Interactive Learning Strategies for the New Workforce

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Lower Lobby

Shangri-La Hotel

26 July 2016

8:30am – 4:30pm

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Interactive Learning Strategies for the New Workforce

The best way to improve your training for the new workforce is to encourage participants to interact with each other, with the content, and with you. In this workshop, Thiagi reveal secrets of effective interactive training that is faster, cheaper, and better. With Thiagi's design approach you will learn to load different content resources into existing templates. You will also learn powerful principles of facilitating training for the new workforce.

Workshop Agenda

Module 1: Basic Principles and Procedures

0915 – 0945	Participatory demonstration of interactive training techniques
0945 – 1015	Characteristics and preferences of the new workforce

Module 2: Designing Training for the New Workforce

1045 – 1115	Applying principles of training design to classroom sessions
1115 – 1145	Applying principles of training design to online sessions
1145 – 1215	Incorporating different content resources in training design
1215 – 1245	Using training-design steps in a flexible fashion

Module 3: Facilitating Training for the New Workforce

1400 – 1430	Why traditional train-the-trainer approaches are dysfunctional
1430 – 1500	Incorporating interactivity in all training sessions

Module 4:

1500 – 1530	Handling disruptive participants from the new workforce
1530 – 1600	Using debriefing as a training technique

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The Guesssing Game

Demonstration of an Interactive Training Technique

1. **Ask participants to create a wish list.** Distribute note cards to the participants. Ask each participant to secretly write down three things they want to learn in the workshop.

2. **Exchange the wish lists.** Ask each participant to exchange the wish list with someone else. Ask the participants to continue exchanging the wish lists several times. After a suitable time period, ask the participants to stop the exchange and study the three items on the wish list they currently have.

3. **Invite predictions.** Ask any participant to stand up and make a prediction of the most frequently listed item on the wish lists.

4. **Score the prediction.** Ask the participants to review the wish list they currently have and stand up if it contains the predicted item (or a synonym). Count the number of people standing up and announce this as the score for the first prediction.

5. **Repeat the process.** Ask anyone else who thinks that he or she can make a better prediction to stand up and announce another wish list item. As before, ask the participants with this item to stand up and announce the score. Repeat the prediction and scoring process a few more times.

6. **Collect all the wish lists.** Quickly read the items on the list.

7. **Debrief the participants.** Explain that the ***Guessing Game*** is an interactive training technique. With the help of the participants, deconstruct the activity. Invite the participants to brainstorm different ideas for using the structure of this activity as a template for creating their own activities.

Characteristics and Preferences of the New Workforce

Capable of working anytime, anywhere, and on any device

Communicate through audio and video rather than using text

Early adopters of new technology

Fluent users of social media

Greater proportion of women

Largest group of cohorts in the workplace

Live with their parents and marry later

More diverse and more inclusive

More likely to be knowledge workers

1. More likely to change their jobs frequently
2. More likely to work collaboratively and share information with each other
3. More self-centered
4. Prefer entertaining and interactive learning
5. Value creativity, integrity, and competence

Superlatives

Most important

Most interesting

Most surprising

Most obvious

Most questionable

Most disturbing

Most disruptive

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Training Design for Classroom Sessions

1. **Face Reality.** Use authentic tests, activities, and examples.
2. **Be spontaneously systematic.** Combine, omit, and rearrange instructional design steps.
3. **Build the airplane while flying it.** Design training while delivering it.
4. **It's the activity, stupid!** Design activities—not content.
5. **Don't reinvent the wheel.** Use templates for rapidly designing activities and structuring content.
6. **Wrap the content inside an activity.** Design activities to incorporate existing content. Present content before the activity (briefing), during the activity (coaching), or after the activity (debriefing).
7. **Line them up.** Align content, activities, objectives—and results.
8. **Let the inmates run the asylum.** Empower the participants to create content and conduct activities.
9. **All together, now.** Require and reward collaborative learning.
10. **Be a sage by the side.** Facilitate activities instead of presenting content. And know your subject matter.
11. **Don't stop—ever.** Keep continuously improving, updating, and modifying the training package.

Training Design for Online Sessions

Each module of the e-learning course consists of four areas. You can through these areas in any sequence, any number of times.

The ***library*** contains all the documents, resources, and tools one needs to achieve the training objectives for the module. Some resources are marked *essential* and some as *optional*. Library items include videos, podcasts, PDF documents, slides, screen flows, checklists, templates, samples, or anything else the designer feels is pertinent to the objectives of the course.

The ***playground*** offers fast-paced web games that are simple to play, and provide reinforcing and engaging ways to gain fluency with the content in the library. Each game is directly related to one or more Library resources. The games are similar to hangman, tic tac toe, matching, sequencing, categorizing, crossword puzzles, and anagrams.

The ***café*** is the place where we have open-ended discussions. Originally, the café included just open-ended questions where participants explored the grey areas of a particular topic. Now, the café consists of forums, cases, as well as open-ended questions. The designers supply responses from subject-matter-experts and scoring rubrics to enable participants to grade themselves.

At the ***assessment center*** the participants are required to produce a set of deliverables. This assignment is not a multiple choice test or some similar type of knowledge evaluation. Rather, it is an on-the-job application or a simulated performance test that authentically asks the participant to prove the training objectives have been achieved.

