are having, move things along to a worthwhile conclusion, and to balance participation among group members ("equal voice").

Good facilitation provides leadership to the group, while respecting and accessing the assets of the group. It also looks for and supports the "emergence" of shared insights. These are what lead to well-supported agreements and decisions.

Facilitation is a powerful way of working that gives everyone a chance to be an active part of the decision making process.

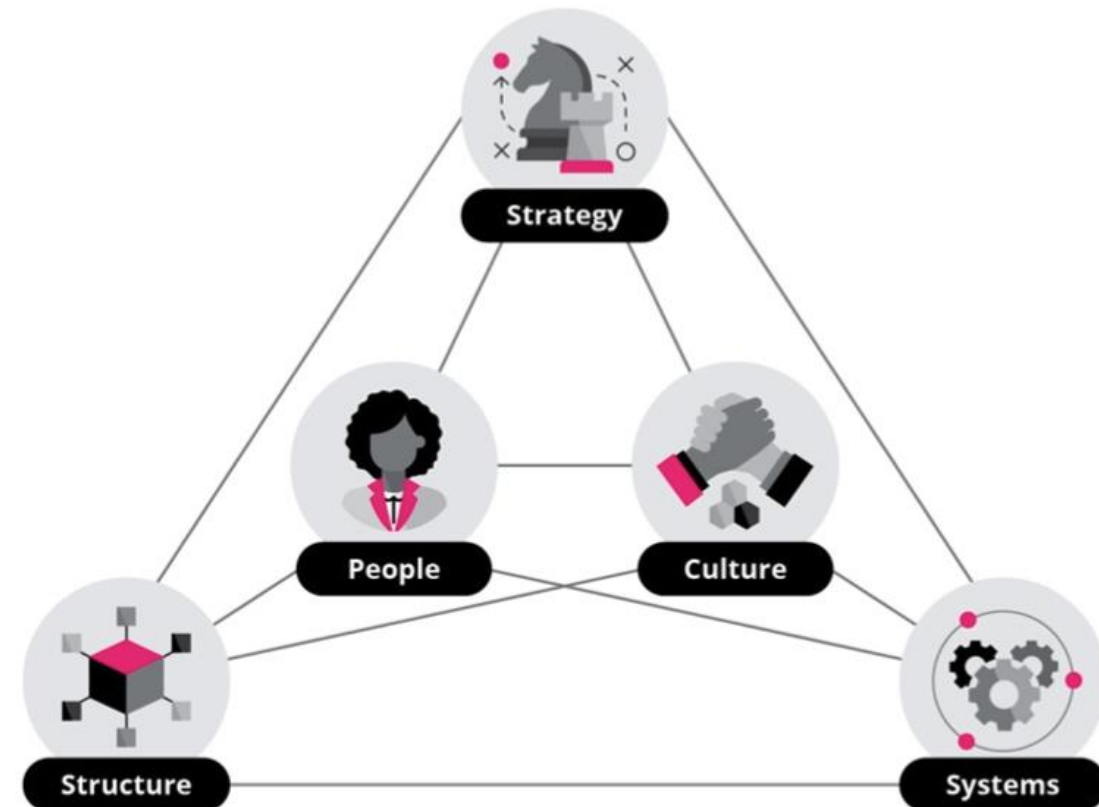
A facilitator helps people have better meetings where they talk and listen to each other really well and make decisions that stick. The facilitator keeps their own views out of the conversation, and helps the others make brilliant use of their time together.

VINCE VERLAAN, MA
Facilitation & Engagement Specialist



Why we focus on these kinds of skills and dynamics as org leaders

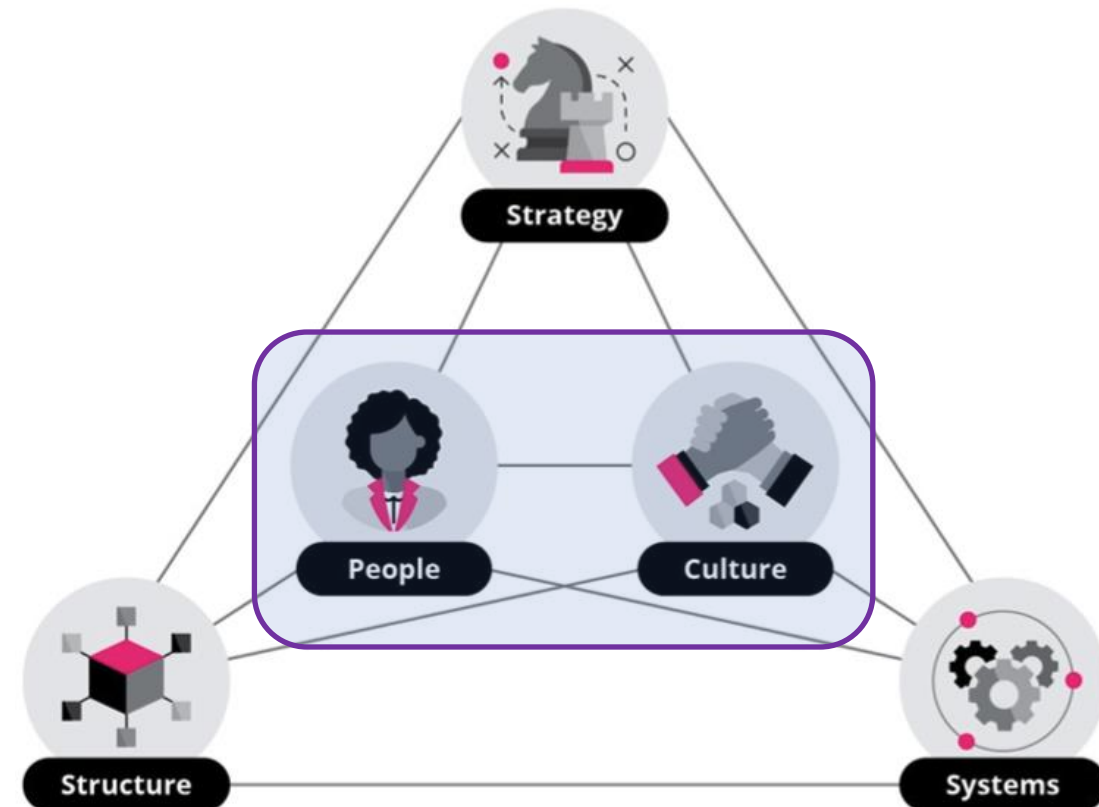
Organizational effectiveness means how well an organization is succeeding at achieving its goals. Each organization is likely to have set numerous objectives and goals for itself. For an organization to become effective, its leaders must understand how these objectives and goals intersect, interact, and compete with one another (Nadler & Tushman, 1980).



