



### The **FoCuSeD™** Facilitator Academy – 2007 Public Class Dates

This premier 5-day highly interactive class is the most comprehensive facilitation class available for training Facilitators. *All Public classes are held in Chicago, IL.*

August 6 – 10

October 15 – 19

December 3 – 7

### The MGR Consulting **FoCuSeD™** Advanced Class – November 13 – 14, 2007

This 2-day highly interactive class introduces *The FoCuSeD™ Facilitator Guide* as well as provides new tools for the experienced Facilitator. You will also learn and practice how to integrate the emotional group process with the process to build a product – the essence of **FoCuSeD™**.

#### Facilitation and Neutrality

The issue of *facilitation* and *neutrality* comes up frequently: at Facilitator conventions, in my **FoCuSeD™** class, and when Facilitators stand for their *IAF CPF* assessment. This article addresses questions and comments such as:

- “What is neutrality?”
- “Does a Facilitator really need to stay neutral?”
- “Can someone truly stay neutral?”
- “I don’t believe in true neutrality but I can be substantively neutral.”
- “What do I do if I know the participants are making the wrong decision?”
- “Can I change hats during a workshop to share my opinion or what I know?”

Remaining neutral is one of the *IAF* Facilitator Competencies. For me, it is a critical element of assessing students and CPF candidates. A Facilitator must be neutral.

#### Content versus Context

Every workshop includes two elements that are distinct yet work together:

- **Content** – the subject matter of the workshop. This is what the workshop is about.

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#### Check out our website.

It has been completely revised and updated.

#### Join our Group Facilitation Forum.

This interactive Forum enables members to post ideas, questions, and comments.

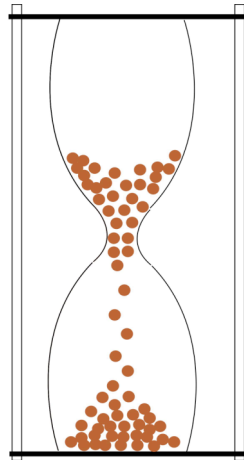
*Thank you to Professional Misfits for developing the website and forum.*

- **Context** – the agenda and process behind the agenda that enable a group of people to come together, focus their discussion and accomplish their task.

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## Facilitation and Neutrality, continued

The Context enables the Content. Looking at the hourglass, the Content is the sand inside the hourglass. The hourglass (the Context) provides a shape for the sand – it does not alter the sand, but helps to give it form and function. Without the hourglass, the sand would still be sand, but not fulfilling a worthwhile purpose. The hourglass without Content is just an empty vessel.



It is important to separate the two elements because when the Context influences the Content, trust is diminished in a group. When a group trusts the process – i.e., the Context – they concentrate on the subject – the Content. They know that the Context isn't being used to manipulate them. They also trust that the Context will help guide them. They are seen and heard in the proper Context.

### That is when Neutrality comes in...

It is a critical competency – “Model Positive Professional Attitude”. This is about believing in the power and value of the group. To do that, you must believe that a group is capable of making valid decisions and you must, therefore, remain neutral. Neutrality builds trust.

I tell students that neutrality is not difficult if you have the right process (the Context) and the right Participants. After all, with the right process and the right Participants, how can you go wrong? I've never watched a group make a wrong decision. They may have made some that I wouldn't have, but it wasn't my call, the group decided, and it was the right decision for the group.

### “Neutrality”?

Remaining neutral means keeping your opinions to yourself. You don't lose those opinions – only a useless blob can do that. You don't argue with them; you don't try to manipulate them through questions or process; and you don't tell them what you think.

**Remaining neutral means focusing on the context – the process** – and not using it to manipulate but to guide.

*For example*, when developing a plan, an objective must be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-based (SMART) to be an objective. As a Facilitator, I ensure that the Participants word their objectives so that

each is SMART but I don't influence them as to whether they go after 25% or 35% of something. SMART is process. 25% or 35% is content. To remain neutral, you need to be able to separate the context from the content.

**As a Facilitator, you are neutral or you are not and if you are not, you are not facilitating – you are manipulating.**

### Neutrality is important because ...

Neutrality is the Facilitator's defense mechanism from attacks. Being neutral means letting go of the “I”, the ego, the personal stake in the outcome. *When you do this successfully, you cannot be blamed (and neither can you blame yourself) for the "wrong" solution resulting from the workshop. When you do this successfully, the Participants develop trust in you.*

Neutrality reflects staying focused on the process, not the solution, and is:

- **Essential** for effective facilitation.
- An attitude of **acceptance** of the various points of view.
- The preserver of the **context**, the process.

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## Facilitation and Neutrality, continued

- The **rudder** of the workshop.

