

25 GROUP FACILITATION TIPS FOR PROFESSIONALS

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Groups are a powerful tool in any business because they combine the collective skills and intelligence of many individuals to achieve a common goal. The ability to successfully facilitate a group involves knowing how to communicate and encourage people to work together. Facilitating groups requires practice and determination and is an excellent skill for leadership figures to have. In this article, we explain what group facilitation is and offer 25 tips for facilitating groups in a professional environment.

What is group facilitation?

Group facilitation is the act of guiding group members to communicate effectively and overcome a challenge or accomplish a goal. Those in leadership roles use groups to address complex challenges, improve productivity, and foster friendship and familiarity among employees. A manager with excellent group facilitation skills can create groups with less conflict and encourage group members to work together successfully.

The ability to facilitate groups is a useful skill for a leader. Here are 25 tips to help you facilitate groups in a professional environment:

1. Communicate effectively

Communicating effectively means proactively sharing relevant project information among team members using good communication skills or tools, such as group instant messaging platforms. Consider asking the group for daily progress reports, organizing weekly meetings, or using a project management platform to ensure good communication among group members. This helps reinforce communication expectations and ensures that group members are aware of their own individual responsibilities in addition to project deadlines.

2. Building trust

Trust is crucial to teamwork because it helps strengthen professional relationships among team members and fosters honesty. Facilitators can build trust within a team by encouraging team members to rely on each other for help and allowing them to feel comfortable sharing their ideas in a group setting. Facilitators can also model trust by planning team-building activities and following through on promises or requests.

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3. Create clear expectations

Clear expectations help each team member understand his or her responsibilities. Facilitators can set clear expectations by stating them through written or verbal communication and checking progress throughout the project. In addition, providing details about each step of the project and the individual contributions of each member can help a manager more accurately visualize the project's end results.

4. Provide the objectives of the group

A group objective is an accomplishment that all group members hope to achieve. Providing a group objective can help the facilitator guide the team to work toward specific milestones. These objectives can measure important metrics such as productivity, profitability and efficiency. For example, a facilitator might set a group goal of 90% attendance at all meetings. Consider offering an incentive for reaching group goals, such as a day off or lunch.

5. Provide the appropriate tools for teamwork

To effectively facilitate a group, leaders should consider providing useful tools to maintain and foster communication and productivity. A team with the right tools at its disposal can work more effectively, as these tools allow members to access important documents, materials or technology as needed. Teamwork tools may include video conferencing software for virtual meetings or project management software.

6. Keep groups energized and enthusiastic

Enthusiasm and energy can inspire a group to exceed expectations and work hard to develop a high-quality final product. Facilitators can keep groups energized by tracking milestones, setting and celebrating goals, and maintaining a positive work environment. It is also helpful to encourage the strengths of each group member, which can help keep everyone motivated about their role in the group.

7. Reinforce positive behaviors

Positive behaviors, such as good communication, going the extra mile on a project, helping another team member, or submitting quality work, help the team take pride in their work and reinforce an environment of mutual respect and productivity. Reinforcing positive behavior involves recognizing good work and praising the group member's efforts for their contribution to the group. You can also offer small rewards or recognition, such as an employee of the month award.

8. Identify group milestones

A milestone differs from a goal because it is a measure of the group's progress toward the main objective. Identifying milestones and celebrating them helps the

team recognize the progress it has made together throughout the project. It also helps keep the team focused on the project schedule.

9. Respond to questions

A group facilitator is likely to receive many questions about the group's objectives, expectations, and general project information. It is important that he/she answer all questions thoroughly to establish him/herself as a source of support and guidance for the group. This helps to avoid miscommunication and reinforces the idea that the group can talk to the facilitator when they have problems.

10. Understand your role as a facilitator

As a facilitator, it is important that you understand your role and responsibilities. You act as a leader and organizer of the group, which means you perform tasks such as interacting with each group member, observing and identifying their strengths, and helping them grow professionally. You may also act as a point of contact between senior management and team members, which means you can work to convey the needs and desires of both parties.

11. Staying committed

Group facilitators can make the group feel more confident in their work when they seem committed to the team's progress. When you celebrate the team's high points and join everyone in the low moments, you show the team that you care about their success. This helps build trust and communication and can build respect between you and the group.

