

June 2009 Newsletter

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In this issue we present some of the challenges of building resilient, self-reliant communities from several different perspectives. One common theme is the importance and effectiveness of local involvement. We welcome your feedback and expertise. Please share your stories with us. Write to us at info@globalfacilitators.org



6 Critical Success Factors for Running Powerful Virtual Meetings

By [Julia Young](#)

With the current state of the world economy, it's easy to understand the surge of interest in virtual collaboration as a way to reduce the expense of bringing people together in physical time and space. Some managers jump in feet first assuming a meeting is a meeting, others put an apprehensive toe in the water, concerned about the lack of visual cues, the reliance on technology, etc. In my experience consulting with global organizations in many industries, while the transition away from face-to-face interaction is not easy, it is manageable if you recognize and address its unique challenges.

What is a "Virtual" Meeting?

A virtual meeting is an event or series of events where participants join in from multiple locations. A virtual meeting may be held "real time" where everyone is

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New dates:

June 9, 11, 16, 18, 2009
11 p.m. GMT, 4 p.m. PDT, 7 p.m. EDT



Joint Project of GFSC & Us Partners
Facilitators, Consultants, Business & Community Leaders, Emergency Response Professionals and Citizens

Co-facilitated by Hina Pendle, PhD. of Us Partners and Marieann Shovlin of GFSC, this series of 1 hour-long webinars focuses on how a crisis does not have to become a disaster.

To register, click
www.crisis2resilience.com

What participants will gain:

- Recognize the characteristics and objectives of each stage of recovery
- Identify the psychological, social and behavioral profiles of people at each stage
- Learn effective interventions and strategies appropriate at each stage
- Avoid unintended consequences and shift away from ineffective strategies
- Identify factors that signal when it is time to move on

Tuition for the series:
\$110, including handbook*

For more information and to register, please visit www.crisis2resilience.com.

* discounts available for NCDD, IAF members



6 Critical Success Factors, cont.

participating as the same time, often by teleconference or video conference. A virtual meeting may also have asynchronous components where participants are working at different times appropriate to their time zone or schedule.

For this discussion, consider a virtual meeting as distinct from online chat, bulletin boards or social networks. A meeting is more formal and structured than these types of events and will most usefully have defined objectives and outcomes, an agenda and a facilitator. Our focus is on that facilitator or meeting manager and the skills we need to get great results from the virtual sessions that we design and facilitate.

Facilitators and meeting managers have a lot to pay attention to: from the planning and design of a meeting, to who should attend and how to manage the group dynamics. Everything we already know about good facilitation applies to virtual meetings and using web meeting tools. In addition to normal meeting planning activities there are some issues particular to virtual meetings that need our attention. There are six critical success factors for getting great results from virtual meetings.

Six Critical Success Factors for Getting Great Results Virtually

1. Plan a viable agenda or series of agendas
2. Effective use of technology
3. Prepare participants and pre-work
4. Keep participants focused and engaged during the meeting
5. Build trust and social capital
6. Maintain momentum between meetings

I invite you to read my [paper about these critical success factors](#) and provide feedback. Consider: Are there more important factors not mentioned? How has transitioning to virtual meetings worked for you?

Julia Young is a valued member of the GFSC Advisory Council. Please visit her blog, <http://facilitate.com/blog/> and website.



Hastily Formed Networks

Excerpts from Reflections,
VOLUME 7, NUMBER 1,
The Society for Organizational Learning;
<http://solonline.org>

“Networks can spring up under a variety of conditions. Sometimes they are desperately needed when a crisis has knocked out both physical systems and social connections. In other cases, they are a more organic response to an unpredictable combination of opportunity, coincidence and timing...[Their] complexity and uncertainty call for the capacity to collaborate in the absence of authority, and we will be most effective if we build the competence for this type of interaction before the need arises..” [C. Sherry Immediato, Managing Director, SoL]

The heart of the network is the communication system (the “conversation space”) used by network members and the ways they interact within it.

P. Denning

According to Peter Denning, faculty member of the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) in his article, *Hastily Formed Networks: Collaboration in the Absence of Authority*, disasters, (like the 2004 tsunami, Hurricane Katrina or bush fires in Australia or Santa Barbara), give rise to hastily formed networks. Based on research at the scene of disasters, he notes that the quality of response was not related to disaster planning or equipment, but on the quality of the network that came together to provide relief.