Nadler, D.A. & Tushman, M.L. 1980. A model for diagnosing organizational behavior.

Why we focus on these kinds of skills and dynamics as org leaders

A leader of any organization can review or evaluate its organization's goals and objectives in terms of their relationship to **five key elements**. These elements influence the effective achievement of these objectives and goals and, by extension, the effectiveness of the organization as a whole.



Nadler, D.A. & Tushman, M.L. 1980. A model for diagnosing organizational behavior.

Collaboration And Teams

Every Team Needs a Super-Facilitator

That's the person who can integrate diverse expertise, promote equitable contributions, and cultivate trust. Here's how to develop this crucial skill. by Jamil Zaki

From the Magazine (September–October 2025)



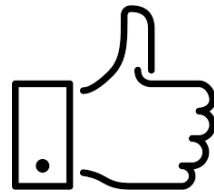
Outcomes of a well-facilitated meeting/event



New ideas for
your issue



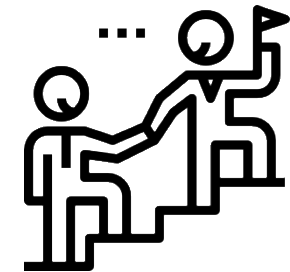
Clear direction
established



Agreement and
Satisfaction



Increased
Performance
and Impact



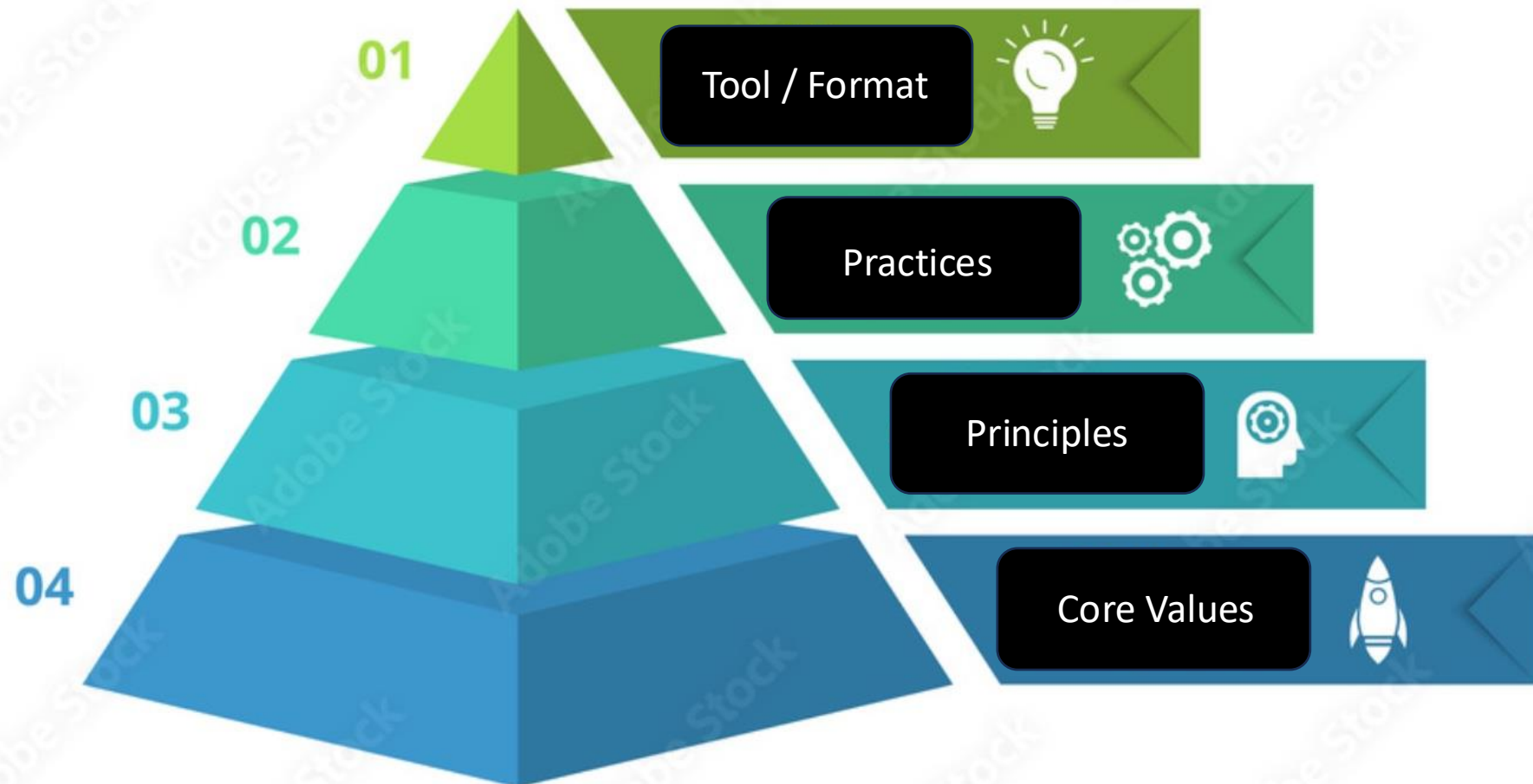
Leadership &
Teamwork

Capacity and enthusiasm to work together grows too!

But it's not just about having a
great workshop format



Going beyond having a great workshop format...



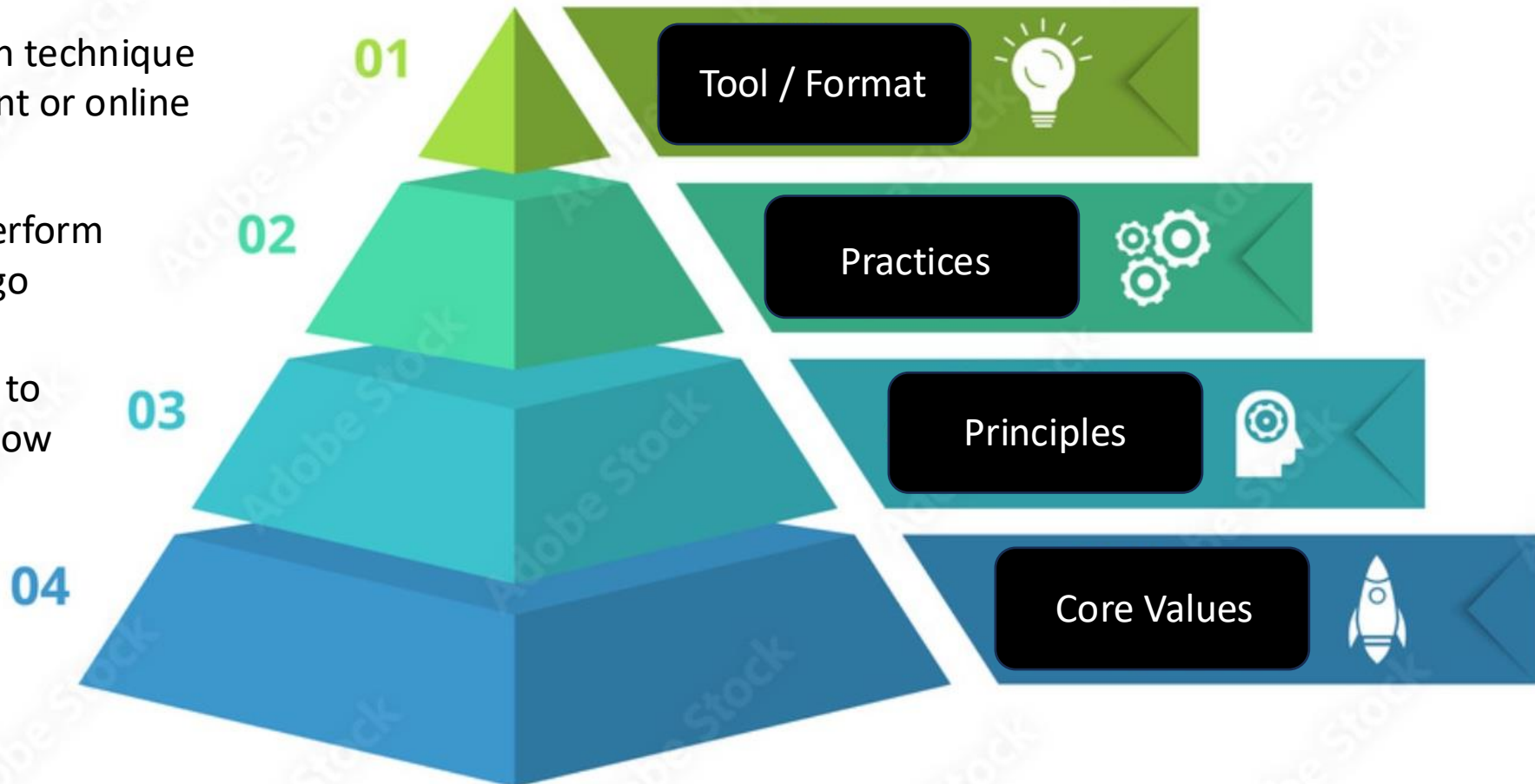
The format is the tip of the pyramid...look at the other levels

A meeting or discussion technique used in a meeting, event or online

An area of skill that I perform regularly, learning as I go

Laws I follow to live up to my beliefs; principles flow up from core values

My strongest beliefs





Benefits of using Participatory Decision-Making (PDM)

FULL PARTICIPATION

In a participatory group, all members are encouraged to speak up and say what's on their minds. This strengthens a group in several ways. Members become more courageous in raising difficult issues. They learn how to share their "first-draft" ideas. And they become more adept at discovering and acknowledging the diversity of opinions and backgrounds inherent in their group.

MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

In order for a group to reach a sustainable agreement, the members need to understand and accept the legitimacy of one another's needs and goals. This basic sense of acceptance and understanding is what allows people to develop innovative ideas that incorporate everyone's point of view.

INCLUSIVE SOLUTIONS

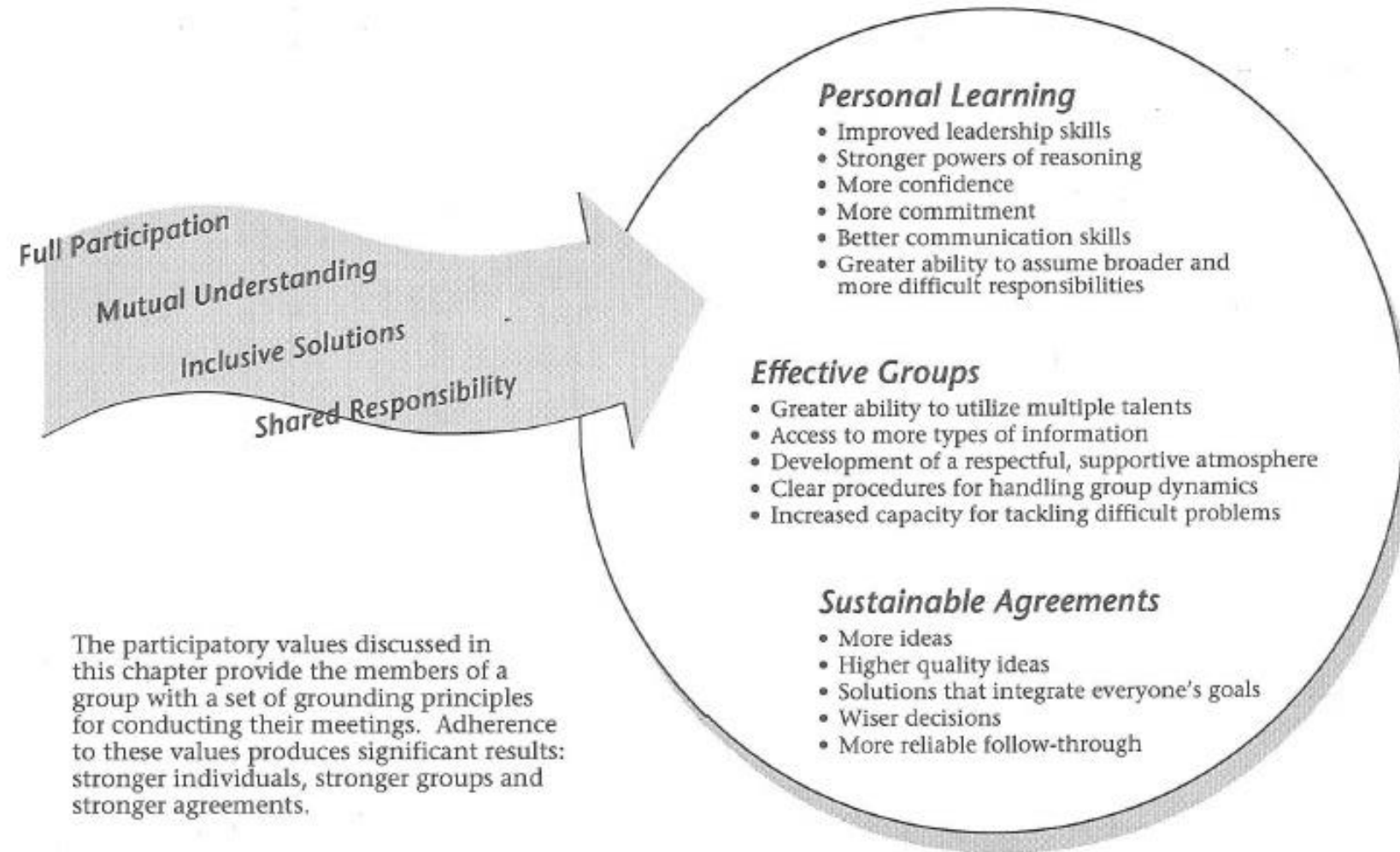
Inclusive solutions are wise solutions. Their wisdom emerges from the integration of everybody's perspectives and needs. These are solutions whose range and vision is expanded to take advantage of the truth held not only by the quick, the articulate, the most powerful and influential, but also of the truth held by the slower thinkers, the shy, the disenfranchised and the weak. As the Quakers say, "Everybody has a piece of the truth."

