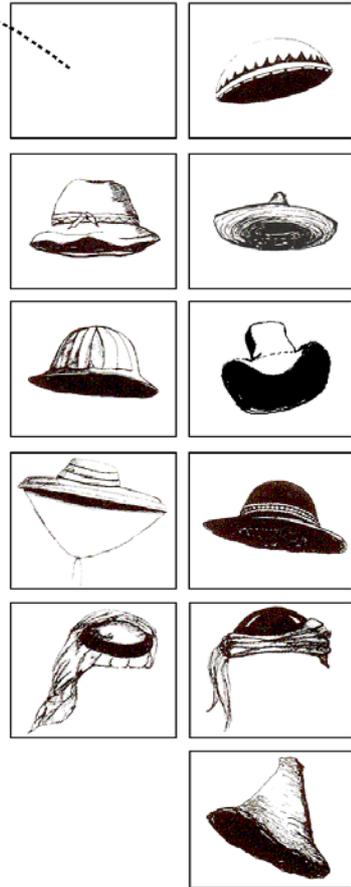




United Nations
Centre for
Human Settlements
(Habitat)

5 The Councillor as Facilitator

Training
Materials
Series



The Councillor as Facilitator

Handbook 5

Training for Elected Leadership

ISTANBUL, 1996 - "THE CITY SUMMIT"



**UN-HABITAT
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Programme**



The Councillor as Facilitator

Handbook 5

**Training
Materials
Series**

Training for Elected Leadership

**The
Councillor as
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Elected
Leadership**



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FOREWORD

As shown by results of training needs assessments conducted by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), training needs of local government elected officials (councillors), or of local politicians, appear among the most urgent world-wide and, at the same time, the least attended areas of capacity-building for local development and municipal management.

In the last few years, a number of countries as varied as Nepal and Poland or Uganda and Paraguay have embarked for the first time in several decades, and in some cases for the first time ever, on a process of electing their councillors and mayors. Training needs of local-government elected officials are also at the top of the agenda in established municipal democracies such as Ecuador, India, and the United States of America.

To respond to these needs, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) has developed and tested a series of training handbooks to assist councillors to represent the citizens, provide civic leadership and effectively work with central government and with the management, technical, and professional staff in local authorities and other local institutions. The handbooks cover policy and decision making, communication, negotiation and leadership, attending, managing and conducting meetings, councillors' enabling and facilitating activities, financial management and other related needs.

This handbook, *The Councillor as Facilitator*, is one of the series of 12 and is intended for use primarily by trainers in national training institutions for local government or training units within local governments themselves. As an additional assistance for trainers using these handbooks, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) has published a companion Trainer's Guide for Training of Elected Officials containing trainer's notes and information prepared exclusively for the benefit of these trainers in planning workshops for local elected officials based on the handbooks.

It is expected that this training handbook will contribute greatly to strengthening the capacity of local governments through the introduction of good Leadership leadership practices, one of the major objectives of the 1996 United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, Habitat II.

I wish to thank Dr. Fred Fisher and Mr. David W. Tees for preparing this and other handbooks in the series in collaboration with the staff of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) Training Section within the Centre's training programmes supported by the Government of the Netherlands. I also wish to acknowledge the contribution of the trainers and local-government officials in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Kenya, Lithuania, Romania and Uganda who assisted in the field testing of these training materials.

Dr. Wally N'Dow
Assistant Secretary-General
United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)

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About the hat

The hat worn by the figure to the right and shown on the pages to come was selected to symbolize the councillor role featured in this handbook.



Traditional hat worn by men in Kathmandu valley of Nepal

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HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

This training handbook on THE COUNCILLOR AS FACILITATOR, like other handbooks in the series, can be used in several ways.

Self-study

The essay that opens this handbook is intended for self-instruction. All you need is a quiet place to think, some time, and something to write with. For best results, we encourage you to write down your answers to the questions raised from time to time in the essay. The learning value of the information is multiplied many times for the reader who takes the time to do this.

Workshop training

The trainer's notes and exercise materials in this handbook are intended for use by experienced trainers in a training workshop for councillors from different local governments. We have included various types of learning activities and formats to provide trainers with considerable flexibility in adapting a workshop to the specific needs of participating councillors. It has been our intention in developing this handbook to encourage you to incorporate your own experiences as a trainer to heighten the learning value of these training materials for participating councillors.

As a trainer, you may decide to use the materials in the handbook in the exact order and manner presented. If you prefer, however, you may rearrange or modify the materials as needed to meet the objectives of a particular training situation. You may choose to offer three hours of training by using key exercises and activities included in the handbook. Or you may take advantage of the many materials in the handbook supplemented by content of your own to extend the length of the programme to a full day.

This handbook is one of 12 in a series for training in elected leadership. You might decide or be requested to provide a workshop that requires you to use more than one or all of these handbooks over a longer period of time. While each handbook can be used independently of the others, their use in sequence can provide a power unified learning experience for participating councillors.

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Team training

These materials also can be used, preferably with the assistance of an experienced trainer/facilitator, to improve the performance of councillors who serve together on the same governing body. When training councillors who serve together, we believe the facilitator must be prepared to organize the training activities in this handbook in different ways. There may be occasions where you, as facilitator, will choose to add new activities depending on the situation and the characteristics of the group. We hope in situations like these you will view this handbook as a “tool kit” containing many optional training ideas to be mixed and matched, modified or abandoned, as suggested by the situation.

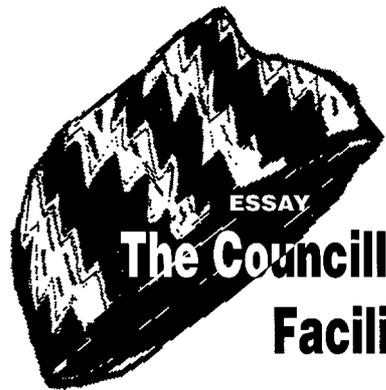
You have many options to choose from with these training handbooks. We hope you take full advantage of them.

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PART I



**The Councillor as
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Essay

Definition

The councillor, in the role of FACILITATOR, fosters collective effort helps others solve problems, and manages interpersonal and intergroup conflict.

Summary

We'll be looking at a number of ways you, as a councillor, can perform a helping role in working with others to achieve the goals of the council and, of course, your own. The facilitator is skilled in group process (e.g., making meetings more productive and encouraging cooperation among team members), in helping others resolve conflicts, and in solving problems. All of these skills are valuable, not only as you conduct your business in the council chambers but in your efforts to work in the community as an elected representative.

Reflection

When I think of myself as a facilitator, in my work on council and in the community, the following things come to mind:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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Concepts and Ideas

The use of the word “facilitator” to describe a particular set of behaviours is fairly new. On the other hand, it seems to have gained world-wide acceptance in that short time. The facilitator role originated in the group dynamics, or human relations movement, and quickly spread to the human services and management arenas as a skill worthy of copying. Whatever its origin, or its sphere of operation, we believe the councillor role of “facilitator” is valuable in the political arena. And, we believe elected leaders have long practised these skills in their efforts to be effective, and to get re-elected. For many of you, this will be a review of the obvious. For others, it may provide some clues on how to increase your ability to work more effectively in a group setting.

Our initial challenge is where to draw the line between what we share with you about this role and what we leave unsaid. Volumes have been written on the various settings or situations in which the facilitator can perform a useful role. Since it is unrealistic to cover every aspect of facilitating, we plan to narrow the field of inquiry to those tasks we believe best describe your facilitating role as an elected official. From our experience, and what we have gleaned from the assessments that have been conducted on your responsibilities as a councillor, we will focus on the following:

1. How to run (facilitate) a better meeting;
2. How to help your council operate more effectively as a team, recognizing that some of you may believe the council should not operate in this manner;
3. How to help resolve conflicts between individuals and groups; and
4. How to help others solve their problems.