### “Acceptance” Clarified

Acceptance does not mean agreement. You can accept what a person says without agreeing. Acceptance is non-judgmental. By accepting, you are showing respect and maintaining neutrality. It opens people to new ideas, new experiences, and new cultures.

### “Substantively Neutral”

People have used the phrase, “Substantively Neutral.” “Substantively” means: essentially, really, or substantially. My concern is that people interpret it as providing grey areas. Can one be, “substantively alive?” Either you’re alive or you’re dead. As a Facilitator, you are neutral or you are not and if you are not, you are not facilitating – you are manipulating.

### Losing Neutrality

When you, as a Facilitator, align yourself with a Participant’s point of view you become another Participant. It is essential that you draw out others’ perspective without disclosing your own opinion – you accept what they say. If you lose neutrality, stop the workshop and take a break. You need the time to reprogram yourself to regain your role. Always begin a workshop by telling the Participants that your job is to remain neutral. Let them police

your actions. It will help you keep to the process.

Every time that I watched a Facilitator lose neutrality, it was for the same reason: the process wasn’t working. If you find yourself struggling to get the Participants to answer questions or they are struggling with what you want them to do, take a break and assess the process. Don’t get frustrated and give them your answers.

Participants always let you know when you’ve lost neutrality, too. They either become belligerent towards you or they shut down and let you do the work. Why not since you control both the process and the content?

**NEVER CHANGE HATS DURING A WORKSHOP.** You cannot be a neutral Facilitator and then, when you decide, remove the hat of neutrality, give your opinion, replace the neutral hat, and move on as if nothing happened. The Participants will not trust you to be neutral again.

### Conclusion

If you find yourself thinking that the Participants are doing something “wrong”, take a break and check the process and your ego – one or both are in need of repair. As a Facilitator, always stay neutral. It is essential. If you believe in the process and in the group, then remaining neutral is not an issue. Put your efforts into the process and neutrality follows. 🙏

## The **FoCuSeD™** Facilitator Academy taught by Gary Rush

### Description

This premier 5-day highly interactive class is the most comprehensive facilitation class available for training Facilitators. It is an approach to information gathering where group workshops replace individual interviews. **FoCuSeD™** is the seamless integration of process and group dynamics expanding processes to cover any group activity applicable in business and in life. The process to build agendas and deal with people is the same whether you are dealing with business, technical, or any other type of subject. You must proactively plan the emotional process to develop the product. One without the other is fruitless. It fully integrates methodologies with communication and group dynamics to derive consensus-based information.

**The FoCuSeD™  
Facilitator  
Academy**

Gary believes that theory is needed and teaches it to provide a background. He teaches specific "how to", he provides detailed facilitator and process tools, and as a CPF Assessor, he covers the *IAF Facilitator Competencies* and what students need to do to achieve them. To be an effective Facilitator you learn by doing. In his class students practice 40% of the class time and receive comprehensive assessments along with recorded sessions. This class helps build your skills and confidence.

**Public Class  
Dates**

August 6 – 10

October 15 – 19

December 3 – 7

***All Public classes are held in Chicago***

We can bring *The FoCuSeD™ Facilitator Academy* on-site anywhere in the world for organizations or companies.

**Cost**

Call Gary Rush for price information, group discounts, and hotel information.

**PMI R.E.P.**

*MGR Consulting* is a PMI Registered Education Provider. Attendance at *The FoCuSeD™ Facilitator Academy* earns you 40 PDUs.

**Our Portfolio of Classes**



MGR Consulting offers the following classes:

- *The FoCuSeD™ Facilitator Academy*
- *The MGR Consulting FoCuSeD™ Advanced Class*
- Business Presentation Skills
- Collaborative Leadership
- Data Modeling Made Easy
- Diversity – How Business Succeeds
- Productive Meetings
- Strategic Planning & Organizational Design
- Team Building Seminar
- Collaborative Leadership for Young Leaders

**See our web site for:**

Additional Information on:

- Products and Services as well as our Courses
- eNewsletters and Articles written by Gary Rush
- Books and Additional Resources

**Call Gary at  
(773) 330-2064 to:**

- Register for Public classes.
- Get Pricing Information.
- Schedule an On-Site class.
- Discuss our products and services or answer any questions you have.

**Email Gary at:**

- [grush@mgrconsulting.com](mailto:grush@mgrconsulting.com)

**Our Web site:**

- [www.mgrconsulting.com](http://www.mgrconsulting.com)

**Group Facilitation Forum**

- [www.mgrconsulting.com/forums/intro/Forum\\_Info.html](http://www.mgrconsulting.com/forums/intro/Forum_Info.html)