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

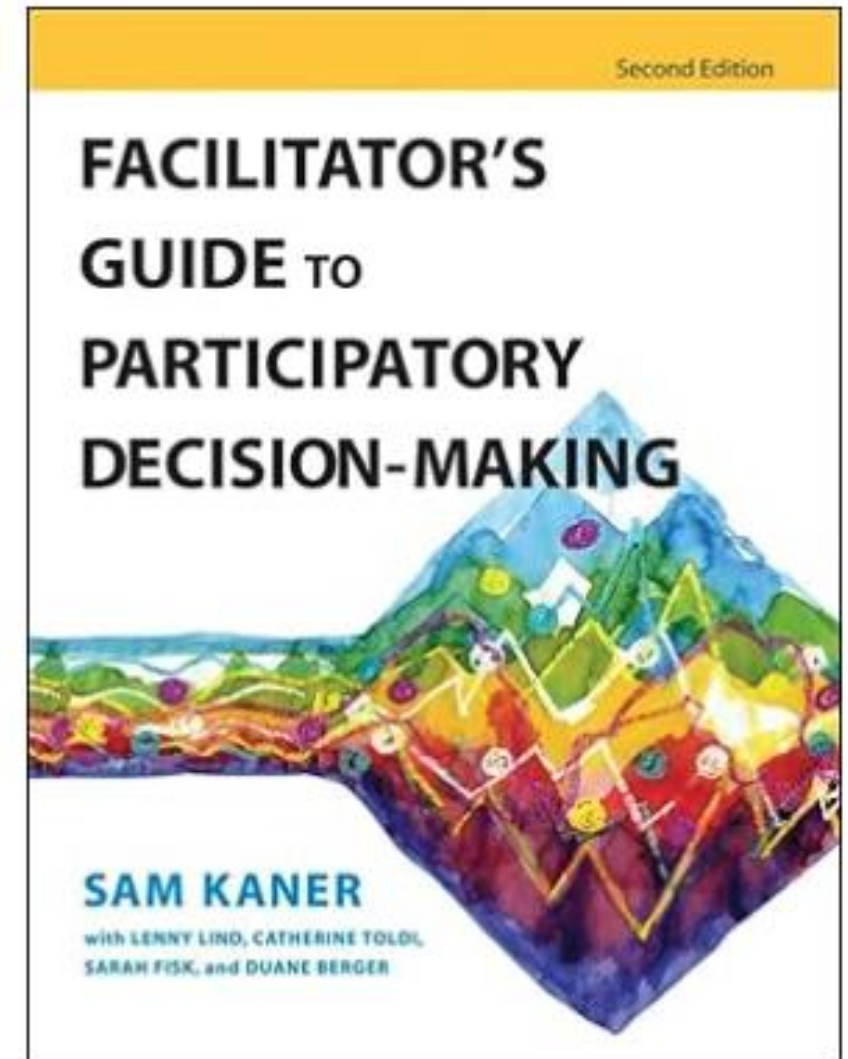
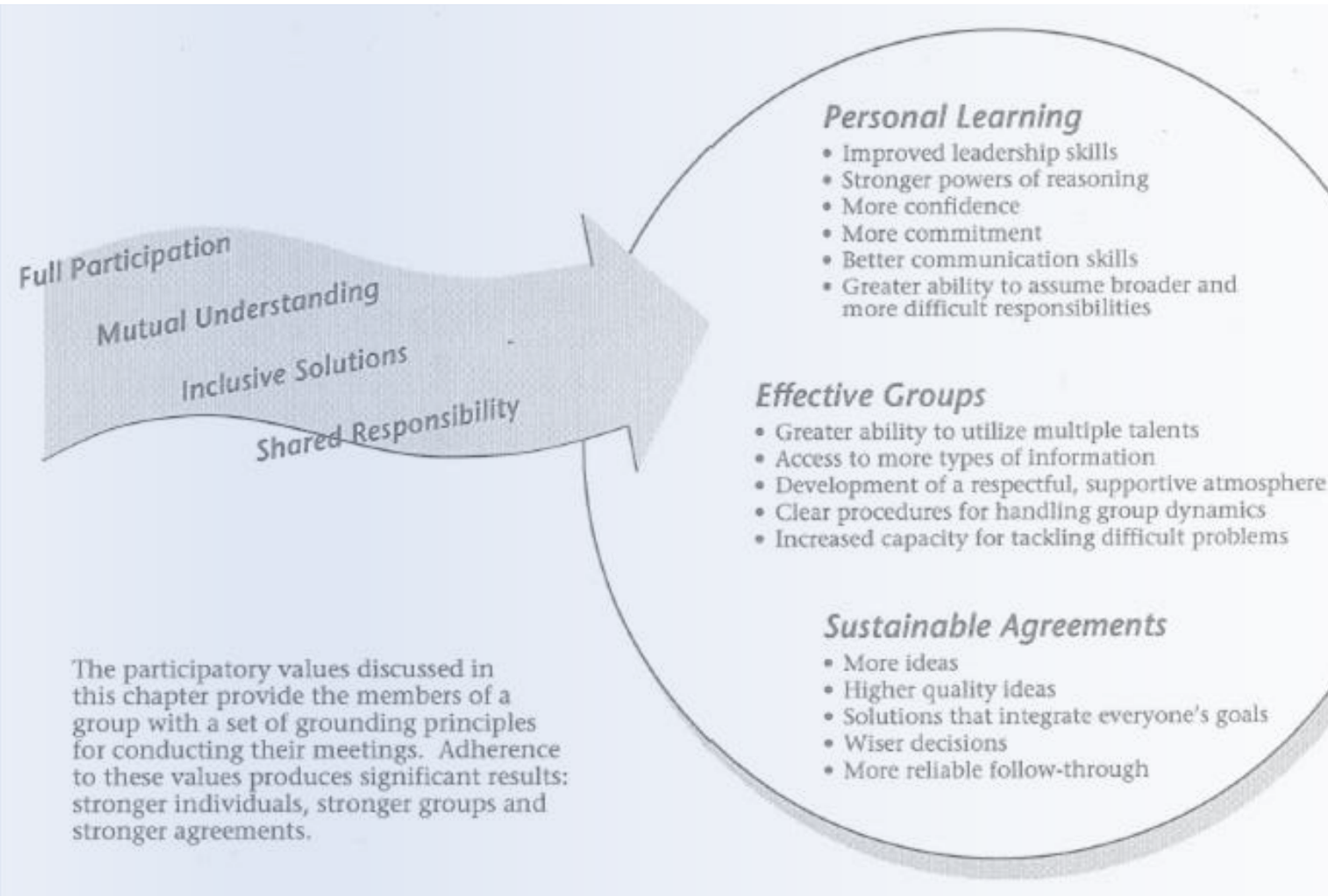
In participatory groups, members feel a strong sense of responsibility for creating and developing sustainable agreements. They recognize that they must be willing and able to implement the proposals they endorse, so they make every effort to give and receive input before final decisions are made. This contrasts sharply with the conventional assumption that everyone will be held accountable for the consequences of decisions made by a few key people.