Incorporating Different Content Resources in Training Design

Content and *activity* are the yin and yang of facilitation. You need both to produce effective and engaging learning. Content without activity produces sterile knowledge. Activity without content results in wasted effort.

It is not enough if you have both content and activity. These two have to be carefully balanced, aligned, and integrated.

We have access to different sources of training content:

- Some of them are in a stable and *recorded* form as in the case of books and video recordings.
- Other sources of content are in a *live* and spontaneous form as in the case of lectures from subject-matter experts and discussions with fellow participants.
- Within recorded and spontaneous categories, content comes in different *formats* such as job aids or stories or graphic illustrations.

Over the past several years, we have been exploring different types of learning activities that can be used with different sources of existing content.

The tables on the following pages list different content sources and the related types of learning activities. Following the table are brief descriptions of each type of learning activities, along with an illustrative sample of the activity.

Content Sources and Learning Activities

Recorded (Consistent) Sources

Content Source	Learning Activity
1. Text	A ***textra game*** combines the effective organization of well-written documents with the motivational impact of games. Participants read a handout and play a game that uses peer pressure and peer support to encourage recall and transfer of what they read.
2. Audio Recording	A ***replay activity*** combines the effective organization of well-written documents with the motivational impact of games. Participants read a handout and play a game that uses peer pressure and peer support to encourage recall and transfer of what they read.
3. Video Recording	A ***double exposure activity*** enhances the instructional value of video recordings. In a typical double exposure activity, participants listen to an audio recording and play one or more games that help review and apply the new concepts and skills.
4. The Internet	The ***4-door approach*** to e-learning uses four metaphorical doors: library, playground, café, and assessment center. This approach combines the effective organization of online documents (in the library), with the motivational impact of web-based games (in the playground), the power of collaborative learning (in the café), and authentic performance tests (in the assessment center).
5. Real Object	An ***object lesson*** incorporates physical objects and equipment as a main source of training content. Working individually or in teams, participants explore the components and functions of the object. As a result, they master different motor skills and knowledge associated with effective use of the object.
6. Environment	***Field Studies and Expeditions*** require participants to explore the environment of another country, culture, organization, or time period. Participants are given a set of objectives to achieve, information to collect, or objects to obtain. In the process of completing these tasks, participants acquire new knowledge about the environment and new skills for relating to the local people.

Live (Spontaneous) Sources

Content Source	Learning Activity
7. Subject-Matter Expert	An ***interactive lecture*** involves participants in the learning process while providing complete control to the facilitator. Typical interactive lectures include presentations that are interspersed with (or followed by) game-like activities (such as built-in quizzes, group tasks, and teamwork interludes). Some of these activities incorporate participant control of the presentation.
8. Coach	A ***coaching activity*** involves an individual coach supporting and improving the performance of a learner through questions, guidance, and feedback. Most coaching activities feature just-in-time and just-enough presentations and demonstrations.
9. Informant	A ***brain-pick activity*** involves one or more "informants" who share a common background. Participants interact with these informants (and with each other) to learn specific knowledge and skills.
10. Fellow Learners	A ***structured sharing activity*** facilitates mutual learning and teaching among participants. Typical structured sharing activities create a context for a dialogue among participants about their experiences, knowledge, and opinions. Structured sharing is particularly effective for sharing the best practices among participants.
11. Diversified Learners	A ***mutual learning activity*** involves a group of participants among whom some have learned new and different knowledge and skills. Working in mixed teams, participants teach and learn from each other until everyone has acquired all the desired knowledge and skills.
12. Fellow Participants	A ***debriefing game*** is an interactive strategy that is used for encouraging reflection and dialogue about an earlier activity (such as a roleplay, a simulation game, or a workplace crisis). Debriefing games require processing of a common experience to extract key learning points from it. They encourage participants to identify and express their emotions, recall events and decisions, share the lessons they learned, relate insights to other real-world events, speculate on how things could have been different, and plan for future action.

Different Formats

Content Source	Learning Activity
13. Graphics	A ***graphics game*** involves photographs, paintings, drawings, or cartoons as an essential element. In most of these games, participants review the graphic, analyze its elements, discover relationships, and discuss their findings.
14. Job Aids	An ***application activity*** involves supplying participants with copies of a job aid. In a sample game, teams of participants learn different steps and reorganize themselves to master the other steps from each other.
15. Tables	A ***table activity*** helps participants to extract information from tables, and undertake such activities as discovering interesting relationships among variables, predicting what will happen beyond the current table, identifying key trends, and recalling useful facts.
16. Tests, Questionnaires, and Other Instruments	An ***assessment-based learning activity (ABLA)*** involves participants taking a test (or completing an instrument) and receiving personalized feedback. Whenever appropriate, ABLAs encourage interaction and discussion among participants about future action.
17. Samples	The key element in a ***sampling activity*** is a collection of different samples. Participants analyze the samples, arrange them in different orders, identify key features, and list quality standards. Later, they apply their discoveries to create new products that meet their needs.
18. Cases	The ***case method*** activity involves a written account of a real or fictional situation. Participants analyze, discuss, and recommend appropriate solutions. They also critique each other's work. The facilitator recounts the actual decisions in the real-world situation on which the case was based.
19. Stories	An ***interactive storytelling*** activity involves fictional narratives in a variety of forms. Participants create and share stories that illustrate key concepts, steps, or principles from the instructional content.
20. Unorganized Information	In an ***item-processing activity*** organizes bits of information, ideas, facts, questions, complaints, or suggestions.

