

MEETINGS THAT ROCK!

By North Star Facilitators



Learning the Art and Science of Engagement

Just Say No to Energy Draining Meetings®

Handout 1



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Introduction to This Competency

Create and Sustain a Participatory Environment

I have a battery-operated toy I bring to meetings that is a little plastic box. When you flip on the switch, it rattles back and forth on the table. Then a loud voice yells, “Excuse me... excuse me... will someone let me out of here?!” It always evokes laughter. People laugh because we often feel like that in meetings. This is what I call “energy-draining”¹ meetings. This term might seem provocative but I am that passionate about helping you and others honor one another and NOT waste any more time in meetings.

Now – I am going to ask you a direct question. Please consider it honestly.



Your first step to creating “meetings that rock” is to know only 4 things:

- I. What do people expect from those running the meetings? (i.e., your roles)
- II. How do people best learn and participate?
- III. What can I do to run better meetings? (i.e., tips)
- IV. What is my action plan? Reflecting, Linking, Committing

¹ “Energy -draining” is an expression to mean something that takes away our enthusiasm and zest. We may feel depleted, ambivalent, frustrated and disappointed at the end of the meeting.



Are you leading energy-draining meetings?

If you don't know the answer to this question, please read from the list below and check off any that you think are happening. We drain people's energy and enthusiasm when we run long, boring, non-participatory meetings. When this is done on a daily basis, it significantly reduces work or volunteer productivity and satisfaction. Here are a few descriptors recent business conference attendees described as typical "energy-draining" meetings:

In this handout, you will have a chance to learn and/or practice:

- A self-assessment tool to understand better your meeting facilitator roles (Part I – page 10)
- The theory and practice of how to engage all types of learners (multiple intelligences) (Part II – page 19)
- The 11 "essentials" of running participatory meetings (Part III – page 25)
- "Ground Rules" to use and tips on how to use (Part III – page 29)
- A check list of tools and props needed for engaging meetings (Part III – page 32)
- A list of the "best in the market" books/resources (Part III – page 36)

The Appendix includes:

- Frequently asked questions (FAQs) on how to handle behaviors that often surface in meetings (page 39)
- Additional Sample Groundrules (page 41)
- 10 Other Skills You Might Like to Know as a Meeting Facilitator (page 42)

- Unmotivated staff attending meetings
- Complaining and negative energy
- Critical attitudes
- No obvious accountability to complete assigned items
- Different needs of people in the room
- "Death" by PowerPoint
- Unfocused - little progress toward meeting aims
- Monologues (a few people do all talking)

If you have witnessed any of these or other unhelpful behaviors, you might be curious about how to avoid them.

This workshop is the first of the 6 part Meetings That Rock series of how to encourage friendly, fully participating and focused meetings. It IS possible. This workshop also explicitly addresses one of the six main Certified Professional Facilitator (CPF©) competencies, i.e., "Create and Sustain a Participatory Environment". See www.iaf-world.org for more information on certification.

How to Benefit From These Modules

These modules are designed to be interactive and reflective. Please consider doing all of the exercises (in purple boxes) throughout each workbook. They are designed carefully to help you retain and apply your learning and stay motivated. Obviously everyone learns differently however, so feel free to do what is best for you. They are meant to supplement what we explore in our live virtual sessions.

Your first exercise is to:

Pour yourself a refreshing drink. Quickly flip through all the pages so you can see what is ahead. Put a small 'post-it' note on any pages that interest you. Take no more than ten minutes to do this. Then come back to this page.



Understanding Your Current Beliefs, Values, Assumptions

Most of us operate on old habits or patterns that served us well for a while but may no longer serve us now as leaders of meetings. What beliefs, values and assumptions do we hold both as meeting participants and meeting leaders? To discover the partial source of these, it is helpful to go back to your **earliest** recollection of:

1. The first meeting you recall attending as a participant.
2. The first meeting you recall leading or chairing.

What was the first meeting you remember attending?

It may have been when you were a relatively young(er) adult or even as a child. My first memory of attending a meeting was at a church board meeting as a teenager. I was asked to attend as a representative of the youth group. I remember being terrified to speak. At one point, all eyes were on me as the board chair asked me to say something in front of the whole board. Although I did speak, I remember my face burning red with embarrassment. I don't remember what I said. The board chair was correct in encouraging a young person to speak but it would have helped if he had done it differently. (More on how to do this later.)

How did YOU start leading meetings?

Everyone also has a story about how they started leading meetings. My story was that I was in New Zealand doing a Master's Degree Program. I was asked by our Program Director to facilitate a very important meeting. It was between a committee of the international OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) and our Masters' program students. I was supposed to facilitate the meeting to discuss the state of the economy of New Zealand! Again, I was anxious. However, the experience was positive enough to motivate me much later to pursue gaining more skills as a meeting facilitator. In fact, one of the visiting OECD (Canadian) members told me immediately after that meeting that if I wanted a job when I returned to my home country of Canada, he would be pleased to give me a good reference.

Exercise 1: Reflecting on Attending Your First Meetings

Describe your story of the earliest memory of attending a meeting (what was good about it and what was not?).

What positive and negative associations or beliefs did you make about meetings from these first exposures to meetings? (e.g., meetings are (by definition) boring, scary, etc.).

Exercise 2: Reflecting on Leading Your First Meeting

1. Describe your story of the earliest memory of leading a meeting (what was good about it and what was not?).
2. What positive and negative associations or beliefs did you make about leading meetings from these first exposures of being the meeting facilitator? (e.g., people in meetings don't talk much).
3. How would I or others describe my current style of leading meetings?
4. What insights do I now have about some of the ways I have been leading meetings?
5. What 3 things would I like to see change in the meetings I run?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

Please share your thoughts from any of the questions above with another person who is supportive of you becoming a better meeting facilitator. Ask them to tell you what they know to be true of your excellent skills already.

I hope from this reflection in Exercises 2 and 3 you realize you've had a few good experiences of being facilitated or facilitating your own meetings. I hope also you have some motivation for **going beyond what is expected** in running meetings. Here is a short list of what the same conference attendees noted above said were features of meetings that rock:

- Fresh ideas abound
- Networking is encouraged
- Passionate succinct speakers (if meeting includes presentations)
- Honoring and respectful of starting and ending time in a culturally appropriate manner
- All voices are encouraged and included
- Everyone is connected to the topic(s) and the people in the meeting
- People understand why they are there, are pleased to attend and contribute appropriately
- Add yours...*
-
-
-
-

Exercise 3: Are any of the above “meetings that rock” features present in the meeting(s) you lead? Which ones?

Part I

What do people expect from those running the meetings?

