

## Building Confidence in Facilitation

It is normal to feel a little nervous before giving a presentation or facilitating a meeting. It is a form of public speaking and public speaking is what many people fear most – even more than death.

The best cure for the jitters is to be thoroughly prepared in advance. Be sure you know your material and that your equipment and supplies are in order. Here are some tips that will help you:

- Rehearse until you feel comfortable with your overall program. Especially rehearse the words you will use in your opening comments in order to start off on the right foot. But do not memorize what you will say. People who do memorize their presentations can sometimes forget part of their comments and lose their place. This can throw them off completely and be very embarrassing.
- Arrive early to make sure that everything in the room is set up properly and to allow yourself time to relax before the session. This also allows you time to greet participants as they arrive and to become more comfortable with each other.

- Check your materials and equipment in advance.
- Anticipate potential problems and prepare to resolve them. For example, have extra markers in case the ones in the meeting room are dried out.
- Get a good night's sleep the night before. It always helps if you are rested.
- Select clothing that is not only comfortable, but makes you look and feel confident.
- Recognize that the participants are often nervous about this unknown experience as well.
- Realize that you are human and if you make a mistake, it is not the end of the world. Somehow you will manage to deal with whatever happens.
- Just before beginning the program, take a deep breath and blow it out slowly through your mouth. This lowers your heart rate and relaxes you.

- Think positively about yourself and your abilities. If you start the session thinking it will go well, it probably will. Conversely, if you start off thinking you will do poorly, you will also most likely be right.
- The best cure for nervousness is experience. So take every chance you have to give a presentation or facilitate a meeting, and before long, you'll be an old pro!

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# Organizational DEVELOPMENTS

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## CRD helps Wharton's 'best' and 'brightest' get even better

The M.B.A. students at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business represent some of the world's best and brightest minds.

But even the best still need to learn new skills from time to time.

And they did on April 9th. Working in tandem with Wharton's Graduate Division, six CRD associates conducted a full-day training program on facilitation skills for 42 Wharton Leadership Fellows. The session was part of an extensive leadership program designed to prepare a select group of second-year M.B.A. students to serve as mentors and coaches for first-year student learning teams.

"When a student enters our program, he or she is placed in a learning team comprised of five or six other first-year students," explained Evan Wittenberg, Director of the Wharton Leadership Program. "The teams are made up of people of different genders, ethnic backgrounds and business types to mirror the diversity that exists in real-life workplace teams. Each course the students take has



group-based work that they must complete with their learning team. It's our responsibility to help those teams function as effectively as possible."

To accomplish that job, near the end of the student's first academic year, Wittenberg begins an intensive series of full-day training programs sponsored by Citigroup designed to help the "Leadership Fellows" be effective mentors and coaches to the new learning teams of first-year students.

And intensive is definitely the operative word. On April 9th, the Leadership Fellows and training facilitators – 50 people in all – left Philadelphia at 7 a.m. to drive to

New York to Citigroup's corporate training facility. Facilitators conducted team-building activities on the bus, followed by a full morning of facilitation training skills. The group had lunch with Todd Thompson, Chief Financial Officer of Citigroup and a Wharton alumnus, and spent the afternoon participating in role-plays created by CRD President Diane Hanson and Wittenberg.

"The role plays were designed to help the teams work through some of the different issues that a team might face," explained Hanson. "Each group had different 'problem' participants. The facilitator trainees first had to recognize the problem, then use the techniques we taught

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**Diane Hanson, President/CEO**  
**President's Message**

*Facilitation. To many, it's nothing more than an added responsibility that falls to whomever called the meeting, offers the most vocal opinions or has the best handwriting.*

*The truth is, however, that facilitation is an art.... a specialty....an expertise that today's organizational teams need to function effectively. Facilitators help groups achieve objectives.*

*Facilitators are not formal leaders, yet they lead. They do not necessarily have positional power, yet they must influence others to get things done.*

*Effective facilitators embody exceptional communication and interpersonal skills and serve as picture-perfect models of cooperation, resourcefulness and problem solving. They need the eyes of a hawk, the ears of a bat and the patience of a saint.*

*Most of all, they need proper skills training and opportunities to practice this fine art. Good facilitators don't just happen. They develop through training and experience. We can show you how.*

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them on how to handle that problem and move the team forward to accomplish its work.”