Using Training Design Steps in a Flexible Fashion

1. **Specify the context.** Identify resources, constraints, schedules, and other administrative details.
2. **Analyze Results.** Specify metrics for measuring the results.
3. **Analyze the Performance System**. Identify factors that influence the achievement of the results.
4. **Construct Tests.** Construct items for measuring authentic final tests and subtests.
5. **Sequence.** Arrange the test items in a sequence.
6. **Retrieve.** Collect existing content and usable activities.
7. **Align Activities with Content.** Design activities for interacting with content.
8. **Align Everything.** Ensure that activities, content, and test items are aligned with each other.
9. **Repeat, Repeat.** Repeat previous steps as many times as needed.
10. **Deliver Mindfully.** Deliver, evaluate, revise, and repeat.
11. **Keep on Improving.** Continue refining the training package (until you die).

Incorporating Interactivity in all Training Sessions

The dictionary defines *facilitation* as "the act of making easier." More specifically, Roger Schwarz (2007, p. 5) in his book *The Skilled Facilitator*, provides this definition:

> *Group facilitation is a process in which a person whose selection is acceptable to all members of the group, who is substantively neutral, and who has no substantive decision-making authority diagnoses and intervenes to help a group improve how it identifies and solves problems and makes decisions, to increase the group's effectiveness.*

Using methods that range from simple brainstorming to elaborate computer-mediated problem-solving protocols, facilitators help groups to plan projects and strategies, collect and share information, interpret and analyze data, review and evaluate products, make and debate policies, deconstruct and reconstruct workflow procedures, handle crises, resolve conflicts, prioritize ideas, and make decisions.

Although many trainers call themselves facilitators, purists would argue that trainers cannot play the role of facilitators because they have pre-specified goals for the participants. There are also debates about whether facilitation is a subset of training or whether it is the other way around. I prefer to run away from these futile arguments and, for the sake of clarifying what I plan to explore in this chapter, offer the following definition:

> *Instructional facilitation is a process in which a person assists a group of participants in selecting, modifying, or accepting a set of learning objectives and acquiring new skills, knowledge, and attitudes related to these objectives. The facilitator supports collective inquiry through the use of activities that encourage participants to interact with each other and with a variety of content resources.*

Instructional Facilitation Compared with Training

Before discussing details of instructional facilitation, it will be a good idea to compare this approach with typical training in the corporate workplace. The following table attempts such a comparison. Here are two points from the table that need to be stressed:

- ❖ Both training and instructional facilitation aim at providing effective learning and improving workplace performance.
- ❖ Trainers focus on consistent presentation of content while facilitators focus on flexible use of activities that deliver the content.

Comparison Between Training and Instructional Facilitation

	Training	**Instructional Facilitation**
Desired outcome	Effective learning and improved workplace performance.	Effective learning and improved workplace performance.
Role	Training is the presenter of content and manager of learning.	Facilitator supports collaborative learning by a group of participants.
Professional preparation	Train-the-trainer sessions emphasize consistent implementation of the training design and content.	Train-the-facilitator programs emphasize conducting activities that support the group to learn on its own.
Learners	All learners must have the prerequisite skills. Differences in learning styles are acknowledged but the focus is on catering to linguistic and logical intelligences.	Current group of learners and their learning styles determine the choice of content and activities.
Overall design	Predetermined and consistently implemented	Original design is viewed as a suggested safety net. Final design organically evolves during the session.

Continued on the next page.

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Comparison Between Training and Instructional Facilitation (continued)

	Training	Instructional Facilitation
Goals and objectives	A standard set of precisely stated goals and objectives are specified for all participants	Session begins with broad goals that are modified through the group's inputs
Content	Content is the most important element. Based on task analysis, accurate and essential content is delivered through participant manuals, slides, and standardized trainer presentations.	Content is given lesser emphasis than the process. Content is obtained from different types of available resources, including participants' current expertise and experience.
Activities	Activities are given lesser emphasis than content. When there is a time crunch, trainers usually skip the activities or reduce the time spent on them.	Activities are considered to be the most important element. Activities require participants to gather, generate, process, and apply the content.
Interaction	Frequent interactions between the participant and the content are required.	Frequent interactions among participants are required.
Questions for participants	A standard set of objective questions, generated by the instructional designer, is interspersed throughout the training session.	Facilitator frequently makes up questions. Participants are encouraged to generate their own questions.
Questions from participants	Generally discouraged or postponed. Trainer responds with standard answers.	Encouraged and used to modify content and activities. Facilitator encourages collaborative inquiry to discover the answers.
Sequence	Trainers stick to single hierarchical sequence of content presentation based on task analysis.	Facilitators modify the sequence to suit the needs and preferences of participants.

Flexible Facilitation

I've spent the past 15 years in field research in a futile attempt to discover the secrets of effective facilitators. I interviewed and observed brilliant facilitators who were selected on the basis of high ratings by their peers and participants. These facilitators reportedly used a positive process that resulted in productive outcomes. I also interviewed the participants they facilitated.