The first thing that is useful to know is: what is expected of a person who is truly acting as a neutral process facilitator? Remember you are trying to leave behind the simpler role of someone who unilaterally (i.e., with no input from others) puts together an agenda (or shows up without an agenda), tracks time and tells who to speak when.

Your roles: How well are you currently doing as a meeting facilitator?

We have categorized your meeting facilitator roles into five overall headings:

1. Creates a Positive, Safe Group Experience
2. Acts as a Neutral Guide
3. Ensures Optimal Participation
4. Uses Appropriate Tools/Processes
5. Achieves Effective Outcomes

The "Meetings That Rock" course gives you the information and practice you need to be able to competently practice most of these roles.

Exercise 4: Fill Out This Self-Assessment Tool

The following three pages are a comprehensive list of possible roles you might perform while leading meetings. We have set this up as a check list so that you can rate yourself on these roles **now** and **again in 3-6 months**.

On a scale of 0-10, how well are you consistently fulfilling this role now?

For example, if I were doing an item all the time I would rate myself 10. If I were never doing it I would rate myself 0. Fill out the far right hand column in 3-6 months and see where you have made progress. Remember none of us are able to achieve all these roles in every meeting! But you try to do the best you can with the situation you have. The key is to know when each role is crucial to the success of the meeting. If you run few or no meetings yet, you could guess at how good you think you would be at doing this, or put N/A (Not Applicable).

How well am I doing each of these roles? 1=not at all; 10= always		
1. Creates a Positive, Safe Group Experience	Now	In 3-6 Months
▪ Helps the group set rules of conduct ('Group Rules' or Guidelines - see pages 29-30)		
▪ Discourages side-conversations		
▪ Protects individuals and their ideas from attack		
▪ Helps people listen to each other and share discussion (e.g., ask the person to speak or direct their comments to you when they are angry)		
▪ Accepts emotions and feelings; helps channel hostility, resistance and competition into effective dialogue ²		
▪ Helps avoid repetition in the discussion		
▪ Assures all points of view are expressed and understood; clarifies agreement/ disagreement		
▪ Helps maintain a sense of humor		

² Covered in a different learning module package called "Dealing with Groups in Conflict"

How well am I doing each of these roles? 1=not at all; 10= always		
2. Acts as a Neutral Guide	Now	In 3-6 Months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remains neutral³ (a phrase we can say to ourselves is “replace judgment with curiosity”. An example of being neutral and non-judgmental would be to ask, “What makes you say that?” or “Can you say more about that?” when hearing someone make a negative or strongly emotional comment. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderates the flow of discussion (keeps participants on track and focused - covered in Module 3 of this package) 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarifies information (if you, the meeting facilitator do not understand what someone has said, chances are others do not also and you will lose the group) 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> States and restates the progress of the meeting 		

How well am I doing each of these roles? 1=not at all; 10= always		
3. Ensures Optimal Participation	Now	In 3-6 Months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paces (speeds up or slows down) the discussion 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assures all learning styles are accommodated in each session to maximize participation and understanding (more on this on pages 19-22) 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sets up space to enhance participation, learning and productivity (Workshop 2) 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Honors everyone’s input respectfully and equitably. 		

³ A learning module on neutrality called “The Neutral and Impartial Facilitator” is available for separate purchase or is included in our business package.

How well am I doing each of these roles? 1=not at all; 10= always		
4. Uses Appropriate Tools/Processes	Now	In 3-6 Months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assures all participants are given the opportunity to participate in a balanced way (e.g., break into dyads or triads often, 'round robin' sessions at beginning and end, focus on body language to draw out quieter ones who are hesitant or unsure how to 'break into' the discussion)⁴ 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggests alternative process methods if something is not working (e.g., break into small groups, take a break, brainstorm, "round robin" feedback, structured conversation methods, group prioritizing, question and answer, tell a story or joke to stimulate new thinking, lateral thinking or Six Hats thinking (Dr. Edward De Bono), "walk about" stations for brainstorming, energizer, dot voting, etc.) Note: Many of these included in other workshop handouts. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps the group find win/win situations, gain agreement or build consensus as appropriate. (Workshop 4) 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps the group understand how they will reach a decision – e.g. majority vote, consensus, etc. (Workshop 6) 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observes when the group has lost focus. In a timely manner, understands the natural order of thinking well enough to ask the right question to help the group refocus and get back on track 		

⁴ Covered in separate learning module entitled "Dealing with Difficult Participants" OR, included in the module package "Building An Advanced Facilitation Practice".

How well am I doing each of these roles? 1=not at all; 10= always		
5. Achieves Effective Outcomes	Now	In 3-6 Months
▪ Summarizes and checks that participants are ready to move onto next topic area		
▪ Assures important ideas are recorded legibly and large enough for all to see		
▪ Brings meeting or session to closure, and makes all participants aware of what will happen next and key actions to follow through. (See page 28 and workshop 6)		
▪ Discerns when a new outcome emerges and helps the group adjust and reprioritize to cover this new emerging agenda item.		

Exercise 5: Reflection on Roles

(Answer this now and again in 3-6 months when you redo your assessment)

- In which of the five roles was I the strongest?
- Which of the five roles would I like to explore more?
- What surprised me about my results?
- Why might it be important to strengthen some of the roles noted in this assessment?
- What are **3** things I might do within 2 weeks to strengthen any role?

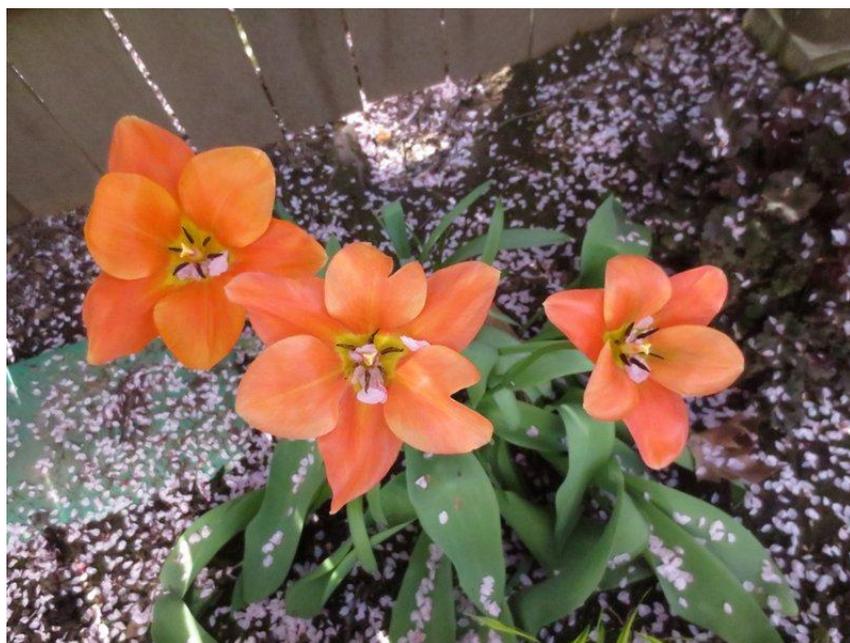
Part II

How do people best learn and participate?