Effective PDM is a core PRACTICE and is based on these four core values

BENEFITS/OUTCOMES of Core Values for PDM (again, the WHY)

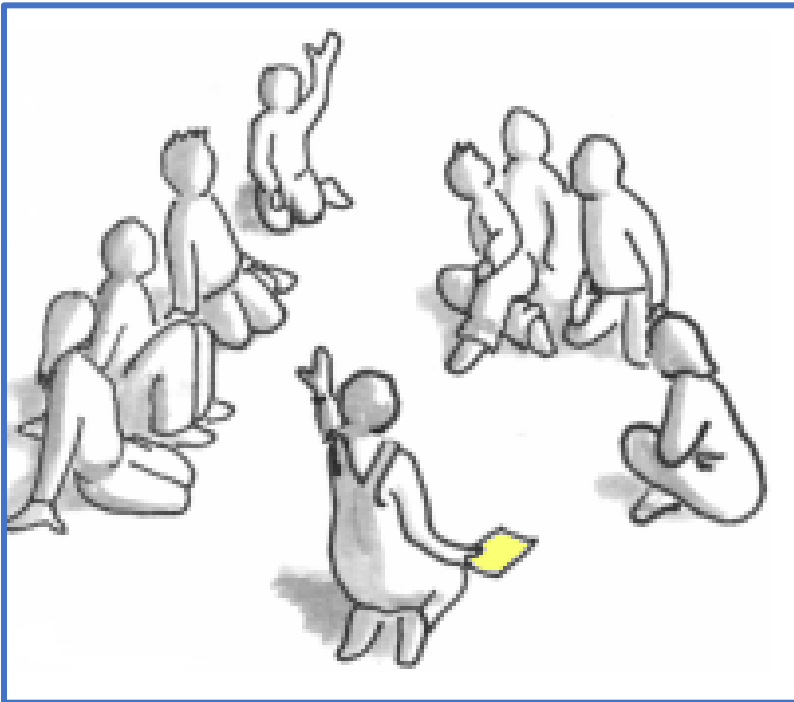


Source of this key material...



FACILITATORS ARE “SERVANT LEADERS”

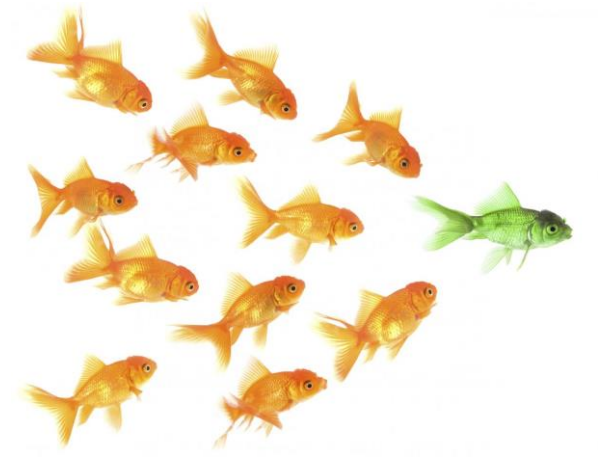
THE *FACILITATOR* WORKS WITH A GROUP TO HELP THEM HAVE A CONVERSATION, COME TO AGREEMENT, AND/OR PLAN FOR THE FUTURE.



- Facilitator is trusted and neutral voice, making decisions about the process the group goes through, but allowing the group to focus on/control content of the discussion

FACILITATORS ARE “SERVANT LEADERS”

Facilitator is a *gentle guide*, making it easier for group to have the discussion and help make the decision.



FACILITATORS ARE “SERVANT LEADERS”

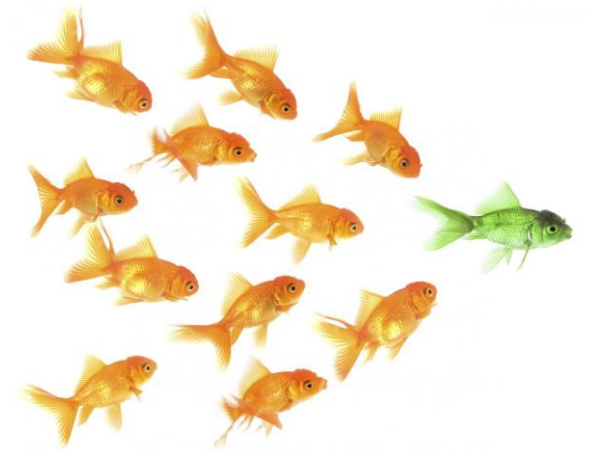
Having a clear, logical and focused **agenda** is essential to your task and to group success

