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Graphic Facilitation

Graphic Facilitation is the practice of using words and pictures in order to create a conceptual map of the conversation before, during or after it took place.

The idea of using images and words to exchange/share ideas and create connections has a long history, starting with the ancient scribes. In any community, group, there were thinkers and executors, and someone had to write down what the thinkers were thinking and what the executors were supposed to perform. Thus, the scribes kept (mostly) a visual track of the important discussions/decisions for people, thus their role was very important.

Today, their role has not changed much, but their tools did. Now, we use flipchart sheets, billboards, banners, markers, to help groups work together. Pressure, expectations are still high, but the work is very fun!

Today, when playing the graphic facilitator role the, the modern scribe captures people's ideas using models, metaphors, visual maps, in order to help them clarify their ideas, to listen and make decisions when working together.

Why graphic facilitation?

Before you decide you want to incorporate graphic facilitation in your work, here are some things you should know:

- We think in pictures, not only in words;
- 1/4 of the brain is designed to process visual information;
- Combining images with text or words increases retaining capacity by 40%.

In graphic facilitation, we use images and symbols to create a link with the visual, emotional side of brain, while adding structure. Although an important element of the graphics, the essence consists of the "process" and "content, and not in the nice picture. Your work must have sense in order to have a relevant contribution to the success of the group you work with!

As a facilitator, trainer, speaker or consultant, graphic facilitation is a resource you can count on when you want to:

- Prepare clear visual formats that provide space for creation and contribution for to the work group members;
- Eliminate confusion, the difficulties of communication between group members;
- Filter the information through a picture;
- Add creativity and excitement to your presentation;
- Turn planning meetings, joint working in productive events, and full of creativity;



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Anyone can use it!

Everyone knows the graphic language! The type of graphics used to facilitate working together originates in gestures and simple images with universal meaning. The ability to draw is a skill that can be trained! Adults and children learn new things, trying and realizing what needs to be improved by analyzing the results.

Graphic language consists in simple shapes. It is important to understand the basic forms. For example, as a musician, the invention that allows him to can play the piano in various contexts, regardless of cultural or geographic boundaries, is to standardize the range of 8 tones. There is only one way in which you play the notes, but is very flexible. Graphic language could have the same flexibility.

When you begin to study a process, a good question is: What are the simple and basic elements? So, the easiest thing you can do in terms of graphics is to put pen on paper and make a point. The most likely next step is to move the pencil and draw a line, then a shape, such as triangle. Then, these could be followed by squares, rectangles and, ultimately filled arrows formed by joining a square / rectangle and a triangle. With some practice, you could turn the arrow into a spiral and then you could get to build a circle.

The language behind graphical facilitation

In the spoken language, the meaning can arise from various things. Word position in the sentence can be an indicator. A general definition provides support regarding the meaning of the word. But at another level, the level of personal experience with a word is what the experts call „connotation”, generated by our relationship with that word.

This means that the meaning of a word is anchored in our early life experiences, not necessarily the rules of grammar.

If you look at the graphic forms, keeping in mind those recounted above, you realize that everyone has a special significance, which can be exploited to facilitate graphics:

- Point means „Look at me! I'm different!"
- Line means "connection ", " connection" or separation ;
- Angles means "sudden change " , "change in use";
- Squares and rectangles means "organization" are perfect examples of construction of organizational functions ;
- Arrow means "dynamism", "motion", "direction"
- Spiral means "dynamic drive" ;
- Circles means "unity" , " perfection"

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