



Why use a facilitator and what can I expect?

Groups are the basic work units of organisations be they project teams, executive boards or production teams. Increasingly we turn to groups to bring together different views, produce quality products and coordinate complex work. Yet our experience with groups often leaves us feeling disappointed or frustrated. Common group failings run from the pathologically political, with individuals working against the needs of the group to further their own ends, plain ineffective because there is no common ground or shared vision for the group to rally behind, to simply a lack of focus on the important objectives expected of them. Many group based expectations, such as role, changing priorities, shared values and common goals can only be addressed as a group, and it is in these circumstances that an apolitical, disinterested outsider can add value. This is the role of a facilitator.

Common areas of involvement for a facilitator include:

- Goal setting
- Planning
- Objective setting
- Evaluation of strategic objectives
- Project prioritisation
- Process improvement
- Team building
- Requirements gathering

Initially a facilitator will work with the sponsor to establish an understanding of the desired outcome, which might include any of the above. The facilitator will suggest a number of ways in to structure the workshop to achieve the outcome, ensure that the group is completely focussed and involved, that each individual contributes to the session and that as far as possible consensus is achieved. The approach needs to fit with the culture of the organisation and the setting of the workshop and it is important that the sponsor fully understands the facilitator's working style.

Once the outcome and approach are agreed, the facilitator will design a process to run the day including the logistics and management of the workshop. This may need a number of one to one interviews before the workshop to establish a better understanding of the context. Ideally, the facilitator will also capture and write up the outcome of the sessions to ensure consistency and objectivity. Common outputs include roadmaps, project plans, scenarios, weighed decision trees or a simple reports.

The benefits of using a facilitator will include:

- A clearer understanding of the issues facing a group from a dispassionate, objective outsider who is not part of the politics or structure of the organisation.
- Consensus among the participants of the best options and approaches available
- Participation, in the process, from all group members

More details on CJB Corporate Coaching services can be found at www.cjbryan.co.uk. Contact me on any of the numbers below to discuss your requirements and to see how you can apply the approach to your organisation.