

There are many ways to encourage participation:

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Verbal techniques

- Ask open-ended questions
- Phrase requests to encourage more responses
- Respond positively to all contributions
- Ask for more specifics
- Ask for and encourage different view points
- Re-direct questions
- Paraphrase/summarise
- Refer to contributions people have made previously
- Hold back on your own ideas

Non-verbal techniques

- Attentiveness
- Voice and tone
- Facial expressions
- Silence
- Movement
- Avoid showing your anger or impatience



As a facilitator you might come across difficult behaviours and/or scenarios to manage!

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- A team member who always points out difficulties
- An individual dominating the meeting
- A non-contributing member
- An “expert”
- The Cynic (“I’ve heard it all before”)
- Conflict between two team members
- The leader (headteacher/senior staff member) as a participant!

There are some tips to help you with these situations



Difficult scenarios

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The objector

... a team member who always points out the difficulties

- Ask them to suggest a solution to the difficulty they have identified
- View them as a resource against whom to bounce ideas and suggestions
- Be prepared for the negative – and use it to improve an idea
- Regard the statement of difficulty as an invitation to build, not as an obstacle

The dominator

... an individual dominating the meeting

- Take control constructively
- Call on other delegates by name
- Thank, restate pertinent points and move on
- Avoid eye contact
- Use your physical position in the room



Difficult scenarios

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The silent one

A non-contributing member

- Don't put pressure on the participant
- Acknowledge their contributions – every time they speak
- Give a non-verbal invitation to speak
- Ask them if they agree with what's being said
- Capitalise on their knowledge and personality
- Talk to the reluctant participant (outside the meeting)

The "know all"

An "expert"

- Don't react defensively – respect what they can offer
- Use the person's expertise – but set limits
- Encourage the expert to listen
- Invite the expert to present formally
- Give the expert an official role in answering people's questions

Difficult scenarios

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The cynic

“I’ve heard it all before”

- Don’t get defensive or angry
- Find some merit in what they are saying
- Bring them in WHEN YOU WANT THEM TO SPEAK
- Encourage them to concentrate on the positive
- Talk to them privately – find out if they are upset or annoyed
- Use the rest of the group to give different viewpoints

The fighters

Conflict between two team members

- Don’t intervene too early
- Emphasise points of agreement, minimise points of disagreement
- Direct delegates’ attention to the objectives of the meeting
- Shelf or park the issue for the moment
- Draw others into the discussion to reduce the one-to-one element
- De-personalise

Difficult scenarios

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The leader

The leader as a participant

- Emphasise the importance of being (positively) frank
- Formalise the situation upfront – difficult dual role, being both player and leader
- Ask the leader if he/she would mind reserving his/her views
- Treat the leader as a person

The approach to feedback is all important ...

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- Show there is a strength or a problem by using examples
- Connect it to the way people think and interact
- Speak with honesty and good intent
- Focus on observable behaviour
- Do it as soon as possible after the event
- Show inconsistencies between what is said and done
- Focus on what is adding to a positive impact
- Identify what is missing that will reduce any negative impact and improve team performance
- Do not simply label what is right or wrong
- Make it an opportunity to increase strengths and improve performance and not a threat