Meeting go-er

Are we right in assuming that most of the time you spend on council business is spent in meetings? How satisfied are you with the results? Did we hear you say that most of it is a waste of time? If that’s the case, maybe you and your colleagues should do something about it. Easier said than done. And, “Why?” you ask. We suspect there are many reasons, but the biggest one may be our willingness to accept BAD meetings - WASTE OF TIME meetings - because they’ve always been that way. “Just,” you might say, “one of the prices one pays for being an elected official.” Nevertheless, it is possible for you to break through that barrier of smoke and verbal fog that keeps you away from your family and prevents everyone else from accomplishing what they expected to accomplish.

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Essay

Before considering what you can do to be a better “meeting go-er,” let’s spend a moment or two identifying some of the problems that plague meetings the world over:

- The goals and expectations of meetings are unclear;
- Nobody seems to be in charge;
- There’s no agenda or the agenda’s so long no one expects to finish it;
- The meeting discussion drifts from one issue to another without bringing to closure to anything;
- Everyone seems to be talking at once;
- You’re always sitting where you can’t see what’s going on
- Somebody always seems to dominate the discussion;
- You feel manipulated - like a “rubber stamp”; it’s nearly an hour since the announced meeting time and half the people who are to attend haven’t arrived
- “By the way, has anyone seen the chairperson?”

Sound familiar? No doubt, but what can be done about these problems? Here are a few suggestions on how to work your way out of the meeting swamp. (We will be talking in this essay about meetings you attend outside the council chambers. Since formal council sessions are often prescribed by law, and the law will vary from country to country, we will leave it up to your local trainers to help you with those meeting)

Start asking the right questions before you commit yourself to someone that else’s meeting. For example, ask yourself.

- Why are we meeting? What do we hope to achieve?
- Will there be a formal agenda? Can I get a copy of it before the meeting?
- Why am I being invited to attend? (Sometimes this is not always obvious.)
- Who else is being invited?
- What am I expected to contribute? Do you want me to bring any document or materials to the meeting?
- How long is it expected to last?
- Who’s responsible for calling the meeting? Who will be presiding over the meeting?
- How important is it that I attend this meeting? What will be the consequences if I don’t attend? (You may want to ask this last question to yourself if you think it might be misinterpreted).

Let’s look briefly at some of these questions in more depth. Knowing the expectations of those convening the meeting is particularly important when you elected official. Are they expecting you to make a formal statement? Do they decision from you? If so, would this be appropriate when you represent only one member of the council? Are other councillors being invited? If not, will this create problem for you in your relationship with your colleagues on the council?

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Essay

After you have the answers to these questions, you should be able to make a decision as to whether it is worth your time and effort to attend. If you don't get the right answers, but still think it is worth attending, then you may want to encourage the meeting-convenor to put more time into its preparation. And, be specific about what you want done. Depending on how you make the request, the person who contacted you will probably appreciate the assistance.

Ready! Set! Go!

You've made a decision to attend. Now, you need to get ready. If it's a meeting to share information, are you prepared to make a contribution? Or, do you just plan to listen? If so, you might jot down some notes about what you want out of the meeting. If it's a decision-type meeting, are you prepared to either make a decision, or be a part of a group that is making a decision? It's an important question when you represent a constituency. If other councillors are attending, you may want to discuss the meeting agenda with them before you attend, or with others whom you believe may be important to the outcome of the meeting. Be at least one step ahead of the meeting convenors just in case they have a "hidden" agenda. Consider any customs, rules or codes of behaviour that might be invoked (e.g., don't show up in your jeans and a tee shirt if everyone else is wearing a suit and tie).

Arrive early so you can rearrange the furniture, if it seems appropriate to your needs and concerns. Sound silly? Maybe, but our experience tells us that the arrangement of the tables and chairs can be crucial to the outcome of a meeting. For example, if the meeting is being called to solve a "thorny" neighbourhood problem, it might be important to arrange the chairs so that people can meet in small groups to consider some options for solving the problem. If the meeting is going to be in any way confrontational, you may want to sit where you have more "leverage" in dealing with your adversaries. While these customs vary from country to country, in many places it would not be to your advantage to be sitting in the back of a long narrow room behind a pillar and next to a window that opens out on to a busy street with a lot of noisy traffic.

At the meeting

Getting there early also gives you an opportunity to make contact with other key people who may be attending. Stake out your location. If it's important to be in position of control or authority, sit where you have the psychological advantage. (Th may not be a problem since you come with the prestige of the elected office, but it's best not to take it for granted.) Be prepared to give the meeting your best effort.

While we have been assuming all along that you are attending a meeting call by someone else, many of the points just made also apply if you are in charge of the meeting. Whatever your role, here are some functions you can perform during the to meeting that are helpful.

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Task functions

Information/opinion generator. Includes giving information or opinions you might have that will help others achieve the tasks of the meeting and seeking information and opinions from others who are reluctant to make contributions during the meeting.

Clarifier. How many times have you been in a meeting and known some point was not clear, but no one was willing to “speak-up”? A clarifying question at this point might have put the discussion back on track and, just as important, saved everyone’s time.

Elaborator. Sometimes an idea or recommendation needs to be expanded upon so everyone understands what is being said. Elaborating or clarifying helps build on the contributions of meeting members and tests the adequacy of the communication that is taking place.

Summarizer. Have you ever been in a meeting that gets to a point where no one remembers what has been said? This usually happens when no one has taken the time or effort to summarize what’s been said. If there is a blackboard or newsprint available, make use of it. Your summary will be more effective when it is written and posted where everyone can see it.

Consensus tester. Often meetings go on long after agreement has been reached because nobody has checked with the group to see if members are ready to decide. A simple little query like, “Are we ready to make a decision?” can move the meeting forward. Don’t hesitate to test for consensus when it seems most people are ready to commit to a decision.

All of the functions just reviewed are what the group process specialists call task functions. They are designed to help groups deal with the task at hand, make a decision, provide information or ideas for consideration, solve a problem, or resolve a conflict. All these task-oriented functions are concerned with the “why-are-we-here what-do-we-need-to-do?” kinds of issues.

Maintenance functions

There are also functions that help groups build better relations among members and to maintain those relationships. Groups have a tendency to get bogged down in interpersonal matters. Groups that have been working together for a while are like an old car. If you don’t provide routine “maintenance,” it’s sure to break down. Here are some things you can do to keep groups from “breaking down.” They are concerned with the “how-are-we-working-together?” issues.

Gatekeeper. How many times have you been in a meeting dominated by one or two individuals while others, who have valuable contributions to make, remain silent? When this happens, it is important for someone to act as a gatekeeper to get more people involved in the discussion.

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Encourager. Sometimes, particularly at neighbourhood meetings where some citizens may feel reluctant for one reason or another to contribute their ideas, it is important to encourage them to be heard. Sometimes this encouragement is as simple as recognizing individuals and helping them realize they are being accepted by other meeting members.

Harmonizer/compromiser. Public meetings can sometimes experience breakdowns in communications. Members start to argue or take positions to maintain their own status rather than help the group do what it has come together to do. While disagreement can be healthy in meetings, it needs to be focused on the task and not personalized.

Housecleaner. Have you ever been in a meeting when there is so much confusion, anger, or just plain avoidance of what you're trying to do that the only solution is to "clean house." We've seen councils reach this stage of counter-productivity. Rather than wait for the electorate to "clean house" at election time, it behoves councils that have fallen into this trap to take the broom in hand and do their own house cleaning. This is when you need to be courageous, to step in and say, "Whoa! Stop! Let's take a look at what's happening here." You look at the interpersonal garbage that has accumulated during your work together and make some decisions about getting rid of it. You are admitting that you're not working well together, and you need to develop some new standards of performance.

