

The 1996-1997 *Survey of Group Facilitators* Sponsored by International Association of Facilitators

The *Survey of Group Facilitators*, sponsored by the International Association of Facilitators (IAF), was developed by the Association's Task Force on Professional Credibility in conjunction with the Program on Group Effectiveness at the University at Albany, State University of New York.<sup>1</sup> The Association's Coordinating Team and Task Forces contributed to its development. Printed questionnaires were sent in the late fall of 1996 to all IAF members of record. Follow-up mailings and collection of data proceeded through the winter of 1997. A total of 540 IAF members<sup>2</sup> were sent questionnaires; 314 were returned for an overall survey response rate of 58%. While this response rate is reasonable the length of the questionnaire (8 pages) and time that it took to complete (some respondents reported 45 minutes) likely contributed to a reduced response rate. Analysis is underway to explore the implications of the data; suggestions for questions that might be examined are welcome.<sup>3</sup> Below are some of the survey highlights. Summary statistics for the complete survey are presented on the following pages.

1. What are your training needs?

To assess training needs facilitators were asked to indicate the importance of receiving additional training in each of 18 subject areas. The four most often identified as "extremely important" were: stimulating creative thinking (32%); understanding complex systems (32%); diagnosing group interaction (29%) and conflict management (29%).

2. What challenges do you face as a facilitator?

The survey listed 11 potential problems and asked respondents to indicate their severity. The three most often identified as "quite severe" were: finding enough paying customers to work full-time as a facilitator (19%); communicating effectively to potential customers what you do and how it adds value (11%); and having customers plan sufficient time to accomplish the meeting's purpose (11%). When combined with the those indicating it was a "rather serious problem" the latter response was 58%, substantially higher than any other combined rating. In contrast, 33% indicated as a "rather serious" or "severe" problem accomplishing meeting objectives under very tight time constraints. Perhaps some facilitators take time constraints as a "given."

3. How do you get work?

Of 11 potential ways to obtain work, three stood out as "extremely important:" referrals by current or former clients (63%); personal networking (43%); and client participated in you class, training program or presentation (34%).

4. What trends are you experiencing in your work?

The three trends in which facilitators most frequently experienced "some" or "major" increases were in the demand for group facilitation (78%); familiarity with facilitation on the part of customers (77%); and the complexity of problem-solving and decision-making situations (70%). The area in which facilitators most frequently experienced "some" or "major" decrease was in the willingness of customers to participate in 2- and 3-day meetings (39%).

5. What directions do you hope facilitation will take?

Future directions most often identified as "extremely important" were: more widespread use of facilitation within organizations (61%); greater recognition of facilitation as a profession (51%); and more applications of facilitation to complex social problems (47%). Although certification of group facilitators received a relatively low rating (19% said it was "extremely important") on a different question 36% indicated that certification of facilitators would provide "much benefit."

6. What membership benefits should IAF make available?

A professional journal was most often cited as providing "much benefit" (44%). Also cited as providing "much benefit" were local IAF-affiliated organizations (43%); discounts on books ((42%); and discounts on facilitation supplies (41%).

7. How do you feel about IAF's Values?

"Connecting and serving facilitators locally, nationally and internationally" was viewed as the most important value (22%) while the least important was "celebrating life through spirit-filled quality interchange, activities and events" (11%).

---

<sup>1</sup> Individuals involved in developing the survey were, from the Professional Credibility Task Force (in alphabetical order): Mark Fuller, Beret Griffith, David Middleton, Peggy Runchey, and Jean Watts; and from the University at Albany: Sandy Schuman and Brad Wright. This report was prepared by Sandy Schuman.

<sup>2</sup> As of February 1998 IAF membership stands at X. At the time of the survey membership was 540.

<sup>3</sup> Send any questions or requests for the raw data to Sandy Schuman, University at Albany, Draper Hall Room 118, Albany NY 12222; S.Schuman@Albany.edu.

*Final Results of the Survey of Group Facilitators 1997*

**International Association of Facilitators**

**Part II. How you learned to be a group facilitator:**

1. What extent of formal training have you received in group facilitation? (please check all that apply)
  - 20.4% No formal training or other preparation; on-the-job experience only; self-taught
  - 8.9% Academic courses as part of my undergraduate studies  
*if checked, approximately how many of your undergraduate courses were directly relevant? 0.3 courses*
  - 24.6% Academic courses as part of my graduate studies  
*if checked, approximately how many of your graduate courses were directly relevant? 0.8 courses*
  - 85.6% Professional training through conferences, seminars, and workshops  
*if checked, approximately how many weeks of training were directly relevant? 5.3 weeks*
  - 39.6% Other preparation (please specify)
  