What we have covered so far are the things most of us know we are supposed to do in meetings. Doing any one of them will make a big difference to how well people participate. This section covers some less well known theory about the neuroscience of the brain and multiple intelligences, and includes some creative techniques. You can decide which ones you are ready to practice or not. **Tip:** Try one small new thing every meeting and see how it goes.

Engaging Every Learner in the Meeting

I have found it extremely helpful to know and apply some “Accelerated Learning”⁵ theory when I am trying to engage every person skillfully in meetings or workshops. First, here is a helpful “rule of three” that is easy to remember.



I will explain a little bit more why we as facilitators, (true also for trainers and presenters) need to follow each of these three things in this order. This concept comes from Accelerated Learning theory.

⁵ Accelerated Learning is an approach to learning which maximizes the ability of all people to absorb, retain and use information. One of the concepts is to ensure that all learning styles are accommodated when working in groups. Multiple Intelligences is one of the many “tools” or concepts embodied in the overall practice of accelerated learning. Try the book: “Accelerated Learning for the 21st Century: The Six-Step Plan to Unlock Your Potential” by Colin Penfield Rose, Malcolm J. Nicholl

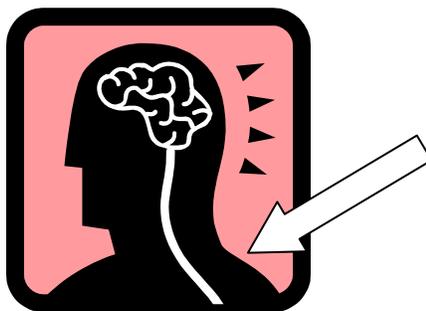
1. First Comfort

2. Then Context

3. Then Content

You might enjoy watching our free Meetings that Rock webinar 1 on this topic at <http://top.adobeconnect.com/p5x32lkipd2/>

- 1. First comfort:** People need to know they are safe in a meeting. They also need to be comfortable to engage their best thinking. You do not want people to enroll their reptilian brains during a meeting. The **reptilian brain or brain stem** is responsible for involuntary actions related to survival. It is the non-thinking brain – the one that wants to fight – flight– freeze– feed or find a mate!



Exercise 6: What makes people comfortable in meetings?

What do you think will do this? Answer these questions:

- What will make people comfortable about attending the meeting before they get to the meeting? What do they need to know? HINT: See next point about context.

- What will make people comfortable on first entering the meeting room?

- What will make people safe to participate and offer ideas during the meeting?

- 2. Second context:** This is essentially answering the why, what, when, who and how of the meeting. People need to know why they are at the meeting, what will be covered and in what order topics will be covered, how long it will take who else will be at the meeting, and what is expected of them. This needs to happen at least 4 times:
- i. before the meeting
 - ii. and again at the beginning of meeting
 - iii. and AGAIN throughout the meeting (i.e. for each agenda item: a brief summary of why this item is important; who will address it; how long we are taking on this item; and what we hope to accomplish related to this item)
 - iv. and AGAIN at the end of the meeting. This time it is different because you are summarizing the meeting or getting the group to reflect on the meeting by answering these questions: what were the original objectives of this meeting; what happened; what results did we get; who is going to do what; when will we meet again; etc.

We explain a little more about this in Part III.

Exercise 7: What can I do to ensure I keep setting context for people?

Hint: Think of visual aids (Answer this for yourself first and then look at footnote below on this page.)¹

E.g., Provide a written agenda; Put up your objectives for the meeting on brightly colored sheets of paper or neatly listed on a whiteboard (answers why); put all attendee names on the agenda and get everyone to introduce themselves at beginning; use name tags if people do not know each other; agenda can indicate who will speak to each part of the meeting; (these last four ideas answer who); indicate timing on the agenda and check in with people if need more time on a specific items than indicated on the agenda (answers when); etc.

3. Third content: Only after you have satisfied people’s needs for comfort and context, do you start the “heart” or deeper content of your meeting. This is where you begin the first agenda item or main discussion/activity. Indicate the content in the form of a key question or succinct topic item on the written agenda. How to do this well is covered in the next module #2.

Exercise 8: Content Exercise

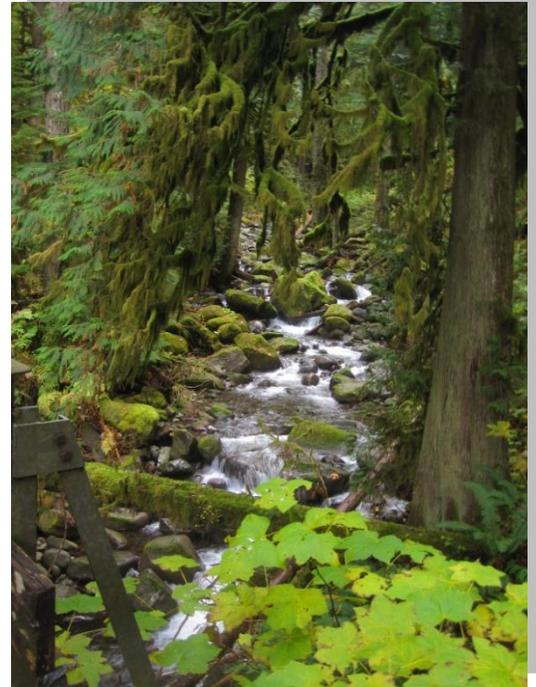
- Think about three meetings you have done in the recent past.
- Craft a succinct question on what you think was one of the most topics of that meeting. Put your question in open-ended form.(i.e., is not answered by yes or no.) Do one for each meeting. (Note – we’ll cover this a bit more in Workshop 2) e.g.,
 - How will we proceed with meeting the deadline for this project given this unexpected new information?
 - What are the key messages we want to include the promotion of our new service?
 - What are the most important findings from our customer feedback survey?

Using Multiple Intelligences Theory to Help People Participate

One of the roles we mentioned earlier was ensuring optimal participation. This assumes that you know that different people learn in different ways and recognize that you will be biased in conducting a meeting in your own preferred learning styles!

If you consistently offer ways to engage people in their preferred learning styles, it seems to profoundly alter the ability of people to feel safe, well-regarded, and clear in their thinking.

Howard Gardner, the creator of the multiple intelligences theory, says we have 8 intelligences. We use these to different degrees depending on our genetics and the environments to which we have been exposed.



As meeting facilitators, we can tap into these intelligences to encourage attendees to participate in ways that are most comfortable for them. Why?