To be specific

In the field test of the original materials in this series, the councillors who were involved suggested we include some ideas on working within the committee structure more effectively, meeting with community groups, and networks of community organizations.

Council committee meetings may be regulated by local-government legislation and standing orders. The first thing to understand about your work within the committee structure is what is required and what is not required. For example, is there a requirement that the committees of council meet at regular intervals? If not, and you believe a lot of meetings are being held needlessly, you might want to question the wisdom of meeting so often.

Are the meetings as productive as you would like them to be? If not, are you prepared to work with the chairperson to improve them? Is the process of decision making in these committee meetings democratic? Does every member have an opportunity to be heard, or are the meetings controlled unfairly by the chairperson or others who take informal control over the proceedings? Is the committee staffed by appropriate municipal officers so your committee has access to information and analysis when needed? There are many more questions we could raise but perhaps it is time to sit back and reflect about your experience with the committee structure as a member of council.

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Essay

Reflection

As a council member, how do you feel about the committee structure that is used to make decisions? Are you satisfied with the overall process? With the results you are achieving by working in committees? With your own involvement and performance in committee meetings? If the answer to any of these questions is “no” then spend a few moments reflecting on why you are not satisfied and thinking about what you might do to raise your level of satisfaction.

Work with community organizations and networks of community organizations will depend, in large measure, on the local culture dictating such meetings and any precedents that have been established by previous councils. Having said this, we want to quickly point out that you needn't be bound by these precedents. It's just smart business to know what might be expected of you as a councillor, based on past experience. When you have this knowledge and understanding, it is much easier to bring about changes that will improve the effectiveness of working in these group situations.

It's your meeting

As an elected leader, we can also assume that you are frequently in charge of meetings, all kinds of meetings, from convening work sessions of councillor sub-committees to presiding over large community meetings. Fortunately, the points we have just covered also apply to meetings where you are in command. Often the task and maintenance functions are more easily applied when you are in charge of the meeting, with one caveat. When you are chairing a meeting, it is difficult to think about the maintenance functions because you are so intent on the task. Given this, you might want to ask one of your colleagues or friends to keep track of the need for maintenance-type interventions.

The questions posed at the beginning of this discussion are also relevant. In addition to reviewing these, let's look at another approach used by the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) to help its staff be more effective in conducting meetings at the community level. ICA has been successful in working in many different countries and cultures around the world, so we can learn from its experience.

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Bringing a STEPS tone to the meeting

ICA likes to use acronyms to emphasize concepts and to make it easier for people to remember them. STEPS is one to help individuals prepare for community meetings. It stands for: ⁽¹⁾

- Space
- Time
- Eventfulness
- Product
- Style

Let's take a look at these five components in a bit more depth.

Space. The physical space in which you hold your meeting is important. Is it convenient for those you want to attend? Is it large enough, but not too large? Sometimes it is better to have a room slightly crowded, if you want to convey the impression of high interest in the topic, than to convene in a large hall where you look insignificant by comparison. Is it a place where those coming to the meeting will feel comfortable? For example, the women who are operating the city's family-planning units might not feel at ease meeting in the social hall of the Catholic Church. Does it have the kind of furniture that will serve your purposes? If you want the participants to do some problem-solving, you may need tables, easels, or blackboards. There are other issues to think about in terms of physical arrangements. Don't leave these details to someone else unless you have discussed them in detail.

Time. This covers not only when you plan to hold the meeting but how long it should be, the pace of events during the meeting, and "sticking" to the schedule. In most countries you would not plan to hold a meeting late Friday afternoon. Nor, would you want to spend the first hour of a two-hour meeting on the first agenda item if there are ten topics to be covered, unless that issue was ten times as important and time-consuming as all the others. In this case, you might want to schedule two meetings.

Eventfulness. ICA puts a bit more emphasis on this component than we do, but it's still worth considering. Let's face it, some meetings are not very eventful. They are not the peak moments in life that are deeply imprinted in our memories. On the other hand, there are those meeting events that have meaning for people, such as the opening of a new neighbourhood centre or an effort to develop a long-range plan for the community. In these cases, it is important to think about how to orchestrate the meeting to make it a bit special.

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Product. What do you hope to achieve as a result of the meeting? If you Don't have some clear goals going into the meeting, it will be difficult to achieve satisfactory results. As the old saying goes, "If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there." The product will depend on what you want to achieve; why you called the meeting in the first place. The most effective meetings are those that result in a tangible product, a decision, a problem solved, or a written statement summarizing the consensus of the meeting.

Style. Have you ever come out of a meeting and said to the person next to you, "That sure was a bad meeting." Often these kinds of comments are directed as much to the style of the meeting as they are to the products or outcomes of the meeting. Maybe the meeting wasn't very well organized. Maybe it ignored some basic courtesies toward those in attendance. Or maybe it lasted three times longer than people were promised it would.

ICA has some interesting comments on the style factor of facilitating meetings in their publication *Winning Through Participation*. Facilitation is both a science and an art - a blend of well-practised skill and sensitive attention to people. Effective facilitators work to master both the techniques and the style of their craft.

Some of the elements of that style are: (a) realistic optimism; (b) assuming responsibility for the tasks, process, and outcomes of the meeting; (c) recognizing and honoring the creative potential of the group and the individuals in the group; (d) being flexible and responsive while keeping the group on track; (e) encouraging participation; (f) providing objectivity; and (g) buffering criticism, anger, and frustration to enable the group to progress.⁽²⁾

Much more could be said about how you can be more effective when you convene a meeting or attend a meeting convened by someone else. We've given the impression, we suspect, that meetings are usually big events involving hordes of people. On the contrary, most meetings are intimate affairs involving no more than ourselves and one or two others. Surprisingly, the pointers we have discussed cover these meetings as well. While they may be less formal and perhaps not planned, these meetings still represent an expenditure of time and energy and are, more often than not, a purposeful act. As you go from meeting to meeting (and at times you must think this is all you do as an elected leader), we hope you will keep this old French proverb in mind "He gives nothing who does not give himself". Team player

Some people will argue that elected councillors should not consider themselves team players because of their representational responsibilities. It's a legitimate point of view and one to keep in mind as we consider this facet of being a facilitator. A recent book summarizing research into teamwork in over 75 different institutional settings provides a definition of team that we find as adequate as any other.⁽³⁾

- A team has two or more people.
- It has a specific performance objective or recognizable goal to be obtained.
- And, coordination of activity among members of the team is required for the attainment of the team goal or objective.

The authors of *Teamwork*, Carl Larson and Frank La Fasto, identified the following characteristics, or properties, of effectively functioning teams:

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Team player

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The authors of *Teamwork*, Carl Larson and Frank La Fasto, identified the following characteristics, or properties, of effectively functioning teams:

1. A clear, elevating goal;
2. A results-driven structure;
3. Competent members;
4. Unified commitment;
5. A collaborative climate;
6. Standards of excellence;
7. External support and recognition; and,
8. Principled leadership. ⁽⁴⁾

Let's look at these characteristics in more depth and from the perspective of your role as elected councillor.

A clear, elevating goal. This is what some would call a sense of mission, an image of a desired state of affairs that inspires action. We have dealt, in some depth, with the issue of setting goals in the module on your role as policy-maker. No one can question the importance of this characteristic. Yet, it is difficult to define within the confines of the council "team" without responding in a flood of platitudes about good government and the need for "a strong, viable community." It may also be difficult because each councillor comes to the council with a different image about the problems of local government and what should be done about them. And yet, without some clear sense of direction (an elevating goal), it may not be possible either to build an effective team or to focus resources in such a way that they have an optimum impact on the future of the community.

