



***Techniques for
Facilitating Effective e-
Collaboration Meetings***

Anne Hudson, Grouputer Pty. Limited

Introduction

As e-Collaboration becomes pervasive we are learning more about the human aspects of using technology to work in groups. These tips provide ideas and proven techniques for making your meetings more satisfying and productive

Facilitation Tips

These tips may be useful when facilitating sessions.

Keeping People's Attention

Over 70% of audio conferencing participants do other things during conference calls.

To keep your remote participants' attention, try to make your sessions as interesting and dynamic as possible:

Make your sessions interactive and involving. Invite participants to contribute ideas, issues and observations and seek feedback both verbally and in the Discuss tool. These discussions will become your meeting minutes.

If you are using presentation slides, make sure they are colorful and arresting.

Use tools like voting to bring closure to relevant topics.

Team Building Techniques

Use simple team building techniques to build high performance teams. For example:

After everyone has arrived at the session, open the Discuss tool and create a Topic called "Getting Acquainted". Ask participants to "introduce" themselves, if they have not all met before, with a few words about who they are, what they do, and their work, family. Discuss the results.

Use the Survey tool to vote on issues to reach agreement about difficult decisions. Use Assign to pass control to other participants to present PowerPoint slides, share documents and spreadsheets

Use Signposts

It is good practice to let participants know what you are doing as a facilitator, and get their agreement.

Some preparation activities are not visible to participants, for example, setting up a vote within Survey, editing text in Discuss, using the idea editing tool, and uploading a Presentation or Document. Participants will see the uploaded files and Survey only when they have been created.

We recommend using audio conferencing. When you are meeting remotely speech is even more important. If you are not using audio conferencing, use the Broadcast feature in Grouputer to send process messages to your group advising what they need to know or do.

Process the Data

When using Discuss try processing agenda items to ensure that ideas are fully considered by rotating through:

- Talk about the issue for a couple of minutes
- Type ideas
- Review all ideas and discuss commonality, themes, gaps, conflict
- Add new ideas that arise from discussion. Summarize the best of the best.
- Prioritize
- Create Action Plans

Check out the Timer feature on the Tool Bar

Session Tips

These tips apply to setting up and managing the Facilitator's Domain

Reminders

Send out session reminders 2 days prior to your session to ensure nobody arrives late or is absent from the meeting.

Pre-session Check

Log-on to your session 10 minutes prior to start time and check your settings and content, just to be sure everything is right. You have time to make changes if you wish.

Groups

Create a new Group for each group/customer/department. This ensures total privacy between Groups and is good practice when using the Self-registration feature. Self-registration participants will only be able to view sessions you create for that specific Group.

One-Click-To-Join

Use this feature to allow your participants to join your session with a single click on a url embedded in a system-generated email. Using the Schedule wizard, and check the box for "Send an email invitation", or copy the url to your own email invitation. This url enables participants to join a session by clicking the url in the email and clicking the Connect button.

Application Sharing

1. To Share another person's desktop follow these steps:

- Use Assign to give session controls to participant
- Participant starts App Sharing

To Stop Sharing the person's desktop:

- Participant must Stop Sharing
- Before Facilitator "Revokes" Session controls

2. If you see the "Please Wait" window, you have minimized the shared window or it is not being shared. Go to G button on icon tray, open list of Shared files, select the file and click Show.

3. If you do not see the Application Share controls on the title bar, click once and it should reappear.

Please refer to the Application Sharing section of the manual for more information.

Technical Tips

Use a Headset for Remote sessions

Speakerphones can produce a lot of background noise, which makes it harder for participants to understand what you are saying. A good quality, hands-free phone headset is ideal for remote sessions.

Broadband is Best

Facilitators will get best results using broadband or a fast network. Dial-up is usually fine for participants. If you are participating from a home office, without broadband, two phone lines are necessary – one to access the Internet, the other for the recommended audio conference

Re-boot before You Start

As a precaution against inherited problems, re-boot your PC before you logon if you have had several applications open simultaneously over a long period. Memory consumption is a major source of standalone PC problems.

Does everyone have the Setup File?

Check all participants have successfully downloaded the setup file prior to the session and ask them to logon with their User Name and Password 24 hours before the session to allow any problems, e.g. firewalls, to be resolved before Start time.

Occasional Problems

If a participant is disconnected from the session they simply log back in the same way as they did initially.

If anyone sees the hourglass for long periods, it generally means their connection speed is slow or their PC's processor is at a maximum usage of 100%. End the activity and login again.

If anyone cannot see the new ideas in the Discuss TeamSpace, use the vertical scroll bars to scroll up and down the column.

Backup Plan B

Showing PowerPoint slides? If someone is unable to view a presentation you are showing we suggest that you email the file to the participant.

If the website requires a password, have one created that you can disable after the meeting. If the site requires a very long url, have a link to the tour placed somewhere on your home page

If you would like more information or a free demonstration, please contact:

enquiries@grouputer.com

<http://www.grouputer.com>