- √ Reduces participant stress for learning new information
- √ Increases people's ability to remember key data
- √ Gains more effective interaction with both the data and other participants
- √ Ensures healthy and helpful participation

Exercise 9: Assess your own intelligence preferences

To learn what your own learning preferences are, take a five minute Multiple Intelligences quiz from the Edutopia Website:

<http://www.edutopia.org/multiple-intelligences-learning-styles-quiz>

Exercise 10: Reflection on your Multiple Intelligence Quiz Result

(If you were unable to take the on-line quiz, refer to page 20 for a quick overview)

- Which intelligences are your strongest?
- Which ones do you actively avoid?
- How do these preferences for certain “intelligences” show up or manifest in the way you prefer to lead meetings?
- What implications does this have for participants who do not have your preferences?
- Thinking back to your last few meetings, what do you better understand about certain participants’ behaviors based on the multiple intelligences theory?

Once you know that each of us has a unique combination of the way we like to think and learn (note: multiple intelligences is only one way to think about this), you will need to find ways to bring in other intelligences into your meeting facilitation.



Tip:

The “intelligences” you prefer to use will likely already be present in your meetings. Focus on intentionally bringing in those for which you have a low score.

Exercise 11: Check your current use of multiple intelligences:

- A short definition of each intelligence is noted in parentheses on the next page.
- Review the list of possible activities for each of the 8 intelligences on the next page. Add any ones you do, or have seen other facilitators do, that are not listed.
- **Circle** any ones you are currently regularly using.
- Then in a different **color of pen, or highlighter**, highlight two to three new ones from all of the intelligences that you would be willing to try at your next meeting.

The 8 Intelligences – adapted from Howard Gardner

Naturalistic (love/appreciation of nature and beauty) – providing plants and flowers in the room; posters of nature landscapes on the walls; warm-up question that allows them to talk about a favorite outdoor place or sport.

Bodily-Kinesthetic– (engaging/moving the body/action-oriented)- Walk abouts⁶; identifying actions in writing; changing seats; group games; toys or props to touch and play with in the center of the table; snacks; clapping; writing data on post-it notes and moving the data around on the wall.

Interpersonal (reflecting with others) – small group work; pairs listening exercises; sharing ideas with the whole group; “round robins”; sharing something surprising or meaningful about themselves early in the meeting.

Intrapersonal (reflecting with self) – individual brainstorm time; journaling; quiet times; breaks; getting them to answer a series of questions on their own; guided visualization (for visioning).

Musical (appreciation of musical sounds or melodies) - background music during reflection times; lively music during breaks; using musical instruments to “call back” the group from small group exercises; referring to songs or musical terms to help participants relate to the topic; inviting people to make up the words to a well-known tune or song to summarize key learning or products (e.g., the mission or vision of a group); invite participants to bring some of their favorite instrumental music.

Visual-Spatial (engage our sense of sight and use of space) – use of images in flip charting & color on the tables; pictures or quotes on walls; visual presentations; esthetically pleasing set-up of space & chairs in the room; creating an appealing center-piece; placing any handouts neatly; use of tent cards and name tags; agenda/ objectives posted on bright paper.

Logical-Mathematical (engage our logic or use numbers) - research and analysis; quantifying data; logic games; graphs; use of a timer in allocating meeting times for specific agenda items or to ensure balanced speaking time per participant in round robins.⁷

⁶ “Walk about” is a term to denote a designated time in the meeting where everyone gets to either 1) view data or information which is posted about the room and add their reactions, comments or questions to each piece of information or 2) brainstorm their ideas to different questions or topics posted around the room. Usually small groups of 2-4 people go to each topic “station” and a timer is used to tell people when to move to the next station. Everyone moves in a clockwise manner until all ‘stations’ are completed.

⁷ Round robin is a term to denote that everyone in the room gets a turn to speak on a particular question or topic. Usually the amount of time per person is limited to less than two minutes depending on the nature of the question.

Verbal-Linguistic (encourage speaking, reading & writing)- written as well as oral instructions; language translation as needed; getting participants to read out loud; having participant write their own data.

Exercise 12: Answer these questions after trying out some of these ideas

(and email to me at bmackay@northstarfacilitators.com – I'll respond.)

What are three ways you can incorporate more intelligences in my meetings?

Which ones have you incorporated in the last two meetings?

How exactly did you incorporate them?

What was the effect (what did people say or do differently as a result of these new additions?)

Which ones would you do again?

Part III

What can I do to run better meetings?

In Part I, you learned some of the key roles of the meeting facilitator and how to engage different “intelligences” in the group. Here are 11 useful tips (or steps) for setting up and conducting your **wildly successful meetings** 😊. These facilitator tips are guaranteed to enhance meeting outcomes and create a productive and light tone:

Tip:

I have found it helpful to apply the 11 steps on pages 24-26 in approximately this order. i.e., start with #1 and end your meeting with #11.



The 11 Essentials Steps of Great Participatory Meetings

1. Set Context. In advance of the meeting, take a poll of representative participants of what is most important to cover at the meeting. Create and distribute a simple agenda with no more than 3-5 items (but only 1-2 main ones). Let people know why they are requested to be at the meeting, how long it will take, and what outcomes are expected. Tell them again when they first meet.

Start within 3-5 minutes of the starting time. If you have a mixed culture group, or a “high-context”⁸ (i.e., needing more relationship building time) group, it is better to be more relaxed about the starting time and begin with something fun or more personal.



2. Set up a Positive Emotional State. Ease people into the meeting. Let them relate to each other in some simple and safe way. Each person can for example answer a simple question that brings them into a positive mind-state or mood. Examples are: What is one good thing or fun activity that happened to you this week? What is something you are grateful for today? What is one thing you appreciate about this group? Etc. You might also have a beautiful flower or interesting appropriate object on a scarf or cloth as a centre piece

and some culturally appropriate food available at the side (preferably not overly sweet food so they do not experience the low energy phenomenon after the sugar has been processed by their bodies, at the most difficult part of the meeting).

3. Set Group Guidelines by Which Everyone Behaves at Meetings.

Post some simple guidelines for everyone to see at every meeting. You may have a standard set or ask the group to generate their own. This gives you permission to refer back to them when an individual's or the group's behavior does not match the guidelines and appears to be causing the group to disengage from the topic or each other. See Part III-b on guidelines in this module.

⁸ The concept of high context and low context groups is a well known concept in thinking about cultural competency. See also our learning module on Cultural Competency (not contained in this package).

4. Begin with the Simple Agenda Items. Choose one or two agenda items that are informational or quick unfinished items from a previous meeting. Do about two of these items to give the group a sense of accomplishment but not so many that it will fatigue them.

