

CHOOSING A FACILITATOR

Before choosing a facilitator ask yourself, do you really need one?

A facilitator can be a valuable help to your business, but not all situations require a facilitator.

A facilitator may be useful when:

- Your business is experiencing times of change and uncertainty
- A group is facing unusual challenges
- There is intra-group conflict
- The leader needs to work with the group (or be part of the group)
- A group feels “stuck” and is not achieving high performance
- There is a lack of commitment or action when it comes to implementing plans
- You have to guide a large group through a conversation or agenda
- You have a situation where innovation or creative thinking is essential

Facilitators can work with groups of different sizes:

- Small groups and workgroups of 3-6
- Medium groups and leadership teams of 7-13
- Large groups and departments of 14-30
- Conference groups or business teams of 30-200

What to look for in a facilitator

Here are some of the attributes you should look for in a facilitator if you are considering hiring one:

- Professionalism - does your facilitator do this job regularly, as a primary business?
- Experience - have they facilitated in a range of challenging contexts?
What happened?

- Training - has your facilitator been trained formally in the techniques of facilitation and the psychology of groups?
- Results - do they have a track record of results?
- Testimonials - can they point to happy clients?
- Grit - will they be able to hold your team focused on an important issue, even if it means sacrificing some easy immediate likability?
- Attitude - does your candidate have a positive and agreeable nature?
- An ability to listen to the conversation and read between the lines - will they be able to see the “real” conversation as it happens?
- An ability to reframe - can your facilitator reframe your business challenges and present them in constructive ways?
- A breadth of experience in business and life - does your facilitator have experience in business so they can empathise with your issues?
- Ability to access and implement a range of tools and group development models. Can they point to 30 or more techniques and tools at their immediate disposal?

Traps when choosing a facilitator:

- Choosing an agency person who seems likeable and charismatic. You know someone who seems very outgoing and ask them to do you a favour.
- Choosing the most senior person to “take control”. You’re the boss, right? So you “should” be the facilitator?
- Choosing someone who always makes the team have fun - fun is good, but results are more important.
- Selecting someone who promises to just step in and make it happen on the day without preparation.
- Scrimping on the facilitation budget for a team meeting or conference **that matters.**