

Graphic Facilitation

The purpose of graphic facilitation is to enhance learning through collective recording or group memory in such a way that imagination is stimulated.

It is essential to learn to record everything significant that happens in a group setting. It allows the group to gel its thoughts and concentrate its attention on the matter at hand. Charts can be made live before a group or partially prepared in advance.

A. Public Recording Skills.

Keeping a public record during an event is powerful for several reasons. It enables members of your group to focus on the issues before them, instead of the individuals advocating only their own point of view. It also enables people to voice differing opinions and have them validated. A one-day course, Power of Graphics, is dedicated to recording skills. Tips and guidelines for Public Recording are:

1. Bursting Easel Charts. Easel chart paper comes bound. Normally, the binding is a staple through a heavy cardboard strip at the top border of the pad of paper. If the easel is the type that holds the paper through holes at the top of the paper (as most paper and easels are), it is worth the time and effort to burst the pad of paper apart before the event begins. This prepares the blank sheets for recording and is of great benefit when removing the paper from the easel to be hung. It eliminates the possibility of ripping the paper through some of the recording when removing it from the pad and makes the process much easier than ripping each sheet off. To rip the sheets off takes time, and is not only distracting for the Recorder but also the participants.

2. Sheet Preparation. Easel chart pads require preparation. Full sheets should always have standard borders and organization icons prominently displayed. Sheet preparation should be completed with an appropriate bold basic color with breaks in the lower left and upper right about three inches from the edge. Additional breaks are acceptable and often desirable toward the later sheets used, as it subconsciously increases the feeling of free flowing thoughts.

3. Icons. Icons can be used effectively during recording to set the mood, and save time in writing lengthy passages. For example, using a “smiley” face in lieu of “things that are going well” saves time and quickly translates the message. Icons can also be used as bullets to distinguish major headings or items on a list.

4. Numbering. Easel pad sheets should be numbered to aid in the transcription process. Frequently, sheets are not transcribed immediately and numbering helps to keep them in order. This is especially true if the person transcribing them is not present or a member of the Facilitation Team. Numbering can be accomplished in a single color and placed in circles to assure they are properly identified. If sheets are hung sequentially, they can be numbered following the session and prior to removal from the wall.

5. Marking Colors. There are seven bold basic colors: black, brown, dark green, red, purple, turquoise, and blue. Highlighting colors include orange, light green, pink and yellow. Use only basic colors for recording anything that must be read by participants and highlighting colors to draw attention to special words or phrases.

6. Highlighting. When possible, highlighting should be completed as the chart is created rather than at a later time. The highlighting is used to enhance memory and understanding of what is being discussed. Try always to highlight before a chart is hung.

7. Hanging Paper. As sheets are used, they will normally require hanging on an empty wall. The type of adhesive used to hang the paper will depend largely on the type of wall surface. Fresh masking tape, tacks, or adhesive putty are all acceptable methods. Sheets should be hung in the same sequence they are produced, to allow for easy reference if need be.

8. Summarizing. Listen carefully to what people are saying and record their ideas in one of two ways. “Lift” an important or key phrase and record it exactly as said, or pick your own meaning for what was said (always ask the person if you have captured their intent when you paraphrase).

B. Transcribing group charts.

It is the Recorder’s responsibility to see that all charts are transcribed. As soon as possible enable the participants to take the charts back to their work place for use in a sustaining effort. Three guidelines to follow when transcribing are:

1. Copy the charts exactly as they were constructed. Otherwise, much of the meaning captured in the original chart will be lost. The style of handwriting and spacing should match as closely as possible. If available, use equipment that reduces larger charts to 8.5x11 copies. In addition, extract pertinent information from the charts and consolidate in a single graph or chart format to capture the event overall.

2. Be sure to include any agreements or commitments made while in the group setting in your summary. It is important for all decisions, agreements, and conclusions to be recorded to establish accountability and aid in follow through activity.

3. Make transcribed charts available to all those present at the session. As a courtesy, individuals should be given an opportunity to make corrections, but only when the transcribed information is in error. Transcribed charts aid participants in three areas:

- a. Remembering what happened during the event.
- b. Explaining to others what occurred during the event.
- c. Taking follow-through actions based on what happened during the event.

The following can be used as a hand out at an event.

Here are a few helpful hints for participants in the use of transcribed charts following an event.

- ? Refrain from providing a full set of chart copies to people who did not attend the event. Often, the meanings conveyed on charts are lost with those who did not attend. Misunderstandings can be generated when too much is left open to interpretation, so be sure to actively share the charts. Select a few key charts that are self-explanatory and circulate them to your work group with an offer to explain fully them and other items of interest. People are normally very curious about off-site events where decisions that may effect them have been made.
- ? Review the charts before taking any actions. Call on others who attended to clarify points that may be confusing.
- ? Identify any areas that pertain to a follow-through and be sure that appropriate actions are taken.
- ? Sit down with individuals or conduct a follow-through group session to provide the detail on parts of the event that may be of particular interest.
- ? Represent the event “happenings” as accurately as possible. It is generally unimportant “who said what.” Leave the names or personal inferences out of a follow-through report where they might have a negative impact. It is important what was said, not necessarily who said it.
- ? People often want to know the “real story” – behind the scenes dialog or decisions. Be accurate in reporting a point of view, but honest too. Recognize that others may not have agreed and leave room for explanations of differing opinions.