The idea of quickly forming a team for a particular, urgent task, and then disbanding it when the task is complete, is not new. For smaller, more manageable crises “ad hoc” committees or “crisis response teams” are familiar to organizations and corporations. Some crises stresses the HFN because the challenges include: Genuine surprise, Chaos, insufficient resources, multi-agency response, distributed response into many local jurisdictions, among many organizations) and lack of infrastructure.

An HFN is a network of people who come together rapidly; work together to fulfill a large, urgent mission; represent different communities; work in a shared conversation space; plan, commit to, and execute actions together.

Creating effective HFNs is a challenge. Denning offers guidelines for a framework that ensures that a network, its people, and its equipment will function well under extreme stress: ensuring a high quality conversation space; addressing physical communications systems; collaboration of all participating organizations during the crisis; practice using the technology and train group members in basic HFN collaborative skills.

Expect an information glut as survivors will overload resources, e.g., limited bandwidth as they try to communicate with family; emergency responders will overwhelm colleagues with situation reports and other data.

A critical factor is the ability to improvise. In her article, *Enabling Adaptability and Innovation Through Hastily Formed Networks*, Tracy Huston applies the U theory (Otto Scharmer) framework and connects it to the process of forming, operating and ultimately disbanding emergent networks. Using theatre improvisation as a metaphor for effective networks, she cites several examples of organizations engaged in improvisational practices to improve their flexibility, creativity, and results.

Huston outlines two ways to enhance the performance of HFNs: developing a minimal structure that allows for self-organization, and building new skills at the individual and collective level. Theatre improvisation techniques can provide some of the skills that help prepare people for crisis situations, and can also teach non-hierarchical leadership processes that are flexible and decentralized.

Source:

VOLUME 7, NUMBER 1, The Society for Organizational Learning; reflections.solonline.org, P. Denning, *Hastily Formed Networks: Collaboration in the Absence of Authority* and T. Huston, *Enabling Adaptability and Innovation Through Hastily Formed Networks* Reflections,



More News from Australia

Marysville Community

'Celebration Day'

by Andrew Gaines

Marysville, a town in Victoria, was devastated by the Black Saturday bushfires on the 8th February. Most of the buildings in town and the district were burned down, with many deaths and injuries.

The Australian Children's Trust (ACT) provided support with volunteers and temporary housing in the weeks immediately following the fires. People from the community established the Marysville and Triangle District Development Group (MATDG). A community engagement day ('Celebration Day') was set for 3 May.

Nigel Bell was the lead facilitator—a natural for the job: trained in social ecology, and skilled at facilitating public meetings. He is also an ecological design consultant and a master of integrated planning with knowledge of bushfire planning and design.

Sixty volunteer facilitators were recruited through various networks, starting with Facilitators Helping Communities Recover. The response was immediate and positive: in less than two weeks we had a full complement of volunteers plus a few on standby.

About 280 people participated. We began with a minute of silence to acknowledge the recent past. Then we set a new, positive tone by giving people an opportunity to share their appreciation for Marysville through a poem or their own heartfelt expression. This helped the community transition from shock and reaction to moving forward.

Trained counsellors were on hand to handle the few issues that arose for some. On-going counselling and relationship workshops are being offered in the area.

In the morning workshop groups of nine or ten and a facilitator focused on what people appreciated about Marysville and what they want to carry forward. We encouraged a conversational style of group process, with facilitators setting the context and direction, and then letting the group go while still keeping them loosely on track. Facilitators

wrote down significant ideas without interrupting the flow of thought in the group.

Some facilitators were "floaters", helping out as needed, noticing when some people seemed at a loss to join a group. They engaged them in conversation, allayed their concerns and introduced them to a group. This was extremely helpful.

In the afternoon session participants joined a table that focused on a topic of interest to them. They were asked to envision Marysville in 2020 and describe what Marysville was like in terms of their selected topic. Then they gave an account of how to get from the Marysville of today to that envisioned future. This was not a decision-making exercise, but a visioning exercise gathering community views. Contradictory views were welcome.

