

Facilitation: The role of the graphic facilitator

50% of the facilitation work involved in person centred processes outlined in the decision making guide (Web Resource 2.4) is graphic facilitation.

Graphics are not an optional add-on or about being colourful for its own sake – they are key in supporting the group to focus, make meanings and bring to life a picture of what they want to create together.

Although much of the graphic facilitator's time is spent listening and recording what individuals are saying, this does not mean they are silent throughout the process.

From time to time the graphic facilitator should use his or her own questions to help the group create meanings together.



Interaction with the group

John O'Brien, Jack Pearpoint and Lynda Khan (2010) suggest the following range of clarifying questions for the graphic facilitator's use:

Questions to build engagement

- "What colour do you want that to be?"
- "What does that look like?"
- "Is there any detail that I could add that would just make that image come alive for you?"

Questions to generate an image in response to a story or key idea

- "What is at the heart of that for you?"
- "What could capture that in pictures?" / "How do we turn those words into pictures?"
- "How can we show that so that so that you will be able to remember all that it means to you?"

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Questions to test connections with earlier contributions and images

- “What does that connect to?”
- “Who else might be there with you?”



Questions to bridge between a desired future and a strategy for getting there

- “What happened to change that?”
- “Who was involved with you in making that happen?”
- “What were your very first steps?”

Questions to see if it might be time to move to the next step

- “If you could have one more image what would it be?”
- “Let’s translate the images back into a summary in words – Does that say what you mean?”

Interaction with the process facilitator and some other rules, prompts and reminders

The job of the graphic facilitator is not to record every word said by group members verbatim, but it is to record those contributions that are judged to be key – verbatim – this means using the exact words and images given – no summarising, re-phrasing or interpreting. It is therefore OK to check that you heard it right.



It is usual for the graphic facilitator to overview the steps to be taken at the start of the process and often at the conclusion of each step.

The summaries need to be brief and simply aim to capture the highlights of the step just completed.

The graphic facilitator will also check if anything has been missed or not yet adequately recorded.

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The process and graphic facilitators need to work in tandem; they are a team and both are responsible for ensuring no steps or prompts are omitted.

Because the graphic facilitator has less direct interaction with the group, they are more able to have an eye on timekeeping and ensure the process is on track to finish at the agreed time.

The process facilitator should not be checking over his or her shoulder to see if the graphic facilitator is keeping up with recording what the group is saying. Although you should expect they will slow the flow of the group dialogue by only allowing one person to speak at a time and by regularly repeating/reflecting what they have heard. Keeping up is the responsibility of the graphic facilitator and it is always OK to ask for something to be repeated if the flow of information becomes too fast.

Further reading / references

Agerbeck, B. *The Graphic Facilitator's Guide*. Loosetooth.com Library (2012)

O'Brien, J. et al *The PATH and MAPS Handbook: Toronto*. Inclusion Press, (2010)

Sonneman, M. *Beyond Words – A Guide to Drawing Out Ideas*.
Berkeley, California, Ten Speed Press (1997)

Wilson, D. and Newton, C. *Circles of Adults: Nottingham*. Inclusive Solutions, (2006)

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