Have purpose or challenge statement at top

Think through the *info sharing, discussion, brainstorming, option formation, decision* steps

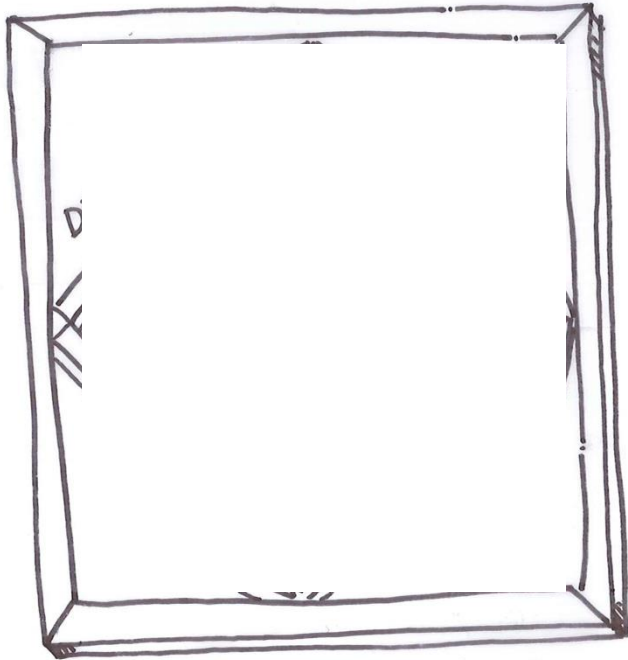
-Take them through each of those agenda steps-

Close with *action planning* and *scheduling*



FOUR KEY THINGS A “GROUP FACILITATOR” DOES

BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER ON AN ISSUE



1. CREATES A “FRAME” FOR THE DISCUSSION

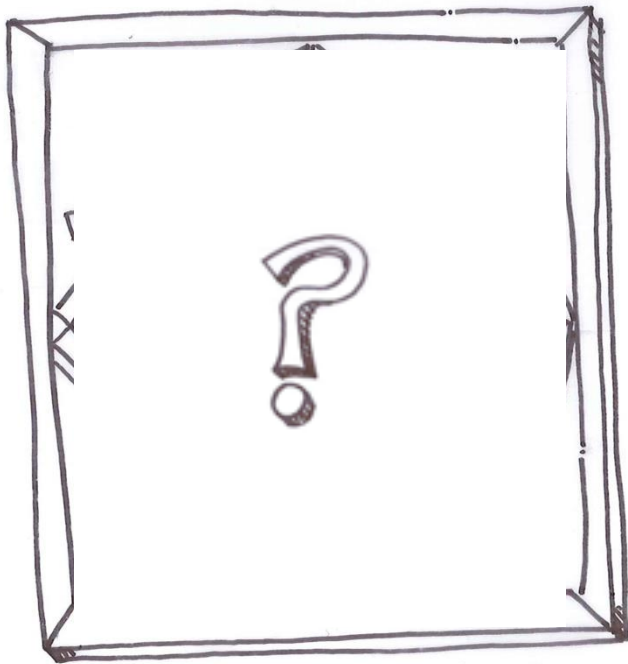
- A FRAME IS THE CONTAINER OF AND REASON FOR THE MEETING

EXAMPLE:

- TONIGHT WE ARE HOLDING A DANCE AND NO ONE HAS SELECTED OR PREPARED THE MUSIC YET.
- ATHLETES FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD LIKE DIFFERENT KINDS OF MUSIC AND WE WANT TO HAVE FUN.

FOUR KEY THINGS A “GROUP FACILITATOR” DOES

ENSURES A WELL-STRUCTURED DISCUSSION



2. POSES A CLEAR QUESTION THAT NEEDS AN ANSWER

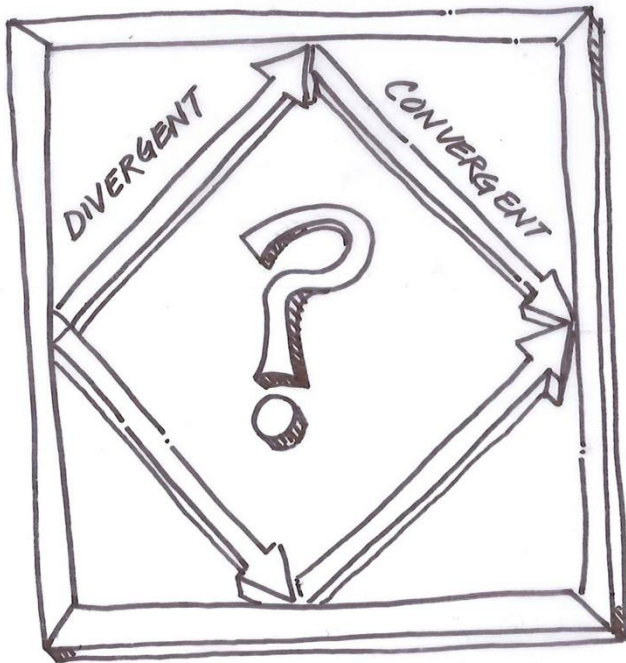
- A QUESTION IS ALWAYS AT THE CENTRE OF THE WHOLE THING
- YOU THEN “INVITE” OTHERS TO HELP ANSWER IT
- KEEP FOCUS AND MANAGE THE DISCUSSION
- KEEP TIME AND HELP THEM GO THROUGH THE PROCESS

EXAMPLE OF GOOD QUESTIONS / INVITATION:

- WHAT MUSIC SHOULD WE PLAY TONIGHT?
- WHAT MIX WILL HELP ALL THE ATHLETES HAVE FUN? SHOULD WE HAVE MUSIC FROM AROUND THE WORLD?
- COME HELP US MAKE THIS DECISION!