Some extra features included a history wall with a long (10 meters) timeline where people could mark significant events from prehistory through to 2030. On large hand-drawn maps of Marysville and the larger Triangle District people could mark locations they felt were significant. There were separate panels around the sides of the tent where people could independently write additional ideas. We provided coloured cards so that people could write what should be left behind and what should be taken forward. On the community level, left behind was 'community divisions'. Taken forward were ideas and visions that largely supported the day's other outcomes.

We spent the next three days meticulously transcribing all the ideas, looking for key themes and patterns to post on MATDG's website (www.matdg.com) and for a preliminary report.

The next steps are under active discussion. Nigel has proposed a 'Phoenix Community Planning Workshop' (within six weeks). It would be "a design charrette," an intensive three-day workshop where community members, architects, town planners, road experts, business people and representatives of all relevant government departments work through all the interlocking issues of rebuilding Marysville. In three days such a group can accomplish what might take a year

or more by normal means. And they can do it better, since the issues and competing trade-offs are worked through by on-the-spot discussion, and proposals are challenged and reworked collaboratively until a plan emerges that people buy into.

Such a process, in my view, cuts through the divisiveness and inefficiency of 'normal' bureaucratic processes where governments committees and subcommittees work in their own silos then awkwardly patch things together. The design charrette is a collaborative process that is responsive to the community, inspiring people to do their best for the community while relinquishing their egos and fixed attachments. It is democracy at work in a very creative way. It is based on partnership/ respect rather than domination/control.

Timing is key. Winter is coming. If there is no plan and agreed community direction soon, many people who might have stayed to participate in rebuilding Marysville may well move away permanently.

"The mood of the day was exceptional and people really picked up the positive spirit... All the facilitators felt that it was a privilege to be part of this, and I feel this myself."
Andrew Gaines

Andrew Gaines

Alliance for Sustainable Wellbeing
www.alliance-for-sustainable-wellbeing.com

For complete article, click
<http://fhcr.collectivex.com/discussion/topic/s/how/183148>



Transitional Communities

According to Dr. Rob Gordon's Theory of Social Processes in Disasters, in time, as reconstruction proceeds, it leads to a return of effective functioning in a different structure. At this stage communication promotes the formation of social bonds, which then promotes the formation of groups. These groups, in turn promote common action. [An outline of Dr. Gordon's Social Process Theory is in the GFSC Library]

Facilitators can encourage activities that help form new structures for emotional support by assuring and mentoring a leadership style appropriate for the level of development within the new social structure. [Brenson-Lazan]



All Disasters Are Local

by Stephen Ganyard

[review of article in New York Times,
18 May 2009]

Stephen Ganyard discusses the “disturbing lack of coordination among the many government agencies and independent organizations.” As commander of a Marine air group in Southern California, Ganyard worked with the County and City of Los Angeles to develop a (very successful) collaborative disaster response training event, Golden Phoenix. He describes the key factors that made this collaboration’s success last far beyond a training exercise.

A key was making participation voluntary and open to any organization, public or private, willing to use its own funds. “Because we didn’t ask for complete control or mandate performance benchmarks, we found plenty of groups eager to participate and willing to experiment.”

Golden Phoenix is based on the premise that, like politics, all disasters are local. Improved safety and security for the people is best created where they live, not a bureaucratic entity far-removed from the crisis. More attention needs to be we are “to prepare for and respond to disasters with speed, skill and effectiveness,” [Janet Napolitano].

People with information and equipment must be able to share with those who need it most. Social networking is a means to effective collaboration among communities with common interests.

He cites “earning their trust and acting as a neutral third party, by acting as a social lubricant and catalyst, not dictating terms or seeking to control, but rather creating trust in exercises in which there was no penalty for failure....We need ‘whole of society’ not just ‘whole of government’ responses to crises.”

To read the complete article, go to:
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/18/opinion/18ganyard.html?pagewanted=1&r=1>

GFSC provides mentoring, methods and materials to strengthen community resilience in times of crisis and change.

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Gratitude/Gracias

Our continuing thanks to

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<http://www.hotconference.com/GFSC/partners1.php>

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<http://www.listcast.com> for our newsletter distribution and email list service

“The degree of personal trust at the tactical level, not money or machines, is the single most important determinant of how well communities will deal with threats and disasters.”

Stephen Ganyard

GFSC Advisory Council for their patience, expertise, advice and caring.

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