A results-driven structure. Is the council organized in such a way that it works effectively to achieve results? You may need to look at this issue from at least two perspectives. First, how effective is the council in its work as a total legislative body? And, how effective is the committee structure, if this is part of your way of operating and making interim decisions? If specific committees need to know what other committees are doing, or need to work more closely with them, is there a defined process for collaboration?

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Are there higher laws dictating ineffective and inefficient rules and regulations that tie the hands of council and prescribe a structure that doesn't work? If so, form an alliance with other councils and get them changed. Many of the bottlenecks and dysfunctional procedures that councils struggle with are left over from the days of colonial rule. They are often anachronisms that have no place in the governance of contemporary communities. Form should follow function not constrain function, which is often the case in government.

Competent council members. This characteristic is one over which you, as an individual councillor, have very little control, yet competence is a key factor in building an effective team. There are some things you can do, however, to develop your own competencies, and training is one of them. Another strategy is to concentrate individual competencies on specific issues or problem areas within the municipal operation. Perhaps you can become an expert in the area of health-care services while another councillor gains an expertise in public works functions. This specialization approach may also require a higher level of trust among councillors. In a truly democratic process the definition of competence is decided by the ballot box and may have little relevance to the competence needs required to govern a complex urban settlement. Perhaps the most "facilitating" move that you, as a councillor, can make is to share with your colleagues any special knowledge you might have and to support training for all council members.

Unified commitment. Some of the more intangible characteristics of effective teams are qualities like mental and physical energy. Forging a unified commitment is difficult where there are different political parties operating within a council or factions that operate on different value stands. And yet, there is the potential for strength when these differences exist. It is possible to have a unified commitment to the larger community and still represent differentiated perspectives on how to develop the community. The greatest facilitating strength you can bring to this qualification is the ability to listen objectively and to withhold judgement until all the perspectives are on the table.

Collaborative climate. A National League of Cities survey in the United States a few years ago found the number one problem of local elected officials was getting along with each other."⁶ The one single most important element needed to foster collaboration and the ability to get along with each other is trust. For trust to exist in a team, there must be honesty, openness (a willingness to share and be receptive to others sharing), consistency (predictable behaviour), and respect.

Standards of excellence. Standards of excellence refer to the way the council team works, how it makes decisions, how it represents its constituents, the quality of your policy decisions, and its ability to work effectively with officials and organizations beyond the official boundaries of the elected body. As a facilitator, you might suggest that your council establish a set of standards by which it can assess the quality of its work as a legislative/representative team.

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External support and recognition. These are characteristics in which the local elected team is head and shoulders above teams in the private sector. Your ultimate recognition is in your ability to get re-elected and your support from the community is re-assessed at each council meeting. Nevertheless, it should not be taken for granted. Carrying out a constant dialogue with the community, and all sectors of the community, is the best way to ensure that what you are doing is continuing to garner the support and recognition needed to operate as an effective team.

Principled leadership. Teams need leaders. It seems like an inconsistent message, doesn't it? But, the locus of leadership is not necessarily lodged in the position of the mayor or president of council although that's the most logical place to look for it. The relationship between the councillor and his or her followers is transactional. Leaders need followers. If the citizens no longer trust you, it is difficult, if not impossible, to lead. When it comes to teams, it is possible for everyone to be a leader. Paradoxical? Yes, but then teams are not armies where rank determines one's worth and potential contribution.

But that's not what MY constituents want

Have you ever been confronted with the following situation? The council as a whole is working effectively together, it has come up with a policy or programme that is in the best interest of the total community, but the constituents in your area of town don't see it that way. They think you will cast your vote with the approving majority at the next meeting of council, and they aren't very happy. What to do?

First, you are in a much better position to defend your decision if it is based on good information and an analysis of various alternatives, including the one that is being considered for adoption.

Secondly, you may want to meet with representatives of your constituents to discuss the proposal and why it is in the best interests of the larger community and how it will ultimately serve their needs as well.

There are no easy solutions to these kinds of conflicts. Your positions will be strengthened if you (a) are open about why you took the position you did, (b) have acted in what you believe to be the best interest of the local government (this does not rule out constituent-oriented decisions), and (c) are prepared to work to implement the final decision of the council, even if it is counter to the way you voted.

Is team-building the answer?

Sometimes councils engage in something called "team-building." This is a process that usually takes a concentrated period of time (from one to three days) when all of the council members go off to a retreat setting on two major issues: (a) How are we working together as a team? and (b) What are the major issues and opportunities we need to be concentrating on in our community leadership role? When councils take time to do some team-building, they usually work with an outside facilitator, someone from a training

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institution or management consulting firm who is skilled in working with small groups and has experience in these kinds of organizational interventions. (Team-building can also involve skill-training, using the materials contained in this handbook series.)

Another approach to team-building is to carry out these kinds of discussions between council members and key administrative staff. Council-staff interventions are particularly useful if problems have developed between the council and staff to the point where it is difficult to resolve them with a day-to-day, piecemeal approach. They are useful also when the council is involved in long-range planning and the input of the professional staff is important to its deliberations.

Team-building is a strategy to help your council work at top efficiency and effectiveness - a chance to do a little diagnostic work on the council machinery and to give yourself a periodic "tune-up." It is also a strategy to use at the start of the yearly budget process when you may need to be more introspective about the future of your community and how local government can contribute to that future in a positive, sustained way.

Being a member of an effective team requires a wide range of skills and behaviour. It also requires the ability to work within an ambiguous relationship with your peers. On the one hand, it is virtually impossible to be effective as a council body if you and your colleagues can't work together as a team. On the other hand, you can only be effective as an elected representative if you are willing and able to stand alone.

Reflection

We've introduced some ideas about a role that may not be as familiar to you as some others - that of the facilitator. We would like you to spend a few moments reflecting about the team concept as it applies to the council. Is this an idea that makes sense? Why, or why not? What is your most effective contribution toward the efforts of the council? How might you be more effective in working as a member of this team? If you could do one thing to increase the effectiveness of council, what would it be?

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Managing conflict

Someone once said, “The best way to stay scared is to keep yourself from finding out exactly what you’re scared of” Conflict is one of those things that most of us avoid if we can. We often turn our backs on it. The problem is, the conflict, and whatever is causing it, usually doesn’t go away. It just sits there and simmers - and simmers. Avoiding conflict can and does create a lot of problems in many organizations. We also know that different cultures deal with conflict differently, and what we have to say is filtered through a lot of Western management and psychological theory and practise. The best we can do is be honest and ask that each of you consider these ideas and their usefulness based on your own experience and cultural norms.

We suspect that people avoid conflict because it is unpleasant to bring it out in the open. Keeping it buried isn’t pleasant either, but on the whole, it seems to be less unpleasant than confronting the issue causing conflict. But, is it? Over the long run, submerged conflict can take a heavy toll in an organization or community. And we have a great capacity to imagine the worst about what will happen if it is brought out in the open. Maybe we avoid conflict because we don’t know how to manage it. Often, the way we “Manage” conflict is to allow those involved to shout at each other, venting a lot of anger but not providing much healing. To be an effective facilitator, a councillor requires conflict-management knowledge and skills.

Most of us understand the negative features of conflict but fail to see conflict as having positive contributions to more effective relationships, whether they are personal, intergroup, or between organizations and nations. Quickly, here is a List of the pros and cons of conflict.

On the plus [+] side of the ledger, conflict can force us to look for new solutions, help us clarify our positions and points of contention, and provide a surge of energy and activity. Conflict can bring problems to the surface that may have festered under the surface for years, produce better ideas, and provide for a breakthrough in relations and productivity.

