

Effective facilitation of a meeting, whether an internal meeting or one involving physicians, can be a daunting task the first time; but with some careful preparation and thought on objectives and outcome, it need not be. Here are some points to consider:

1 Preparation

- Clarify the meeting objectives – what do you want to get out of it?
- What will delegates gain from participating in the meeting?
- What will happen as follow-up to the meeting; ie, the suggestions made and the questions asked?
- As a back-up, if the discussion proves slow, have a prepared agenda, with time allocations for each question to stimulate discussion.
- Remember the difference between open and closed questions – formulate questions that will generate discussion.
- Think of different techniques to encourage participation; eg, listing, brainstorming, prioritizing, grouping, etc.
- Do some research on who will be in the group, their background and likely experiences relevant to the meeting discussion.
- Consider asking participants to do some preparatory work, or to make short presentations during the meeting, or to lead sections of the discussion.

2 Meeting facilitation techniques

- Decide how you will open the session. Will you have an icebreaker activity, or just ask the delegates to introduce themselves and their institution?
- Everyone should be asked to say something before the meeting is underway, as this will encourage full participation throughout the meeting.
- You could open the meeting by brainstorming ideas to discuss. Use a flip chart to “park” ideas for later discussion. However, if the meeting is recorded, don’t overuse the flip chart; concentrate on the discussion instead.
- How will you set the context for the discussion and establish the right tone?
- How will you get the group focused immediately?
- How will you respond to disruptive or domineering behavior?
- What techniques will you use to involve the whole group?
- How will you keep the group on track?
- Paraphrase questions to ensure you have understood them correctly.
- What questions will you revert to if there is a silence?

- Give the audience the opportunity to table any unresolved issues.
- How will you close the meeting?
- Explain any follow-up processes.

3 The debrief process

- What notes are you, as facilitator, expected to provide from the meeting?
- How will discussion of the meeting be captured? If it is recorded, who is responsible for writing up a report?
- Who will coordinate this process?

**If you have any comments on this fact sheet, please contact
Ann Dieckmann (ann@facilitate-uk.com)**