

Facilitation:Facilitator Guidelines

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Overview

This section provides additional suggestions and tips for maximizing participant experience.

Guidelines

The following are an example of guidelines provided to session facilitators. They are offered as input for facilitators as they consider to guide their sessions; facilitators will obviously have the final say in how the sessions transpire.

A primary goal of Aspiration events is to let the participants drive the dialog. The concern is less with information transfer and more focused instead on maximizing social interaction; when friendships are established, that drives knowledge sharing long after the event.

Facilitators are invited to envision themselves as catalysts in this process, and to consider the following suggestions for structuring their sessions:

- Call out the goals for each discussion at the outset, check along the way that you are progressing towards those goals, and review the goals at the end of the session. This is sometimes referred to as the “tell them what you're going to tell them, then tell them, then tell them what you told them” model.
- If group size is not excessive, consider doing a quick go-round where each participant can state in a sentence or two what they hope to get out of the session. This helps to both establish the level and range of knowledge in the group, as well as inform and focus the discussion.
- Strive to include everyone in the circle. Some participants will want to talk too much, others will refrain from speaking. Try to move the dialog to the latter camp, and don't be shy about politely calling out those who monopolize the airwaves
- Avoid long presentations, and instead aim to establish context and open the floor for discussion. There will be great wisdom and experience in every circle, and letting that flow leads to great serendipities
- Avoid Powerpoint or other “slideware” whenever possible. While visual aids have unquestioned value, slides put people in “TV-watching” mode, diminishing their instinct to participate.
- Watch for tangents that de-focus the topic at hand; rope in the digressors and those with a penchant for monologue. Other participants will appreciate this greatly.
- Summarize at the end of each session, checking back against the goals you defined at the outset
- Overall, use your wisdom and passion as your guide; we greatly appreciate facilitators sharing their time and knowledge with the group, and trust each facilitator to create an optimal sharing environment.

In addition, most breakout sessions follow a "report back" model, where participants reconvene between sessions and each group reports back to the larger group with a very short summary of key points and "ah-ha's". To that end:

- Please select someone in the breakout circle to be the note taker, other than the facilitator. It is extremely preferable that notes be taken on a laptop or other computer in order to expedite sharing and subsequent editing
- Please leave a few minutes at the end of the session to decide as a group on what will be reported back
- If using a collaborative documentation tool such as a wiki, make sure the notes taken are posted to the wiki as soon as possible, hopefully before reconvening and doing report-backs.

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