



## **How to Design Groups and Structures for Successful Facilitation**

It's best for working groups to have some structures that support the group's facilitation and its evolution through the stages of development. Here is a comprehensive list of structures for building an optimum group or team. You should work with your client to explain and establish those structures.

### **Specify the specific purpose and goals of the group**

Goals might be, for example, "to produce a project report that includes a project plan, schedule and budget for the month of January" or a goal of "Make a strategic decision about the future of a certain product." Communicate the goals to the members of the group and allow time for discussing them.

### **Decide the timing and frequency that are needed to achieve the goals**

This timing includes when the deadline by which the goal of the group is to be achieved. Someone outside the group might decide that, or it might be decided by the members themselves. Timing also includes specifying the frequency of group meetings that is needed to achieve the goal of the group. If a goal of the group is for members to learn about their group process and about themselves in groups, then the group will need sufficient time to stand back and reflect during their meetings.

### **Decide the best membership of the group**

The group should include members who have the interest and influence to achieve the goals of the group, and who also have their own supervisors' permission to attend the meetings of the group.

### **Ensure that group members have strong support of their management**

Management needs to agree on the goals of the group and support the members' participation in the group, as well. Management also needs to provide sufficient resources in terms of funding, expertise and facilities.

### **Establish the roles that are needed in group**

Roles might include leadership, administration of meetings, facilitation, a recorder and a time keeper. People might rotate roles amongst themselves, as well, depending on the current stage of development of the team, and also on how far along they might be in achieving their goals.

### **Clarify the best style for facilitation**

Should it be rather direct, for example, giving directions and asserting decisions? Or should it be more indirect, for example, supporting the group to make their own decisions by asking them questions and summarizing what the facilitator is hearing? Be sure that the group members know the facilitator's role and preferred style.

### **Decide how ground rules will be determined**

Ground rules guide the behaviors of the members of the group during their meetings. Will those be recommended or will the members develop them themselves?

### **Determine the processes that members will use amongst themselves in the group**

How will the members make decisions and solve problems among themselves? The processes that members use to work together depend on the culture of the organization and on the members in the group. They also depend on the timing available to achieve the group's results, and on the current stage of development of the group.

### **Identify any needs for training and materials**

For example, members might benefit from a training that provides a brief overview of the typical stages of team development and the team's goals, structures and processes to make decisions.

### **Identify the costs to provide the necessary resources for the team**

Consider costs, such as paying employees to attend the meetings, hiring trainers, hiring consultants, renting rooms and getting office supplies.

### **If possible, contact each team member before the first team meeting**

It's often useful for you to contact each member, for example, to communicate the goals of the group, why that member was selected, the benefit of the goals to the organization and that member, the timing available to achieve the goal, and who will lead the team (at least initially). Invite the member to the first meeting of the group

### **Consider whether any team building is needed to build strong trust and working relationships among members**

Team building activities can include, for example, a retreat in which members introduce themselves, any practice exercises in which members help each other solve a short problem or achieve a certain goal.

### **Carefully plan the first meeting**

In the first meeting, review the goals of the team, the benefit of the goals to the organization, the time frame for the team effort, who will lead the team (at least, initially), when the team might meet and where, and any changes that have occurred since that first individual meeting with each member. Have this information written down to hand out to each member. At the end of the meeting, it's useful to ask each member to make a public commitment to the team effort.