



## Collaborative tools, services and training Meet smarter, not harder!

England and America are two countries separated by a common language.

– George Bernard Shaw, or possibly Bertrand Russell. (Unless it's Oscar Wilde, Dylan Thomas, George S. Patton, or Winston Churchill.)

True realism consists in revealing the surprising things which habit keeps covered and prevents us from seeing.

– Jean Cocteau

training events coming up

### Brisbane

#### Group Facilitation Methods

22–23 June 2010

#### Facilitation Expansion & Integration

20–21 July 2010

#### Strategic Thinking & Planning

18–19 August 2010

#### Working with Value Systems

14–15 September 2010

#### Group Facilitation Methods

19–20 October 2010

#### Understanding & Leading Change

9–10 November 2010

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### Maximising Meeting (and Workshop) Outcomes

Several weeks ago I was talking to a group of project managers about how to get the most out of their meetings and workshops. The further we went, the clearer it got that my lovingly crafted presentation wasn't doing it for some of them.

#### But aren't they really the same when it's all boiled down?

Well, the short answer is – **it depends**. Here's the longer answer:

- In my experience, effective meetings and workshops are both underpinned by the **same framework** of preparation, design and implementation. For me, the answer was clearly yes. I tend to use the words interchangeably.
- Conversely, for some of the group, meetings and workshops were **completely different** in terms of participants, timing, topics and outcomes. As such, the only thing these events had in common was the project they were working on.

In addition, this part of the group were looking for some techniques to help them manage their meetings. **Meetings** were often a problem, and they wanted a way to **just fix them**. This is a more comprehensive version of my response.

**Firstly**, you should **prepare, design and run the meeting** as discussed in previous newsletters. To recap: be clear with everyone about the bottom-line for the meeting; make sure all the available information gets shared and cross-connected; figure out what the priorities are; and finally – make a decision.

This is not about formal chairing or facilitating. It is about having a clear structure and process in place. You can do this with an introduction followed by a **simple series of questions that guide the discussion** to a clear conclusion. It's faster, more comprehensive and gives better results for the long term.

**Secondly**, when the going gets difficult you need to **separate the person from their position**. That is, you work with what they say and mean, rather than how they say it.

One way to do this is **three-part assertion messages**. These use a format of: (1) "When you say..." (2) "I feel/think..." (3) "Because...". This format teases the objective data apart from acknowledging the tensions and the 'why'.

**Thirdly**, you can see how these work together as a **nested process**. A given meeting might have several topics to cover, combining to make an overall whole. Each topic has its own process, leading to a conclusion. Each process can in turn be broken down as required to cover all the different aspects properly.

So, what great tools have you used to make sure good decisions get made whilst keeping on track and on time?

Please, go online and share a comment.

Go well!

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Image by Unknown – thanks to whoever made it.