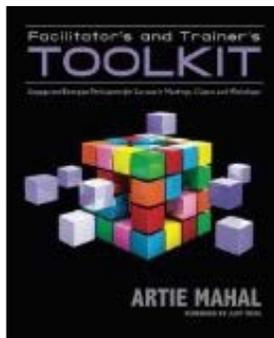


Facilitator's and Trainer's Toolkit: Engage and Energize Participants for Success in Meetings, Classes and Workshops

By Artie Mahal

Technics Publications. 2014. 297 pages. \$26.96

Reviewed by Paul Harmon



My focus, when I look at a book like this, is on whether the book would be helpful to someone engaged in business process analysis and redesign, or in the management of a business process, or perhaps the development of a business process architecture. That's what I do, and it's what I help other people do. Obviously anyone engaged in process work finds him or herself engaged in lots of workshops, meetings and classes. In some cases one is meeting with people to try to learn about the business process they help execute. In

other cases one is meeting with managers to define how a given process will interact with the other business processes they manage. In still other cases, one is meeting with senior managers, trying to explain what you propose to do during the course of a process redesign project, or telling them how the new process you have developed will improve their business. In some cases you seek to obtain information from the participants, in others you want to gain their support or encourage them to give a new innovation a try.

The person planning and running such a meeting is, broadly, a facilitator. He or she must work with other people, putting them at their ease, responding to questions, complaints, resistance and even anger to achieve a set of goals. There is no one way to achieve the goals of facilitation. In some environments, a workshop can be a relatively formal affair with a clear agenda and prescribed steps. In another environment, the workshop can be a work in progress, changing as project circumstances change and as new people join in the process. A good facilitator needs a set of principles to understand what he or she is about. And the facilitator needs a lot of tools – tricks of the trade, if you would – to help deal with a wide variety of problems and with changing situations.

Artie Mahal is a master facilitator. I first encountered him when he began to teach classes for BPTrends – a company I help manage. Before that Artie had spent years

managing business process change at Mars corporation. BPTrends offers courses that teach people how to analyze and redesign business processes. As an instructor, Artie wore two hats. First, he was a workshop instructor, working with a class of business analysts to help them understand the workshop material. Second, it's in the nature of process analysis and redesign that business analysts must meet with managers and employees to elicit information about the business processes they seek to redesign. Thus, Artie had to facilitate workshops and within that context, he had to teach others how to facilitate. If Artie ever got an evaluation with less than a 5 out of 5, I have yet to hear about it. From the minute a workshop started Artie was working with the students to assure they learned. It was a joy to see how he kept everyone enthused and shifted as he offered explanations and exercises that engaged participants, mentally, physically and emotionally.

It's one thing, of course, to pull off a master facilitation in person – clearly Artie has a friendly, vibrant and enthusiastic personality and that certainly helps him accomplish his work – and it's another thing to teach others to get similar results. It's hard to teach enthusiasm. But Artie comes as close here as I can imagine. He breaks the process up into steps, explains each step, and then provides lots of tools to help carry out each step. (The tools library and the explanation of how to use each tool would be worth the price of this book, without all of the material on when and how to use the tools.)

There are lots of books on facilitation and workshop leadership on the market. This is one of the best. Moreover, if you are specifically interested in using these techniques in business process redesign, then this is a book that explains facilitation in a way particularly conducive to the tasks required for process improvement. I strongly recommend this book to anyone faced with a process improvement project and faced with sitting down to plan a workshop or facilitation session.

Paul Harmon is the Executive Editor of www.bptrends.com