HIRING A FACILITATOR

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SO, YOU'RE HIRING A FACILITATOR

What is involved in the process of finding the perfect facilitator for your next meeting? Maybe it's the first time you've brought in an outside facilitator. What is the interview process for the facilitator at your organization's event? What do you ask? As Stephen Covey said, begin with the end in mind.

Before you begin your interviewing process think about the skills are you looking for.

START HERE: WHAT DOES A FACILITATOR DO?

Facilitators help teams and groups unlock their full potential. Their objectivity supports the problem-solving and decision-making that paralyzes groups when they are doing their technical jobs and also trying to facilitate toward a solution.

In large groups, a facilitator is critical to structuring conversations that allow everyone to have a voice in the decision-making. This will also improve communication around the room as the facilitator helps to interpret different styles and opinions so others hear them.

If this doesn't convince you to hire a facilitator for your next team event, consider that a facilitator is the only objective person in the room, and operates as a moderator, not a decision-maker. Think about your group and how decision-makers are seen differently in the middle of proposing a solution and you have an example of why a facilitator matters.

What should you consider when looking for a facilitator?

1 EXPERIENCE IN WORKING WITH YOUR SPECIFIC SCENARIO

For instance, if you are building a strategic plan with 18 people involved, be sure your facilitator has experience with both - building a strategic plan (and executing it) and a group size between 15 and 20 people.

2 RESULTS DRIVEN

Look for a facilitator who can bottom line your outcome and share with you how they will solve any problems that might emerge through the process. A good facilitator will build in accountability to the outcome so they leave you with your next steps in hand.

3 AGILITY IN FACILITATION TECHNIQUES

Within any facilitation assignment there are a multitude of techniques to use that help the group move forward. At times there might be brainstorming on a particular subject, conflict resolution on a difficult topic, consensus building across levels and areas of responsibility, and decision making processes to land the group with action steps by the time the time is complete. This agility is also important for flexibility and adaptability for the unique needs (and dynamics) of your group.

4 INCLUSIVE

It is important your facilitator is aware of cultural differences, and any other elements of belonging that come along with a diverse group.

5 PRE-WORK

A good facilitator knows the success of the facilitation is in the preparation and conversations that precede the actual gathering. They will seek to understand your desired outcomes for the meeting, gather as much relevant information as possible, and tailor their process to your culture/climate.

6 REFERENCES/TESTIMONIALS

Like any hiring decision, seek out references for organizations like yours. If you know you have a simmering conflict, ask for references for facilitation through a complex topic with a myriad of opinions and approaches. If you know you have general resistance to a significant element of the meeting, ask for a reference to that effect. Even if the facilitator doesn't have a specific reference for you, this will generate a good conversation on their approach for you to determine a fit.

7 COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The best facilitators are excellent listeners, reflecting back sentiments in the conversation that lead the group to the next place in the conversation and avoid group think and/or group complaining. They are able to guide discussion through the lens of the entity's culture/climate, not a generic lens they use on every group.

CONCLUSION

Regardless if you are hiring an external facilitator or using an internal facilitator from another area, these points provide you the information you need to maximize the group time into great outcomes.

FACILITATOR QUESTIONS

1. Can you tell me about your experience as a meeting facilitator?

_____

2. What types of meetings or workshops have you facilitated in the past?

_____

3. How do you prepare for a facilitation session?

_____

4. What facilitation techniques do you use to encourage participation and engagement?

_____

5. How do you handle conflicts or disagreements that arise during a meeting?

_____

6. Can you provide examples of how you've helped groups reach consensus or make decisions?

_____

7. What strategies do you use to keep meetings on track and within the allotted time?

_____

8. How do you ensure that all voices are heard and that quieter participants feel included?

_____

9. Can you share any success stories or testimonials from past clients or participants?

_____

11. What do you see as the role of a facilitator in creating a positive and productive meeting environment?

_____

MEET JUDY

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Judy Hissong is the President of Nesso Strategies. A former law firm Chief Operating Officer, she helps firms become more profitable by advising leaders in strategic and leadership development challenges. Her mission is "world domination for Good®." By creating actionable, lightbulb moments that leaders want to share and spread, she intends to improve the world one person at a time. When she's not speaking, training and consulting, Judy teaches quarterly online workshops and facilitates Leaders Lab, a monthly video conference that enables small groups of leaders to brainstorm strategies and solutions to work through common issues that keep firms stuck.

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If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.
—John Quincy Adams

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