On the minus [-] side of the equation, conflict can create an atmosphere of anxiety, distrust, and suspicion. It can make some people feel demeaned and demotivated. Conflict can generate goal-displacement behaviour by those in conflict (where they spend more time “getting even” than getting ahead) and increase the distance between people who could benefit from working together.

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Know the source

Conflict can develop when there are differences in:

- Facts and perceptions (our communicated view of reality)
- Preferred goals and outcomes (how things ought be, not how they currently are)
- Ways, or methods, for achieving those goals
- Values (our fundamental beliefs)

Differences over facts and perceptions are usually easier to resolve than differences in goals, outcomes, and the methods used to achieve these results. Values are the most difficult differences to resolve or even to manage with any degree of long-term success.

Conflict strategies

Different people have different ways of dealing with conflict. Many years ago, Kenneth Thomas, who is considered one of the leading experts on conflict management, identified five basic strategies individuals and groups employ when faced with conflict. These approaches are based on two primary dimensions of behaviour, “assertiveness,” (the extent to which we attempt to satisfy our own concerns) and “co-operation,” (the extent to which we attempt to satisfy the other person’s concerns). Using a two dimensional model (see the next page) with high and low values on these two behaviours, he has defined five specific methods of dealing with conflict. ⁽⁶⁾

Avoidance: (unassertive and uncooperative) Individuals who adopt an avoidance approach to conflict don’t pursue their own interests and concerns or those of their adversaries. They simply avoid conflict by such tactics as not showing up for the meeting or by postponing the issue until some undetermined future date.

Accommodation: (unassertive and cooperative) Those who adopt this style neglect their own interests to satisfy the concerns of the other party. Tactics include such contrasting approaches as: yielding to the other side’s point of view and selfless generosity.

Competition: (assertive and uncooperative) This style is the opposite of accommodation. It’s a power-motivated strategy designed to win at any cost when confronted with a conflicting situation.

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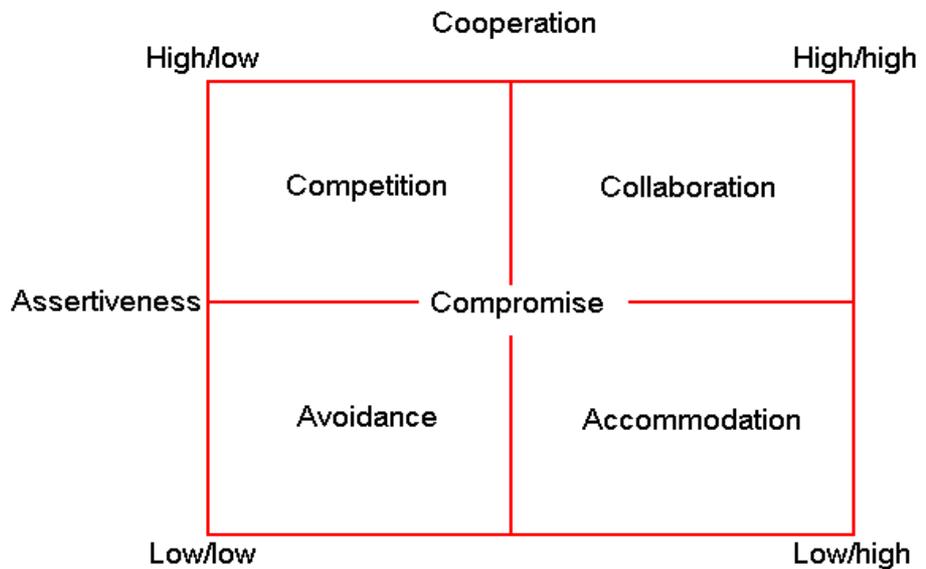
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Collaboration: (assertive and cooperative) And, the opposite of avoidance. Collaboration, at its best, seeks to find win-win solutions to conflict. This involves solutions that satisfy the needs and concerns of both parties. Such a strategy involves an understanding of why the conflict exists and finding solutions that eliminate, or at least minimize, competition for resources.

Compromise: (somewhat assertive and cooperative) Parties tend to compromise when they are looking for fast, mutually acceptable solutions that partially satisfy both parties. Strategies include finding a middle ground everyone can live with and splitting the differences that exist between the conflicted bodies.

Two-Dimensional Conflict Model



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According to Thomas, there are no universal “right answers” when it comes to dealing with conflict. All five modes of behaviour are useful. It depends on the situation. It is believed that each of us tends to have a dominant style for dealing with conflict. For example, some of us might avoid conflict at all cost while others may have a tendency to be competitive in conflict situations. Then again, we might resort to compromise or one of the other styles suggested by the Thomas model.

Explore the difference

If you are going to help manage conflict, the best place to begin is with a better understanding of the issues behind the conflict. This means digging beneath the surface indicators of what might be causing the conflict. Facts are the easiest to confirm and reconcile. Perceptions are more difficult. They have a tendency to become distorted, partly because we have the tendency to attribute motives to other people’s actions and “see” things that will confirm our own position. For example, you may think my perception of a situation is pure fantasy, but to me it’s very real. My perceptions of what is “real” have become part of my frame of reference and way of dealing with conflict. Sometimes it is easy to clarify inaccurate perceptions by “getting out the facts.” Other times it is more difficult. Here are some things you can do to help facilitate the resolution of a conflict between two individuals or groups.

1. Help the individuals or groups see the conflict from the others’ point of view. Here is a situation when “active listening” skills can be used (see the handbook on The Councillor as Communicator for more information on this communication approach).
2. Look for situations where the conflicting parties have made assumptions about the intentions of others based on their own fears. Often we assume the worst in conflict situations, and these fears drive us to entrenched positions.
3. Move the warring parties away from attacking each other and placing blame. When this happens, we usually become defensive, counter attack, and create more distortions.
4. Help them sort out their interests from their positions. We tend to get ourselves locked into “Positions” (e.g., I understand your position on the construction of a ring road, but what is it you want to achieve?) Sometimes an assessment of both parties interests will provide a breakthrough that leads to a mutually beneficial agreement.
5. Help them create additional options. Often the only alternatives they have available are the two over which they are at odds.
6. Let them vent their emotions. Sometimes the emotions are more important than the facts. By getting them out, the parties often are able to unload feelings that inhibit constructive discussion. Often the release of these emotions provide a valuable source of information that might not otherwise become available.



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7. Help them find win-win solutions. Not everyone wins in the resolution of conflict, but it is surprising how many times conflicts can be resolved with both sides coming out as winners. This is where your ability to listen and help those in conflict generate new options can be invaluable. Your best resources, in helping others resolve their differences are: (a) the raw materials (knowledge and emotions) they bring to the situation, and (b) your patience and empathy in helping the adversaries refine their raw materials into an agreement they can both live with.

To reiterate, conflict is a potentially valuable resource in most organizations. We hope you will put on your facilitator hat and help manage these situations in the course of your council duties and responsibilities and in your role as a community leader.

The stitch is lost unless the thread is knotted.

- Italian proverb

Problem solving

The final facilitating strategy we want to cover is problem-solving. As a councillor, you can help your constituents solve problems in a variety of ways. Sometimes you solve problems as a member of the total council. More often you engage in problem solving in a less formal, more casual setting. At times you may need to work with the municipal staff, through the chief administrator, to get things done. At other times you will be tapping community resources or simply providing timely information on where to go to get assistance.

Since we covered many of the key points about problem-solving in the handbook on *The Councillor as Decision-maker*, we will only highlight the critical steps at this time.

1. Be sure you understand what the problem is before you try to solve it.
2. Look at the problem from different perspectives if you are at all unsure what to do.
3. Try to understand the consequences of the problem, not only to the person who wants to solve it, but to others.

