Chapter IX

GSS Facilitation: A Reflective Practitioner Perspective

Pak Yoong
Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Brent Gallupe
Queen’s University, Canada

INTRODUCTION

GSS research recognized meeting facilitation skills, such as building rapport and relationships with participants, managing conflict, and appropriately selecting and preparing technology, as key success factors in electronic meetings (Bostrom, Clawson & Anson, 1991; Hayne, 1999; Miranda & Bostrom, 1999; Tan, Wei, & Lee-Partridge, 1999). Although these facilitation skills have been identified as important, very little is known about how electronic meeting facilitators acquire these skills. Up to now, no research has tried to examine at a detailed, theoretical level, how conventional meeting facilitators acquire the skills to become effective electronic meeting facilitators. Vogel, Nunamaker, Applegate and Konsynski (1987) alluded to this issue as early as 1987 when they commented that “while group skills are recognized as important, little systematic attention has been given to group facilitator training...” (p. 127).

Numerous researchers have raised the issue of how GSS facilitation training should be conducted (Anson, 1990; Bostrom et al., 1991; Clawson, 1992; Yoong, 1995). For example, Anson (1990) advocates that novices...
should concentrate first on learning to facilitate in the conventional meetings before adding the technology component. However, he recommends that if individuals were selected on their prior facilitation experience then training in the technology first (or concurrent with group dynamics training) would be equally effective. Beranek, Beise, and Niederman (1993) propose that observation and apprenticeship should probably be part of a GSS facilitation training program.

The existing literature, which focuses on descriptions of the structure and methods of specific training programs, also provides an idea of how training is conducted in these situations. Many training programs use a hands-on “experiential learning” approach with role modeling, role playing, simulation of real live meetings (mini-meetings), video taping and feedback, and group discussions. In most instances, the training programs are targeted at participants with at least some prior generic facilitation experience.

The objectives of this chapter are to describe the nature of reflective practice and the development of reflective practice in one human aspect of information technology application, namely, the facilitation of face-to-face electronic meetings.

**BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

In March 1993, I² began a grounded theory study that investigated the question:

_How do facilitators of conventional meetings make the transition to facilitating face-to-face electronic meetings?_

This study aims to develop a model representing the learning processes and experiences of traditional facilitators who are undergoing training in the facilitation of computer-supported problem-solving meetings.

As I began this research journey, I reflected on my facilitation experience of both conventional and electronic meetings. I know that it was not only “reading” about meeting facilitation but also “doing” meeting facilitation that has assisted my learning to be a facilitator of electronic meetings. I have also found that reflecting and talking on these facilitation experiences have made possible the links between “doing,” “reading,” and “making sense” of what is essentially a complex set of behaviors. This action-reflection approach to learning, which included periods of “reflective thinking” on my facilitation experiences, is the main approach that I have used, and continue to use, in my continuing learning as a facilitator of conventional and electronic meetings.

I have also found the facilitation of meetings, with its characteristic rational and irrational components, to be a complex process. Understanding my
Related Content

Designing Usable Security Feedback for Web-Filtering Systems
www.igi-global.com/chapter/designing-usable-security-feedback-web/47351?camid=4v1a

A Model-Based Approach to Analysis and Calibration of Sensor-Based Human Interaction Loops
www.igi-global.com/chapter/model-based-approach-analysis-calibration/62336?camid=4v1a
ICT4D in China and the Capability Approach: Do They Mix?
www.igi-global.com/article/ict4d-in-china-and-the-capability-approach/125273?camid=4v1a

Rhetoric, Practice, and Context-Sensitivity in Sociotechnical Action: The Compass Case
www.igi-global.com/chapter/rhetoric-practice-context-sensitivity-sociotechnical/24718?camid=4v1a