

Get More from Your Meetings

Facilitation Tips

Meetings work on two levels: **Content** and **Process**. As a facilitator your primary focus is on Process. If you are presenting much of the information within the meeting (Content), you may want to find someone else to facilitate. It's hard to think on both levels while the meeting is happening.

Think about **the space** where the meeting will be held in advance. Make sure there is adequate seating for everyone to be comfortable and see each other easily.

Agendas are the game plan for any meeting – you have to have one. Sharing the agenda with the participants in advance of the meeting is very helpful as it gives everyone a chance to make suggestions to shape the agenda and prepare for the topics to be addressed.

Each **topic** on an agenda can be clearly labelled with the presenter's name and the time in minutes that the topic is allowed. This helps the facilitator keep the agenda realistic, gives each topic the time it needs, and also sets limits for how long a topic can be discussed.

One of the first things on the agenda is **reviewing the agenda** with all participants. This gives everyone a chance to see the plan, voice any concerns and begin with a united feeling.

This is also a good time to **clarify roles** – let the group know who is facilitating and make sure you have a note-taker if you need one and a time-keeper if the facilitator wants help keeping within set times.

When time allows, start the meeting with an **introductory go-around** that gives each participant a minute (or less) to share how they are doing or some other bit of personal info. This starts the meeting off on a note of connection and gives people a chance to let others know if some personal issue is affecting their mood or behavior. You can also use this time to jump into pertinent content – at Deming we always start staff meetings with book recommendations from each person.

When facilitating, remember that your job is to **stay aware of the process** and not to get caught up in the content. Using Liberating Structures will help equalize participation, but sometimes old-fashioned discussions are necessary. Watch for conversation dominators – you may have to break in and give more introverted people a chance to talk.

When discussion flags, or starts to go off topic, you can re-focus the group by **summarizing** the main points shared so far and ask the group questions to go deeper or come to a conclusion.

LS Selection Matchmaker: What Serves Your Purpose?

~ Use with the LS Design Cards or the LS Menu on the next page~

1. Rapidly share challenges and expectations while building new connections	12. Specify only the absolute “Must do’s” & “Must not do’s” for achieving a purpose	23. Discover, spark and unleash local solutions to chronic problems
2. Make the purpose of your work together clear	13. Tap the wisdom of the whole group in rapid cycles	24. Move from either-or to robust both-and solutions
3. Together, look back on progress to-date and decide what adjustments are needed	14. Articulate the paradoxical challenges that a group must confront to succeed	25. Reveal and understand relationship patterns that create value or dysfunctions
4. Stop counterproductive activities & behaviors to make space for innovation	15. Reveal insights and paths forward through non-verbal expression	26. Develop strategies for successfully operating in a range of plausible yet unpredictable futures
5. Discover & build on the root causes of success	16. Develop effective solutions to chronic challenges while having serious fun	27. Define the 5 elements that are essential for a resilient & enduring initiative
6. Engage everyone simultaneously in generating questions/ideas/suggestions	17. Sort challenges into simple, complicated and complex categories	28. Analyze the full portfolio of activities & relationships to identify obstacles & opportunities for progress
7. Share know-how gained from experience with a larger community	18. Spread good ideas and make informal connections with innovators	29. Understand how embedded systems interact, evolve, influence the spread of innovation, and transform
8. Discover & focus on what each person has the freedom and resources to do now	19. Practice deeper listening and empathy with colleagues	30. Surface most essential needs across functions and accept or reject requests for support
9. Rapidly generate & sift a group’s most powerful actionable ideas	20. Map informal connections and decide how to strengthen the network to achieve a purpose	31. Reconnect the experience of leaders and experts with the people closest to the challenge at hand
10. Get practical and imaginative help from colleagues immediately	21. Define the step-by-step design elements for bringing initiatives or meetings to productive endpoints	32. Practice progressive methods for helping others, receiving help and asking for help
11. Engage everyone in making sense of profound challenges	22. Liberate inherent action and leadership in large groups	33. Observe and record actual behaviors of users in the field

Write two or three sentences about the challenge you have in mind. Then, ...

1. Put a checkmark next to each objective you wish to achieve. [√]
2. Group objectives in a logical sequence of beginning, middle and end.
3. Trim your list by taking out the less critical objectives; save those for later.
4. If you are down to between 3 and 7 objectives you have your first string. **Voila!**
5. Develop one or two alternative strings, shorter, longer or different.
6. Share with others, compare, modify and choose one that makes good sense.
7. Match your string of objectives with its string of LS and check timing.
8. Save alternative objectives for improvising as needed during implementation.

Liberating Structures Menu

~ Use when LS Design Cards are not available ~

Each LS in this table is designed to achieve the objective with the same number.

Cut along the table lines to make separate cards easy to manipulate and string together.