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4. Break the problems into bite-size pieces, if possible. Problems are usually easier to solve that way.
5. Try to find out who else has the problem.
6. Once you're decided on what the problem is, think about who else might be interested in solving it.
7. Look for the barriers that are keeping the problem from being solved.
8. How can the problem be solved without spending the local government's resources? This is a very important question at a time when public resources are shrinking and problems are growing.
9. How will you know when it's been solved? As an elected official, you'll want to follow up to whatever action has been taken, or not taken, so you can be ensured that the problem has been solved.
10. Of all the pointers just stated, the most important is the first: "Have you correctly identified the problem?" Remember that a problem well-stated is a problem half-solved.

Some concluding remarks

As we reflect on all of the things we have said about the facilitator role, we realize we have probably covered a lot of ideas that are "old hat" to you. We suspect many of the skills and strategies we talked about are like second nature to public leaders, and yet, they probably bear repeating. Our reflections also remind us there is a lot that remains unsaid about this role. The knowledge and skills involved in conducting better meetings (or being a more effective meeting participant), working as a member of a legislative team, managing conflict, and helping others solve problems are almost endless. While other hats you wear are, no doubt, more important, this one is probably the one that shows the most "wear and tear." We think it might be useful if you took a little time out of your busy schedule from time to time to think about how you do the many things that helped others be more effective, and what you might do to do them even better. And then, go out and do them.

Few leaders realize how much how little will do.

- Unknown

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Essay

Key points

- The facilitator role encompasses many skills to be learned and many opportunities to serve.
- Among the most important roles the facilitator performs are those of meeting management, team-building, and conflict resolution.
- Meetings can be the bane of the councillor's existence - but help is on the way when you don your facilitator hat.
- Meetings can be improved through attention to space, time, eventfulness, product, and style.
- Some question whether the council should consider itself a team, and yet councils have most of the attributes of teams and can't function effectively without teamwork.
- Team development is a way to forge more effective councils, build better council-staff relationships, and conduct long-range strategic planning.
- Conflict-management is another important facilitator skill, one that will come in handy in a lot of situations.
- Conflict, in spite of the bad ratings it gets, is important to responsive and creative local self-government.
- The sources of conflict in a community are many, but the most difficult to resolve are those that concern differences in the fundamental values that people hold.
- Most conflict-resolution strategies include a mix of assertiveness and cooperation.
- Facilitators can perform important functions in problem-solving situations.
- The most important function in problem-solving is problem-finding.
- The effective facilitator is one who never turns down an opportunity to help others be more effective in doing what they want to do.

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- (2) *Ibid.*, p. 88.
- (3) Larson, Carl E., and La Fasto, Frank M.J., *Teamwork* (Newbury Park, CA, 1989), p. 19.
- (4) *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- (5) National League of Cities, *Program for Community Problem Solving, Vol. I, "Case Summaries"* (Washington, D.C., The League, 1988).
- (6) Thomas, Kenneth, "Conflict and conflict management," *The Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Vol II* (Chicago, IL, Rand McNally, 1975).

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PART II

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Purpose

The facilitator is a role often associated with trainers and consultants as they make it easier for their clients to accomplish tasks. By assuming the role of facilitator, individual councillors are also making a conscious effort to improve the process by which the council carries out the difficult and complex tasks of governance.

This workshop is designed to assist councillors in becoming more effective in thinking about and working with the challenges of elected leadership. Workshop participants will learn how to make more meaningful contributions to the work of their councils in conducting meetings, resolving conflicts, and solving problems.

Contents

A brief description of each learning activity is shown below with an approximation of the amount of time required. If you wish to change the order, to omit something, or to add training material of your own, feel free to do so.

5.1. Warm-up exercise: what to do with the cement

Comparison of individual results with team results in generating constructive ideas for taking advantage of an opportunity. (30 minutes)

5.2. Trainer presentation

Brief presentation by the trainer on the role of the councillor as facilitator. Draw on material from the preceding essay and your own experience to describe how councillors can make their skills available to make meetings more productive, encourage cooperation among team members, help in the resolution of conflicts, and solve problems in the community as well as in the council chambers. (30 minutes)

5.3. Instrument: a facilitator behaviour inventory

Participants complete an instrument that compares their actual behaviours as facilitators with their preferred behaviours. Discussion of possible ways to close the gaps. (45 minutes)

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5.4 Exercise: making meetings work

Participants list the meetings they attend, rate their level of satisfaction with each of the meetings, and discuss in small groups how their levels of satisfaction might be raised. (75 - 90 minutes)

5.5 Exercise: resolving conflicts

Working in small groups, participants read a letter from a councillor containing allegations of mismanagement directed toward the mayor and suggest strategies for resolving a potentially disruptive interpersonal conflict. (90 minutes)

5.6 Role play/case study: privatizing the markets

Participants take part in and observe a role play involving a town councillor who accepts the responsibility for facilitating a committee meeting called to help an association make plans to manage some neighbourhood markets. (105 minutes)

5.7 Skill transfer exercise

Participants reflect on what they have learned and make personal commitments to put it to use after the workshop. (30 - 45 minutes)

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Workshop

Trainers Notes

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5.1 Warm-up exercise: WHAT TO DO WITH THE CEMENT

Time required: 30 minutes

Objective

This exercise is to demonstrate the increased efficiency that results when councillors help each other think through a complicated issue rather than working alone.

Process

Divide the participants into three groups of about equal size. Distribute copies of a situation (see the next page) and ask the participants in all three groups to read it.

When the participants have read the situation, explain that two of the three groups will have the task of finding a solution to the problem stated in the situation and that the third group will serve as a facilitator to help one of these groups find a solution. Inform members of the third (facilitator) group which of the other groups they will be helping to solve the problem. When all three groups have read the situation and say they understand what they are to do, begin the exercise and give the two problem-solving groups about ten minutes to complete the task.

When the exercise is completed, compare the results by counting the number of ideas produced by the group receiving help and comparing the total with the number of ideas produced by the group receiving no help. In most cases, the group receiving help (facilitated) will produce more ideas than the group receiving no help (non-facilitated).

Encourage a discussion of the meaning of the results and their implications for more cooperation and teamwork among councillors.

The situation

Imagine that you have been informed by the Town Clerk that the town has an opportunity to acquire, at no cost, 12,000 kilos (12 metric tons) of cement in 480 bags weighing about 25 kilos each. The cement bags have been salvaged from a sinking ship and are stacked on the town's commercial dock. The dock master is willing to donate the cement to the town council provided it can convince him that a good public use will be made of the salvaged material.

Spend a few minutes (about five) thinking about the problem and then write down on a sheet of paper as many good public uses for the bags of cement as you can.

Workshop

Trainers Notes

5.2 TRAINER PRESENTATION

Time required: 30 minutes

Objective

This presentation is to provide participants with ideas and perspectives on role and a conceptual foundation they can use for the individual and group exercises included in this workshop.

Process

Prepare the presentation based on information from the preceding essay on the facilitator role. In particular, describe how councillors can make their skills available to make meetings more productive, encourage cooperation among team members, help in the resolution of conflicts, and solve problems in the community as well as in the council chambers.

Outlined information on note cards may help you cover the information systematically and stay on schedule. Ask questions from time to time during the presentation as a check on participant comprehension and to hold their attention. Augment the presentation with visual aids including pre-printed newsprint sheets and overhead transparencies as a further aid to comprehension.

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Workshop

Trainers Notes

5.3 Instrument: A FACILITATOR BEHAVIOUR INVENTORY

Time required: 45 minutes

Objective

Instruments, like the one used in this exercise, are a valuable link between the concepts being discussed and the real-life experiences of participants. When participants complete an instrument and identify with the concepts being explained, the whole process becomes more meaningful and relevant to their own experiences as councillors.

The purpose of this instrument is to help participants identify ways in which they actually behave as facilitators and to choose the behaviours they want to use more extensively.

