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# Requirements Facilitation: Problem People Characteristics

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Business Analysis Skills Development

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Presented by



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## Facilitation Intervention (Handling People Problems)

### 1. Managing People Problems

Source: *FoCuSeD™* Facilitation, MGR Consulting, Inc. Used with permission.

**General Rule: Don't embarrass the participant publicly.**

- 1) First, determine and correct the cause of the problem.
- 2) Mitigate the symptom if the cause cannot be correct by:
  - a) Ground Rules.
  - b) Body position.
  - c) Eye contact.
  - d) Talking with the person during a break.
- 3) Enlist the assistance of the Business Partner or Executive Sponsor.
- 4) Last resort, have the problem participant removed.

### 2. Managing Problem Characteristics

Source: *FoCuSeD™* Facilitation, MGR Consulting, Inc. Used with permission.

Following are guiding principles for dealing with people (all based on "Treat others as you wish to be treated.")

ID	Participant "Nickname"	Characteristics	What to Do
1	Latecomer	Always comes late to meetings, makes a "show" of arrival, insists on "catching up" and stopping the group midstream.	Enforce punctuality ground rule; do not disturb meeting or allow person to "catch up"; talk to during break if necessary.
2	Early Leaver	Drains group's energy and morale by leaving meeting before its official end.	Handle as you would the Latecomer; do not stop the meeting for one person.
3	Broken Record	Brings up the same point repeatedly; constantly tries to focus discussion of this issue; can prevent group from moving ahead to new items even if ready.	The broken record needs to be heard. Make item an open item – discuss later.

ID	Participant "Nickname"	Characteristics	What to Do
4	Doubting Thomas	Aggressively negative; too skeptical and critical; always "bursts the bubble" by saying something like, "That will never work," or worse.	Never defend yourself. Try to turn their negative attitude into a productive one – "we need your good ideas."
5	Headshaker	Actively expresses disapproval through body language and nonverbal cues such as rolling eyes, shaking head, crossing and uncrossing arms, sighing, etc. Covertly influences group to reject an idea.	Simply confront the headshaker. Do not allow these nonverbal cues to continue unnoticed. Ask them to verbally agree or disagree, depending on their actions.
6	Dropout	Sits away from the table or at the back of the room; expresses disapproval or dislike by ignoring the proceedings; may read, do unrelated paperwork, etc., to avoid getting engaged in the session. Careful, a Doodler is not dropping out – he or she is simply a horizontal thinker.	Use your "lasered" focus to let them know that you see what they are doing. During a break, talk to them – do not allow it to continue. Do not publicly ask for participation.
7	Whisperer	Constantly whispering during meetings, holding "offside" conversations; upstages facilitator or session leader, as well as other group members.	Standing close to the whisper(s) will stop their conversation. Enforce one conversation with the entire group.
8	Loudmouth	Talks too often and too loudly; dominates the discussion; seemingly impossible to shut up; may be someone who has a higher rank than other group members.	Direct conversation away; stand in front of person for a short time; talk to during a break.
9	Attacker	Launches verbal, personal attacks on other group members and/or facilitator; constantly ridicules a specific person's or constituency view.	Stand between two people fighting; stop attacks; use additional ground rules to control.
10	Interpreter	Always speaks for someone else, usually without invitation to do so; restates ideas or meanings and frequently distorts it in the process.	Try to get original speaker to confirm without embarrassing or putting on the spot.

ID	Participant "Nickname"	Characteristics	What to Do
11	Gossiper	Brings hearsay or rumors into the meeting; attempts to shift power by appearing to be the "authority" on little known information; moves group toward argument or debate over the "truth" of the information.	May have to take a break to get proof; allow others in the meeting to confirm or deny; force them to leave personalities out of meeting.
12	Know-it-All	Uses credentials, age, seniority, etc., to argue a point; focuses group attention on opinion and status as opposed to the "real" issue.	Often a supervisor; deal with much like the interpreter. Keep group focused.
13	Backseat Driver	Keeps telling the session leader or facilitator what to do – or not do; attempts to control the meeting by downgrading facilitator's efforts.	Listen to some comments – they may be good; never turn over control; talk to during breaks; enforce rules.
14	Busybody	Always ducking in and out of meetings, doesn't ask subordinates to hold calls, tries to give impression of being too "busy" (and therefore, important) to devote full attention to the meeting and the group.	Deal with like the Latecomer or Early Leaver; try to establish rules to control during preparation.
15	Interrupter	Jumps into the discussion and cuts off someone else's comments; feels impatient, too excited or concerned that own ideas won't be acknowledged.	Stop them immediately; always get back to them but do not allow them to interrupt; they will learn.
16	Teacher's Pet	Spends more time and energy trying to win session leader's approval than on contributing to the discussion; can potentially "hook" the facilitator into giving "strokes" at the expense of others and the meeting itself.	Try to rearrange group so that this person is sitting away from you; be careful about hurting them; direct their enthusiasm toward the meeting topic. Do some team building.