Initial data from our observations and interviews were disappointing and confusing. I did not find consistent, common behaviors among these facilitators. Further, even the same facilitator appeared to use different behaviors with different groups, even when conducting the same activity. To make matters worse, the same facilitator sometimes used different behaviors with the same group within the same activity at different times. As I collected and classified more data and reflected on the patterns, I realized the real secret of effective facilitators was to be inconsistent!

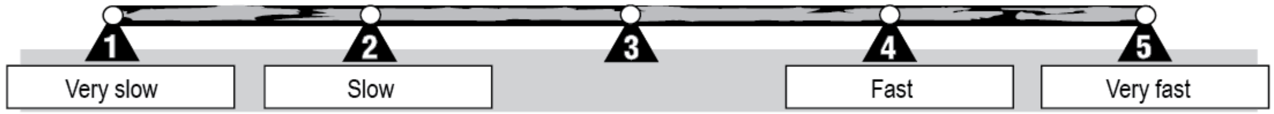
I reflected on the data and decided to call the core principle *flexibility* instead of inconsistency. Based on this reframing, I came up with these five conclusions:

- **Effective facilitators are flexible.** They modify their activities before and during use.
- **Effective facilitators are adaptive.** They modify their activities along seven critical tensions.
- **Effective facilitators are proactive.** Before using an activity, they modify it on the basis of the characteristics of the participants and the purpose of the activity.
- **Effective facilitators are responsive.** While using an activity, they continuously modify it to keep the different tensions within acceptable ranges.
- **Effective facilitators are resilient.** They accept whatever happens during the activity as valuable data and continue with the activity.

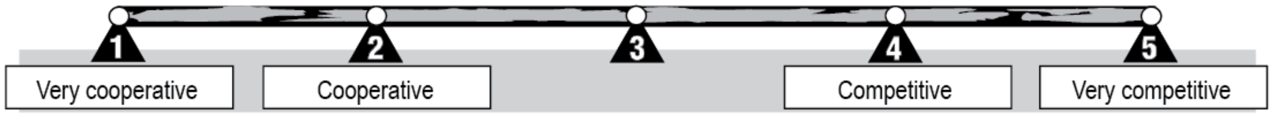
To understand the flexibility of a facilitator, we should understand seven different dimensions of facilitation. Our analysis suggests that these dimensions can enhance or destroy a facilitated activity. Because each of these dimensions has two extreme poles, I call them the seven tensions in facilitation. These tensions are identified in the behaviorally-anchored rating scales shown in the figure on the next page.

