

SUPPORT FOR PARISH AND CLUSTER PLANNING GROUPS

FACILITATOR INTERVENTIONS

The facilitator plays a key role in assisting a group with both their effectiveness and their efficiency. The facilitator relies on his/her own sensitivity to group dynamics, knowing when to make an intervention and knowing the precise language needed. Precision with vocabulary is key to the facilitator's success.

The following lists some examples of the binds that groups often get into and some of the interventions a facilitator might make:

1. Groups can get bogged down in “story-telling”:

“While it is helpful to hear some of these experiences we might want to check for further data on that topic.. .to see if this is a widespread response”.

2. Groups operate on untested assumptions:

“Is that an accurate assumption?”(note the facilitator doesn't use value judgements (e.g., “right or wrong” assumptions) but invites the group to judge for themselves to see if the assumption is based in reality.)

3. Discussion can go beyond the issue:

“Could we take a minute to reflect on what we heard and decide where we want to go with our task tonight.... “

4. The group seems to be in agreement . . .heads are nodding in positive ways:

“It appears as if we are ready to test for consensus at this time...”

5. Folks are getting impatient and may want to force closure:

“Could I suggest that we continue this discussion at our next meeting? We are already overtime and we seem to have a great variety of opinions... .we might be able to come to consensus better if we get a little distance from it and come back with our ideas.”

6. Groups sometimes become dependent on the authority figure either the Pastor, or the facilitator... .or some other perceived “expert”:

“In addition to what (expert or authority figure) has told us, it is important to hear what you think and for you to give input to the decision..”

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7. The group is divided on how to proceed:

"What is the real difference between these alternatives? We might find that we are in more agreement than we think."

8. The group looks for a referee:

"Could each of us take some time to write down our position vis-a-vis the options that are before us..."

9. The group moves into sub-groups and two conversations are going at one time:

"Could we take a minute to quietly reflect on where we want to go next.."

10. The group avoids decision making:

"We might not be sure that the decision we will make is the right one in all ways, but at this time we do need to make a choice that seems to be the best one among the options considered..."

11. People start to come late to meetings:

"Could we agree on our starting time so that we can make the best use of everyone's time. Does everyone have the dates of our meetings blocked off on their calendars?"

12. People start to analyze why people do what they do:

"It is difficult to "see" an intention and we can only work with what we see or hear (experience) as well as the effect that it has on us. Would you like to comment on how you are feeling?"

A GOOD FACILITATOR DOES NOT INTERVENE UNNECESSARILY AND LIKE A TICKING CLOCK SHOULD FADE INTO THE WOODWORK