

REASONS TO HIRE A FACILITATOR

While you probably don't need an outside facilitator for all of your organization's meetings, there are usually a few very important times when an organization could use an outside facilitator, such as during a strategic planning process, board development process, annual workplan session, or any other occasion where your organization needs to make a big decision, have a much-needed discussion, or build a stronger team. A facilitator:

- 1. Improves the overall effectiveness of your meetings:** A facilitator works with your organization's leadership to develop an effective meeting agenda beforehand, and then works hard during your meeting to ensure that the group achieves the goals set forth in that agenda.
- 2. Makes important decisions:** A facilitator understands the process of decision-making, and helps move your group through that process in a structured way that engages everyone within your group.
- 3. Makes your meetings more efficient:** A facilitator helps a group stay focused and intervenes when a group veers off track.
- 4. Helps you manage conflict:** Conflict can either derail a group or can be harnessed to help creatively solve a group's problems. A trained facilitator understands the dynamics that are often at the heart of conflict and helps your group work through conflict productively.
- 5. Allows everyone to participate in the decision making process:** Facilitating a meeting is hard work, and if a member of your group is in charge of doing it, it can be very challenging to also participate fully in the meeting.
- 6. Helps everyone be heard:** A facilitator listens attentively to every word that is spoken during a meeting, and reflects much of it back to the group. This way, individual speakers feel that they have been heard, and, in hearing their words again, there is a greater chance that the group will actually understand what was said.
- 7. Helps you solve problems:** Skilled facilitators have a variety of tools at their disposal to help groups of all kinds to creatively understand and solve problems that involve group activities and discussions.

TOP TIPS
FROM RON MILAM
CONSULTING

TO-DO LIST

- Ask about the facilitator's experience facilitating groups similar to yours.
- Ask for references.
- Ask if they are Certified a Professional Facilitator by the International Association of Facilitators (IAF).
- Designate who within your organization will work with the facilitator.
- Select your facilitator in advance so that there is time to prepare for your meeting. (Remember, half of a facilitator's work occurs before the actual meeting.)
- Discuss with the rest of the group how a facilitator can help the group address challenges the group has been unable to solve on its own.
- Clarify goals and outcomes for the facilitator and develop a workplan.
- Ask the facilitator to draft a contract for your review, modify it and then sign it before work starts.
- Work with your facilitator to craft an agenda suited for your group.

Ron Milam has over 14 years of experience facilitating meetings and developing leadership for over 50 organizations.

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