2. In the last two years (1995-1996), what formal training have you received in group facilitation? (please check all that apply)
  - 21.8% No formal training or other preparation
  - 1.0% Academic courses as part of my undergraduate studies  
*if checked, approximately how many of your undergraduate courses were directly relevant? 0.0 courses*
  - 3.2% Academic courses as part of my graduate studies  
*if checked, approximately how many of your graduate courses were directly relevant? 0.1 courses*
  - 74.7% Professional training through conferences, seminars, and workshops  
*if checked, approximately how many weeks of training were directly relevant? 1.8 weeks*
  - 16.2% Other preparation (please specify)

3. How important is it to you to receive additional training/learning in each of the following areas?

	Not important at all	Slightly important	Rather important	Extremely important
Analytical skills	22%	33%	34%	11%
Computer-aided documentation	23%	37%	31%	10%
Computer-aided participation	17%	44%	25%	14%
Conflict management	5%	28%	39%	29%
Developing and using ground rules	29%	37%	23%	12%
Diagnosing group interaction	7%	21%	43%	29%
Evaluating alternatives with many criteria	15%	25%	37%	23%
Excluding my content-related opinions	42%	36%	14%	8%
Explaining the role of facilitation to others	28%	33%	23%	16%
Exploring the nature of a problem	15%	27%	42%	17%
Mediation and dispute resolution	10%	30%	36%	24%
Relating to different participation styles	11%	31%	38%	19%
Relating to different thinking styles	11%	29%	37%	24%
Stimulating creative thinking	4%	22%	42%	32%
Understanding complex systems	8%	23%	38%	32%
Understanding my role as a facilitator	31%	30%	26%	14%
Working with diverse groups	13%	30%	37%	20%
Working with large groups	13%	27%	40%	20%
Other (please specify)	9.3%			

**Part III. How you facilitate:**

1. Which types of facilitation do you practice? (please check all that apply)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 27% Analytical facilitation                   | 57% Large group facilitation                            |
| 39% Board development                         | 46% Leadership training                                 |
| 31% Business Process Reengineering (BPR)      | 25% Learning organization                               |
| 40% Community-based planning                  | 19% Master planning                                     |
| 37% Conflict resolution                       | 13% Mediation   |
| 20% Consulting methods training               | 39% OD consulting                                       |
| 31% Curriculum development                    | 58% Participatory planning                              |
| 23% Decision Conferencing                     | 33% Program and process evaluation                      |
| 25% Dialogue Method                           | 42% Project planning and scheduling                     |
| 47% Discussion moderation                     | 6% Rapid Application Development (RAD)                  |
| 17% Electronic meeting systems                | 34% Organizational restructuring                        |
| 56% Facilitation mentoring/coaching           | 75% Strategic Planning                                  |
| 87% Group problem solving and decision making | 23% System process mapping                              |
| 65% Training/ learning                        | 73% Team building                                       |
| 13% Research on facilitation                  | 44% Technology of Participation (ToP)                   |
| 46% Focus groups                              | 21% Total Quality Process Improvement Teams             |
| 8% Graphic facilitation                       | 16% TQM and CQI consulting                              |
| 43% Group development                         | 49% Training/ mentoring/ coaching of group facilitators |
| 43% Group process consultation                | 49% Workshop design                                     |
| 59% Idea generation/ Ideation                 | 10% Other ( please specify)                             |
| 38% Improvement planning                      | 6.4% Other  |
| 38% In-house facilitator                      | 2.6% Other  |
| 13% Joint Application Development (JAD)       |   |

2. How serious a problem has each of the following challenges been to you as a facilitator?

	Not a problem	A slight problem	A rather serious problem	A quite severe problem
Getting everyone's full participation	33%	56%	10%	1%
Setting meeting objectives	60%	35%	5%	0%
Accomplishing meeting objectives under very tight time constraints	17%	49%	28%	5%
Having customers plan sufficient time to accomplish the meeting's purpose	9%	33%	48%	11%
Finding adequate meeting room arrangements	49%	38%	11%	2%
Finding enough paying customers to work full-time as a facilitator	42%	22%	18%	19%
Communicating effectively to potential customers what you do and how it adds value	17%	48%	25%	11%
Dealing with participants who don't want to be there	25%	58%	16%	1%
Producing documentation before the group disperses	33%	41%	21%	5%
Finding that customers who said that they wanted a participatory process didn't really mean it	23%	53%	19%	5%
Helping participants implement the results	22%	36%	33%	9%
Other (please specify)	7.4%			