FOUR KEY THINGS A “GROUP FACILITATOR” DOES

ENCOURAGES INPUT AND EXPLORATION



3. EXPLORE ALL THE OPTIONS WITH THEM

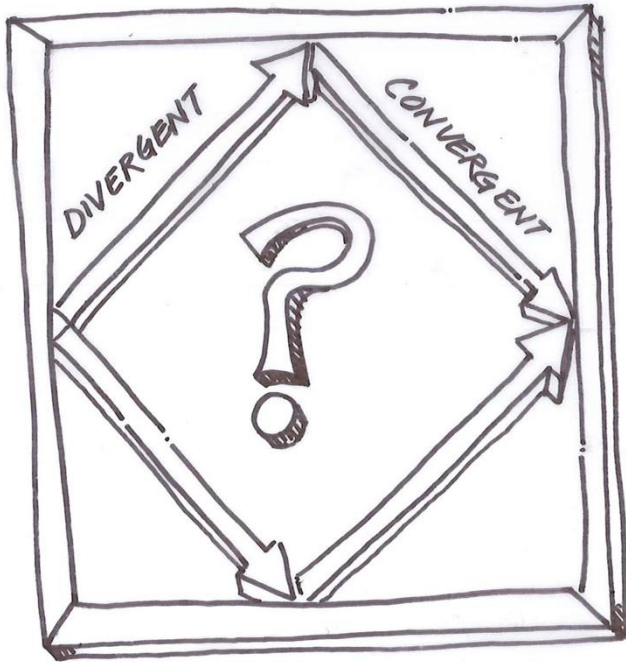
- TAKE THE TIME TO DIVERGE (BRAINSTORM IDEAS / LISTEN TO ALL)
- YOU MANAGE THE DISCUSSION HERE AND LATER...
- HELP DRAW IN THE QUIET PEOPLE AND LIMIT THE ONES WHO TALK A LOT

EXAMPLE:

- EACH PERSON CAN SUGGEST THEIR FAVOURITE MUSIC
- THERE IS NO WRONG ANSWER (BRAINSTORM)
- MAKE UP A LONG LIST OF POSSIBILITIES
- GIVES THE GROUP OPTIONS AND “OPENS UP” THINKING

FOUR KEY THINGS A “GROUP FACILITATOR” DOES

SUPPORT OPTIONS DEV, DECISION-MAKING, AND ACTION PLANNING



4. *DECIDE AMONG OPTIONS OR PROPOSE A NEW SOLUTION*

- HELPS THE GROUP CONVERGE ON A GOOD IDEA/PLAN
- CHECKS FOR AGREEMENT WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT
- FORMALIZES GROUP DECISIONS AND NEXT STEPS
- CONGRATULATES PEOPLE ON THEIR WORK, SUPPORTS REFLECTION ON THE EXPERIENCE

EXAMPLE:

- FIND SOME IDEAS THAT AT LEAST 2 PEOPLE SUGGESTED
- LOOK FOR OTHER SIMILARITIES
- DISCUSS WHAT YOU WANT TO RECOMMEND (AND WHY)
- HELP THE GROUP FORM / PROPOSE A GOOD SOLUTION
- GET READY TO REPORT BACK AND EXPLAIN YOUR ANSWER
- ORGANIZE AN ACTION PLAN AS A RESULT OF DECISIONS TAKEN

TOP 10 LIST – WHAT A FACILITATOR DOES



1. Calls the group together around an issue or question (or several)
2. Provides or helps the group decide on a suitable process/tools for the session
3. Ensures the group follows the agreed process/agenda and keeps on time
4. Keeps the focus on one item/activity until completed a
5. Manages flow of discussion - drawing out quiet people or those with the most relevant expertise, and limiting those who often talk a lot
6. Clarifies and summarizes key points as they emerge
7. Checks for agreement, testing for consensus
8. Formalizes group decisions and confirms with the group
9. Helps group deal with conflicts (if any); supports reflection on the experience
10. Ensures that a written record is made of action points and decisions



TOUCHING ON TOOLS

There are hundreds of formats/tools

- Sticker notes, voting dots, flipchart paper, markers, tape
- In-person, online, hybrid can all work – but think it through in advance
- Synchronous, asynchronous, accommodation efforts...

Make it as interactive as you can and always have FUN!



Vince's website has links to many good Tools and Resources



<http://www.engagefor2030.org>

Transformative Strategies for People & Planet

Session Lab library of facilitation methods

<https://www.sessionlab.com/library>

Digital Facilitation overview

<https://www.workshopper.com/post/digital-facilitation-tools-for-online-workshops-and-meetings>

Dialogue for Capacity Development

<https://reospartners.com/resource-library/dialogue-capacity-development>

BC Guide on Building Aboriginal Relations Capacity

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:US:14a1cfce-b86f-4bb5-8d40-378f4fec7fa5>

International Association for Facilitation (IAF) methods library

<https://www.iaf-world.org/site/pages/methods-library>

National Charrette Institute – Tools for Collaborative Design and Placemaking

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/nci/resources/>

Frameworks for Complex Systems Change

<https://www.sfu.ca/complex-systems-frameworks.html>

Questions

