

Handout 2.1.1: Verbal Tools for Group Facilitation

VERBAL TOOLS FOR GROUP FACILITATION

When facilitating a group conversation in a meeting or workshop, you can use a number of simple verbal tools to engage participants and to make sure everyone is involved.



Probing

Probing is used to determine the mood or general opinion of the group about a certain topic or point in the discussion. Just asking for a "thumbs up-thumbs down" survey can be enough to get an impression of the general opinion of the group.



Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing means to express the same content that was just stated before but in your own words in order to check that both you and the others have the same understanding.



Redirecting questions and comments

Redirecting a question to the group helps get participants more involved in the discussion. In addition, it also encourages group reflection.



Bridging and referring back

This helps the group follow the discussion and to connect ideas by recalling earlier discussions or ideas.



Shifting perspective

If the group gets stuck at some point in the discussion, try to shift the perspective and look at the problem from a different angle.



Summarizing

Repetition promotes understanding, and summarizing what has been discussed so far will help the group build upon the conclusions they have already made.



Giving positive reinforcements

It's important to encourage people, especially those who are less assertive, to state their opinions. Therefore, when someone brings up a good point, say so, thus showing his/her participation is appreciated, and later on he/she will feel confident enough again to bring up another idea.

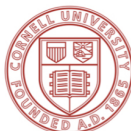


Including quieter members

Encourage less talkative members to contribute to the discussion. Ask directly for their opinions and ask if they have any questions. At the same time, keep in mind that people do have different learning and thinking styles and may not feel comfortable if they are 'encouraged' too much.



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