**Part IV. Marketing your services:**

1. How do you get your facilitation work? Please rate the importance of each of the following sources.

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Rather important	Extremely important
Referrals by others within your organization for internal work	30%	14.2%	25%	31%
Referrals by current or former clients	4%	6%	26%	63%
Referrals by other facilitators	12%	29%	39%	20%
Referrals by a broker	82%	12%	4%	2%
Advertising in client-oriented/ trade publications	77%	17%	4%	1%
Advertising on the Internet	75%	20%	3%	2%
Advertising in the yellow pages	89%	10%	2%	0%
Client participated in your class, training program, or presentation	10%	19%	36%	34%
Your contacting potential clients	26%	26%	27%	21%
Personal networking	7%	18%	31%	43%
Responses to formal procurement requests (requests for proposals)	39%	37%	14%	12%
Other (please specify)	6.5%			

**Part V. Computer supported facilitation tools:**

1. Do you make use of computer-supported group facilitation tools?

73.0% No, I have not used computer-supported group facilitation tools (if "no," please skip to #4 below)

27.0% Yes, I have used computer-supported group facilitation tools

2. If "yes," how frequently this past year have you used each of the following computer-supported group facilitation tools?

	Not at all	Much less than half	About half the meetings	Much more than half
Participants use Internet or World Wide Web for the meeting	80%	19%	0%	1%
Participants operate computers networked across meeting sites	80%	15%	3%	3%
Participants operate computers networked in one meeting room	38%	32%	7%	23%
I operate a single computer in the meeting room as facilitator	45%	29%	9%	17%
Others in the room operate one or more stand-alone computers	44%	33%	10%	14%

3. If "yes," how frequently this past year have you used each of the following computer-supported group facilitation tools?

	Not at all	Much less than half	About half the meetings	Much more than half
Word-processing software	20%	35%	14%	32%
Spreadsheet software	51%	41%	3%	5%
Presentation software	24%	41%	18%	17%
Idea generation/ organization software	43%	30%	4%	24%
An electronic meeting system	40%	27%	5%	29%
A keypad system	82%	9%	4%	5%

4. What inhibits you from using computer-supported group facilitation tools more frequently? (please check all that apply)

42% Lack of familiarity with how they are used with groups

17% Don't believe they produce added value

46% Too expensive

54% Don't encounter applicable situations frequently enough

8% Lack of familiarity with computers

29% Other (please specify)

**Part VI. Successful groups:**

1. There are many reasons that have been suggested why groups are effective at addressing problems and successfully accomplishing the tasks on which they work. From the 10 characteristics of groups listed below, please check the 5 characteristics that you believe are most predictive of effective team work and successful group problem solving. *Successful groups must be highly:* (please check **only 5**)

- 34% EXPERT - members have all the necessary knowledge and skills to work on the problem
- 65% DIVERSE - members bring a variety of backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences to the task
- 83% OPEN - members are intellectually curious, flexible, and creative in approaching issues
- 58% CONSCIENTIOUS - members are motivated to work competently and thoroughly on the task
- 57% PREPARED - members are sufficiently informed about the problem to understand the key issues
- 33% ANALYTICAL - members are willing and able to use appropriate problem-solving methods and tools
- 38% STABLE - members are emotionally mature, not unduly angry, anxious, insecure, or impulsive
- 12% EQUIPPED - members are willing and able to use appropriate communication and information technology
- 72% CONSIDERATE - members work cooperatively, evoking trust through tolerance and respect of each other
- 43% EXPRESSIVE - members have appropriate social skills to assertively present and defend their concerns to the group

**Part VII. The future of facilitation:**

1. What trends are you experiencing in your work as a group facilitator? Please indicate the degree to which you are experiencing each of the following:

	Major decrease	Some decrease	No trend noticed	Some increase	Major increase
Demand for group facilitation	1%	5%	15%	53%	26%
Demand for working with larger size groups	1%	3%	41%	45%	10%
Complexity of problem-solving and decision-making situations	1%	1%	28%	54%	16%
Difficulty in getting customers to pay for services	3%	7%	78%	11%	1%
Competition from others providing facilitation services	0%	2%	48%	42%	8%
Familiarity with facilitation on the part of your customers	0%	3%	20%	67%	10%
Willingness to participate in 2- and 3-day meetings	9%	29%	37%	22%	3%
Understanding of distinction between training and facilitation	0%	8%	48%	40%	4%
Demand for training in facilitation skills	1%	3%	30%	54%	12%
Other (please specify)	5.0%				

