



NEWSLETTER

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“Good leaders make people feel that they’re at the very heart of things, not at the periphery. Everyone feels that he or she makes a difference to the success of the organization. When that happens people feel centered and that gives their work meaning.”

Warren Bennis (professor at USC)

To:

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MGR Consulting is offering The *FAST* Facilitator Workshop by Gary Rush – See page 4

Diversity and the Facilitator

What does diversity have to do with a facilitator? I’ve been teaching facilitators for over 20 years. Over 3000 students have attended The *FAST* Facilitator Workshop and all of them know that I teach facilitators to, “treat others as you want to be treated.” That same philosophy is what diversity is about. My students know that I have never been a fan of labels. As I developed my eight classes, they all evolved from *FAST*. In

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NEWSLETTER No. 3.0

This is our periodic newsletter for both email recipients and mail recipients. Enjoy.

- “**Diversity and the Facilitator**” – Pages 1 – 3
- **Public Class Schedule** – Page 4.

Visit our web site

<http://www.mgrconsulting.com>

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Diversity and the Facilitator, Continued

facilitation training, I touch on many subjects; dealing with people, leading, conflict, presentations, planning, preparation, and methodologies along with more mechanical issues such as documenting, scheduling, and logistics. All of these subjects have a tremendous amount of information surrounding them and there are people who have the need or desire to focus on a specific subject. So, every class I have built began as a subject in the *FAST* class. Diversity is no exception.

Diversity is significant to everyone. Diversity is about – respect and treating each other as you want to be treated – especially facilitators. The more we facilitate, the greater the chance of encountering people with differences that we need to understand. Facilitators need to set an example.

A Facilitator's Mission is ...

What does a facilitator do? A facilitator's mission is to enable, make it possible, and make it safe for a group to come together, communicate, and accomplish their task. In other words, facilitators are temporary leaders. Effective leaders understand and embrace diversity – it enriches their team and broadens their views. To be effective facilitators, we need to master core competencies. As defined by the International Association of Facilitators (IAF), these include:

- Create collaborative client relationships.
- Plan appropriate group processes.
- Create and sustain a participatory environment including honoring and recognizing diversity.

- Guide group to an appropriate and useful outcome.
- Build and maintain professional knowledge.
- Model a positive professional attitude.

At least three of the competencies (collaborative relationship, participatory environment, and model positive attitude) speak to the elements of diversity – understanding people, making it safe for everyone, and setting the right example. Understanding diversity is a core competency for a facilitator.

We address Diversity by...

Facilitators address diversity by creating a safe environment, effectively managing conflict, listening, and modeling appropriate behaviors. We create a safe environment by making each participant feel valued, able to speak without being attacked, and listened to without being judged. This balances the power in a workshop – everyone has equal opportunity regardless of any characteristic – age, position, race, gender, religion, or personality. The essence of diversity is that all people have equal opportunity without regard to any specific characteristic. A workshop should be the epitome of a “perfect” society. That is the job of the facilitator.

Even in near perfect societies, conflict arises. As I stated in my previous article, (*Managing Conflict* – see our web site for the article as part of the March 2006 Newsletter), conflict can be constructive if

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Diversity and the Facilitator, Continued


properly managed. Conflict can also arise from differing social identities. How a person views himself or herself affects how that person responds to attacks and to challenges. The facilitator must be aware of what is causing the conflict. Is it the issue? Is it tied to the social identities of the participants? Understanding the cause is critical to determining the appropriate action. A team-building exercise to develop awareness may be needed if the social identities are part of the conflict. Mixing up sub teams helps form a more cohesive overall team. Addressing the issue while missing that the underlying cause is more personal causes a facilitator to focus on the wrong aspect. Doing so enables the problem to persist or get worse. The facilitator must focus on the cause of the problem.

The most effective skill a facilitator brings to a workshop is active listening – whether managing conflict or not. People don't listen to each other – especially when there is disagreement. When people disagree, they stop listening – “*Why listen when the other person is obviously wrong?*” When people stop listening, disagreements take their own course and often go in unintended directions making it worse. It's difficult to manage differences when unrelated topics arise that sidetrack the discussion. That is why active listening is so important. The facilitator must focus on the discussion; hear what is really being said – not just the words used; and feed that back to the participants so that they stay on track, and stick to arguing ideas, not personalities. The facilitator must hear the underlying message of the participants and cut through the often poorly chosen words. This not only helps to manage conflict – because

people begin to hear the real issue – but also helps people treat each other with respect – because the words don't get in the way.

By active listening, a facilitator sets an example for the participants. A facilitator's competency of modeling appropriate behavior is displayed when he or she listens well. When the facilitator keeps the group focused on the issue and not on personalities or poorly chosen words, a pattern is established for the participants to mimic. Participant behavior changes when they see the facilitator model the appropriate way and they see positive results. They begin to listen to each other. They choose words more carefully. They learn to disagree on issues and not attack personally. In doing so, the facilitator moves the group through their life cycle stages forming them into a cohesive team. When teams form properly, they take advantage of each other's strengths. They find their role within the group. They take advantage of diverse ideas and diverse views thereby enriching the group and the outcome.

So...

Diversity is significant to facilitators. It is our job to bring groups together and form them as cohesive teams. To do this, we need to ensure that we address the true cause of conflict; we need to make it safe for everyone to participate; we need to listen well; and we need to set the example. Managed poorly, diverse people and views erupt into greater problems. Managed properly, diverse people and views enrich everyone and enrich results from workshops. 



PUBLIC CLASSES

Class	The <i>FAST</i> Facilitator Workshop	Leadership Skills	Diversity – How Business Succeeds
Description	Our 5-day class that provides the finest and most comprehensive facilitation training available. The audience is candidate facilitators. This class confers 32 PDU's.	A 3-day class providing leadership skills and tools for the budding leader. This audience is anyone looking to become a leader. This class confers 18 PDU's.	Our newest class is a 2-day class that enables students to understand diversity and “inclusivity” as well as implement or support diversity programs. This class confers 12 PDU's.
Cost per student	\$2600	\$1890	\$760
Class Dates	July 10 – 14 September 18 – 22 October 16 – 20 December 4 – 8	August 14 – 16 November 6 – 8	August 17 – 18 November 9 – 10

Gary Rush teaches all classes.

All class fees cover training, materials, continental breakfast, lunch, and breaks. Hotel room reservations at the Majestic Hotel, 528 W. Brompton, Chicago, IL 60657 are made through MGR Consulting. Student pays own hotel and incidentals – a credit card is required to hold a room. Room rates and terms are listed on our web site (Public Classes). If you do not want to stay at the hotel, please let us know so that we don't make a reservation for you.

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- **Facilitation**
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See our web site.

**Call to register, discuss, or schedule a class.
Call Gary at (773) 330-2064 or email at grush@mgrconsulting.com
www.mgrconsulting.com**