5. Discuss Emotional Items While Energy Is High. Use a structured discussion method (e.g., The Focused Conversation sequence of thinking or De Bono's Six Thinking Hats technique – see module #3 of this series for explicit instructions on these two dialogue techniques) to pose a series of questions to achieve flow and depth of thinking for the most difficult topic. If you have more than one emotionally-charged item, separate them with an easy item or a short break.

6. Break into Small Groups a Few Times In Each Meeting. It is helpful, even in short meetings, to break into dyads (i.e., pairs), triads and groups of four occasionally especially when dealing with lengthy, difficult issues. This will ensure full participation even by those who prefer to be quiet. Dyads are most comfortable and safe for people initially. Triads offer a little buffer for discussing sensitive topics. For creative team work, four to five people allows participation from all and provides enough diversity to obtain creativity. Beware, if group mistrust is high they will resist breaking into small groups. After a few minutes in small groups discussing a set question, ask each group to report back their “findings” or conclusions to the whole group. Take notes on a flipchart or whiteboard. You may be able to try this once they sense safety with the group.

7. Ask Open-Ended Questions Frequently. Open-ended questions usually begin with what, how, where, when and why. Closed questions are ones that can be answered with yes or no, and usually begin with did, is, or forms of the “to be” verb. When you consistently ask open-ended questions in a caring and thoughtful tone of voice, it will ensure people of your curiosity (not judgment) and your neutrality. Prepare your questions ahead of time for each topic. Consult the third module in this package for 100+ examples of great open-ended questions.

8. Provide Ample Opportunity for Self Reflection During the Difficult Topic Items. Quiet time or self-reflection time encourages people of different learning styles to fully participate. Many of us need to think about a topic or question in our own mind, before we are ready to share ideas out loud or move onto the next topic. You can do this by sending out an agenda in advance or providing the group with background research on a challenge or topic ahead of time. You can also do this during the meeting by asking each person to take three-five minutes of silence to read over the material and/or write “draft” ideas or comments before you ask for input from group members.

9. Provide Visuals as Much as Possible. Most people will remember information better if it is provided in visual form. Ways you can encourage this are: provide written agendas in both a handout and large flip chart/white board format; record notes from the discussion on flipcharts or white board; distribute written documentation (meeting minutes or other products) after the meeting; post or use relevant photos, graphics, pictures, meeting objectives or quotes around the room and in large enough format where everyone can see them. *Visuals Speak*⁹ cards are a good tool to have.

10. Regularly Encourage Participants to Share Brief, Yet Relevant Stories or Appropriate Humor. This increases comfort levels of all, and helps our brains retain what they need to remember. People also remember meetings fondly if there are relevant stories and positive emotional sharing! Also end the meeting on a high note. For example, have them share something they “liked or learned”. Nanci Luna Jiménez of (www.LunaJimenezSeminars.com) taught me this!

11. Make sure you keep a list of assigned action items visible for everyone to see as participants complete discussing each topic. For example, at the end of each topic, ask someone in the group to summarize what are the key actions related to this topic. Write down the topic, action(s), date to be completed and who will complete in the form of a table - which can be viewed on a projected image from a lap top or on a flipchart or whiteboard. It might look like the table below. Be sure to gain agreement from the person(s) assigned that they can do this task. If not, ask what support they might need to get done. If appropriate, ask “who can assist with this?”

Tip:

In advance of your meeting, create a flipchart sheet of the table below or write it on the white board for all to see at beginning of, and throughout the meeting 😊



⁹ A set of beautiful and provocative photos which can be purchased from www.Visualsspeak.com. See also module 5 on creativity for ideas on how to use.

Action Items to be Completed after This Meeting

Topic	Action(s)	By when?	By whom?



How to Run Better Meetings: Samples of Favorite and Typical Group Guidelines

In the third tip above, we talked about the importance of setting ground rules or group guidelines. Guidelines are sometimes referred to as ground rules. They are suggestions for behavior that will help the group do their best work together. In some cultures, it might include:

- silencing cell phones or other technology
- arriving on time
- “sharing the time” – everyone gets a chance to speak
- not interrupting
- speaking succinctly
- keeping confidentiality when required

How to use them:

There are **3** ways to introduce them to a group:

1. You can pre-create a list of guidelines for people to use as general guideline.
2. You can create a list of potential starter guidelines that you ask them to revise and agree to.
3. You can have the group create their own customized list of guidelines together at the beginning of their work together.

The third approach is most helpful under the following conditions: 1) you are going to be discussing a contentious issue or issues and/or, 2) your group is going to meet regularly over the course of many meetings (e.g., a new committee or task force).

Tip:

Once ground rules or guidelines are created, be sure to write them in large visible print and display them prominently.



My favorite:

Here is a short list of my favorite guiding principles that I post at almost every meeting. Sometimes it enough to just have these up for people to read at times in the meeting. These I learned and added to from ICA Canada (www.ica-associates.ca). If you use them, your style and methods should align with these beliefs and values.

- Everyone here is wise.
- We need everyone's wisdom for the greatest results.
- Every idea is valuable.
- There are no wrong answers.
- The sum of the whole is greater than the sum of the parts
- Everyone will hear and be heard.
- Learning and productivity are proportional to the positive emotional state of participants.

More typical:

Here is a more typical beginning list of Ground Rules you can invite a group to revise:

- Come prepared.
- Meetings begin and end on time.
- Pay attention and listen (Cell phones silenced; IT devices off).
- Share the time (be brief in your remarks).
- Ensure actions are clearly recorded.
- Everyone takes responsibility for their own action items.
- What is said here, stays here (confidentiality).
- When brainstorming, all ideas are accepted and affirmed.
- Participate fully.

Exercise 13: Choose Your Guidelines

From among the examples of guidelines above, rewrite, add or chose 5-7 which you think will work well with the next group you are facilitating. Type them up attractively with clipart and a border and distribute them at your next meeting. Get agreement on them. If this is a group you regularly facilitate, create a large poster size version of them to always post. You might consider laminating them to keep them looking fresh. You might also post on a website, Dropbox or some electronic storage area for others to use.

Meetings That Rock Supplies & Props

You are feeling fairly confident by now we hope about the “Gaining Group Engagement” competency. Great! You’ve thought about your roles, how to help people learn in their preferred ways, setting up first comfort, then context and finally content, and ways to incorporate many of the 11 essential tips, and chosen appropriate ground rules. Now here is a list of supplies you need to ensure you are well-prepared & cater to the multiple intelligences. Feel free to add more creative supplies such as music, a center-piece arrangement and more. I use a designated small rolling suitcase to carry mine that is always repacked and replenished after several meetings. You could have one or two of them to share amongst team facilitators if there are several of you leading meetings.

