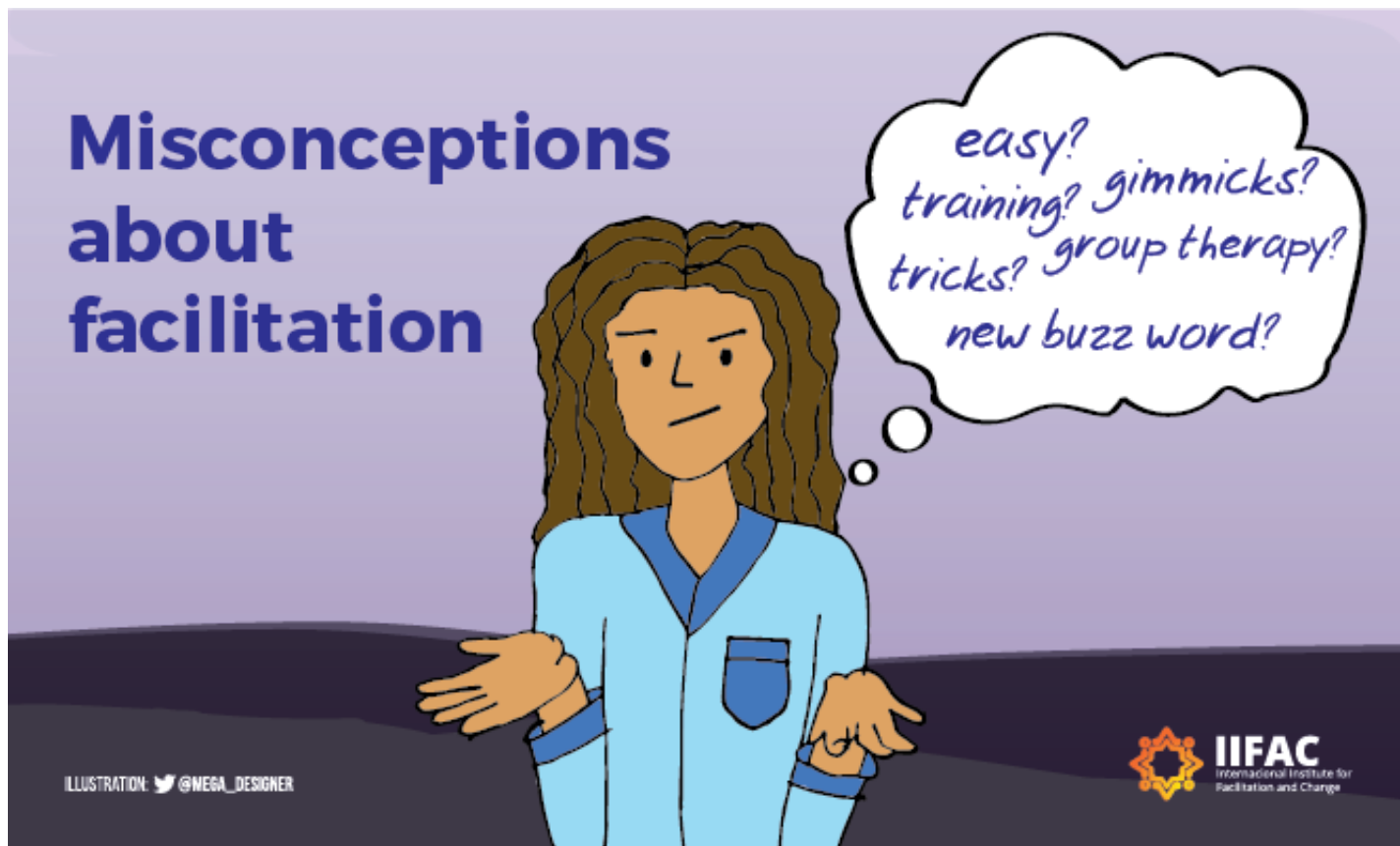


Misconceptions about Facilitation



Editor's note: This is the first in a series of three, lightly edited excerpts from an article originally published in The Competent Collaborator blog of Fulcrum Connection. Parts 2 and 3 will appear in the April and May issues of *Coffee Break*.

The Institute of Cultural Affairs in Belgium identified five common misconceptions about facilitation.

1. **Facilitation is another name for training.** In training, information flows primarily from the trainer to the participants, while in facilitation, information flows primarily from the participants to each other and to the facilitator.
2. **Facilitation is easy.** Like any professional skill, facilitation takes deliberate learning and time to understand, practice, and master.
3. **Facilitation is getting inundated with a whirlwind of ideas.** Although idea generation is often a component needed in a facilitated session, facilitation is focused on delivering the outcomes necessary for a group to take informed action.
4. **Facilitation is a new buzz word.** Facilitation began in 19th century France with an event called a charrette for group work focused on design and then became mainstream in 1994 with the formation of the International Association of Facilitators.
5. **Facilitation is tricks and gimmicks.** The techniques of professional facilitation are grounded in science; for example, read *Creative Approaches to Problem Solving* by Isaksen, Dorval, and Treffinger, 2000.

Certified Professional Facilitator, Geoff Ball, identifies some more misconceptions about

facilitators to add to this list. [See *ClientAwarenessGuide.pdf*](#)

6. **A facilitator takes over the group.** A facilitator complements the task leader who hires the facilitator as the process leader but it is the task leader that is in charge of the group and who has responsibility for results; in fact, the facilitator does not have credibility without the task leader's endorsement and support.
7. **It is a sign of weakness to let someone else facilitate your meeting.** The facilitator and the task leader form a collaborative partnership in which the facilitator acts as a consultant and coach to help the task leader look good, and to achieve the group outcomes needed to support long-term goals.
8. **Facilitation is "touchy-feely" like group therapy.** Creativity and the willingness to learn from others are important components to facilitation. Science shows that emotion impacts both creativity and learning so awareness of emotions is part of what it takes for a facilitator to deliver agreed-to meeting outcomes.
9. **Facilitators are only involved in what happens in the meeting.** As Bill Shephard points out in the [Science of Success podcast](#), the work that the facilitator does before the meeting is the largest contributor to the success of the meeting.

About the author



Valerie Patrick Valerie Patrick, founder of [Fulcrum Connection](#), has led over 40 highly successful and high-performance teams across over 200 organizations in the last 15 years of a 25-year career with multi-national Bayer in the areas of product development, sustainable development, and organizational change. Dr. Patrick served as sustainability coordinator for Bayer's North America operations, Head of Bayer Material Science's Creative Center in Future Business, and Head of Bayer Material Science's Transportation Industry Innovations group. Dr. Patrick has B.S. (Bucknell University), M.S. (California Institute of Technology), and Ph.D. (California Institute of Technology) degrees in chemical engineering, and is a CPF (Certified Professional Facilitator) trained Creative Problem Solving facilitator, SOQ (Situational Outlook Questionnaire) Qualified Climate Practitioner, and ADKAR Change Management Practitioner. Dr. Patrick is also author of both the Competent Collaborator Blog and Quadrant II Newsletter, and is host of the Science of Success: Social Secrets Podcast. (All can be found at <http://www.fulcrumconnection.com>.)

Need help making the best use of time spent in meetings? Let's schedule a short phone conversation to discuss your situation.

I'd like to schedule a conversation!