



Facilitating Large Groups

The key to facilitating for groups of any size is to have a plan to keep people engaged. That's no different if you're speaking to a group of 20 or 2,000. Use these tips to make your facilitation feel easy and seamless.

Prepare yourself:

As a speaker or facilitator, you will set the tone for the experience of everyone else in the room. This is especially true if you're the first speaker of the day. Take this role as an opportunity to create the type of space that will help meet the goals of the event.

Familiarize yourself with the material you'll be covering. Especially if you're a bit nervous, the more you're comfortable with what you're talking about the easier it will be.

Have a prep ritual to help prepare to speak to the group. This could include taking deep breaths in a quiet space, shaking out your nervous energy or taking a few sips of water.

Bring the energy:

As a facilitator your role is to keep the conversation moving forward, on-track and within the bounds of established norms. But it's also a chance to guide everyone in the space to match your energy.

Is your facilitation style passionate, conversational, emotional, playful, methodical?

If you want attendees to participate - how are you creating a space for that to happen?

How can you incorporate energy boosters into the session (especially later in the day)? Would you feel comfortable leading a stretch break, short dance break or simply inviting people to move around the space as they need?



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Facilitation Basics:

Make sure you've looked over the agenda and/or session objectives before your session. It's important that people feel like their expectations are being met. One of the best ways to do this is to stick to the objectives laid out ahead of time. Try not to go off on tangents and stick to the predetermined topics.

It's easy for things to get derailed by one question or strong voice in the group. A great way to handle this is to create a container known as a "Parking lot" or "Bike Rack". The parking lot is a place where conversations and topics that won't be addressed in that session can be "parked for later/another time". This campaign is solely focused on creating a pathway to citizenship for all 11 million undocumented immigrants. While there are many efforts necessary for our collective liberation, this Summit won't be enough to cover them all. Nonetheless, you should establish a norm of having a space to add things to the Parking Lot and allow for time at the end of the summit to assign out next steps for discussing the items there. This could mean people form small working groups for another time, take the conversation to dinner afterwards or simply discuss it with you as the facilitator separately.

Test Technology:

If you're using music, a microphone, or projector and slides, make sure you're comfortable with working each of these things, or have someone on hand to support you with this.

If something does go wrong, use it as a time to add a little humor - everyone will understand these things are out of your control. If you have a major technical problem that will take time to repair - that may be an opportunity to shift to a stretch break or take a few questions while it's being resolved.

Again, your role as the facilitator is to set the tone for everyone else, so if you roll with what happened without getting upset - they likely will as well.