- 2-20 non toxic felt pens – black, blue, green (for most of your flipchart writing and data the small groups will produce)
- 8 white board pens of varying colors (for recording data which can be erased from white board)
- Other colors of non-toxic felt pens for accent on flipcharts
- large half sheet size “post-it” sticky notes (for attendees to brainstorm ideas)
- Smaller post-its in different colors and shapes for participants to note action items)
- Large colored sticky dots (for prioritizing as in dot-voting)
- Masking and painter’s tape (to post data; hang flipcharts, etc.)
- Rubber (Elastic) bands (to roll up flipcharts)
- Paper clips (to clip post-it note data together)
- Collapsible flipchart stand. The heavier e.g., Neuland versions which can collapse, have ergonomic features and hold any size chart pad are ideal; for travelling, the lighter collapsible ones work well
- 1 pad of flipchart paper (non adhesive kind is preferred as pages do not stick to each other; adhesive pages are helpful when you do not have time to fuss with masking tape.)
- Timer (small group work; ensure equal participation in “Round Robins”; keeps you on track)
- Sounding chime or bell or a variety of sound making instruments (to call small groups back together)
- Camera to take photos of data and activities to put into document
- Koosh or other unusual small, soft, throw balls, colored pipe-cleaners, other kinesthetic toys (instant energizers)

(Final) Exercise 14: Overcoming blocks to meetings that rock

1. Visualize better meetings: what will they look, sound and feel like?
2. Articulate what might stop you from having better meetings?.
3. Choose 3 overarching ways you'd like to overcome any hindrances noted in # 2 and get closer to what you described in #1

Part IV

Making Your Action Plan: Reflecting, Linking, Committing

In this final section, we ask you to make a short action plan to put some of the most relevant ideas in this handout and the first workshop into action. If you practice something right away, it becomes part of your long term memory system, and you will remember to do it more and more as you practice.

We suggest that your action plan includes:

1. What 2 roles from the self-assessment tool you will emphasize in your next few meetings
2. What 1-2 intelligences you might incorporate that you usually do not do
3. Choose 2 of the 11 essential steps of meetings you will apply
4. Which 5 ground rules will you use? Prepare a flipchart or handout of these for your next meeting.

Fill out this chart and print it out so as you design your meetings, you remember to do this.

Actions	Which ones	How specifically I will do
Two roles I will emphasize		
Two new intelligences to incorporate		
Two of the 11 essential steps		
Five best ground rules for my meetings		

Exercise 15: Summarize Key Learning Points

What did you learn from reading the 11 steps of participatory meetings or any of the previous theory? How are they connected? i.e., what link are you making between the different areas of theory covered in this competency.

-
-
-
-

What specific ways could you apply any of these steps to project or other meetings you are participating in or leading?

Conclusion

In the end, running meetings is an art and science because it takes both precision and creativity. If people find their interactions in meetings productive and positive, it can make their whole work day go better. Gradually you will begin to see a positive cultural shift to a more resilient and happy workforce. It is well worth your time to become more skillful in running meetings and being more facilitative in all your interactions with people. We welcome your questions or comments via email. You can email me directly at: bmackay@northstarfacilitators.com.

In our next workshop, we'll look at a 6 step process to creating meeting agendas. (i.e., the "how to" of meeting design). You will learn exactly what to do before your meeting, so that meeting time is used well, people know why they are there and are clear on what are their responsibilities after the meeting.

Our Favorite “Best on the Market” Resources

(Other than those noted in this module)



- International Association of Facilitators (IAF), www.iaf-world.org (the international not for profit association for facilitators globally)
- International Association of Public Practitioners, www.iap2.org (the international organization for those working on public and community issues specifically)
- Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), www.ica-international.org (the international not-for profit organization which created the Technology of Participation tools for leading meetings in any culture)
- Dynamic Facilitation, www.tobe.net (a NW USA based organization which has created a specific model of dealing with very challenging, sometimes considered irresolvable issues in groups)
- Non-violent Communication, www.cnvc.org (the international organization which teaches and promotes the use of skillful compassionate language to solve all levels of conflict to from individual interpersonal conflict to workplace culture issues to international dangerous conflicts)
- Stir Fry Seminars, www.stirfryseminars.com (a USA-based organization dedicated to helping groups and individuals understand cultural differences)
- Luna Jiménez Seminars, www.lunajimenezseminars.com (a USA-based training and facilitation organization dedicating to eliminating the effects of oppression)
- www.EffectiveMeetings.com – Your Meeting Resource Center – a website sponsored by SMART Technologies, LLC, Your meeting productivity Experts. Includes many excellent FREE succinct tips and short articles for leading effective meetings. Note: we have specifically tried to include data here which is not covered by free websites.
- Multiple Intelligences, as noted in the text, you can learn more about multiple intelligences by first taking a quiz at his website provided by Edutopia: <http://www.edutopia.org/multiple-intelligences-learning-styles-quiz>

References used in this module and books to help you explore facilitator skill-building:

- Dynamic Facilitation Manual and Reader, Rosa Zubizarreta and Jim Rough, 2002
- Facilitating with Ease, Ingrid Bens, 2000, Jossey-Bass
- Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making, Sam Kaner, 1996, New Society Publishers
- The Art of Focused Conversation. Brian Stanfield. 1997. www.ica-associates.ca
- The Facilitator Excellence Handbook, Fran Rees, 1998, Jossey-Bass Pfeiffer
- The Art of Facilitation, Dale Hunter, 1994, Tandem Press. N.Z.
- The Power of Smart Meetings – How to Plan and Run Collaborative Meetings that Get Results, Bob Wiele, 2003, Fearless Diamond Press. www.onesmartworld.com
- The Skilled Facilitator, Roger Schwarz, 2002, Jossey-Bass. www.schwarzassociates.com
- The Secrets of Facilitation, Michael Wilkinson, 2004, Wiley, John & Sons
www.learningstrategies.com
- The Secrets to Masterful Meetings – Ignite a Meetings Revolution, Michael Wilkinson, Leadership Strategies, 2005. www.learningstrategies.com
- The 9 Disciplines of a Facilitator – Leading Groups by Transforming Yourself, John & Maureen Jenkins , 2006, Sponsored by IAF, Jossey Bass
- The IAF Handbook of Group Facilitation – Best Practices from the Leading Organization in Facilitation, Sandy Schuman, 2005, Jossey-Bass
- ToP (Technology of Participation) Group Facilitation Methods – Effective Methods for Participation, Institute of Cultural Affairs, 2000





Your Guide and Author of This Series:

Barbara MacKay

Barbara MacKay, MS, CPF©, principal of North Star Facilitators, specializes in strategic planning, facilitation processes, training, and consulting.