2. What directions do you hope facilitation will take?

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Rather important	Extremely important
Increased use of computer-based tools in facilitation	16%	50%	21%	13%
More applications of facilitation to complex social problems	1%	9%	43%	47%
More widespread use of facilitation within organizations	0%	2%	37%	61%
Greater recognition of facilitation as a profession	2%	12%	34%	51%
Wider presentation and discussion of facilitation in the media	4%	26%	37%	32%
Certification of group facilitators	16%	38%	26%	19%
Other (please specify)	6%			

**Part VIII. About the International Association of Facilitators (IAF):**

1. Which IAF annual conferences have you attended or do you plan to attend? (please check all that apply)

17% I attended the 1994 conference in Arlington      57% I plan to attend the 1997 conference in Oklahoma City

33% I attended the 1995 conference in Denver  
 62% I attended the 1996 conference in Dallas

57% I plan to attend the 1998 conference in San Francisco

2. Are you currently a member of the IAF?
  - 1% No, I have never been a member of the IAF (if “no,” please skip to Part VIII on the next page)
  - 7% I am not currently a member of the IAF, but I have been a member previously
  - 92% Yes, I am currently a member of the IAF
  
3. **Values:** Which values should IAF embody? Distribute 100 points among the following values to reflect their relative importance in your view. For example, if you felt they were all equally important, each would receive 17 points.
  - 16% Including the full spectrum of personal, professional and cultural diversity in the field of facilitation.
  - 22% Connecting and serving facilitators locally, nationally and internationally.
  - 21% Advocating participative methodologies that generate ownership of decisions and actions.
  - 11% Celebrating life through spirit-filled quality interchange, activities and events.
  - 17% Modeling a participative and flexible organizational structure that promotes growth, change and learning.
  - 14% Supporting socially responsible change within private, public and volunteer organizations.
  
4. **IAF Vision:** Of the following statements, which are most important in your view for the future of the International Association of Facilitators? Distribute 100 points among the following visions to reflect their relative importance in your view. For example, if you felt they were all equally important, each would receive 17 points.
  - 20.5% Professional leader - a leading influence in the art and mastery of facilitation
  - 15.5% Global network - a worldwide connection between diverse members and partners
  - 19.2% Expertise exchange - the ongoing global exchange of facilitation expertise
  - 16.3% Service center - the premier provider of resources in support of the professional facilitator
  - 14.4% Dynamic organization - a strong, evolving organization focused on inclusive and participatory practices
  - 14.6% Relevant research - grounded in applied research to meet customer needs and respond to social trends
  
5. **IAF Strategic Directions:** Below are the strategic directions listed in the *Draft IAF Strategic Plan 2005*. Which do you think are most important? Distribute 100 points among the following strategic directions to reflect their relative importance in your view. For example, if you felt they were all equally important, each would receive 17 points.
  - 19.6% People to people events - assure a worldwide presence through state-of-the-art conferences
  - 19.8% Facilitation clearing house - worldwide professional information exchange
  - 16.3% Training partnerships - pilot strategic partnerships for mutual services and learning
  - 12.3% Global membership - actively expand a diversified membership
  - 19.9% Professional credibility - catalyze mainstream societal understanding and recognition of facilitation
  - 12.1% Service infrastructure - build administrative and fiscal resources to support growth
  
6. Of the services and benefits IAF currently provides, which provide the most value?

	No value at all	Some value	Much value
Annual conference	2.2%	25.0%	72.8%
Newsletter	2.0%	56.7%	41.3%
Think Tanks	15.9%	60.2%	24.0%

7. Below is a list of the current Think Tanks. In which would you be interested in participating? What other topics would be valuable to explore?

	Not interested at all	Slightly interested	Rather interested	Extremely interested
Types of Facilitation	15.4%	28.8%	40.1%	15.7%
Facilitation Competencies	17.8%	25.0%	34.4%	22.8%
Computer-Supported Facilitation	24.0%	37.1%	26.2%	12.7%
Chaos Theory Applied to Organizational Systems	24.2%	27.1%	29.3%	19.4%
Organization as Community	23.5%	24.9%	32.6%	19.0%
Technology of Meaning	29.7%	26.3%	28.2%	15.8%
Other (please specify)	5.4%			

8. What types of services or benefits would you like IAF to make available? What other services would you suggest?

	No benefit at all	Slight benefit	Some benefit	Much benefit
Health insurance	51.1%	19.0%	12.8%	17.2%
Professional liability insurance	36.8%	21.4%	24.6%	17.1%
Certification of facilitation training programs	18.2%	20.3%	32.2%	29.4%
Certification of facilitators	18.0%	22.5%	23.6%	35.9%
Professional journal	2.4%	16.3%	37.7%	43.6%
Discounts on books	3.7%	16.7%	37.8%	41.8%
Discounts on facilitation supplies	6.2%	19.9%	32.9%	41.1%
Local, IAF-affiliated organizations	7.8%	15.2%	34.3%	42.8%
Other (please specify)	3.3%			

