

AAR FACILITATION TECHNIQUES

Setting Up AAR Discussion:

“This is not a critique, not meant to assign blame. It’s an open, honest and professional discussion.”

Restating a Point:

This is used to summarize a point that a participant made that may have not been clear to everyone. “So you’re saying you think the helitorch should have started higher up the ridge, and that would have prevented.....”

Handling the Upward Delegation of Blame:

Participants will often blame the “system” for being broken, and that causes failures at their level. “OK, I agree, but that’s above our pay grade. We still have to live with the fact that this issue places us in increased risk. So what can we work on at our level to improve?”

Bringing Out the Opinion of the “Quiet Ones”:

Some people just don’t process through discussion, but they usually are listening closely and when asked have good insights. Wait until a little later in the AAR and then ask them by name open ended questions. “Well Ken, you were up on the road, what was your perspective on this?”

Interrupting a Dominant Member of the Group:

Some people just naturally like to talk. There is also a tendency for a leader to give all the answers. Interrupt them tactfully with a comment like: “I’m concerned we’re going too deep into this issue without getting any additional input. Let’s hear from....”

When the Group is in Denial:

One or more people think (let’s use communications) went fine and are not discussing the issues. In order:

1. Act somewhat surprised. “Really? Interesting. Are there any other thoughts on how communications went today?”
2. Spur discussion with one of your own observations: “OK, I saw a couple messages that didn’t get passed to the folks holding the road. What was the plan there?”

3. Press a bit firmer: “OK, what I’m hearing is that you would do this exactly the same way again?”
4. Do one of two things. If the issue is minor, let it pass. If the issue is important, then you may have to make the point blank observation yourself: “OK. You’re saying communications went fine. I saw two specific instances where we were right on the edge of the prescription and that did not get to either Mike or Susan. You’re telling me that is not a problem? What would have happened if we didn’t get that bucket drop?”

Pursuing an Issue to its Root Cause:

The Japanese say always ask why five times. It’s a good technique to make sure that you’re really getting to the root cause of an issue. “So...the torches weren’t ready because they didn’t get fueled. And we’ve heard they didn’t have fuel because the fuel cans were on the other rig. What caused that to happen?”

Using “Negative Polling” to Ask Questions:

This is an effective way to get quick agreement/consensus. It is faster than making sure everyone agrees. “Is anyone opposed to moving on to question #3 now?” or “Does anyone disagree that that was the plan, yet this is what really happened?”

Building Up or Eliminating Ideas:

This technique merges complimentary pieces from different ideas or highlights agreement on pieces of an idea when total idea is not agreed upon. “So is there anything you could add to that suggestion to make it work for you?” or “What could we delete from the idea to make it work better?”

Avoiding Win/Lose Decisions:

Look for a win-win situation with the group. “Does it have to be one way or the other? Could we agree to both?”

Asking Open-Ended Questions:

This allows for a variety of possible responses while inviting involvement and participation. “Why do you think that happened?” or “What could we do differently next time?”

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