Barbara is currently mentoring facilitators from all over the world and cares deeply about passing on the skills to others so the world becomes a just, peaceful and creative place. Barbara strong interpersonal communication skills and experience allow her to work skillfully with a wide variety of participant perspectives. Barbara specializes in helping groups participate, problem-solve, plan and make progress in challenging and complex situations. She has an energetic, respectful style and clear delivery. Barbara has worked with 100's of clients from all sectors with her own company since 1995. She provided social, economic and environmental consulting and facilitation services with many cultures throughout Canada from 1981 to 1995.

Barbara is a: Certified facilitator and USA trainer with the International Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA and Canada); Certified Professional Facilitator (CPF) and assessor of other facilitators world-wide with the International Association of Facilitators (IAF); Professional Development Strategic Initiative Coordinator for the IAF for four years; has been an Adjunct professor with University of Oregon (Eugene) (teaching the only required facilitation skills (4 credits) class of all Oregon universities at graduate level in Conflict and Dispute Resolution Studies); an adjunct professor teaching facilitation skills at Portland State University (Not for Profit Management Institute); certified OneSmartWorld™ trainer; trained in Disaster Crisis Intervention for facilitators; certified accelerated learning trainer; trained extensively in: Constructivist Listening and Cross Cultural Communication and Alliance Building; visioning processes; Mind Mapping™; Behavior styles model "Why Are You Like That?™"; and Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI). She is also trained and teaches about Learning Organizations; Organizational Journey (ICA); conciliation; "shifting from positions to interests"; conflict resolution; negotiation skills; anger management; risk communication; training for trainers; and curriculum development.



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Appendix



FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) About Meetings

Keeping Meeting Time to a Minimum

Q: Should you start with or without those who are consistently late?

A: *The proverbial wisdom is start on time always – to show respect for those who do show up on time. You can say to the group: “We seem to be starting our meetings late. Do we need to change the timing on them?” or “What practice do we want to put in place regarding starting times for our meetings?”*

Q: Should one try and minimize meetings?

A: *Yes! In general, if the matter can be handled by a memo, email or telephone call, don’t call a meeting. I call meetings when 1) an item needs interactive discussion for the best solution/decision, 2) when there is some important information to be presented and you want to see how everyone is reacting to this information, 3) when you need to build or boost team morale by having them be in the same room together and celebrate accomplishments, or 4) when you are learning something new together and you want everyone to be at the same starting point.*

Q: What are some methods of maximizing the output and minimizing time?

A: *Send an advance agenda. Tell people personally in advance why their presence is needed and what advance work is needed. Get group agreement on timing of each item and stick to this timing (within limits). Schedule meetings for end of day (e.g. 3:30 p.m. if everyone wants to leave by 4:30). Use ORID this is the first mention of ORID in the module and it is all over the FAQ. I’d spell out the acronym and give some references.*

Questions on Dealing with People Who Have More Seniority than You

Q: When you are in a meeting with several other people, should you take the lead and run or wait to see if the meeting evolves (if you are with others who are more superior to you in terms of rank)?

A: *This is tricky. At first, you will have to be patient and let the “superior” ones take or not take the lead. It may take years before you can really handle this diplomatically! Again, I usually find the ORID technique saves the day for me in these situations. Question-comments such as, “I am wondering what everyone considers to be the highest priority topics for today?”, or even, “This is what I hope to accomplish in this meeting. Am I on track with everyone’s thinking?”*

Q: How can a young person diplomatically control more senior personnel during the course of a meeting?

A: *Offer to put together the agenda. Offer to facilitate – say you want the practice. Ask the right questions at the right time (ORID). Use diplomatic questions and comments like, “Can you say more about that?”, or, “This seems to be an important issue – what are the facts on this situation?” (i.e., always go back to neutral territory if you can).*

Q: What are some tips for booking meeting time with people who are very busy and have little time to meet?

A: *Try to understand the personality type you are working with. With a results oriented person say, “I need 10 minutes of your time in the next two days to discuss this item. I need your input because...When can you give me this time?” (You may even provide them with a succinct written briefing note on the item you need help with). With a creative type, use your imagination, have fun – offer to take them out to lunch or breakfast – send your request cartoon style or with pictures. With a finance type – give them lots of notice - tell them when, why and what. Generally schedule a group meeting around the most critical person’s agenda. Only ask for a meeting if you absolutely need it.*

Questions on Keeping a Group on Track

Q: Beyond a formalized agenda, what are ways to keeping a meeting on track?

A: *Set group guidelines for the meeting and remind group when these are not being observed. Follow the natural order of thinking (ORID¹⁰). Obtain agreement on ending time and stick to it. “Table” items that appear to need more research, time to process feelings or analysis. Draw out the quieter participants – they are usually able to summarize what has been going on and move the group along with insightful comments. You might say, “Joshua, you’ve been listening to all this. How would you summarize our thinking so far, or what other information might help us wrap up this topic?”*

Q: How do you keep participants on topic without inhibiting participation or making them defensive?

A: *The human mind naturally makes associations with data it hears or sees¹¹, so it is easy for anyone to “get off track or off-topic”. When you sense someone is losing focus, thank them for their insightful comments, sum up what you have heard from the group on the current agenda item, and ask another relevant question to bring the group back to that topic. Keep encouraging the group to stay focused with comments like, “We have some really good ideas on this and I’d like to make sure we don’t lose these ideas. Can we quickly jot them down and get back to the main topic at hand?”*

¹⁰ See learning module entitled “Great Everyday Conversations” and the book called “The Art of Focused Conversation” available from www.ica-usa.org

¹¹ This associative level of thinking is called the Reflective level of thinking by the Institute of Cultural Affairs, a not-for-profit international organization that has been researching and teaching about the Technology of Participation® since the 1960’s. We share more about this in the module included in this package related to discussion methods.

Additional Sample Ground Rules

Your choice of ground rules will depend on the tone, format, purpose and facilitation methodology that you are using. Here are three other sets of ground rules based on the skilled facilitator approach, the dynamic facilitator approach and the public conversations project approach. These ground rules are more complex and are better used in longer meetings with stakeholders from different organizations.

The Skilled Facilitator Approach (Roger Schwarz and Associates)

1. State my views and ask for others' views
2. Share all relevant information
3. Use specific examples and agree on what important words mean
4. Explain reasoning and intent
5. Test assumptions and inferences
6. Jointly design next steps
7. Focus on interests, not positions
8. Discuss undiscussible issues
9. Use a decision-making rule that generates the level of commitment needed

Dynamic Facilitation (Jim Rough and Associates)

Essentially there are no ground rules. However, this is what they say, "Instead of using 'ground rules', we emphasize both active facilitation and modeling. As the facilitator listens deeply to people, he or she is modeling good listening. Even more importantly, the facilitator is helping participants feel heard. From the perspective of Dynamic Facilitation, the key element in that situation is the conversation itself. Any actual "rules" or "agreements" that a group might come up with are not nearly as powerful as the shared understanding that is built through exploring what those agreements might mean. Even if the group has come up with some "ground rules", our role as a facilitator is not to enforce rules, but to facilitate in such a way that rules become unnecessary."