### 3. Situations Requiring Intervention

Keeping the session on track starts with good preparation and includes the use of appropriate process intervention. Process intervention is an interruption by the facilitator in order to re-focus the participants and/or to rebalance group dynamics. Most interventions can link back to the posted ground rules or group norms. As a guideline, always start with the lowest level of intervention, which is the least obvious and least threatening to the individual or group.

**The following are examples of the five (5) most common situations requiring intervention to keep the session on track, with example suggestions on how to intervene in each situation.**

Topic	Situation	Intervention
<b>1. Side Conversation</b>	Individual participants with other participants	1. Friendly reminder. "Just a reminder, we agreed to 'one conversation at a time' in our ground rules for today."
		2. Direct reminder. Make eye contact with participant and restate, "One conversation at a time please."
		3. Personalize it. "[Name] do you have a clarification question?" or "[Name] I can see you have something to contribute; when [Name 2] has finished we'll hear from you."
		4. Make direct request. "[Name], please hold your comments until [Name 2] has finished."
	Repeat offender	5. Talk to the individual at a break, one-on-one.
	Many interrupting	6. Put the process on hold and as the group, "Do we need to take a break?"
<b>2. Staying on Time</b>	Veering off the topic	1. Friendly reminder. "Just a reminder, we agreed to 'keep focused' in our ground rules for today"
		2. Specifically re-focus on the particular topic. "I'd just like to remind you that we are discussing item [#, topic name], please hold discussion on other topics until we get to them."

Topic	Situation	Intervention
	Running out of time	<p>3. Attempt closure. "Team, we have 10 minutes left for this item. We need to re-focus. What do we still need to discuss to conclude this item?"</p> <p>"We are almost out of time, there appears to be more discussion required is that true?" If yes, follow-up with, "What do you need in order to close on this item?" "Why are we unable to close on this item?"</p>
	Insufficient time	<p>4. Give participants a choice on how they want to spend their time. "Is this item more important than the remaining items on the agenda, and if so, when will you address the other items?"</p>
<b>3. Never-Ending Discussion</b>	Information barriers	<p>Follow the same guidelines under "Staying on Time." If the remainder of the meeting is dependent on the completion of this item, then reschedule the meeting with action items to ensure that participants bring whatever is required next time</p>
	Personal agenda	<p>1. Gentle interruption. "[Name], excuse my interruption, but I'm not sure how this fits with our topic. Can you clarify for me?"</p>
		<p>2. Direct the inquiry. Make eye contact, "[Name], this sounds like a topic already discussed," and then make eye contact with the other participants. "What key piece of this discussion would you like captured on the parking lot?"</p>
		<p>3. Personalize it. "[Name], we agreed that this item would remain parked, has anything changed its status?"</p>
	Energizer bunny	<p>4. Talk to the individual privately at break. Gently give feedback about the effect the behavior is having on the group and the session. Ask for the individual's help in keeping the session moving forward.</p>

Topic	Situation	Intervention
<b>4a. Conflict: Personal Attacks</b>	Individual attacked (pot shot)	1. Say nothing the first time unless you are sure it was intentional. Apply humor by saying, "I hope that comment isn't an indication that we need armor for this meeting."
	Another shot	2. Restate the ground rules. "Our ground rules clearly state that... We welcome all ideas/comments that build or clarify ideas, but not negativity."
	Another sarcastic remark	3. Firm. "[Name], this is not the first time that you have targeted [Name 2] with your remarks, please stop." Then redirect with, "What is the concern you have with the issue/idea? How would you modify it to improve it?"
	Persistent attacks	4. Gentle public reprimand. "[Name], despite my reminders, you continue to make critical comments towards [Name 2's] ideas. If there is a personal disagreement, it is inappropriate to play it out here. Can you participate in this session productively or is there another issue which needs to be addressed before the team can continue?" The participant may leave. If so, ask the team if they can continue without this individual. (May also be one-on-one at break.)
<b>4b. Conflict: Group Attacks</b>	Group attacked	1. Say nothing the first time unless you are sure it was intentional. Apply humor by saying, "I hope that comment isn't an indication that we need armor for this meeting."
		2. Restate the ground rules. "Our ground rules clearly state that... We welcome all ideas/comments that build or clarify ideas, but not negativity."

Topic	Situation	Intervention
		3. Firm. “[Name], you have made several negative comments to the group members. Is there something else going on that is interfering with your ability to participate here today?” Or direct to the team, “Team, how do you feel when [Name] makes this type of comment?”
		4. Personal confrontation. If the attacks continue, and the group is reluctant to say anything to the offender, then speak to the individual at break. Same as item 4 for Personal Attacks.
<b>5. Returning Late from Breaks</b>	Team members are late	1. Light reminder. “Remember, you agreed to return from breaks on time because it helps you finish on time. It’s one of your ground rules.” Just before the next break, remind the team to be back on time, and advise them of when that exact time is. You may ask to synchronize watches.
	Chronically late	2. Ask for input. “Out of curiosity, why do you have a ground rule that says return from breaks on time, and yet consistently several people are late? What do we need to do for this to work?” Hold a discussion around the ground rule and expectations—perhaps there are not enough breaks, or they are too short.
		3. Ask for consequences. “What consequences would the team like to impose on participants who are late returning from breaks or lunch?”