

ICA

ASSOCIATES

facilitating a culture of participation

Getting Powerful Products and Results **Wayne Nelson**

While the facilitator places a great deal of focus on the process, it is critical for each event to produce real results. The best motivation of all comes from genuine accomplishment. Facilitators orchestrate events to enable groups to achieve their objectives in concrete form. Discussions without real products often fade into vague memories, while those with real products stand out and can be acted upon. Products can include decisions, strategies, models, designs, action calendars as appropriate to the specific situation.

What does the group need?

Some groups are very clear about the results they need and others are not. Thinking about focus and the needs of those with an interest in the results gives you some clarity about the necessary product of a facilitated session.

- Focus the topic as clearly as possible to ensure that the specific concerns are addressed.
- Find out who will be affected and who will be participating in the session.
- Objectives need to be stated clearly and expected results need to be defined.
- Clearly articulated objectives and desired results will indicate what products are needed.

Design with the end in mind

When you create your plan imagine the kind of result the group needs and the 'thinking steps' that it will take them to create what they need. As we all know very well, some conversations are not productive unless other aspects of the topic haven't been discussed.

- Determine what kind of product is required. i.e. - a decision, a model, a plan, a recommendation, a design, etc.
- List all of the aspects of the anticipated result.
- List the questions that need to be discussed in order to create the needed product.
- Create a sequence of questions or topics that enables the group to proceed from their beginning point to the necessary result in an easy flowing way.

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Clarify Expected Results with the Group

One of the keys to getting great results is being very clear with the group about the whole plan and how it will lead to solid results, products and decisions.

- Stating these at the beginning will enable the group. Participants will be able to enter discussions with confidence if they are clear about where the discussions are going.
- Write up the anticipated results or products on a sheet of flip chart paper and post it on the wall to keep discussions on track.
- For some groups, it will be necessary to develop the objectives of the session at the beginning of the session itself. Do this briefly, but thoroughly.

Create well documented reports. Reports serve a variety of functions. They can be used for future reference. Action plans serve as guides to daily activities and provide a tool for ongoing monitoring.

- Use charts to summarize workshops. A chart can summarize an entire workshop on a single sheet of paper.
- The detailed minutes or background data may be important, for future reference; so be sure documentation is accurate.
- Consensus and decisions are put in written form.
- A good report seals the completion of a process, gives the work significance and honours the participation that created it.
- A beautifully prepared document signifies the expenditure invested in its creation.

Distribute workshop results quickly.

The product of a workshop embodies the dialogue, contributions and most importantly, the commitments of the participants. Having the results in one's hands marks a sense of accomplishment for the time and energy expended.

- The product of a workshop articulates peoples' ideas as they articulated them
- Quick distribution of results enables people to move directly to implementation.
- It is best to provide some form of results for each person at the close of the workshop.