



Resources on facilitation

There is a huge amount of material available on facilitation. There are also an enormous number of different styles and everyone tends to develop their own approach.

There are materials that broadly focus on facilitation with:

- Community groups
- Activist / radical groups
- Public sector organisations
- Academics and students
- Private sector
- Health sector users and professionals

All of these have different takes on the same principles. Some sectors focus more on transfer of power than others. If you want to find written materials that inspire you I would suggest putting two hours aside to simply web search for materials that look interesting and relevant to you. There's plenty of good free stuff – avoid the sites that expect you to pay unless you want to invest in some good books!

Some books:

- **The Skilled Facilitator: a Comprehensive Resource for Consultants, Facilitators, Managers, Trainers and Coaches** Roger M. Schwarz
Roger is something of a facilitation guru, but his stuff is not very community-focused
- **The Complete Facilitator's Handbook** John Heron
They say: This comprehensive guide is designed to provide the key to successful facilitation. Analytical in approach and highly structured, it aims to help facilitators both understand and develop their own personal style of facilitation. Combining a strong theoretical content, including a comprehensive group dynamic theory, with an extensive repertoire for practical action the book provides the essential foundations for building effective facilitative skills that suit both a facilitator's personality and then closely match the situations they encounter.
- **Create! A toolkit for creative problem solving in the not-for-profit sector** Mark Butcher
Strongly focused on groups solving problems. Lots of useful exercises. I like this and use it!

Two key people:

Joanna Macy has been doing work in this field in all sorts of wonderful ways for many years. She's helped people work with big personal issues such as confronting despair and has also done long-term work with communities in Ukraine affected by Chernobyl . She talks about 'The Work That Reconnects' a form of group work that began in the 1970s. It may sound abstract but her work is excellent. Find out more at www.joannamacy.net/

Robert Chambers worked at the Institute for Development Studies with their Participation, Power and Social Change Team. He describes himself as "Undisciplined with background in biology, history and public administration. Current concerns and interests include professionalism, power, the personal dimension in development, participatory methodologies, teaching and learning with large numbers, agriculture and science, seasonality, and community-led sanitation". He is very inspiring and his work shows how to really give people power and a voice. Check the team at www.ids.ac.uk/go/research-teams/participation-team or search for his work.

The roles and key skills of a facilitator

- 1. Develop commitment and engagement**
- 2. Design and plan with care**
- 5. Do it yourself: use participatory methods and skills**
- 6. Encourage and enable involvement by all**
- 7. Recognise, manage and ideally resolve conflict**
- 8. Encourage and stimulate group creativity**
- 9. Get to the end – and to an outcome!**

Active facilitation – keeping the process moving

One key issue for the success of any facilitation is the performance of the facilitator. This is about what you and I do! A facilitator may take on many roles and may be seen in different roles by different people at different times. When would you be or be seen as a

- Referee?
- Advisor?
- Ringmaster?
- Coach?
- Chair?

Being a good facilitator comes down to developing your own personal practice – how you behave and react. The positive aspects to develop (over a long period!) include:

- Listening and responding
- Being inclusive
- Stimulating responses
- Not ignoring dissent
- Empowering

Staying within limits: It's always important to know what you can deliver and don't build false expectations. Use ways of working and techniques that you feel confident with, but don't be afraid of change and development. Consider each piece of work that you do and think what worked and what might work better next time if you changed things slightly (or a lot!).

Planning your work: There's a few key points that matter no matter what you are doing:

- Know the audience and everyone else involved
- Check the publicity – know what people are expecting
- Know the timeframe and plan work to fit in (allow for over runs & 'under runs')
- Be clear on how you finish (and achieve the aims)

Facilitation and energy: Keep moving! If you put out energy other people (probably) will as well. Some points to remember:

- Don't let the silences stretch (know when to move on)
- Use humour (carefully) – self-deprecation can be useful but don't overplay it
- You've got an agenda (but don't be afraid to deviate)
- Keep people moving (when feasible / appropriate)