Public Conversations Project Ground Rules

1. We will speak for ourselves. We won't try to represent a whole group, and we will not ask others to represent, defend or explain an entire group.
2. We will avoid making grand pronouncements and, instead, connect what we know and believe to our experiences, influences in our lives, particular sources of information, etc.
3. We will refrain from characterizing the views of others in a critical spirit, keeping in mind that we're here to understand each other, not to persuade each other.
4. We will listen with resilience, "hanging in" when we hear something that is hard to hear.
5. We will share "airtime" and refrain from interrupting others.
6. We will "pass" or "pass for now" if we are not ready or willing to respond to a question – no explanation required.
7. If asked to keep something confidential, we will honor the request. In conversations outside of the group we won't attribute particular statements to particular individuals by name or identifying information without permission.
8. We'll avoid making negative attributions about the beliefs, values, and motives of other participants.

10 Other Skills You Might Like to Know as a Meeting Facilitator

I would like to emphasize the importance of **on-going learning** in the art and science of meeting facilitation. Choose one or two seminars or conferences or webinars per year that intrigue you. Then check around with other trusted colleagues about their experience with these professional development opportunities. If you hear good things, sign up and reserve that time to devote your exclusive attention to your own learning and networking. Try not to have other distractions from work or home while you are attending these trainings. You will find your learning is proportional to the amount of attention you can give the seminar. If you do not have access to in-person training seminars, consider what other North Star Facilitator learning modules might fill in some gap areas in your competency. Where other modules exist to help you learn more about any of these 8 areas this isn't relevant in this module, we have noted the specific module or package of modules for your easy reference.

Below I offer brief thoughts on the core learning areas, why each is important and what a few of my favorite resources are. There are so many good ones. I offer just a sampling of ones I use regularly.

Easier to do:

1. **Problem-solving and decision-making techniques.** Every group at some time is going to need to solve a problem and or make a decision. My favorite tools are from ICA (Institute of Cultural Affairs), OneSmartWorld, Sam Kaner and Dr. de Bono's Six Hats. (See resources section for more information)
2. **Oral and written communication skills.** Imagine a facilitator who cannot give clear instructions, tell a compelling story to inspire the group to action, articulate clear provocative and thoughtful questions, or write a clear document to synthesize the groups' work. For verbal communication try a local toastmaster's group (<http://www.toastmasters.org/>). For writing practice, take a one day technical writing or business –writing course and/or get coaching from a writing or speaking coach ([writing and speaking resources at Harvard](#)).
3. **Self assessment tools and profiles.** There are many great tools that benefit teams and individual, help understand and accept behaviors, and work more skillfully with different learning styles. My current favorite is the OneSmartWorld 4Di tool (www.onesmartworld.com) because it is simple to learn, includes 18 different strategies for thinking and has a personal spirit dimension which I've not seen in any other tool. My other favorite is the Herrmann Brain Dominance instrument because it has been verified across cultures around the world, is easy to use and is learned very quickly by participants (www.hbdi.com). Also see the North Star module on the Brain Diversity Game Dominance. Both of these instruments can be down-loaded to any computer in the world.
4. **Consensus building and planning techniques.** Every group will need to build lasting agreement and create plans together. There are many tools. My favorites have been developed by ICA (Institute for Cultural Affairs) www.ica-usa.org including their strategic and action planning models and consensus workshop method. Another consensus decision-making model that I like is

the gradients of agreement scale by Sam Kaner¹². (Some of these decision-making and consensus methods are covered in this package).

5. ***Creativity and Accelerated learning techniques.*** Everyone learns differently. Are you able to tap into the kinesthetic, visual and auditory learners on a continuing basis? Are you able to help a group play at their work, laugh together and enable their creative spirits? My favorite annual conference to learn this theory and how to apply it is the Alliance for Learning at www.ialearn.org. Another conference my colleagues greatly enjoy is “The Creative Problem Solving Institute” (<http://www.cpsiconference.com/>).¹³
6. ***Techniques for gaining meaningful participation from every group member.***¹⁴ Do you know how to work with both dominant and reluctant participants? Do you know sure-fire techniques for making sure every voice is heard for every topic? There are many courses available to help you figure this out. ICA courses are great models of this. (www.ica-usa.org)

A little more challenging:

7. ***Organizational development models and concepts.*** To ensure you understand what it takes to help an organization make a culture shift or move to higher levels of performance in teamwork, collaboration or effectiveness for example, you need to understand some of the theory of “systems” and how organizations evolve. Our package on Facilitating Easeful Organizational Change covers much of this.
8. ***Conflict resolution and negotiation skills.*** Every group usually has some internal struggle or several interpersonal conflicts going on. If you are an external (independent) facilitator, if a client asks you to do “team-building”, this usually means there is some conflict in the group. If you are not comfortable handling and accepting conflict, you might want to consider some skill-building in these areas. One of my favorites is non-violent communication (www.cnvc.org) and Dynamic Facilitation (www.tobe.net). Our package on “dealing with Groups in conflict” is a great starting point.
9. ***Building self-awareness and healing from your own life’s traumas.*** To skillfully guide a group, you need to be aware of your own biases and places where you might get triggered by a particular type of behavior in a group. Much of this is related to what was hard for us as young people. Healing from the effects of our own childhood traumas and doing self discovery work is key to us being able to be authentic and powerful facilitators. Many leadership courses also help in this journey. www.lunajimenezseminars.com offers great course to learn this skill. See also the book called “The 9 Disciplines of a Facilitator – Leading Groups by Transforming Yourself” (see resources section of this module).
10. ***Cross-cultural awareness and Alliance Building.*** Regardless of your country of origin, your race, gender, age, faith or sexual orientation, you can be an “ally” to someone who is different from you. It is important that the meeting leader model the utmost care and respect for all cultures and differences. Subtle things we do, often unconscious, can add to or reduce the discomfort of minority participants in the room. Do you really know what it takes to be a good ally to a woman if

¹² See the book Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision-Making by Sam Kaner

¹³ Our second learning module package on facilitator tools includes much of the theory and practice of Accelerated Learning techniques.

¹⁴ See learning module entitled “Helping Groups through Difficult Decisions” for more on this technique.

you are a man, to a person of color if you are white, to a Muslim if you are Christian, to a Jew if you are a Gentile, to a homosexual, trans-gendered or bisexual person if you are heterosexual, to a young person if you are a middle aged person and so on. Two great cultural awareness trainings I have found are through www.lunajimenezseminars.com or www.stirfryseminars.com.

