

Main Appendix, I - Tips for Successful Facilitation of Groups

How to ensure no one dominates a meeting

When someone dominates a discussion, the other participants hold back their ideas. Participants get bored. Instead of coming up with solutions that incorporate a wealth of diverse opinions, the team ends up with a mediocre decision.

Here are some suggestions for dealing with participants who talk too much:

- Avoid discouraging the excessive talker. Instead, encourage the others to participate more.
- Go around the group, giving each participant a turn to talk.
- Divide the group into pairs for preliminary sharing of ideas. Then ask each pair to give a summary report of their discussion.
- Impose air-time limits on participants. Give the participants equal numbers of poker chips, each worth 30 seconds of talking time.
- Interrupt the person with a question directed to someone else.
- Acknowledge the comment and involve others: "Al, that was an interesting insight. Barbara, what are your views on this issue?"
- Before the meeting or during a break, enlist the help of the excessive talker in encouraging the silent participants to open up.
- At the start of the meeting, establish equal participation by all members as a team goal. Encourage the participants to help monitor and manage personal participation.

How to encourage input from participants who don't talk enough

I am not sure who presents a tougher challenge to the facilitator: the participant who talks too much or the one who talks too little. It is easier to ignore the silent ones than the excessive talkers. However, silence does not indicate understanding or enjoyment of the learning.

Encouraging the silent types to talk will help ensure a much more inclusive process. Also it will set a model for equal participation from everyone.

Here are some suggestions for dealing with participants who don't participate:

- Reduce the anxiety level by using an alternative format. For example, break the large group into dyads for preliminary sharing of ideas. Then ask each pair to give a summary report of their discussion.
 - Ask the participants to write their concerns, comments, suggestions, or whatever on index cards. Then ask the group to cluster these cards and organize them into themes.
-

- Direct questions to the silent participant. Ask questions related to the silent participant's areas of expertise and interest.
- Ask the silent participant to react to someone else's statement.
- Ask everyone to take turns to make a 1-minute presentation.
- Reinforce comments from the quiet participant (without appearing to be patronizing).
- Before the meeting or during a break, talk to the silent participant. Emphasize the importance of her or his participation and collaboratively work out strategies to increasing the level of participation.
- Before the meeting or during a break, assign the role of identifying and drawing out the reluctant participant to a one or two group members.
- Call on the silent participant by name. Frequently use the name of this participant.

Techniques to share with participants working in small groups

Facilitators can make a handout of these tips and provide them with activities to participants.

Instructions:

1. Choose a note taker
 2. Answer the questions using a method of your choice such as:
 - The go around – one by one each participant shares an answer to the question
 - Popcorn method – participants will randomly share answers as they are ready
 - The LIP Zip – participants take a few minutes to reflect on the questions, then write down their responses on cards. Put the completed cards in a hat, draw randomly, and have group members read responses that are not their own. (Facilitator Note: this is good for sensitive questions)
 - Concept web – write the question in a bubble in the centre of your paper and create a web of responses that stem out from the bubble.
 - Any combination of the method that you prefer!
 - Make sure everyone who wants to contribute gets to.
-