Seven Tensions in Facilitated Activities

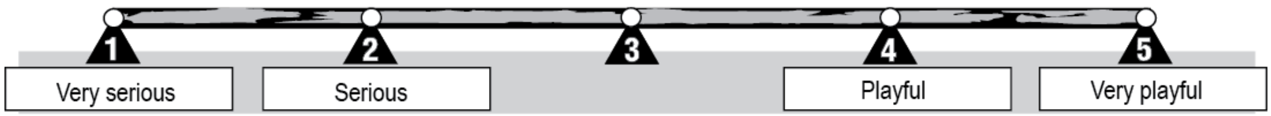
1. PACE



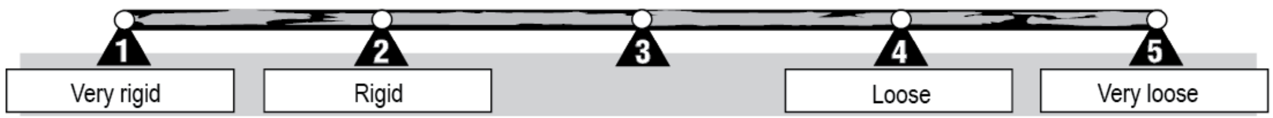
2. INTERACTION



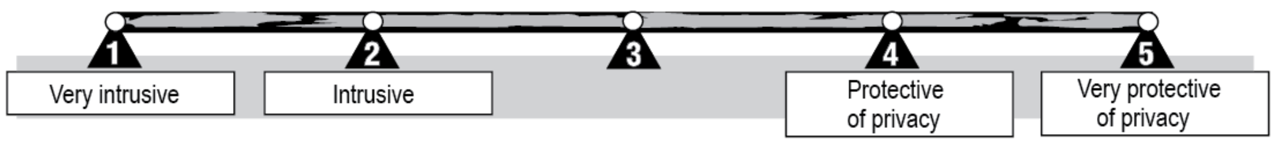
3. TONE



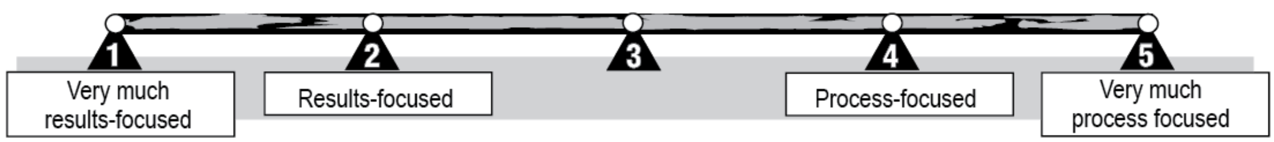
4. IMPLEMENTATION



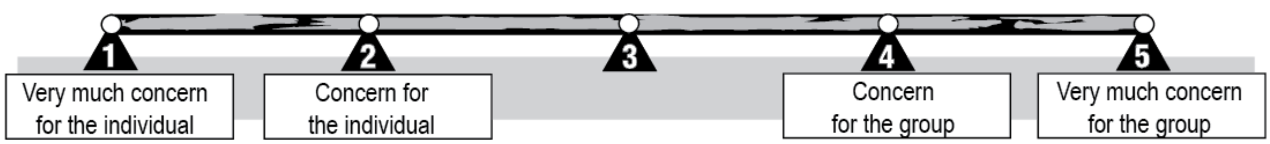
5. SHARING OF THOUGHTS



6. FOCUS



7. CONCERN



Facilitation as a Balancing Act

When an aspiring facilitator asks me, "Should I conduct the activity at a fast pace, or a slow one?" I usually answer, "Yes." The appropriate location of an activity along the seven tensions depends on several factors, including the number and types of participants and the structure and purpose of the activity. The secret of effective facilitation is to make these tensions transparent. This is achieved by maintaining a balance between the two extremes. Unfortunately, however, "balance" resides in the perception of participants, rather than in outside reality. Thus, the balance along the cooperation-competition dimension may differ drastically between a group from an ashram in South India and a group from a brokerage firm in New York. Similarly, the balance in the privacy dimension may differ depending on the culture to which the participants belong.

How To Prevent Tension Headaches

The first step in making a tension disappear is to avoid the extremes (positions 1 and 5 in the rating scale). Beyond that, you can use a variety of common sense tactics to increase or decrease each tension. Here are a few sample tactics for each element:

Pace

- ***To speed up the pace . . .***
  Begin the activity promptly and get it rolling fast. Announce and implement intermediate time limits.
- ***To slow down the pace . . .***
  Announce and implement minimum time requirements. If a participant or a team finishes the task before this time is up, insist on review and revision. Introduce a quality-control rule that punishes participants and teams for turning in sloppy ideas or products.

Interaction

- ***To increase competition . . .***
  Use a scoring system to reward effective performance. Periodically announce and compare the scores of different individuals or teams. Reward the winning team with a valuable prize.
- ***To increase cooperation . . .***
  Reduce the conflict among the participants and increase the conflict between the participants and external constraints (for example, time limits). Use multiple criteria for determining the winners: reward individuals or teams for speed, quality, efficiency, fluency, creativity, novelty, and other such factors.

Tone

- ***To increase seriousness . . .***
  Maintain a serious tone. Recognize and praise serious and thoughtful behaviors. Emphasize critical aspects of the game. Focus on negative consequences of flippant behaviors.
- ***To increase playfulness . . .***
  Maintain a playful tone. Recognize and praise impulsive and playful behaviors. De-emphasize critical aspects of the game. Focus on the positive consequences of playful behaviors.

Implementation

- ***To tighten implementation. . .***
  Begin with a detailed explanation of the rules. Stress the importance of adhering to these rules. Provide a printed copy of the rules to each participant. Frequently refer to these rules.
- ***To loosen implementation. . .***
  Acknowledge that the participants will be initially confused. Reassure them it is not absolutely necessary to stick to the rules. Don't present all the rules in the beginning. Introduce the rules only if and when they are required.

Sharing of Thoughts

- ***To increase intrusiveness . . .***
  Make intimate self-disclosure statements and praise others for making such statements. Ask probing questions about personal feelings and emotions. Require everyone to respond to such questions.
- ***To increase protection of privacy . . .***
  Encourage personal choice of level of self-disclosure. Avoid probing questions about personal feelings and emotions. If necessary, ask for anonymous written responses.

Focus

- ***To increase the focus on the process . . .***
  Make the procedure more enjoyable by introducing game elements such as bonus scores and chance. From time to time, stop the procedure and undertake a process check. Let the participants suggest changes for making the procedure more effective.
- ***To increase the focus on the results . . .***
  Use a scoring system to reward efficient performance by individuals or teams. Stop the procedure and discuss the desired results. Have participants commit themselves to getting the job done.

Concern

- ***To show more concern to individual needs . . .***
  If participants are at different levels of skill or knowledge, organize them into teams of approximately equal levels of competency. Encourage timid people to participate more by providing them with additional information and responsibilities.
- ***To pay more attention to group needs . . .***
  Identify dominant participants and give them additional roles (for example, keeping score or taking notes) to channel their excess energy. Have the team conduct periodic process checks to make sure everyone's needs are met.

Six Steps in Effective Facilitation

Fortunately, you don't need a PhD in social psychology to come up with suitable tactics to increase or decrease opposing elements related to different tensions. The tactics listed above for maintaining a balance are for illustrative purposes only. Brainstorming additional tactics of this nature may actually be an excellent topic for a facilitated activity.

Knowing these tactics does not guarantee you will become an effective facilitator. You need to know when and how to use them. Here's a six-step procedural model for using the tension-adjustment tactics before, during, and after a small-group activity.

Step 1. Identify your preferences.