1. Impromptu Networking 5-20 min. 	12. Min Specs 20-50 min. 	23. Discovery & Action Dialogue 25-70 min. 
2. 9 Whys 5-20 min. 	13. Wise Crowds 10-60 min. per person 	24. Integrated~Autonomy 60-80 min. 
3. What, So What, Now What 15-45 min. 	14. Wicked Questions 20 min. 	25. Generative Relationships 25 min. 
4. TRIZ 30-45 min. 	15. Drawing Together 30-40 min. 	26. Critical Uncertainties 60-100 min. 
5. Appreciative Interviews 30-60 min. 	16. Improv Prototyping 15-20 min. per round 	27. Purpose-to-Practice 25-120 min. 
6. 1-2-4-All 10-12 min. 	17. Agreement-Certainty Matrix 30-45 min. 	28. Ecocycle Planning 60-95 min. 
7. User Experience Fishbowl 25-70 min. 	18. Shift & Share 35-90 min. 	29. Panarchy 1-2 hr. 
8. 15% Solutions 15-20 min. 	19. Heard, Seen, Respected 25 min. 	30. What I Need From You 45-70 min. 
9. 25-to-10 Crowd Sourcing 20-30 min. 	20. Social Network Webbing 45-60 min. 	31. Celebrity Interview 25-60 min. 
10. Troika Consulting 15-30 min. 	21. Design Storyboards 25-70 min. 	32. Helping Heuristics 15 min. 
11. Conversation Café 35-60 min. 	22. Open Space 90 min. to 3 days 	33. Simple Ethnography 1-6 hr. 



The Principles of Liberating Structures

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Principle</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">When Liberating Structures are part of everyday interactions, it is possible to:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Liberating Structures make it possible to:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">START or AMPLIFY these practices that address opportunities and challenges with much more input and support:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Liberating Structures make it possible to:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">STOP or REDUCE these “autopilot” practices that are encouraged by conventional microstructures:</p>
<p>1. Include and Unleash Everyone</p>	<p>Invite everyone touched by a challenge to share possible solutions or invent new approaches together. Actively reach across silos and levels, beyond the usual suspects.</p>	<p>Separate deciders from doers. Appoint a few to design an “elegant solution” and then tell all others to implement it after the fact. Force buy-in. Confront resistance with hours of PowerPoint presentations.</p>
<p>2. Practice Deep Respect for People and Local Solutions</p>	<p>Engage the people <i>doing the work</i> and familiar with the local context. Trust and unleash their collective expertise and inventiveness to solve complex challenges. Let go of the compulsion to control.</p>	<p>Import <i>best practices</i>, drive <i>buy-in</i>, or assume people need more training. Value experts and computer systems over local people and know-how.</p>
<p>3. Never Start Without a Clear Purpose</p>	<p>Dig deep for what is important and meaningful to you and to others. Use <i>Nine Whys</i> routinely. Take time to include everyone in crafting an unambiguous statement of the deepest need for your work.</p>	<p>Maintain ambiguity by using jargon. Substitute a safe short-term goal or cautious means-to-an-end statement for a deep need or a bold reason to exist. Impose your purpose on others.</p>
<p>4. Build Trust As You Go</p>	<p>Cultivate a trusting group climate where speaking the truth is valued and shared ownership is the goal. Sift ideas and make decisions using input from everyone. Practice “nothing about me without me.” Be a leader and a follower.</p>	<p>Over-help or overcontrol the work of others. Respond to ideas from others with cynicism, ridicule, criticism, or punishment. Praise and then just pretend to follow the ideas of others.</p>
<p>5. Learn by Failing Forward</p>	<p>Debrief every step. Make it safe to speak up. Discover positive variation. Include and unleash everyone as you innovate, including clients, customers, and suppliers. Take risks safely.</p>	<p>Focus on doing and deciding. Avoid difficult conversations and gloss over failures. Punish risk-takers when unknowable surprises pop up.</p>

6. Practice Self-Discovery Within a Group	Engage groups to the maximum degree in discovering solutions on their own. Increase diversity to spur creativity, broaden potential solutions, and enrich peer-to-peer learning. Encourage experiments on multiple tracks.	Impose solutions from the top. Let experts “educate” and tell people what to do. Assume that people resist change no matter what. Substitute laminated signs for conversation. Exclude frontline people from innovating and problem solving.
7. Amplify Freedom AND Responsibility	Specify minimum constraints and let go of overcontrol. Use the power of invitation. Value fast experiments over playing it safe. Track progress rigorously and feed back results to all. Expose and celebrate mistakes as sources of progress.	Allow people to work without structure, such as a clear purpose or minimum specifications. Let rules and procedures stifle initiative. Ignore the value of people’s understanding how their work affects one another. Keep frontline staff in the dark about performance data.
8. Emphasize Possibilities: Believe Before You See	Expose what is working well. Focus on what can be accomplished now with the imagination and materials at hand. Take the next steps that lead to creativity and renewal.	Focus on what’s wrong. Wait for all the barriers to come down or for ideal conditions to emerge. Work on changing <i>the whole system</i> all at once.
9. Invite Creative Destruction to Enable Innovation	Convene conversations about what is keeping people from working on the essence of their work. Remove the barriers even when it feels like heresy. Make it easy for people to deal with their fears.	Avoid or delay stopping the behaviors, practices, and policies that are revealed as barriers. Assume obstacles don’t matter or can’t be removed.
10. Engage in Seriously Playful Curiosity	Stir things up—with levity, paradoxical questions, and Improv—to spark a deep exploration of current practices and latent innovations. Make working together both demanding and inviting.	Keep it simple by deciding in advance what the solutions should be. Control all conversations. Ask only closed <i>yes or no</i> questions. Make working together feel like drudgery.

Want to learn more about Liberating Structures?

Check out the book, ***The Surprising Power of Liberating Structures*** by Henri Lipmanowicz and Keith McCandless, at your library or look at their website:

<http://www.liberatingstructures.com/>