Process

Distribute copies of *A Facilitator Behaviour Inventory*. Ask the participants to complete the inventory, following instructions.

After the participants have completed the inventory, ask them to select two or three facilitator behaviours which they seldom or never use as councillors now and which they want to begin using more in the future. Ask them to circle behaviours they have selected. Then, using the notesheet on the page following the instrument, ask the participants to think about and write down a specific action or two they would be willing to take within the next few days to begin using these behaviours. Ask volunteers for reports to close the exercise.

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FACILITATOR BEHAVIOUR INVENTORY

Instructions

Exercise

Each of the 14 statements included in the inventory is a behaviour normally associated with a councillor in the role of facilitator. Read each statement. Decide the extent to which your actual facilitator behaviour corresponds with the statement and record your response by checking the appropriate block. You have completed the inventory when you have checked one response for each of the fourteen statements. Don't leave out any of the statements.

Facilitator	Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Always
1. I know in advance what is expected of me before attending a meeting.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2. I help others get the most results they can out of the meeting.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3. I make an effort to help build and maintain good relations among members.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4. I encourage members to establish a clear sense of direction.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5. I know the kind of results I want from my efforts in the meeting.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6. I know and share my special areas of competence with other members.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

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Exercise

Facilitator Behaviour	Never Seldom Occasionally Frequently Always				
	Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Always

- | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 7. I listen objectively to and withhold judgement until all ideas are known. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. I strive to be open, honest, and trusting in my relations with other members. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. I suggest standards for assessing the quality of work done at the meeting. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. I maintain a dialogue with community people to get their support and approval. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. I assume a leadership role any time my knowledge and experience are needed. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. I help opposing parties see each other's points of view and avoid placing blame. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. I help opposing parties find mutually beneficial win-win solutions. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. I follow a systematic process for identifying and working to resolve problems. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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Exercise

PARTICIPANT'S NOTES

The facilitator behaviours I have identified for improvement action are:

- 1. _____

- 2. _____

- 3. _____

Some actions I have in mind to begin using these behaviours more extensively in my council role as a facilitator are:

Action

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Action

Action

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5.4 Exercise: MAKING MEETINGS WORK

Time required: 75-90 minutes

Trainers Notes

Purpose

This exercise is for participants to rate their current level of satisfaction with the meetings they attend and to plan steps they can take to raise their level of satisfaction.

Process

Ask participants to list on a sheet of paper the various types of meetings they attend as councillors. Give them five or ten minutes to complete their lists. Ask participants, in turn, to report what they have written down while you compile this information on the left half of a sheet of newsprint. On the right side of the sheet, draw a rating scale (see the example below). To avoid listing the same meeting more than once, you might use a check mark or other form of notation when similar types of meetings are reported by participants.

Meeting Types	Rating Scale
1.	1 2 3 4 5
2.	1 2 3 4 5
3.	1 2 3 4 5
4.	1 2 3 4 5
5.	1 2 3 4 5

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Explain to participants that the scale on the right side of the newsprint sheet is for their use in rating their level of satisfaction with the meetings reported and compiled on the left side of the newsprint (ratings are from 5 = highest satisfaction to 1 = lowest satisfaction). After explaining the scale, ask participants to get up and to place a check mark over the number opposite each of the meetings they attend that corresponds with their own level of satisfaction with the meetings.

When participants have completed their ratings, tabulate the results. Identify the meetings that are rated lowest the most often and record the result. Assign the low-satisfaction meetings to several small groups of participants and ask the small groups to answer two questions about the meetings assigned to them:

1. What irritates you most about the meetings?
2. What might be done to increase your level of satisfaction with the meetings?

After 30 - 45 minutes, ask participants to reconvene and report on their results. Discussion.

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5.5 Exercise: RESOLVING CONFLICTS

Time required: 90 minutes

Objective

Conflicts are often a result of people seeing reality differently. Sometimes the underlying causes of conflict are differences in what people see as important, differences in the facts about a situation, or differences in perception about why things are the way they are. In any case, when these differences prevent us from getting what we want, conflict will result. It can be managed, however, if differences can be brought to the surface and discussed openly in an atmosphere reasonably free of hostility.

This exercise gives participants an opportunity to plan constructive actions that can lead to the resolution of a potentially destructive interpersonal conflict.

Process

Distribute copies of a letter written by a town councillor to the mayor that contains many allegations and complaints about the mayor's performance as a leader and manager of council affairs.

Have each participant imagine that he or she has been asked by the mayor to be present at a meeting between the mayor and the councillor and to, as the mayor puts it, "help me get to the bottom of this situation."

Divide participants into four or five small groups. Ask each small group to develop a strategy for improving the relationship between the mayor and the councillor and moving the situation toward a win-win solution. Suggest that they consider some of the ideas mentioned in the presentation on resolving conflicts. Give small groups 30 minutes to develop their strategies.

When time is UP, reconvene the participants and ask for reports from each of the small groups. Compare and discuss the various strategies.

Note. The following letter was written by a councillor from a city in Eastern Europe to the Mayor citing his concerns about the Mayor's performance of his duties shortly after the Mayor and Council were sworn into office thus creating conditions for interpersonal conflict.

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LETTERHEAD

Dear Sir,

When on Tuesday, May 19th, I sent you a letter containing several objections drawn from the last meeting of the Urban Planning Commission, I didn't expect that I would write you again so soon, not to congratulate you, but in order to express my concern about your lack of respect for the law and the activities of the councillors.

First of all, I will resume the facts:

Wednesday, May 20th, we were at the city hall at 1700 hours. A day before we were invited by a phone call from a councillor-colleague and we were not informed about the content of the following meeting.

At the meeting we found out that the Urban Planning Commission was already, illegally, summoned (we are supposed to be announced three days before a meeting). We were supposed to discuss the bus stations project.

The project involved a very questionable report of the administrations technical staff. My objections were:

- a. We were supposed to have it three days before the commissions meeting and we didn't get it.
- b. It did not contain sufficient reasons justifying the emergency

We didn't know that you had already chosen among different other solutions. Not with posters in the city hall's windows should councillors be informed about your plans.

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- d. The report contained several ideas about leasing offers which were not clearly described. We all know that the commercial spaces are scarce and in great demand and that the mayoralty is searching different ways to find extra money. Who is supposed to decide and what criteria should be used to reach the decision?

Why didn't we discuss this problem in the councillors' assembly? If we are so badly informed, how are we supposed to know about the bidding project? In my opinion, the bottom line is:

1. The organization of the new local government activity is poor.
2. The flow of information is practically absent being replaced by rumors.
3. The procedures of the local council are not observed, although you have used so many times the "aside by the law" principle. My opinion is that this is lack of respect toward the councillors' activity and an attempt to use us just for formal activities.

Please understand my objections, neither as a personal attack, nor as an attempt to obstruct the city hall activities. It's not a personal attack, because I trust your capacity and I consider that our dispute is exclusively a dispute of principles and methodology of work.

It's not an obstruction of the city hall activities, because, nowadays, they are chaotic and badly coordinated. It's your own duty to coordinate them. The secretary of the city hall will watch the legality of your activity, but your activity must be drawn from the town's realities and not from the laws.

Maybe your impatience to solve more problems and to make more changes makes you so nervous! I know that you are overwhelmed by requests, problems, complaints, suggestions, etc. But I believe that you have the intelligence and the energy to manage correctly the situation.

I don't want to look like I am only a critic; therefore, I suggest a few ideas:

1. Establish a list of priority objectives (goals) for this year, leaving place for some problems that may unexpectedly arise.
2. Set up a schedule for attaining these goals.