- Flexible facilitation does not require self-denial. You have a right to have personal preferences along the seven dimensions — as long as you are aware of these preferences and capable of keeping them under control. For example, I prefer a fairly fast pace, cooperative interaction, playful tone, loose structure, protective climate, results focus, and concern for individuals. Most of the time, I am aware of my biases and realize that they may not suit the needs of the group.
- The best way to discover your biases is to recall small-group experiences in which you felt very positive or very negative and to analyze the factors that contributed to those feelings. You may also ask your peers and participants for feedback about your biases. Once you are aware of them, train yourself to relegate them to the background when necessary.

Step 2. Identify participant preferences.

- Before planning an activity, you need to collect information on the likely preferences of your participants along each of the seven areas of tension. The best source of information is a representative sample from the group. The best strategy for collecting the information is to interview the participants using the behavioral scale presented earlier. To cross-check your information, talk to other facilitators, consultants, and trainers who are familiar with the group.

Step 3. Design or revise the activity to suit participant preferences.

- Whether you are designing a new simulation game or using an existing role-play, integrate your understanding of participants' preferences into the activity. Carefully work through the steps and rules of the activity to decide where they appear to be located along each tension.
- When you identify tension areas at one extreme or another, redesign the activity to make suitable adjustments. During this step, you may want to work with a few members of your participant group and a few experienced colleagues to ensure that your design adjustments are appropriate.

Step 4. Begin the small-group activity.

- With appropriate initial adjustments, you should conduct the activity with confidence. Do not worry about making additional adjustments at the initial stages. Present an overview of the process and the desired products to get the group started.

Step 5. Make modifications on the fly.

- As your participants work through the activity, continuously monitor the levels along various dimensions. If the seven tensions are at optimum levels, do not interfere with the flow of the activity. However, since there is no such thing as a perfect activity, some tensions are likely to become salient from time to time. Wait a little while to see if the group makes its own adjustments. Most groups, especially experienced ones, work out their own system of reducing tensions. With inexperienced groups, you may intervene with appropriate adjustments. Do this as quickly and as unobtrusively as possible. Continue monitoring the group and adjusting the activity as required.

Step 6. Debrief the group.

- You have a critical step to complete even after the activity has ended: conduct a debriefing session with all participants immediately, and with a few selected participants later, to collect information on their perceptions of different tension levels. This can be done in a few minutes by asking questions based on the rating scale such as, "When did you feel the activity was too slow?" or "When did you feel that I asked you too many intrusive questions?" Take notes on the participants' responses and use them to balance the activity with other groups. You may also use this feedback to balance other future activities with the same group.

A Simple Summary

The main point of this article is that the effectiveness of small-group activities depends heavily on the flexibility of the facilitator. Whether you are a newcomer or an old-timer, you can improve your effectiveness by attending to and adjusting pace, interaction, tone, implementation, sharing of thoughts, focus, and concern.

Handling Disruptive Participants: Tactics

Originally designed for use by team facilitators in meetings, many of the techniques suggested in these checklists can also be used when facilitating team activities.

These checklists suggest practical tactics for handling different types of disruptive behaviors. They can be used by the facilitator or his or her assistant. A more effective approach will be to distribute copies of different checklists to different team members so that they monitor and handle different types of problems.

The checklists are organized into informal clusters. There is some overlap among the different clusters.

How To Handle Disruptive Talking Behaviors

1. Talks too much

- Call on others.
- Impose "air-time" limits on participants.
- Give participants poker chips worth 2 minutes of talking time.
- Interrupt the person with a question directed to someone else.
- Acknowledge the comment and involve others: "Al, that was an interesting insight. Barbara, what are your views on this issue?
- Explain to the excessive talker that it is important to hear from everyone.
- Assign the role of gatekeeping to a participant.

2. Does not talk

- Direct questions to the silent participant. Ask questions that can be answered easily.
- Ask the silent participant to summarize someone else's statement.
- Ask everyone to take turns making a 1-minute presentation.
- Pair up participants and ask each pair to discuss the topic between themselves for a 2-minute period.

- Ask questions related to the silent participants' areas of interest.
- Ask participants to write their ideas on index cards.
- Reinforce (in a sincere fashion) any comment from the taciturn participant.
- Assign the role of identifying and drawing out reluctant participants to a team member.

3. Has difficulty talking

- Don't get impatient. Don't complete the sentences for the other person.
- Use a buddy system in which partners hold private conversations before participating in the meeting.
- Ask participants to write their ideas on index cards.
- Hold a one-on-one conversation with the participant during a coffee break or before the meeting.

4. Talks too loudly (or too softly)

- Ignore this behavior unless it disrupts the meeting.
- Give direct, nonthreatening feedback requesting the participant to modify his or her volume.
- Give feedback to the participant before or after the meeting or during the coffee break.
- Ask a friend of the participant to give feedback.

5. Talks in technical jargon

- Compliment the participant on his or her technical expertise and ask for a simplified explanation.
- Request the participant to translate his or her comment into layperson's language.
- Ask other participants if they understood the comment.
- Ask for clarification of terms and concepts you don't understand.
- Ask another technically competent participant to help clarify terms and concepts.
- Avoid sarcastic remarks and threatening demands.

