

Facilitation for Real Ownership

by Jeanette Romkema

The key to optimizing learning and building long-term memory is to create 'ownership' of learning content. (Jensen, 2005; Poldrack et al., 2001)

Below are facilitation skills I have been especially aware of lately in my work. These go beyond technique. They are more about “being” than “doing.” See which ones you practice and which ones you want to pay more attention to.

Authenticity. Being genuine with the learners is critical for building a relationship of trust in the learning event. Listen deeply, ask questions with real curiosity, and acknowledge when something they say gives you a new insight. Be honest about your own questions, concerns and enthusiasm for the topic.

Autonomy. Adults' lives are their own and as such they need to have full ownership of their decisions. Although as facilitator you may create the structure for participants to set goals, frame plans and discuss accountability, the learners are the owners of those goals, plans and accountability. Autonomy reinforces ownership. Create space for people to decide. Celebrate when they ask for autonomy instead of clearer instructions. It is a sign of ownership

Brevity. Only share the right information for the exact moment with your specific audience. Learning events can fail due to too much content – “less is more!” A few ways to check what you may need to adapt in your workshop design are:

- How many **people** are coming? Who are they?
- Why are they coming? What do they **need**?
- What is your vision for **change** as a result of this 1-hour workshop? What is realistic?
- How much **time** do you have?
- What kind of **space** will you be in? How are people accustomed to using this space?

Get out of the way of learning. After setting a learning task or activity we often want to hear how the discussion is going or see how the work is unfolding. Don't. We need to get out of the way so learning can happen – it is through the struggle, decision-making, and debate that learners engage and personalize the content being learned.

Personalize. As much as possible, refer to examples and stories shared as well as topics and themes of interest to the group. New learning needs to hook into existing knowledge and experience, so get to know your audience at every opportunity: phone, email, breaks, conversations, check-ins, and the like.

Silence. So often we say too much. Don't be afraid to sit in silence or wait 5 seconds before adding something or redirecting a question – people need time to think.



Purpose. Be ready, at any time, to reconnect the learning to the purpose for including it now as you understand it. When you own it, they can own it too.

So, which of these do you want to work on for the next while in your work?