12. Be assertive

Assertiveness helps reinforce a sense of respect and urgency. Set clear boundaries and expectations for the group and discuss them to make sure everyone agrees. Boundaries are an important part of mutual respect, and facilitators use assertiveness to maintain them. For example, you can set the boundary of not interrupting while another person is speaking by gently correcting a team member when this occurs and asking the original speaker to continue what he or she was saying.

13. Minimize interruptions and distractions

Distractions can slow progress, so it is the group facilitator's responsibility to minimize distractions and interruptions. If you are in a meeting, you might consider enforcing policies such as "no mobile devices" or "mute microphones while someone else is speaking" if you are conducting a meeting via video call. These rules help reduce distractions and increase focus and productivity.

14. Communicate with each of the members of the group

It is important to communicate with the team as a whole, but it is equally important to communicate with each group member individually. Sometimes there are certain opinions or concerns that people don't feel comfortable discussing in a group setting, so it's best to have some conversations in private. This also allows you to get to know each group member on a personal level, so you can help them develop their strengths and make sure they are placed in a position where they excel.

15. Getting help

As a facilitator, you may need the help of group members or other facilitators to overcome certain obstacles. It is a good idea to ask for help or delegate tasks when you realize that a problem or challenge is too big to overcome alone. This can help create more opportunities for teamwork and can make your strategy for overcoming the obstacle more efficient.

16. Prepare for setbacks

As a facilitator, you may experience challenges. Groups may experience setbacks in communication, productivity and efficiency, which can prevent them from achieving their objectives. Overcoming a setback means determining ways to work together and developing a solution. You can also create a plan in advance and discuss the process of what to do when common challenges arise. This can reduce response time and maintain productivity even during major challenges.

17. Consider learning opportunities

Group facilitators often discover ways to improve their communication and leadership skills. Consider taking advantage of any opportunities within or outside the company or group to improve your leadership skills. These opportunities may include courses, seminars or books that focus on leadership and group facilitation.

18. Learning to listen more effectively

A crucial part of group facilitation is active listening skills. It is important to listen to what the other person is saying and to assess body language or other environmental factors that may influence the conversation. If you don't understand something, you can ask questions after the person has finished speaking.

19. Use an agenda

Using an agenda can help you visualize the goals or expectations for the team or for a specific event. You can also share the agenda on a calendar or in an email to ensure that everyone in the group understands the project, meeting or expectations beforehand. Consider allowing meeting participants to review the agenda so they can prepare their questions before the meeting begins.

20. Assign roles

Group members can have specific roles that best leverage their skills to help meet the team's objectives. For example, someone with financial expertise can be the group treasurer because of his or her previous experience in that area. This can help create a more cohesive and productive team by utilizing everyone's talents in an appropriate role.

21. Encourage taking breaks

Facilitating groups involves taking into account the needs of group members, including the need to rest and take a break. Encourage group members to take a break and facilitate the time needed to do so. Breaks can help to improve productivity by allowing employees to re-energize.

22. Ask for opinions

Asking for group feedback can help you see your leadership style from the group's point of view and identify areas for improvement. Honest feedback can set a standard for you and allow you to focus on certain qualities or skills. Consider asking for team feedback after a milestone, team building session or project completion.

23. Take concerns seriously

When a group member raises a concern with you, it is important that you take it seriously to establish a sense of safety and mutual respect. This helps each group member feel that his or her concerns are important to the leadership team. Consider taking time out of your day to address individual concerns or holding group meetings for collective concerns.

24. Be inclusive

Group facilitators can benefit from inclusiveness because it helps the group succeed by applying everyone's unique skills to different tasks. Including everyone in the group's conversations, objectives, and work can also foster a sense of unity and camaraderie in the group. In addition, this approach can expose group members to new techniques and best practices from people in the industry or from different fields.

25. Be fair

It is important for the group facilitator to set the same standards for each group member to maintain equality in the workplace. Although you may set different goals for group members, the standard of behavior, progress and quality of work can remain the same to establish equity. Communicate equally with each group member, maintain the same expectations and track progress equally to establish mutual respect and avoid showing favoritism.