

# **FACILITATION: THE ART OF GUIDING A GROUP**

January 11-12, 2014

Dispute Resolution Institute  
Hamline University School of Law

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**Course Description:** Group meetings are so common in the legal and business world that often no one thinks much about how they should be conducted; yet training, preparation and care can greatly improve group dynamics and decision-making. Group facilitation training involves acquiring the skills of guiding a group to define its purposes and achieve its goals. Facilitation is grounded on the theory that every person in a group is entitled to have a say and be a part of building consensus so that group decisions are both robust and reliable. This course will explore the theoretical underpinnings of this model of facilitation through lecture, structured role plays, exercises and group discussions. Students will also learn practical facilitation skills: ascertaining a group's purposes; structuring a meeting process to meet those ends; encouraging story-telling and dialogue; building consensus; and managing conflict. A blend of philosophy and "how to," the course is suitable for anyone interested in group dynamics.

**Course Goals:** Participants will learn and demonstrate understanding of a methodology for group facilitation; acquire and show specific skills and techniques of a facilitator; and integrate theories of group dynamics with the practicalities of running/participating in a meeting. Participants will leave the course able to lead and participate in group meetings in new and more productive ways.

**Course Text:** Wilkinson, "The Secrets of Facilitation: The SMART Guide to Getting Results with Groups," Jossey-Bass (2012)

## **Course Agenda**

### **January 11, 2014 (9:00 am – 4:30 pm)**

Introduction and Theories of Facilitation

What is a Facilitated Session; Models and Methods of Group Leadership (Ch. 1)

Posing Questions to a Group (Ch. 2)

Preparation for Facilitation: What are the Steps? (Ch. 3)

How to Start a Facilitation (Ch. 4)

Helping a Group Gain and Retain Focus (Ch. 5)

Notes and Recording: The Power of the Pen (Ch. 6)

Role Play and Debrief

### **January 12, 2014 (9:00 am – 4:30 pm)**

Gathering Information, Prioritizing and Reporting Back (Chapter 7)

Closing a session: Review, Confirm, Evaluate (Chapter 8)

Detecting and Resolving Dysfunction (Chapter 9)

Building Consensus: How to Decide and Deciding (Chapter 10)

Secrets to Team Building: Starting with and Restoring Energy (Chapter 11)

Standardized and Customized Agendas and How to Set them (Chapter 12)

Role Play and Debrief

The Guerrilla Facilitator

Course Evaluation

## Additional Information and Assignments

### Class assignments

**Read text: Introduction and Chapters 1 – 12 before class begins. The reading will underlie the exercises that we do in class so read beforehand.**

#### **Facilitate a discussion.**

Each student will facilitate or co-facilitate a brief group discussion of one aspect of the book. Further instructions and assignment sheets will be sent to you two weeks before the first class. They will look something like this:

Student name:  
Student name:  
(Share your time approximately equally)  
Assignment, Day One, Morning. Be prepared to lead a 15 minute group discussion of the question in Chapter 1, “What is facilitation and when is it appropriate/not appropriate?” showing the use of brainstorming techniques.

**Attendance.** Attend every hour of class and actively participate in and contribute to discussions, role plays and the facilitator skill exercises that will be assigned.

### Grades

Grades for degree-seeking students will be based on the following elements with the designated weights:

20% Class contribution (facilitation assignment, discussion, exercises in class)

80% Final paper (not to exceed 2000 words). The Final Paper assignment will be distributed at the end of class. It will not require independent research. **IT IS DUE ON JANUARY 27, 2014 by 4 p.m.** in printed format. Instructions for paper submission will be distributed on the last day.

You will be graded on: 1) thoughtfulness and creativity; 2) demonstrated acquisition of skills; 3) sound and integrative analysis of concepts; and 4) in written work, organization and good usage, punctuation, syntax, grammar, etc.

**Students should be aware of the following Hamline University School of Law Academic Rule:**

**AR-105(B) (8):** A student who does not take a scheduled examination will receive a grade of “F” for that examination, unless properly excused. **In addition, any student who does not turn in a required paper on the scheduled date will receive a grade of “F” for that paper, unless**

**properly excused. Failure to meet any course requirement can be the basis for a final grade of “F” in the class, unless properly excused.**

### **Role Play Guidelines**

Role plays provide you with experience as a meeting participant and as a meeting facilitator. Role plays allow you to experiment with new approaches and techniques without having to worry about “real world” consequences. You will benefit from the feedback and suggestions of the other participants and observers and will learn from comparing your behavior, approach and results with that of others in the class.

Guidelines for participation in role plays:

1. Take the role play seriously; what you (and other participants) get from the role play is directly related to the effort you put into it.
2. Don’t deviate too far from the scenario. If you are assigned to be a “naysayer” in a group session, then be one. But you should also respond to the productive interventions of the facilitator just as your character would in a real situation.
3. Play the role the way you think the person in the situation would play it – not necessarily as you would. Maybe in real life you are tremendously voluble, but if you are assigned to play a quiet participant, try!
4. Enjoy the role play experience!

### **Instructions for Observers**

1. Please help get exercises started and stopped on time.
2. Don’t interrupt a role play except to call time or remind participants to stay in their roles.
3. Observe non-verbal, as well as verbal, communications. Take notes on what you see and hear so you can make specific reference to what transpired; i.e., did the facilitator brainstorm, make lists, etc.? Be prepared to share your observations.