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Introduction

Leading is a decision, not a job description.

In the early 1990s, a large city hospital asked our consulting company, TeamTech, to teach a group of managers “some communication skills.” Communication issues topped the list of major issues in many organizations at the time. After the communication skills training we worked with several hospital departments that were experiencing conflict and controversy. What started with a simple request for communication skills training moved to a wider scope of organizational concerns. Eventually, this broadened to facilitation training for managers and supervisors in all of the hospital’s departments. Over time, more and more clients requested facilitation training for people who were in various leadership positions – managers, supervisors, team leaders and so on.

Working with people in business, government and the community over many years has taught us that the capacity to be facilitative is at the core of working effectively with others. People who are facilitative catalysts help colleagues work together smarter, faster and more comfortably with enthusiasm and fun. The facilitative process fosters ownership, teamwork, better communication overall and results. As one manager said, “After practicing this for several months, I’ve found that people around me are adopting the same techniques. We accomplish more in shorter amounts of time, we trust each other more and we are more open with each other. We collaborate and celebrate in coming up with solutions that are much better than if we’d worked on things on our own.”

The Facilitative Way, which is based on the facilitation training we typically offer, was written for those who are in positions of responsibility for individuals, teams, tasks and their organization: non-profit, governmental or for-profit. *The Facilitative Way* examines the skills, techniques and methods needed to help people think and act together to make a difference. This book can help you think, talk and act cooperatively when you use effective combinations of reflective, facilitative and strategic processes.

The insights and processes presented here are based on international research of the Institute of Cultural Affairs and the insights of Dr. W. Edwards Deming. Priscilla and Joel were in leadership and board positions with the ICA for twenty years and helped in the development of many of the ICA methods.

The Facilitative Way

Kathleen served in a one-year internship with Dr. W. Edwards Deming, one of the world's best known advocates in the quality movement of the 1970s and 1980s. For over thirty years we have seen the power of disciplined reflection and have watched people express ideas about how to make things work better. We have observed meaning and purpose reenter a situation and seen spirit and fulfillment motivate people. We have heard individuals make sense out of their complex situations. Many of the stories in this book reflect this spirit and sense of fulfillment. Our insights are drawn from a long and varied history of working with groups of people from rural villages to corporate boardrooms.

The Facilitative Way offers new ways to achieve a “people” emphasis and create a supportive atmosphere to express innovative ideas. “Being facilitative” means easing the work processes for yourself and others by thinking together. “Thinking strategically” means taking into account the whole as well as the necessary details to make strategic choices that accomplish desired outcomes.

Changes in the marketplace and the necessity to give service demand a more facilitative and strategic workplace. Today's information-based economy with its high customer demands and global competition is requiring a new level of speed, imagination and flexibility, affecting every aspect of our work life. This need for speed, imagination and flexibility is causing many of the changes in today's workplace. These changes in turn are calling for an increase in people skills, such as:

Change – upgrade your thinking skills

What you know is important; but how you think, make decisions and act is critical. It is important to upgrade your thinking skills at the same pace as you upgrade your RAM and megabytes. Don't find yourself with Version 1 thinking in a world operating on Version 6.0. The workplace has shifted from “brawn” to “brains” as we all struggle to let go of old assumptions of the industrial economy.

Change – work effectively together

Increasingly, jobs emphasize both technical responsibility and people responsibility. Too often when the nurse has been promoted to unit supervisor or the bank teller to branch manager, they lack the necessary people skills for their new responsibilities.

Change – talk with people, not at them

Leaders need to understand how to use the resources and people that surround them. You can be a leader without being the official “manager” or

“project lead.” It’s not about telling others what you know, it’s about listening more actively and being sure that everyone involved has made a contribution.

Change – think with a big-picture perspective

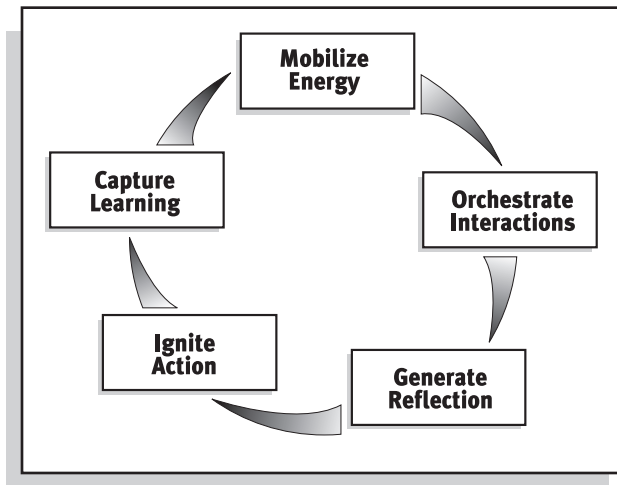
Leaders need to adopt big-picture thinking so that all the dynamics at play in a problem can be identified and a strategic response developed.

Change – choose to take responsibility

Responsible action is the goal, and individual choice is the vehicle. When responsible thinking is released, people are fully engaged and get things done.

Throughout *The Facilitative Way* we will share tools and techniques for being strategically facilitative and responding more effectively to situations, problems and issues. The key is in the together as we strive to work with new modes of thinking and acting. Making interactions easier starts with each of us.

Through tools, theory, procedures, reflections and thinkabouts you will learn how to take advantage of the research that has been done on the teaching of thinking. Watch for the following icons found throughout the book to guide your learning.



Learning Flowchart

At the beginning of each facilitative approach chapter is a flowchart delineating the key points of the chapter. This enables you to see the logical flow of what you are learning.



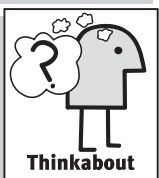
The Facilitative Approach

Key understanding of the approach and method covered in that arena.



Reflection

Questions to help you and others think about thinking. These questions deepen learning and increase your ability to apply learning



Thinkabouts

Information and understandings that add depth to implementing the method.



How-to Action

Practical ways to use the methods and tools in work situations.

When you learn, practice and apply the facilitative models presented here, you will be more effective at:

- Analyzing what a given situation requires
- Raising the questions that make a difference
- Getting more impact with less energy
- Generating buy-in for what is needed
- Engaging people in thinking and taking action together

Decide to be a facilitative leader, and others will think of you as a person who knows how to get things done with others.