

# The Foundation of Facilitation

*Facilitation* is one of those rather vague terms, that's commonly misunderstood.

The term *Facilitation* is built on the word *facile*; which means “easy to do”. The role of facilitator originated within the field of *Adult Education* where it was coined to describe the role that teachers play when they help learners deepen their knowledge, without delivering content. This role was built on the core assumption underpinning *Adult Education* or *Andragogy*, which is that adults have experience and know what they need, therefore the role of teacher is chiefly to guide them in their educational journey. (Knowles 1984)

In addition to this central assumption, *Andragogy* also asserts that:

- Adults possess both knowledge and experience and hence, don't need to be told what to do, as much as supported in identifying how to take action.
- Adults are motivated by their personal goals, needs and expectations.
- Adults have an inner desire to find meaning, grow and seek change.
- Adults are most effective in an environment that emphasizes self-worth and dignity.
- Learning is facilitated in an atmosphere in which people are encouraged to trust themselves, to make mistakes and to try again.
- Adults, who are helped to achieve their personal goals, experience a heightened sense of engagement and buy-in.
- Adults are capable of making decisions, taking responsibility and assuming accountability.
- The adult's orientation to learning is chiefly related to application. (Galbraith 2004)

At its core, facilitation trusts that people are capable and that they operate out of positive intention. Regardless of where it's applied, all facilitators believe that if people are given the right tools, they will do what's right for themselves and for others. The only thing that matters to facilitators, is that the situation of the people they work with is improved.

On a functional level, the simplest way to understand facilitation is to think of it as asking, instead of telling. Listening more than talking. Using questions, instead of making statements. Drawing out the ideas of others, instead of imposing ideas. Encouraging people to think, engage and take responsibility, so that they're motivated to take the lead.

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