#### Part IX. Your work as a facilitator:

- As a facilitator, how do you usually describe yourself? (please check only one)
 

2.0% Conference facilitator	1.3% Seminar facilitator
3.3% Electronic meeting facilitator	5.9% Training facilitator
40.1% Group facilitator	9.8% Workshop facilitator
12.1% Meeting facilitator	11.1% Other (please specify)
	14.7% Multiple answers
- For how many years have you been facilitating?       $x = 11.1$  years,  $stddev = 8.16$ , range 1-40
- At what organizational level do you work? Approximately what percentage of your work as a group facilitator is performed at each of these organizational levels? **Total should = 100%**
  - 16.1% Senior executive
  - 20.4% Upper management
  - 21.9% Middle management
  - 13.0% First-level management
  - 10.6% Supervisory
  - 16.5% Front line/ shop level

4. Approximately what percentage of your work as a group facilitator is performed in each of the following sectors?  
**Total should = 100%**
- 24.8% Strictly public sector
  - 29.1% Strictly private sector
  - 18.6% Strictly not-for-profit sector
  - 6.7% Both public and private sectors together
  - 5.9% Both public and not-for-profit sectors together
  - 3.7% Both private and not-for-profit sectors together
  - 11.0% All three sectors together
5. Is any of your work as a group facilitator performed under the aegis of an organization?  
 32.7% No, I work exclusively as an independent, e.g., contractor, subcontractor (if “no,” please skip to #8 below)  
 67.3% Yes, I work at least occasionally under the aegis of an organization
6. If “yes,” which of the following best describes the services of your organization (please check only one)  
 21.7% Primary service is group facilitation  
 78.3% Group facilitation is one of many services provided
7. If “yes,” what percentage of your work as a group facilitator is performed ... **(Total should = 100%)**
- 41.3% As an internal facilitator (e.g., facilitating groups within your organization)
  - 57.9% As an external facilitator working as part of a larger organization (e.g., employee, partner)
8. Approximately what percentage of your professional time is devoted to work as a group facilitator or trainer of group facilitators? **Total should = 100%**
- 37.9% Group facilitation
  - 9.6% Training of group facilitators
  - 11.8% Other types of training
  - 14.3% Other types of organizational consulting
  - 8.9% Administration
  - 16.7% Other professional work
9. Approximately what percentage of your annual income is derived from your work as a group facilitator or trainer of group facilitators? **Total should = 100%**
- 39.2% Group facilitation
  - 9.0% Training of group facilitators
  - 12.6% Other types of training
  - 15.4% Other types of organizational consulting
  - 5.2% Administration
  - 18.1% Other professional work
10. Approximately what percentage of your work as a group facilitator is performed as an unpaid volunteer? 12.8 %

**Part X. Personal information:**

This information, as well as other information you provide in this questionnaire, will not be associated with you personally. No record will be maintained as to who provided this response.

1. In what facilitation-related organizations are you a member? (please check all that apply)
  - 1.7% Society for Professionals in Dispute Resolution
  - 31.1% American Society for Training and Development
  - 44.5% Institute of Cultural Affairs
  - 2.9% International Association of Public Participation Practitioners
  - 0.8% International Association for Conflict Management
  - 29.8% Local facilitation organization (please specify)
  - 17.2% Internet Electronic Discussion on Group Facilitation (misc.business.facilitators/ Grp-Facl@Albany.edu)
  - 32.4% Other (please specify)
  
2. What was your total personal earned income in 1995?

6.7% under \$20,000	26.0% \$60,000 - 79,999
15.8% \$20,000 - 39,999	7.7% \$80,000 - 99,999
31.6% \$40,000 - 59,999	12.3% \$100,000 and over
  
3. What is the average daily rate you generally charge for facilitation work?

12.1% under \$300	19.8% \$900 - \$1199
17.7% \$300 - \$599	9.7% \$1200 - \$1499
19.4% \$600 - \$899	21.0% \$1500 and over
  
4. In what year were you born?  $x = 1948.8$ ,  $stddev = 8.2$ , range 1923 - 1968
  
5. Are you
  - 39.3% male or
  - 60.7% female?
  
6. What is your highest level of education completed?

0.0% Did not complete high school	13.0% Some graduate study
1.6% High school diploma	46.3% M.A., M.S., or other Master's degree
6.5% Some undergraduate study	15.0% Doctoral degree
17.6% B.A., B.S., or other college degree	