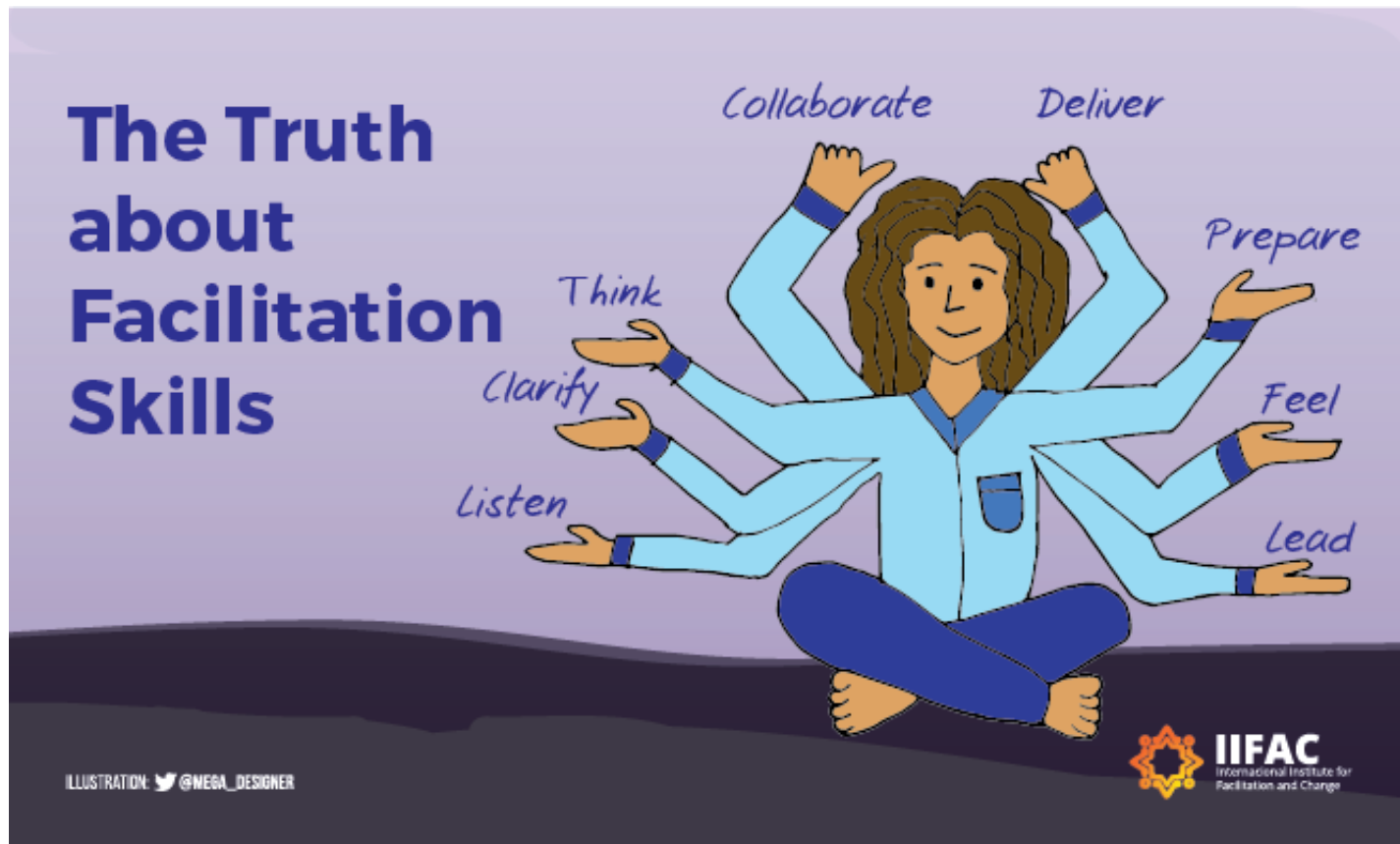


The Truth about Facilitation Skills



Editor's note: This is the second in a series of three lightly-edited excerpts from an article originally published in *The Competent Collaborator* blog of Fulcrum Connection. See Part 1, "Misconceptions about Facilitation" in the March 2016 issue of Coffee Break. Part 3, "The Benefits of Facilitation" will appear In May.

A facilitator is a process leader who partners with a task leader to design and execute a group event that meets agreed-to outcomes and deliverables. The following sources were used to identify the five key skills needed for facilitation described next:

- The core competencies of facilitation from the International Association of Facilitators (see <https://www.iaf-world.org/site/professional/core-competencies>)
- The description of the skills needed for a career in facilitation from Academic Invest (see <http://www.academicinvest.com/how-to-become-a-facilitator>)
- The description of professional facilitation services offered by the Hayes Group (see <http://www.thehayesgroupintl.com/facilitation/>)
- The description of professional facilitation services offered by the Kinharvie Institute in the UK (see <http://www.kinharvie.org.uk/facilitation>)

Key facilitation skill 1: Effectively manage your own emotions to stay neutral and objective on content, and to stay energized in the facilitation role in order to guide the group toward agreed-to outcomes. Some call this emotional intelligence. This skill encompasses a wide range of capabilities such as having the self-confidence to speak in front of a large group of people, trusting the potential of a group to generate high-quality content, and to maintain self-control in

the face of criticism and other negative emotions from others.

Key facilitation skill 2: Demonstrate process leadership in preparation for an event/project that is both highly cognitive and highly collaborative in nature. This skill also encompasses a wide range of capabilities such as designing applications to meet client needs, preparing time and space to support the group process, and helping to clarify the purpose and outcomes for the event/project.

Key facilitation skill 3: Practice process leadership to deliver agreed-to outcomes. This skill includes being able to think on your feet, displaying excellent interpersonal communication skills, being able to effectively manage dysfunctional behavior, and adaptability to make needed changes to the facilitation plan on the spur of the moment, and in consultation with the client. This skill also involves a wide range of capabilities such as demonstrating effective participatory communication skills, ensuring inclusiveness, evoking group creativity, and guiding the group to consensus and desired outcomes.

Key facilitation skill 4: Form an effective and complementary partnership with the event/project sponsor/leader that is also highly cognitive and highly collaborative in nature. This skill includes such capabilities as demonstrating collaborative values, clarifying mutual commitment, and developing consensus on task, deliverables, roles, and responsibilities for the event/project.

Key facilitation skill 5: Develop yourself as facilitation professional. This skill includes maintaining a base of knowledge to support your facilitation work, mastering a range of facilitation methods, maintaining your professional standing as a facilitator, acting with integrity, and practicing self-assessment and self-awareness to continually improve as a facilitation professional.

I believe that the reason there are so few professional facilitators relative to the overall population is that many of these key skills are difficult to master because they are contradictory in nature. For example, practicing process leadership when preparing for an event means being credible in the preparation and being cognitively fully engaged in the task. But it also requires being collaborative which means listening to understand and value the ideas of your collaborator(s) as much as your own, and proceeding accordingly. So you have to create a plan for the preparation, but you also have to be willing to abandon the plan, as needed, in response to the evolving collaboration and consensus that occurs during the preparation. This also applies to the facilitated event. You create a facilitation plan but need to be flexible and aware enough to adjust the plan as opportunities and challenges emerge during the course of the event.

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>.)

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