
Guerilla Facilitation

What to do if the Meeting Leader is not Leading!

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There will be times when a meeting is not going well, but the meeting leader is not taking action. “Guerrilla Facilitation” is a set of techniques designed to help manage a meeting when you are not the meeting leader. The key to Guerrilla Facilitation is to ask questions that lead the group to take the action that is needed. There are several situations in which Guerrilla Facilitation might be helpful.

The Meeting Starts without a Clear Purpose

The agenda of a meeting, and the discussion that occurs, should all be tied to the purpose of the meeting and the products to be created. Yet often times, leaders start a meeting by either going over the agenda or diving straight into the first agenda item. If the meeting leader starts the meeting without stating the meeting’s purpose, you might say the following

"Excuse me. I may have missed it. Could you take a second to go over the overall purpose of this meeting and what we need to have when we are done? This will help me stay focused and make sure I don't go off on unimportant topics. What's our overall purpose for this meeting?"

Note that a Guerrilla Facilitator never accuses (e.g., “You didn’t state the purpose”). Instead, a Guerrilla Facilitator asks a question to help gain clarity.

The Discussion is Getting Off Track

A facilitator uses redirection questions to keep a group on topic. Likewise, if the discussion seems to be getting off track, but you are not the meeting leader, you can say the following.

"These are excellent points we are discussing. I know we have to get back to our main topic, but I don't want to lose these points. Can we record them on an 'Issues List' or something so we can discuss them later, and then get back to our main topic?"

Once more, asking the question can help take some of the sting out of the redirection.

One Person is Dominating

A facilitator uses specific techniques for addressing dysfunctional behavior, including a situation in which one person is dominating the discussion. These same techniques can be quite effective as a Guerrilla Facilitator as well. If the meeting leader permits a person to dominate the discussion, consider saying the following.

"This is an important point we are discussing, and Joe has openly shared his views. It would be great to hear everyone else's opinion on this. Can we go around the room and have everyone give their view on this idea?"

One or More Participants Have Dropped Out

The round-robin technique that is used when one person is dominating the discussion will also work when you sense that one or more people are not participating.

"This is an important issue we are discussing. It would be great to hear everyone else's opinion on this. Can we go around the room and have everyone give their view on this idea? I'll be glad to start..."

Decisions or Actions are not being Documented

Facilitators know the importance of documenting all decisions made during the session and any actions that need to be taken. Sometimes, however, a decision can be made or an action indicated and the meeting leader might fail to record it. If this happens, consider saying the following.

"It sounds like we just made an important decision. Can we have someone repeat it so the decision can be accurately recorded and we will have documentation of the decision made?"

The Meeting is about to end without a Review

Facilitators know that a proper ending for a meeting includes reviewing decisions made and actions to be taken. If a leader is about to end the meeting without a review, consider saying the following.

"After such a productive meeting, I would hate to leave without being clear on what we decided or what is going to happen next. Could we take a minute to review the decisions we've made and the actions that need to occur once we leave?"

As you can see, Guerrilla Facilitation can be quite effective in guiding a meeting. These techniques provide proactive strategies to help guide the discussion when the meeting leader is not providing strong facilitation.

Interested in learning more facilitation techniques? Check out our course, [The Effective Facilitator](#).

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