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3. Establish a system for assessing your activity.
4. Organize, as soon as possible, a system to inform the population about city hall activities.
5. Inform completely and in due time the President of the Councillors' Commission about the problems that are to be discussed at their meetings.
6. If the procedure adopted by the councillor's assembly seems to you too bureaucratic, do not forget that in the first place there were objections against it. It is not too late to propose some emergency procedures. But don't forget that an emergency must be justified by serious reasons. But I warn you that our emergency meetings, in the near future, will be conducted according to the law.
7. Whenever you can, tell your staff about their duty to be respectful toward the public. The authority of a civil servant is to build on competence and honesty, not on dictatorial and aggressive behaviour.
8. Don't forget that you are a politician. During the next four years you will design the town's administrative policy. You are not a simple bureaucrat but a leader responsible for fulfilling the promises you made to the people who elected you.

I put an end to this letter, very dissatisfied with myself, because I think I was not sufficiently clear. But I know it is not possible to clarify such a serious problem like the activity of the mayor and of the elected councillors by mail.

So I conclude with a final suggestion: let's meet periodically, in order to discuss calmly and openly issues concerning principles of our policies in the local government.

Signed,

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5.6 Role-Play/Case-Study: PRIVATIZING THE MARKETS

Time required: 105 minutes

Objective

To provide participants an opportunity to use their facilitator skills as advisors to a community association as it struggles to take greater responsibility for the management of a neighbourhood market.

Process

Ask five workshop participants (at least two of them women, if possible) to volunteer for a role-play/case-study. When you have five volunteers, explain that the Mawandi Market Association's Steering Committee has asked a member of the Mawandi Town Council to help the Committee develop a plan for running its neighbourhood markets.

Give the volunteers a description of the task and the roles to be played. One role is for a councillor who has been asked by the committee leader to help the committee get started on a plan for managing the Association's markets. The second role is for the committee leader (preferably a woman participant who strongly favours managing the market) and the third for a member of the committee (another woman, if possible) who strongly opposes Association management of the markets. The other two volunteers are to serve as observers (see observer worksheets below) to record and report later on what happens when the councillor meets with the Steering Committee members.

Give the volunteers about five minutes to read the situation and role descriptions. While the volunteers are discussing the task, set up a table with five chairs for the role players and observers. Begin the meeting and tell the players they have about fifteen minutes to discuss how the Association can take on the task of successfully managing the neighbourhood markets.

At the end of 15 minutes, ask each of the players in the meeting to comment on the meeting and the success of the councillor as a facilitator. Ask for observer reports and enlarge the discussion to include other participants.

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PRIVATIZING THE MARKETS

The situation

The Town Council of Mawandi has decided to privatize some of Mawandi's neighbourhood markets. The women who run the markets have recently become organized as the Mawandi Market Association. A committee of women identifying themselves as the Mawandi Market Association Steering Committee has come before the Town Council to ask for help in learning how to manage the neighbourhood markets. They want Councillor Makepeace, who has been helpful to some of the market people in the past, to help them set up a system for successful management of market business.

Councillor Makepeace

You are on your second term as a member of the Mawandi Town Council. You have over ten years of experience in setting up and running a successful small business of your own. You have a reputation among market people as someone who can be trusted and relied upon to get things done. You are ready to help the association although anxious about the responsibility.

Ms. Handy

You represent the newly-formed Mawandi Market Association as the leader of its steering committee. You have little experience in managing a large organization and have found that none of the women in the neighbourhood markets do either. While the Town Council was in charge of the markets, you felt comfortable that the market's interests were being protected. However, the move toward privatization has you concerned about the future. You were part of the effort to create the Mawandi Market Association and see it as a strong force for protecting the rights of the market owners in Mawandi. You were recently appointed as leader and spokesperson for the Steering Committee which was created to represent members of the association. A majority of the members of the steering committee agree with you and favour a strong role for the association in managing the neighbourhood markets. Otherwise, the Town Council will contract with a market master who may not be sympathetic with the needs and interests of the women who run the market. However, others on the committee, and particularly Ms. Negamon, do not believe the association is capable of handling so large a task. You need help and have recommended Mr. Makepeace, a trusted and respected member of the Town Council, to meet with the committee.

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Ms. Negamon

You are a member of the steering committee and have for many years operated a small vegetable kiosk at one of the neighbourhood markets in Mawandi. You have never liked the way the Town Council managed the market and were pleased when a decision was made to privatize the markets. However, you were dismayed when Ms. Handy proposed that the association take on responsibility for market management. You favour a professional market master. You are afraid the association will try to run the markets and are convinced that management by committee just won't work. You have decided to take a stand against Ms. Handy and Mr. Makepeace in their efforts. You want the Town Council to contract out management of the markets to a private market manager or organization.

Ms. Middrow

You have for a number of years, like Ms. Negamon, operated a vegetable kiosk in one of Mawandi's neighbourhood markets. Only recently appointed to the Steering Committee, you have not made up your mind on the best way to manage the markets. You like the idea of association management as a way of giving market operators more control. On the other hand, you are fearful that the association may not be qualified for the task of market management and that the services of a professional individual or group might be more advisable. You look forward to hearing the various opinions expressed and plan to make your decision

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OBSERVER'S WORKSHEET

Exercise

Watch closely what takes place during Councillor Makepeace's meeting with the Market Association Steering Committee and answer the questions about the interaction in the space below. Be prepared to report on your observations when asked to do so by the trainer.

1. What was the purpose of the meeting, how was this purpose stated, and by whom?

2. What were the chief issues expressed at the meeting and how were they addressed?

3. In general, how did Makepeace "facilitate" the meeting or help accomplish its purposes?

4. How successful was Makepeace in his role as facilitator? Explain your answer.

5. What more could Makepeace have done to secure a more positive or favourable outcome?

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5.7 SKILL TRANSFER EXERCISE

Time required: 30-45 minutes

Objective

This exercise is to help participants transfer the learning experiences of workshop into their real-world activities as elected officials. The focus of this exercise is on raising expectations, engaging in realistic planning, and making personal commitments. Most of the work is done on a personal basis with some interpersonal sharing.

Between knowing and doing there is a wide chasm

It is generally agreed that the purpose of training is to improve the way people do things by showing them a better way. In fact, the success of a training experience can be measured by the amount of personal growth and change that takes place both during training and after the training is over.

Training rarely has the impact on workshop participants that trainers hope it will have, particularly after an exposure of only a few hours. The exhilaration the moment fades quickly when the trainee is confronted with old work habits the resistance of work associates who have not shared the training experience.

On the other hand, commitments to learning and change made at the close of a workshop can help participants overcome learning resistance in themselves and in the work environment. A trainer can help learners make a successful transition from the world of learning to the world of doing through a few simple planning exercises. Think about it this way. The time taken to encourage learning transfer could be the difference between a brief exposure to some interesting ideas and a life-changing experience.

Process

Spend at least half an hour at the end of the workshop to focus the attention of participants on important learning's and encourage them to continue experimenting with these learning's in their council activities. Begin by giving participants about 15 minutes to work independently on a simple learning transfer questionnaire.

When participants have completed the questionnaire, ask them to share quickly with the group two or three things they intend to do differently in their council roles as facilitators to close the workshop.

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A LEARNING TRANSFER QUESTIONNAIRE

Take a few minutes to reflect on the role of the facilitator, the new ideas you encountered in this workshop, and how you feel about them. Then, in the space below, write a sentence or two to describe something interesting you have learned about yourself during this workshop.

Based on what you have learned about yourself and the many possibilities for change presented by this workshop, what two or three things do you intend to do differently in your council role as facilitator?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Finally, what obstacles in yourself or in your work environment do you expect to experience during your efforts to implement these changes? What will you do to remove or minimize these obstacles?

Obstacle	Action to remove the obstacle
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- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 1. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 3. _____ |

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If you can learn it, you can do it.