CONCEPT

Workshop Facilitation Skills: Leading Strategy Sessions and Group Decisions

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Technical depth: Practitioner · **Practical mode:** Role-play

Introduction

Organisations invest heavily in strategy offsites, planning workshops and cross-functional sessions, yet many end with a long list of ideas, no agreed decision and actions nobody owns. The cause is usually process rather than content: unclear outcomes, the wrong methods and unmanaged group dynamics. This Core Concept course equips managers to design and lead sessions that reach real agreement, using recognised facilitation competencies and participatory methods. Through facilitated role-plays with peer feedback, participants build a Workshop Facilitation Plan for a strategy session in their own organisation.

Course Objectives

- Contract with a sponsor on the purpose, outcomes, participants and decision rights of a session
- Select participatory methods that fit the session's purpose, group size and time available
- Design and run strategy and planning workshops that move a group from ideas to decisions
- Test agreement and apply an explicit decision rule so outcomes hold after the session
- Manage dominant voices, silence, conflict and hierarchy while remaining neutral on content
- Produce a Workshop Facilitation Plan ready to use with a real group

Target Audience

- Managers who lead planning, strategy and improvement workshops for their functions
- Strategy, planning and transformation office staff who run leadership offsites
- Project and programme managers facilitating cross-functional requirement and risk sessions
- HR, organisational development and internal consulting professionals who facilitate groups
- Quality and continuous improvement leads running problem-solving and lessons-learned sessions

Course Outline

Day 1: The Facilitator's Role and Session Foundations

- IAF Core Facilitator Competencies: Six Competency Areas
- Facilitator, Trainer, Chair and Consultant Role Boundaries
- Content Neutrality and the Skilled Facilitator Mutual Learning Approach
- Sponsor Contracting Interview: Purpose, Outcomes, Participants and Decision Rights
- Workshop Readiness Check: Stakeholder Mix, Pre-Work and Logistics

Day 2: Facilitation Process Models and Methods

- Kaner's Diamond of Participatory Decision-Making and the Groan Zone
- ToP Focused Conversation Method Using ORID Questions
- ToP Consensus Workshop Method for Clustering and Naming Ideas
- Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Cycle: Discover, Dream, Design and Destiny
- Large-Group Formats: World Café and Open Space Technology

Day 3: Designing and Running Strategy Sessions

- Purpose, Outcomes and Process POP Agenda Design
- SOAR Analysis for Strengths-Based Strategic Conversations
- Scenario Exercises Using the 2x2 Scenario Matrix
- Prioritisation Techniques: Dot Voting, Impact-Effort Matrix and Pairwise Comparison
- Visual Facilitation on Flipcharts and Digital Whiteboards

Day 4: Group Dynamics, Difficult Situations and Decisions

- Gradients of Agreement Scale for Testing Consensus
- Decision Rules: Consensus, Consent, Majority Vote and Leader Decides After Input
- Intervention Techniques for Dominant, Silent and Disruptive Participants
- Power and Hierarchy Dynamics When Senior Leaders Are in the Room
- Hybrid Workshop Facilitation with Breakout Rooms and Shared Canvases

Day 5: Facilitation Role-Plays and the Workshop Facilitation Plan

- Role-Play: Opening a Strategy Offsite and Leading the Divergent Phase
- Role-Play: Guiding a Divided Leadership Team Through the Groan Zone
- Workshop Output Templates: Decision Log, Action Plan and Session Report
- Workshop Facilitation Plan Drafting: Contract, Agenda, Methods and Run Sheet
- Observer Feedback Against the IAF Competency Checklist

Skills You Will Gain

- Session Design
- Sponsor Contracting
- Participatory Method Selection
- Consensus Building
- Group Dynamics Management
- Strategic Conversation Facilitation
- Hybrid Workshop Delivery
- Decision Documentation

Why Attend This Course

- Return with a Workshop Facilitation Plan for a real strategy session, rehearsed in front of peers
- Run sessions that end with recorded decisions and named owners rather than flipcharts nobody reads
- Stay in control of the process when senior leaders dominate or the group divides
- Practise with facilitators from other sectors and countries and borrow the methods that work for them

Conclusion

A well-facilitated session turns the knowledge already in the room into decisions people will support. This course moves from the facilitator's role and contracting, through the principal participatory methods, to designing strategy sessions and handling the dynamics that derail groups. The final day, delivered as facilitated role-plays with observer feedback, produces a Workshop Facilitation Plan that participants can use with their next group, giving them a repeatable way to lead workshops that finish with clear agreement and owned actions.