6. Talks in a convoluted, politically-correct fashion

- Compliment the person for his or her sensitivity and ask for a clarification of terms you did not understand.
- Reassure participants that all comments will be held in strict confidence and they can feel free to speak their minds.
- Ask other participants if they understood the comment.
- Check with participants from minority groups for their preferences.
- Avoid sarcastic or insensitive remarks. Discourage other participants from making such remarks.

7. Uses excessive humor

- Thank the participant for adding a light touch to the discussion, and request for comments directly related to the topic.
- Relate the humorous comment to the discussion topic.
- Ignore the humorous remark and follow it up with a serious one.
- Ask the participant to relate his or her story, joke, or humorous comment to the topic under discussion.
- Give feedback to the participant before or after the meeting or during the coffee break.

8. Talks in an excessively serious fashion

- Model light comments to help highlight the humor in the situation.
- Invite a participant with a sense of humor to respond to the previous comment.
- Avoid sarcastic or insulting comments about the seriousness of the participant.
- Briefly discuss the importance of seeing the light side of serious topics to encourage creative problem solving.

9. Talks to someone else on the side

- Make a non-sarcastic request to the participants to share their thoughts with the rest of the group.
- Direct a question to one of the participants holding the side conversation.
- Ask one of the participants to react to the previous comment.
- Stop the discussion and look expectantly at the disruptive participants.
- Walk nearer to the disruptive participants, touch one of them, and maintain eye contact.

10. Talks only to the facilitator or the team leader

- Emphasize that the meeting is a dialogue among all participants.
- Request the participant to address his or her remarks to the team.
- Avoid eye contact. Move away from the participant.
- Avoid commenting on the participant's remarks. Wait for some other participant to comment.

Strategies

- **Improve the trust level.** Make it easy for the team members to give constructive feedback to each other.
- **Trust the team.** Given time, most teams will bring disruptive members under control.
- **Trust the process.** If you focus on the procedure, disruptive behaviors may stop by themselves.
- **Develop basic guidelines.** During the first meeting, establish ground rules for appropriate behaviors during the activity.
- **Reward appropriate behaviors.** Recognize and reinforce supportive participant behaviors.
- **Share the responsibility.** Ask the participants to handle disruptive behaviors whenever they notice things going wrong.
- **Model productive participation.** Practice what you preach. Ask others to demonstrate cooperative, disciplined behavior.
- **Divide and conquer.** Break the participants into smaller groups. This reduces the size of the group and increases individual air-time.
- **Try the buddy system.** Organize the participants into pairs. Ask each person to control his or her partner.
- **It takes two.** Work with a co-facilitator. Take turns focusing on the participants and on the process.
- **The silent treatment.** If things get tense, declare a time-out. Have the participants analyze what's going on. Discuss their feelings, then return to the task.
- **Take a detour.** Have a standard procedure for tabling a topic and moving on to less controversial issues.
- **Send subliminal messages.** Decorate the meeting room walls with appropriate posters (for example, Blame the Process, not the Person!).
- **Conduct a debriefing.** After each meeting, ask participants to evaluate their performance and establish ground rules for future sessions.
- **Conduct an off-line meeting.** Provide constructive feedback to a disruptive participant during a break.

Using Debriefing as a Training Technique

Sorry to disillusion you, but people don't learn from experience. If they do, how is it that I keep doing the same stupid things that upset me, and how is it that my friend gets married for the fourth time?

Why?

People don't learn from experience; they learn from *reflecting* on their experience.

I firmly believe in this principle and keep preaching it to everyone. To me, all experiential learning activities merely provide an excuse for reflection.

What?

As a facilitator, you encourage this type of reflection by conducting a debriefing discussion. During this debriefing, your participants reflect on their experiences in the activity, relate them to the real world, discover useful insights, and share them with each other. Debriefing also helps you to wind down the activity, reduce negative reactions among the participants, and increase insights.

How?

A major dilemma in debriefing is maintaining a balance between structure and free flow. I suggest that you prepare several questions before the debriefing session. During actual debriefing, encourage and exploit spontaneous comments from your participants. If the conversation degenerates into a stream-of-consciousness meandering, fall back on your prepared list of questions.

Which Type?

You can conduct a debriefing session after any activity, but not all activities benefit from a debriefing session. It is all a question of focusing on the training objectives. For example, you can conduct a team-based activity to train your participants to design an experimental study. You can then debrief your participants about their personal reactions to mathematical topics and interpersonal concepts related to working in teams. However, if your goal is to train your participants on the systematic research procedure, the debriefing discussion that increases selfawareness and team awareness is totally superfluous. You should not be wasting the participants' time in this touchy-feely dialogue.

What types of activities benefit from debriefing? Here are five characteristics of activities that require a debriefing discussion:

1. An activity in which the connection between the events and the real world are not clear-cut. In other words, activities that are metaphorical rather than direct.

2. An activity that generates intense feelings and emotions — either positive or negative — that distract participants from focusing on logical patterns and root causes.

3. An activity that happens so rapidly that the significance of the critical events is lost on the participants.

4. An activity whose significance is likely to be interpreted in different ways by different participants who experienced it.

5. An activity that focuses on principles, insights, feelings, and beliefs rather than on facts, procedures, and problem solving approaches.

Most training activities exhibit several of these characteristics. They all deserve to be debriefed. Failing to conduct a debriefing discussion will prevent participants from maximizing their learning. Worse yet, an activity without debriefing will leave participants in a confused state, wondering, "What was that all about?"