To determine what the training content should be, Hanson and her associates interviewed past Leadership Fellows to see what skills they needed and incoming Fellows to ask what skills they thought they would need. The training session, originally developed last year, was designed and crafted within two weeks. Based on feedback from last year's participants, this year's program expanded the role-plays, which students felt were the most valuable part of the training.

Both Hanson and Wittenberg agreed that some of the training participants deserved Academy Awards for their performance in the role-plays.

“The students loved the role-plays,” said Wittenberg. “Hopefully the teams they experience in real life won't be nearly as difficult as the ones they experienced during this training session. They really got into the role-plays and challenged each other to work through tough situations.”

Now, said Wittenberg, they're anxious to practice what they've learned. And they'll have their first chance to do so in late August at the annual Wharton Learning Team Retreat in the Catskills of New York, which serves as the kickoff for the M.B.A. program.

“Team members will meet one

another, and the Leadership Fellows will help the teams identify their operating principles, shared values and so on, so they can function better as a team throughout the year,” said Wittenberg.

Overall, Wittenberg added, the training was excellent.

“Diane and her team did an outstanding job,” he said. “At the end of the session, when we asked the participants what they had learned, it was clear to us that they got everything we wanted them to get out of this training - and more! “As they put these skills into action at the retreat and throughout the year,” he added, “we're confident they'll be successful in mentoring the learning teams, which will help create a positive learning environment for all our new M.B.A. candidates.”

*“On behalf of all the Wharton Leadership Fellows, thank you and the entire team from Creative Resource Development for spending the day with us in New York.*

*We learned a great deal about facilitation tools and techniques, gelled as a group through the role play exercises, and had tons of fun. The training will definitely prove to be invaluable in our interactions with the 1st year MBA's next fall.”*

*- Suzanne Cassano  
Leadership Fellows Coordinator*

## Facilitation Overview

*The art of making things happen easily.*

Traditional facilitators are neutral servants of the group - unbiased and non-evaluative toward any content input. They serve a crucial role in helping today's organizational teams accomplish the tasks they've been commissioned to do. What do facilitators do? Take a look:

- Provide structure and guidance to help the team reach its objectives.
- Design and plan meetings.
- Focus the meeting; manage the meeting flow.
- Create a safe meeting climate conducive to participating, listening, sharing knowledge and experience, learning and accomplishing results.
- Encourage participation, dialog, debate and interaction.
- Focus the team on issues and tasks versus personalities.
- Ask questions.
- Listen actively (listen for thoughts, feelings and what is unsaid).
- Protect individuals and their ideas from attack.
- Suggest alternative methods and procedures.
- Record people's ideas.
- Read the team and make adjustments.
- Provide feedback to participants.
- Remain aware of themselves; what they say, how they respond, their tone, energy, body language, facial expressions, eye contact.
- Maintain impartial point of view.
- Remain flexible and adaptable.
- Reframe problems.
- Monitor “group process” using process tools to keep the team healthy and moving forward.
- Develop team member's awareness of their own group process.
- Organize, connect and summarize the team's data or get the team to do so.
- Help the team capitalize on differences among members.
- Model tolerance for ambiguity. Help the team find win-win solutions.
- Help the team move to decision points, identify and commit to next steps and reach closure.
- Maintain participant self-esteem.

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*CRD offers a variety of training and coaching options to help you improve facilitation skills throughout your organization. Whether you want to train one individual or a group of new facilitators, we can create customized training and resources to meet your needs. For more information, please call 877-692-5146.*

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