Six Questions To Ask During Debriefing

Debriefing is the process of facilitating participants to reflect on their experience, gain valuable insights, and share them with each other.

Here's a convenient set of questions for conducting a debriefing discussion:

Question	Why?	How?
How do you feel?	This question invites participants to get in touch with their feelings about the activity and its outcomes. By getting strong feelings and emotions off their chest, participants are in a better state of mind to be objective during the latter phases of the debriefing discussion.	Begin this phase with a broad question about how they felt during and after the activity. Encourage participants to use single words and phrases and discourage them from lengthy analyses. Follow up with specific questions related to different elements of the activity.
What happened?	This question invites participants to recall and share information about what happened during the activity. This prepares participants to analyze the information during the next stage.	Begin this phase with a broad question that asks participants to recall events during the activity. Use this information to create a chronological list. Ask questions about specific events.
What did you learn?	This question encourages participants to list the different principles and insights they learned from participating in the activity. This enables participants to share their insights with each other.	Begin this phase by asking participants an open question about what they learned. Make a list of principles and insights.

How does this relate?	This question encourages participants to relate their experience in the activity with the events in the workplace. The responses enable participants to discuss the relevance of the activity to participants' real world experiences.	Begin this phase with a broad question about the connection between the activity and events in the workplace. Suggest that the activity is a metaphor and ask the participants to offer real-world analogues.
What if — ?	This question encourages participants to apply their insights to new contexts. It presents different scenarios and requires participants to speculate on how people's behaviors would change under different contexts.	Begin this phase with several scenarios that require speculation on how the differences would have affected the process and the outcomes of the activity. Then invite participants to offer their own scenarios and discuss them.
What next?	This question encourages participants to undertake action planning. It encourages them to apply their insights from the activity to the real world.	Begin this phase by asking the participants to suggest strategies for use in future activities. Then ask the participants how they would change their workplace behaviors as a result of the insights they gained from the activity.

Structured Spontaneity

While it is important for you to have an organized sequence of debriefing questions, it is equally important to encourage spontaneous comments from the participants. You need to cultivate an oxymoronic mindset of structure and flexibility at the same time. Your approach should combine a freewheeling dialogue and the prepared structure when the conversation meanders in meaningless directions.

The Game After the Game

Whenever we conduct a jolt or an experiential activity, we faithfully follow it up by conducting a comprehensive debriefing discussion. We have also trained hundreds of facilitators on the use of the debriefing model. They, too, take the debriefing activity seriously and conduct it according to our recommended procedure.

The result? We have succeeded in boring the participants, making them restless, or putting them to sleep. While our debriefing discussions may be interesting to some of the participants (especially those who are dominating the conversation with their cathartic monologues), others may conclude that we are beating a dead horse. They are probably thinking, "We've got the point. Let's move on!" After the excitement of the jolt, most debriefing discussions begin to sound bland and insipid after the first few minutes.

My friend Dr. Roger Greenaway (website: reviewing.co.uk) specializes in the area of debriefing (which he calls reviewing) and has developed several active and creative strategies to prevent the anticlimactic nature of after-activity reviews. Inspired by his principles, we have created several debriefing games (that we refer to as the games after the games) to maintain the momentum of jolts, games, and experiential activities. We present five debriefing games in the following pages.

Use of Debriefing Games

You may use debriefing games after any type of learning activity. You may also use them to help people learning from some significant real-world event, such as completing a project or merging with another organization. Debriefing games are of special value when the preceding activity or event shares the following characteristics:

1. The relationship between an activity and the reality of the workplace is often indirect and metaphorical.
2. The activity or the event has an emotional impact that distracts the participants from discovering cause-effect relationships.
3. The activity or the event is very brief and disappears before the participants notice what is happening.
4. Different participants focus on different aspects of an activity or event and perceive different patterns.

Sharing Insights

Here is a debriefing game that involves participants pairing up with different people and sharing their insights and other people's insights.

Participants

10 or more. 20 or more participants produce the best results.

Time

10 to 15 minutes

Flow

Ask a question. Ask a question that requires reflecting on the activity and coming up with useful insights. Here are three sample questions:

- What did you learn from the activity?
- How does the activity relate to events in your workplace?
- How would you apply the insights from the activity to improving your workplace performance?

Pause for coming up with a response. Ask participants to reflect on your question and relate it to the activity they experienced earlier. Ask them to come up with several responses and select the best one. Encourage participants to jot down some notes that identify the key points in the response.

Share your response with a partner. Ask each participant to pair up with another participant from some other area of the room. Ask the two participants in each pair to take turns sharing their responses to the question. Encourage participants to take notes on the other person's response since they would share it with a different partner during the next round. When this exchange is completed, ask the pair to look for new partners.

Share new responses with new partners. Ask participants to pair up with a new partner and share the response they heard from the previous partner. Ask everyone to repeat the process of finding new partners, presenting the most recent response they heard, and listening to a response from the other participant.

Select the top three responses. After a suitable period of time (when most participants have worked with at least five different partners), announce the end of the exchange activity. Ask each participant to work independently, think back on different responses and select the three best ones. The selected responses may or may not include the participant's original response.